

## UNESCO TO BLAME Reality or Easy Escape?

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### Abstract

*“UNESCO to blame” is a trend often observed in scholarly works. In those studies UNESCO is accused to privilege Eurocentric standards on heritage conservation. Is this reality or an easy escape? Can this trend be noted in other UNESCO reference texts? This article seeks to answer this question by studying the two main inscription-based conventions and their contribution to heritage management, while performing a data analysis on the countries behind these conventions, and their roles over time. The 1972 World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage are, therefore, taken as case studies. Based on the results, this paper elaborates on a critical analysis, distinguishing what UNESCO, as well as, Europe can eventually be blamