Sustaining natural heritage sites as great tourist attractions: international guidelines versus local contexts

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Abstract

Sustainable management of natural heritage sites (cultural landscapes, protected areas, labelled territories...) is now emerging as a needed horizon for many international institutions (UNESCO, IUCN...), donors or NGOs who disseminate widely, at the international level, best practice guidelines. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that, for almost twenty years, World Heritage Sites and protected areas stakeholders are trying to find a balance between heritage protection and economic development. Local stakeholders have to face paradox issues on different scales: to build a local governance, to develop a heritage-based healthy tourism economy, to conserve all aspects of heritage (nature, culture, including the sense of place)… In short, managers and stakeholders should be virtuous heritage guardian angels while financial, administrative and human resources are still limited and management is becoming more and more complex. The observation and analysis of local contexts in heritage sites can make clear that the reality is quite different and more complex. Even if the tourist number seems to go too far according to the tolerance threshold and if stakeholders find the situation tricky or alarmist, implementation of a carrying capacity (for example) in local sites is clearly not the standard. At last, innovations can emerge locally, sometimes disconnected from the traditional ways of best practice global circulation or north-south transfers.

Keywords: *natural heritage sites, management, international guidelines, visitors management.*

Introduction

Sustainable management of natural heritage sites is needed today as a desired horizon by many international organizations and professional networks. As a consequence, international recommendations and guidelines in this field are sometimes becoming injunctions to heritage sites stakeholders. Since the 2000s, there is an abundant professionnal literature dedicated to guidelines or best practices in managing heritage sites, both taken from the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) or listed by the IUCN. Far from being presented as "cookbooks" applicables to any country or site, these guidelines provide a framework to implement protection of heritage elements (biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural aspects...), appropriate management, tourism sustainable development or good governance.

The aim of this paper is to show the interference and the links between the contemporary production of a comprehensive and global thinking of sustainable management of natural heritage sites and the work of stakeholders at the local level. The first part deals with the emergence and stabilization of a natural heritage sustainable management system, highly theorized, although it is abundantly supplied with concrete cases of best practices sometimes designated as "real models". The analysis of this international heritage management system is essentially based on the literature produced by UNESCO and IUCN, the most relevant organizations as international leaders in natural heritage management. The second part of the paper tries to compare this sustainable heritage management system, widely distributed worldwide, to the reality of local contexts.

The main hypothesis is that despite the wide international distribution and the great intellectual and practical needs for this system, local heritage management is essentially based on the specific territorial and local context, so that local management is relatively independent of the effort towards global standardization. Site cases developed in the paper are taken in both south and north countries like France, United Kingdom, Canada, Argentina and Cameroon and finally demonstrate that practices depend on the type of protection tool, the type of professional network (which may be national or international) and the local territorial context. Although heritage management site (including techniques and tools for visitors management) relies on international recommendations and guidelines, the day-to-day management is highly dependent on the local stakeholders (and their links within the site territory) and on the protection rules (which depend on the national and local protection regulation). Moreover, despite the development of an international heritage sustainable management system, management innovations rely widely on north-north or south-south experiments flows, on the professional networks which are the more easily mobilized by local stakeholders (e.g. at the regional level, or depending on fund demands, or depending on the type of protection tool) or on cooperation between same natural environments (e. g. high latitudes natural environments or tropical rainforest environments).

1. Towards a global system of heritage sustainable management: guidelines, best pratices and models

This first part explores how emerges a theory of heritage sites sustainable management from the 2000s in order to reach a good level of protection for exceptionnal heritage sites. This normative framework diffuses inside professional networks thanks to abundant technical literature (guidelines, study-cases…) written and edited by international organizations. As the main objective is to emphasize the analysis of the confrontation between global theory and local contexts management, we propose a comparative survey and reading of the various documents edited by UNESCO and IUCN. We will not take into consideration the literature produced by national networks (such as ATEN in France) even if this national level would deserve a research itself. The content analysis of best management practices gives a good understanding of both differences and similarities in these theoretical systems. To go deeply into the analysis, several parameters are taken into account, such as the nationality of experts who write this literature and geographical contexts which are cited as references.

- **Guidelines as management standards and objectives to reach**

All the texts set out below (a synthesis is proposed in Table 1) offer a global professional framework to heritage stakeholders linked to international or regional charters, international conventions or declarations, orientations proposed by international organizations, often traduced in numerous guidelines. All this literature is widely linked and address the issues of planning, capabilities, management and monitoring and offer keys ans tools to implement and to reach objectives which are international standards. These standards are defined by recommendations (both general and accurate) and good practices examples which can be developed as exemplary cases. The proposed guidelines are produced at various scales by many stakeholders. International organizations like UNESCO, IUCN, UNWTO or World Bank give us the most international, well-known and relevant guidelines, but national organizations and government agencies can also produce such framework. NGOs hold a special place because their actions are multi-scale, international to local level (e. g. Wildfowl and Wetland Trust –WWT- as regards to natural sites). In this international framework, the importance of the links between tourism and heritage conservation has already been demonstrated (Foxlee, 2007). However, we notice that the First International Charter on Sustainable Tourism, following the International Conference of Lanzarote in 1995, lays the foundation for subsequent guidelines.

Table 1: International heritage stakeholders and conventions, charters and guidelines (Adapted from Foxlee, 2007).

Stakeholder	Issues	Literature (Declarations, Charters, Guidelines…)	Date
International organizations for nature conservation			
International Scientic Council for Island Development	Sustainable tourism	Charter for Sustainable Tourism of Lanzarote	1995
EUROPARC Federation	Sustainable tourism	European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas	1995 1999
CBD, PNUE, UNWTO, IUCN	Biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism	Berlin Declaration on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism	1997
CBD	Biodiversity	Convention on Biological Diversity then Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism	1992 2004
IUCN WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas)	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, Guidelines for Planning and Management	2002
PNUE (United nation Environnement programme) / Conservation international	Biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism	Tourism and Biodiversity: Mapping Tourism's Global Footprint	2003
IUCN WCPA	Biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism, sharing economic benefits	Durban Action Plan and IUCN World Parks Congress Recommendations	2003
IUCN	Tourism as funding for protected areas	Tourism and Protected Areas: Benefits Beyond Boundaries	2006
IUCN	Tourism management	Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas Guidelines for Sustainability	2014 2015
International organizations for heritage			
ICOMOS	Cultural tourism, cultural landscapes	International Charter on Cultural Tourism	1999/ 2002
UNESCO	Tourism and cultural heritage	Tourism at World Heritage Cultural Sites	1999
UNESCO	World heritage, tourism management	Managing Tourism in World Heritage Sites : a Practical Guide to Stakeholders.	2001
UNESCO	World heritage, tourism management	Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites: a Practical Manual for World Heritage Site Managers.	2002
UNESCO	Cultural landscapes management	World Heritage Cultural Landscapes. A Practical Guide for Conservation and Management	2009
UNESCO	World heritage and sustainable tourism	World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Program	2012Website
International organizations for tourism			
UNWTO	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable Development of Tourism	Website
UNWTO	Tourism	Global Code of Ethics of Tourism	1999
UNWTO	Tourism and cultural heritage	Tourism at World Heritage Cultural Sites	1999
UNWTO	Sustainable developpement for tourism	Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations. A Guidebook	2004
UNWTO	Tourism congestion management	Tourism Congestion Management at Natural and Cultural Sites	2005

These texts have in common to offer guides or guidelines for a territorial policy for sustainable tourism through the establishment of planning strategy, management process, monitoring, partnerships and local governance with all stakeholders including local communities. For stakeholders directly involved into nature protected areas management, the conservation objective is recalled, especially for fragile ecosystems. In these guidelines, J. Foxlee (Foxlee, 2007) points out several items in particular: the role of research, the importance of ethics in ecotourism, the importance of sharing the tourism benefits, the needs for education and training for local stakeholders. Tourists are however included through tourist and tourism experience and heritage interpretation. Guidelines are built with lists of recommendations but also as a process to follow, step by step, to identify a set of data and questions that will lead to a better knowledge of local territories, contexts, stakeholders, issues and challenges for a greater sustainability. But, beyond the general and common principles and objectives and the their semantic differences, who is writing and producing theses guidelines (the experts) and what are their differences?

First, sustainable development for heritage sites seems to be developed quite late in international conventions devoted to heritage or nature protected areas and therefore in the guidelines. That is an important fact to notice that is one of their important key issues today. For example, the World Heritage Convention from 1972 doesn't mention it because the Rio Conference takes place 20 years later. So, in the late 1990s and during the 2000s, the challenge for international organizations is to propose new statements and to develop guidelines and tools especially designed to integrate this new concept for heritage management. This sustainability « shift » is integrated gradually step by step, depending on the emergence of news issues and challenges, according to the method of up-to-date, not in the World Heritage Convention itself for example, but in the guidelines. In the last 15 years, new issues are integrated in the global recommendations: sustainable tourism, the role of local communities in the management, governance, sustainable development for nature heritage…

Secondly, the guidelines often attempt to solve the complexity of managing sites under both regulation requirements (defined by the national law context) and international recommendations for protection and management. These two objectives usually go in the same way, but not always with the same content. For example, how can local stakeholders maintain Oustanding Universal Value (OUV) for the UNESCO when they don't have the regulation tools needed at the national scale? Or, how can they manage between opening the site to visitors to build a tourism economy when the local protection tools focus on biodiversity preservation?

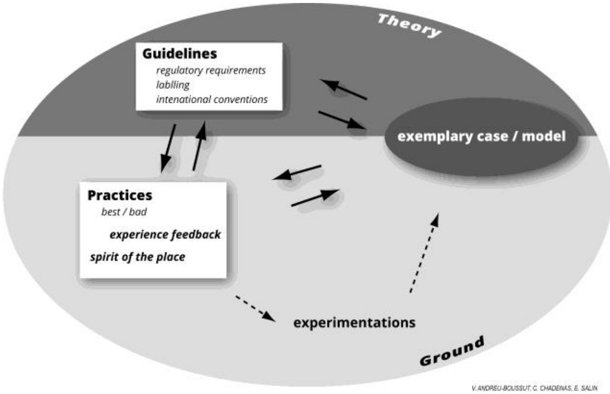

Figure 1: Between ground and theory, guidelines, practices and case models for a heritage sustainable management system.

Finally, we can understand how the heritage sustainable management system works (Figure 1). Its general characteristics are both theoretical and operational and it works basically according to an integration of real case studies into a theoretical and methodological synthesis. The guidelines are developed in order to traduce international recommendations linked to conventions or charters. If the ambition is quite theoretical, it also rely on practices (bad or good). The practices come from a collection of sites management experiences, which are integrated to the guidelines or published itself. When practices are good or best practices because they match the items and issues developed in the guidelines, they can be presented as case « models » for the international network.

- **A heritage sustainable management system based on the selection of best practices**

Considering the data collection of best practices listed by IUCN in its 2015 guidelines (Leung and al., 2015) and by UNESCO (in UNESCO 2008, UNESCO and al.,2012,) a quick geographical and thematic analysis can give key points about how the field work implement guidelines for international organizations. This best pratices inventory is presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: Synthesis of best practices according to UNESCO and IUCN (Leung et al., 2015, UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, UICN, 2012, UNESCO, 2008)

Best practice	Country	Issue
UNESCO		
Parks Canada	Canada	Involvment of local communities
Joggins Fossil Cliffs / Joggins Fossils Institute (Nova Scotia)	Canada	Heritage interpretation
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park	Australia	Management and monitoring
Serengeti National Park / The Nature Conservancy (NGO)	Tanzania	Management plan
Okapi Wildlife Reserve	Congo	Management into a conflict
Wadden Sea National Park	Germany, Denmark,	Visitors management
Banc d'Arguin National Park / Fondation internationale du Banc d'Arguin	Mauritania	Funding
Jurassic Coast	United-Kingdom	Education
Huascaran National Park / The Moutain Institute (NGO)	Peru	Involvment of local communities into
Sangay National Park	Ecuador	Buffer zone planning, get out of list of
Nanda Devi National Park	India	Visitors management for biodiversity
Ichkeul National Park	Tunisia	Scientific monitoring
Wadi El- Hitan (Valley of the Whales)	Egypt	Ecotourism, sustainable tourism
Aldabra Atoll Nature Reserve / Seychelles Islands Foundation)	Seychelles	Biodiversity management
Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)	India	Biodiversity and water management,
Sangay National Park	Ecuador	Biodiversity management, culture
Bwindi Forest National Park	Uganda	Monitoring, nature-based tourism,
IUCN		
Hong-Kong Geopark	China	Geopark
Ararine Geopark	Brazil	Geopark
Thembang Bapu Community Conserved Area	India	Community-based tourism and
Botswana	Botswana	Policy about sustainable tourism in
Volcanoes National Park	Rwanda	Benefits from mountain gorilla tourism
Richtersveld Transfrontier Park	Namibia / South Africa	Transboundary event
KwaZulu Natal province	South Africa	Funding
Parks Victoria / Medibank Australia / the Australian National Heart	Australia	Health : Healthy Parks Healthy People
Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park	Vietnam	Planning
Almaty Nature Reserve	Kazakhstan	Protected area perception for local
Namibia	Namibia	Community-based resource monitoring
Yosemite National Park	USA	Visitor use and impacts monitoring
Willmore Wilderness Park (Alberta)	Canada	Visitor monitoring
Průhonice Park	Czech Republic	Visitor experience monitoring
Grand Canyon National Park	USA	Planning and zoning
Wadi El- Hitan (Valley of the Whales)	Egypt	Protection design and visitor experience
Virunga National Park	Congo	Controlling gorilla poaching
Parks Canada	Canada	Marketing
Gunung Mulu National Park	Malaysia	WHS Communication to visitors
Parks Canada	Canada	Green building
Jiuzhaigou Valley National Park	China	GIS
Nature protected areas system	Peru	Interpretation centers
Samuel de Champlain and Mattawa River provincial parks (Ontari)o.	Canada	Visitor experience : participatory
European Charter for Sustainable Tourism / PAN Parks	Europe	Partnership in sustainable tourism
Wilderness Wildlife Trust / Wildlife Safaris	Bostwana, Namibia, Zimbabwe	Education and wildlife
Dana Biosphere Reserve / Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature /	Jordan	Management governance and ecotourism
Šargan-Mokra Gora Nature Park	Serbia	Public-private management
Ni'iinlii'Njik Protected Area (Yukon)	Canada	Governance in planning and
Tambopata National Reserve / Tambopata Research Center	Peru	Public-private alliance
Resource Africa (NGO)	South Africa	Capacity building
Kenting National Park / Shirding community (Taïwan)	China	Governance
US Forest service	USA	Partnerships for tourism management
Hustai National Park	Mongolia	Tourism funding for conservation
Damaraland Camp / the Torra Conservancy	Namibia	Sharing benefits with local community
Corbett National Park	India	Funding
Baa atoll	Maldives	Conservation project
Nature protected areas system	Montenegro	Funding of protected areas / income
Nature protected areas system / New Zealand's Department of	New-Zealand	User fees
Nature protected areas system	Peru	Tourism and adaptation to climate

Taking the example of IUCN guidelines for nature heritage sites, the authors/experts are mostly from english-speaking countries such as Canada and Australia. Australian experts are also recognized as references for best practices on tourism and local communities, as demonstrated by the success of the guide "Successful Tourism at Heritage Places, A Guide for tourism operators, heritage managers and communities" (The Australian Heritage Commission and the Department of Industry, 2001) published in 2001 and transferred in other IUCN guidelines, especially in the last issue of 2015 (Leung and al., 2015). This last important issue (269 pages) offers case studies developed and considered as "good practices", choosed often about specific items and never for their whole management. 6 major items as main objectives seem to feed especially the last guideline and its study cases : (a) to implement a multi-level and multi-stakeholders governance (with a special focus about local community participation), (b) to meet the higher requirements for protection, (c) to participate to local development, (d) to open to many visitors, to make the site well-known, (e) to implement a management plan (with strategic planning) and (f) to respect and to develop the sens of place.

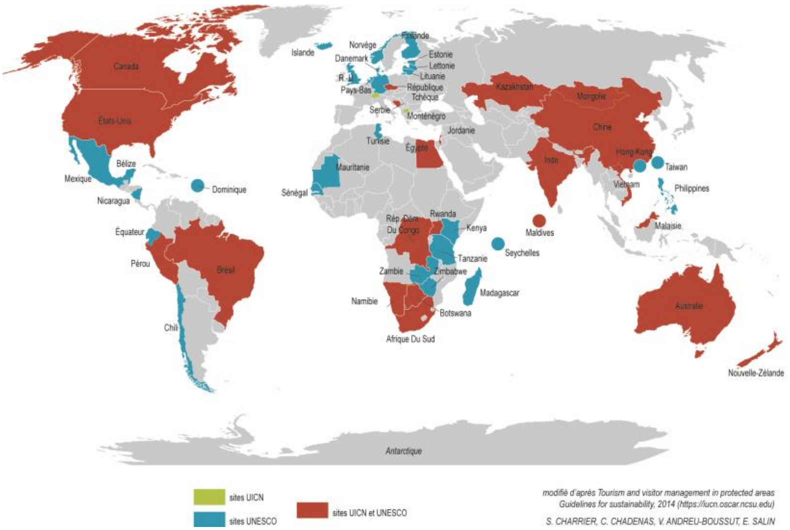

Figure 2: An international geography of best practices according to UNESCO and IUCN.

In this best pratices collection for international organizations (Table 2), we mostly meet good site management from specific places (like nature protected areas) and less often from specific stakeholders (national agencies like Parks Canada, NGOs like Africa cases) and from countries for their laws and regulation tools (like Europe for the Charter for sustainable tourism). This best practices collection list 10 major topics which are core issues for heritage sustainable management. We must first notice that 14 case studies on 39 deal with tourism. Sustainable tourism (1) and management (2) are the most important issues, for more than half of the choosed best practices. The participation of local populations (3), biodiversity conservation (4) or education (5) and capabilities (6) come next in this list. Other topics appear : visitor experience (7), visitor management (8) (for the US, Canada…), interpretation (9) (Peru) and ecotourism (10) (Jordan). The most frequently cited countries are Canada (5 times) and the US (3 times) from north countries, and South Africa (4 times), Namibia, China and Peru (3 times each) from south countries.

- **Emerging models for sustainable tourism?**

Sustainable tourism has contributed to renew deeply heritage management guidelines for international organizations and has often been proposed as an alternative to mass tourism. UNESCO emphasizes also the quality value of cultural tourism which would give priority to active transportation, typical local products rather than standardized products without any links to the heritage site (qualified as bad products), local arts and crafts and interpretive centers. Tourism is seen as a source of funding for the sites, contributing to their maintenance and management or as an added value (e.g. farmers living within the site perimeter or in its surroundings). For UNESCO, the site's inhabitants are also heritage protection’s ambassadors. The financial benefits are either direct (when the developer is also the site manager) and indirect, when recovered by the private sector (hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, shops…) or the public sector (taxes or various fees…). According to UNESCO, the polluter pays principle should be generalized, although it’s impossible sometimes to make visitors pay an entrance fee. In the guidelines, asking fees for pedestrians is still controversial, and the solution of asking payment only for car-parks or motorized access seems to be less conflictual (UNESCO, 2016, http://whc.unesco.org/fr/tourisme/). UNESCO also emphasizes the need to preserve specific areas or places, sometimes with temporary measures. The involvement of local communities (also named host communities) is recalled as essential in all the guidelines presented above. The visitor experience is also highlighted, through "authenticity" and negative impacts are highlighted through folklore.

UNWTO also offers a guide to sustainable tourism in a broader context with models or best pratices that can be applied to different types of tourist destinations (UNWTO 2004). The contributors guide come from very different countries with a good representation of Canada and Australia (11 from Canada and 10 from the US within the 60 authors - UNWTO 2004). The guideline clearly use the UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN guidelines for nature protected areas and World Heritage Sites. Even if the guideline is more focused on economic efficiency, it does not exclude the specialized organizations issues.

In all the different guidelines, it is easy to root the same general principles and examples of best practices not proposed as "recipes cookbook" that managers could apply indiscriminately and without regard to local context (culture, landscape, crafts…). This literature gives tools to better understand the heritage sites complex issues, in order to better protect them. Different contexts effects will be developed next part to discuss international guidelines principles versus field or ground heritage stakeholders reality.

2. Guidelines in the field: when stakeholders have to face sustainable management

Now it is important to show how heritage site managers use this global management system, which provides them with broad guidelines and a framework, through the prism of the reality on the ground. Depending management habits, past experiences and tourist flows, situations appear very varied and contrasting. Driven by international guidelines but also by the desire of many countries to go to these solutions, three themes are particularly worth investigated: sites governance, visitor impacts management and making profit from tourism.

- **Looking for a « good » heritage governance: wishfull thinkings and important improvements**
    - The heritage governance: a challenge under regulatory integration

The integration of local communities in all stages from the label to the site management is one of the five strategic objectives of the World Heritage Convention since Budapest Declaration in 2002. The convergence with other declarations and conventions is obvious, especially with the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. The emergence of the concept of governance goes with the growing recognition of the role of local people in the management of these territories which are becoming project territories. Sometimes, this injunction towards a good governance evolves into a normative framework. In Quebec, the creation of the first marine park in the Saguenay-Saint-Laurent in 1998 provided an opportunity to fix in the law the principle of a broad territorial governance. This is based on the committees that coordinate participatory management. They ensure the coordination of co-management between the federal government and the Quebec government. Then a coordination committee meets 9 local actors to monitor the implementation of the management plan: 4 representatives of local authorities, a representative of the Innu First Nation of Essipit, a representative of the scientific community, a representative from interpretation and education sector, a Parks Canada representative and a representative of the Quebec government. The 23 national parks in Quebec are now equipped with this organization.

In France, despite regular criticism about the centralizing state, a local governance culture has settled since the late 1970s, particularly in the context of the creation of regional parks and of the Conservatoire du Littoral. Since the first decree created in 1967, the regional nature parks have been remarkably successful to affect almost 15% of the country, mostly because protection projects are regional projects which emerge from a broad local consultation and which are the subject of contracts with the state and not a regulation. For its part, the Conservatoire du Littoral develops a dual approach to governance because its land acquisition and pre-emptive schemes are negotiated in advance with local officials, but also because the management of acquired sites is always given to a local stakeholder who is the most competent and legitimate (local authorities, nature protection associations, farmers...).

- Governance in the heritage making: the glaring gaps

In the implementation of conservation projects, the gaps are important between local and national scale projects and international scale projects. In the context of labeling applications under UNESCO, it is explicitly asked to the candidates sites that the demanding label process should be done within a local governance framework. The example of Quebrada de Humahuaca in the northwest Argentina, classified as a cultural landscape in 2013, is interesting because it is a model of good governance and involvment of local communities for UNESCO. During the application process, specific commissions were set up in each of the 9 villages of the valley. People were then invited to participate in defining approaches of heritage issues in their territories through participatory workshops and debates. This example illustrates the "bottom-up" valued by international institutions.

At a national level, situations can be extremely different. In a majority of territories, socio-political contexts and regulations that contribute to conservation projects are supported by a majority of local stakeholders or at least need local stakeholders to be consulted. For example, Quebec National Parks creation projects are accompanied by public consultations which can last several years, and which also occur if the management plans must be renewed. In contrast, in Cameroon, even the recent creations of protected areas have not been the subject of any consultation. This is the case of Campo Ma'an National Park, established in 2000 on nearly 265,000 ha on the southern border with Equatorial Guinea. The non-participation is explained by the fact that the creation of the National Park came to compensate at the nationale scale the development of a pipeline crossing the country from east to west.

- Governance in the management process: conflict prevention and legitimacy

As part of the management, governance injunction is widely taken up, because a majority of protected areas has an expanded management committee beyond the initial one manager. The problem is mainly related to the performance and operation of the management board. If the Campo Ma'an National Park in Cameroon has a management committee which meets approximately once a year, it is limited to representatives of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and administrative authorities. In this organization, the involvement of municipal authorities and representatives of the industrial sector is a concession. Instead, the floor of the Management Committee of the Giants in Northern Ireland is a wide consultation stage (a steering group) where sit the manager (National Trust), the institutional actors of the environment (the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the environmental government agency), a representative of the community, the public actors of tourism and development, representatives of landowners (the Crown Estate and a private owner) and two scientists. The secretariat is provided by the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. Broader and more inclusive, it also meets more often, several times a year, allowing for an ongoing discussion process to prevent possible conflicts between opposing views on the protected area. In France, the manager of the Baie de Somme national nature reserve (The Syndicat mixte Baie de Somme) tries to avoid conflicts between different functions and uses of nature (birdwatching or nature watching, horse riding, sailing, kite surfing, canoeing, kayaking...) and to limit disturbance for birds. So he went to set up a Charter of good practices for the outdoor activities et nature sports who have discussed and signed. Setting up for the first time in 2009, it was updated in 2013 following the request of users.

- Governance induced by tourism: inhabitants, tourists and tourist operators

Local governance is a central issue for a majority of international guidelines. Some of them specifically address tourism governance, often as a result of a whole good local governance or as a required context for any further sustainable tourism development (especially for ecotourism projects). In the case of the Saguenay-Saint-Laurent Marine Park, the governance culture built since the 1990s in the heritage development process greatly facilitates the coordination tables set up to collectively define the regulation on offshore activities within the perimeter. First regulation of this kind in Canada and Quebec, it is the result of discussions initiated mainly with communities, tourism operators (cruise organizers of whale watching...) and sport stakeholders (kayak rental companies...) and helped to limit disturbance of marine mammals by all the tourist uses (observation, kayaking, sailing...) since 2002. In 2012, this consultation takes over and leads to a revision of the Regulation and to new advances: the establishment of a training and certification for tourism operators, the setting of a maximum number of boats in an observation area, a limited speed authorized in the mouth of the Saguenay...

In case of an absence of real governance means, ecotourism projects development can provide an opportunity for building links between nature managers, local people and tourism stakeholders. In the Campo Ma'an National Park in Cameroon, despite a management committee closed to residents and tourism professionals, an ecotourism development project in the central area covered by the new 2015 management plan tends to bring the manager back to local people, private sector and NGOs. In fact, three community initiatives around the Park and supported by the WWF since 2000 (the Kudu project about sea turtles in Ebodjé and two eco-tourist villages in Campo Beach and Nkoélon-Mvini) provide an example the Park's managers intend to follow well.

- **Mitigating tourism impacts on heritage**
  - Carrying capacity: a unusual tool for heritage stakeholders?

The search for a balance between heritage conservation and opening to the public is a strong issue for the sustainable management system whose implementation has long been done via the concept of carrying capacity. If this concept still important to managers, including ecologists, it has often been criticized for its excessive subjectivity (Deprest, 1997 Lazzarotti, 2012). In the early 2000s, UNESCO also change its approach by putting forward the concept of "limits of acceptable change", a much more dynamic approach between preservation objectives and tourist satisfaction. Otherwise, guidelines theoretical approaches are not really operational. Finally, a few sites actually put in place a carrying capacity and rarely showing it. Generally, carrying capacity is implemented in the most protected and regulated areas (Integral Reserves National for Parks, Nature Reserves ...) where thinking about visitors thresholds is the most usual and in countries where nature’s cultural approach enables temporary or permanent closure of all or part of the protected area (e. g. the Netherlands). An early example is provided by the Pacific Rim National Reserve where the Western Canada Wilderness Comittee evaluated in the 1980s a carrying capacity of 7800 persons/year in order to ensure backpackers comfort (Stoltmann and al. , 1992). When in the 1990s the annual number of visitors exceeds 9000 persons/year, the reserve set up a reservation center (with limited places) and trekking permits. This carrying capacity matched also with the need to ensure a tight control of security for a dangerous path. In other cases, the manager does not put forward a formal carrying capacity but do choices about parking sizes, which is indirectly a carrying capacity, with a special focus on motorized visitors (e. g. Pointe Raz in France). In most sites, managers don’t want to reach the concrete implementation of a carrying capacity, but it can be usual to close or preserve portions of space for fragility reasons or temporarily to achieve ecological restoration.

  - A large range of visitor management techniques: between concentration and bursting flux

Heritage stakholders’ work is far from being a simple choice of opening or closing spaces. It's more of a visitors flux management looking for a balance between minimizing ecological impacts caused by visitors (disturbance of animals, trampling...) and maintaining the quality of the visitor experience (waiting time, crowd feeling...). The solutions are numerous and can change over time depending on the successes and failures and depending on the evolution of visitors flux and their impacts. Widely disseminated by the guidelines of UNESCO or IUCN, these techniques oscillate between concentration and bursting flux both in space and time. The most usual solutions are probably those regarding concentration and channeling visiting flows in specific places and courses which allow to move off the impacts from the most vulnerable areas to special places where management efforts can be focused. Channeling and marking trails has become a common tool for many sites (Canada, France...) and technical solutions for trail management are numerous from thinking about coating to defining the width of pathways… The honey pots method, which consists of concentrating the public on some emblematic places or interpretive centers (at the entrance or exit of the site, sometimes both), has widely been used by the US National Parks Service (Depraz , 2008) and the English National Parks (including the Lake District National Park).

At the opposite, bursting the visitor flows is often mentioned but its results seem more uncertain. In the most visited sites (Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, Pointe du Raz in France ...), managers make a special effort to expand the space to visit beyond the iconic landmark and to distribute the flow on a larger space with various means (communication with visitors, new pathways development...), providing other sites to visit. For the Giant's Causeway, the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust is developing a communication and development project to disperse the flow on nearby other coastal sites: Dunluce Castle, Mussenden Temple, Carrick-a-Rede and Glens… Spreading the flow can also be done in visiting time. If it is difficult for managers to intervene on the specific time of the visit which largely depends on school holidays or seasonal climate, they may however try to spread visits during all the day. In addition to the night events strategy, the National Trust has recently conducted a communication campaign among visitors of the Giant's Causeway to encourage them to come in the morning or later at night arguing for a more qualitative visitor experience (quality of light at the morning or at the sunset, feeling of freedom ...).

- Preserving the sense of place?

The "sense of place" is a concept recognized by UNESCO and ICOMOS, at their core value of heritage places in reference to the geniuses, both guards and expressions of antiquity places. The 2008 Quebec Declaration on "Safeguarding the spirit of place" at the 16th General Assembly and International Scientific Symposium of ICOMOS recalls previous measures (Icomos symposium and 2003 Kimberley Declaration) to recognize the caracteristics of "living, social and spiritual" places through the "beliefs, memories, affiliations and expertise" of local communities.

The intangible dimension of heritage is central to the spirit of place definition which "consists of hardware (sites, landscapes, buildings, objects) and intangible (memoirs, oral, written narrative documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, odors) physical and spiritual, that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place "(Prats and Thibault, 2003). These elements are significant and contribute to give a specific spirit to places : "the spirit builds the place and at the same time, the place structures and invests the spirit" (Prats and Thibault, 2003). The sense of place seems obvious where communities are most likely to grab it and to hand over it to visitors. Heritage sites stakeholders (managers, communities, young people, tourism professionnals…) are deeply asked by professionnal or international organizations to make the sense of place visible and understandable for visitors. In France, heritage site management professionnals are clearly facing this issue. Defined as "an atmosphere (...), symbolic images, intended or felt (...), a complex alchemy, (...) fed by literary and artistic references", sense of place is discussed through the tension between preservation and tourism by ICOMOS France (Prats and Thibault, 2003), the Grands Sites de France network (Vour'ch, 1999) and the ministries of Culture and Ecology. For these experts, sense of place is "the tangible and intangible identity of the place, taken into an evolutionary dimension, who enables to define the carrying capacity and the quality of site management » (Prats and Thibault, 2003). In 1999, the Grands Sites de France professionnal network organized a special conference devoted to sense of the place (Vour'ch 1999) where heritage stakeholders defined sense of place for their sites : spirit of freedom, of legends or devotion (for the Pointe du Raz), retreat and renewal (for Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert), end of the world (for Cirque du fer à cheval)… To go forward, the example of the Mont Saint Michel shows that stakeholders can also implement sense of place with huge management project. During more than a decade, the Opération Grand Site of Mont Saint-Michel gave back the mount to the sea, reconquering the lost island to be in harmony with its sense of place.

The sense of the place is becoming an important part of heritage management. It appears more and more as a way to respect the identity of places, to integrate local reality in the site management, while applying heritage sustainable management.

- **Making profit with tourism: success and deadends**

Even if the issue of heritage profit is quite central for international guiadelines, through tourism development and more recently through ecosystem services, it is far from being obvious to all stakeholders. In some specific contexts, visitors are quite accustomed to finance conservation service by paying admission fees like in american and canadian National Parks or like in Brittany for National Trust sites (where membership is also common). In Quebec, the state company (named Société des établissements de plein air du Québec, SEPAQ), which is responsible for managing National Parks and wildlife reserves, has defined 5 main guidelines for 2012-2017 (SEPAQ, 2012). If the first orientation is to ensure the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, the second and fourth guidelines aim to contribute to sustainable development of nature tourism and generate new income. In Europe and especially in France, site managers (but also institutional stakeholders) often make this issue a philosophical and ethical dilemna because nature is supposed to be free for all visitors and people. Maintaining the free access to nature areas is sometimes a key issue that these stakeholders focus on as a protection argument (like Conservatoire du Littoral). Nevertheless, stakeholders are increasingly driven to find new income because they need money for management or because it is a good way to justify protection tools and to maintain heritage values.

- When nature heritage can be become tourist destination

The international guidelines give guidance for visitors management and for destination management. Usually the scale of heritage site (classified and management perimeter, buffer zone…) does not match the scale of the territory considered as a tourist destination and must be extended to a wider area. The tourist destination also refers to a dreamt destination by visitors and is organized as a support for a coherent multidimensional experience (Gravari-Barbas, Jacquot, 2014).

For the different heritage sites, making a tourism economy depends both on their location from where visitors come from (tourists and excursionists) and on their reputation, which can offset the problem of distance. This question is a deeply cultural issue that can be amplified by a national or international recognition as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland or the Pointe du Raz in France are both heritage sites visited for over a century, defined as cultural icons in literature and arts. Their reputation is largely international today. For Giant’s Causeway, the classification under UNESCO complete the local process of heritage making but is clearly not responsible for its visitors attractivity. Common knowledge about heritage sites may also change quickly. Many sites of the Antrim coast where is located the Giant’s Causeway are thus recently becoming places to visit since their media coverage in the first season of Game of Thrones series produced by HBO: Mussenden Temple, Dunluce Castle, Dark Hedges, Ballintoy Harbour and landscapes in the Glens... On the contrary, if the polder of Grand Pré (Nova Scotia in Canada) which is the Mecca of Acadian history, became gradually a landmark since the nineteenth century, its visitors has recently dropped dramatically, from 65,115 visitors in 1998 to 28,516 in 2008 (George, 2013). The classification of the site as a World Heritage Site (as a cultural landscape) by UNESCO in 2012 appears as an attempt to stop the decline for the two co-managers that are Parks Canada and the Landscape of Grand Pré Company.

Heritage sites reality shows a highly variable spectrum of contexts of welcoming visitors capacities. When a site combines good location and reputation, it is clear that visitors are important. Near Paris, Fontainebleau forest welcomes more than 3 million visitors a year (Lahaye, 2015) on a vast area of almost 25,000 hectares and, near Bordeaux, the Dune du Pilat also welcomed 3,378,000 visitors in 2014 (Conservatoire du Littoral, 2015). In many cases, the notoriety does not compensate entirely proximity and good location. The little known Villepey ponds benefits from its proximity to Frejus and its location on the French Riviera and can earn 1.35 million visitors in 2014 (Conservatoire du Littoral, 2015), and the famous Pointe du Raz located in the peripheral west of France reaches only 900,000 visitors in 2015. The situation is similar for US National Parks: the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the Appalachian Mountains, near the population centers of the east coast, is the most visited with 9.5 million visitors in 2010 while attending the famous western National Parks is below (4.4 million visitors to the Grand Canyon Park, 3.7 million visitors to Yosemite Park and 3.3 million visitors to Yellowstone Park) (Andreu-Boussut, 2012). At the end of this spectrum of contexts, without any fame or good location, visitors fall completely, making tourism development really difficult. This is the case of Campo Ma'an National Park, which has hosted a hundred visitors in 2014.

Even if the park is located on the most touristic coast of Cameroon, it accumulates handicaps: difficult access by tracks, high entrance fees for both local or international standards, lack of awareness...

- Can every visitor be converted into money?

Finally, hosting visitors is not always equivalent of making economic benefits. Beyond measuring the economic impact of visitors (who is also an important methodological issue), the question is to define the scale and the space who is receiving the economic benefits because it can be the heritage site itself or a large territory where the heritage site is included. In France, a large part of site managers may consider it sufficient if the site visitors can spend money in the territory for services, overnight stays, meals or shopping in trade. And the heritage site can participate very strongly to produce these economic impacts, particularly when private or voluntary services of tourist guide or sports use the site as a practice space, or where agricultural activities are developed on the site in partnership with local farmers. In Quebec, the SEPAQ which is the company manager of National Parks estimate that each visitor spends an average of 60.72 Canadian dollar per day in the territory (SEPAQ, 2015). But this is direct or indirect benefits which don’t affect the financial management of the heritage site itself even if it can justify protection.

More interesting are the solutions and attempts to produce direct economic impacts on the sites. These essentially borrow two separate paths but which can be complementary: developing services provided to visitors in exchange of a paiement by the manager himself (guided tour, secured parking service, shuttle service, heritage interpretation,...) or taking enter fees. In France where visitors are not accustomed to pay their access ta nature heritage sites, managers who are looking for self-financing prefer to choose the first path. A the Pointe du Raz, visitors don’t have to pay for their entrance, but visitors wishing to use the car park must pay 6 euros in the site pay-out exit, which supplies most of the annual budget of the Syndicat mixte who is the manager (620 000 euros). In the Baie de Somme, the National Nature Reserve of 3421 hectares is free for visitors except for the 200 hectares of Marquenterre park. The entry fee is 10.5 euros for adults and 7.90 euros for a child and is justified by guide services in observatories along the route. Visited by about 170,000 people a year, the annual sales at the Marquenterre emerges therefore as quite comfortable. In Quebec, the National Parks opted for the two tools so that the company manager, SEPAQ, has significant commercial revenue (92.7 million Canadian dollars for fiscal year 2011-2012) generated by the 23 National Parks both by the entrance fees (adults are the only ones having to pay 8.5 Canadian dollars per day) and the services provided (campsite, chalet accommodation ...).

Conclusion

It is quite tough to compare global standardization to local issues, as the analysis has to face both the international professional literature making and the awareness of local natural sites management. The results of this kind of research depends also on the choice of the investigated sites which can deeply influence the results. To avoid this issue, the best way was to choose various natural sites in very different local contexts (with different heritage statuses and protection tools, different socio-economic levels of development…). The results are not only to show how far some natural sites can be from international standards and objectives but also to notice the items the most usually focused, debated and challenged in local cases: funding and finding new incomes, implementing a carrying capacity, trying to find tools for governance…

It is obvious that this research could go further on this subject, this paper is a first step. Two aspects should need further investigations and analysis. The first one should be to give more detailed analysis of the international guidelines contents and how these guidelines enrich each others using sometimes the same experts and the same best practices. An important issue is also to root the making of best practices as models and how these cases succeed to reach international recognition (actually the links between local cases/experts/theory and guidelines). The second aspect should be to investigate precisely how the local stakeholders deal with international standards and use all the professionnal literature which is produced for them. This specific item seems to rely deeply on the natural site heritage status (international status like WHS versus national one), on the level of pressure put on the site ecological integrity, and on the involvment of the local stakeholder into professionnal networks.

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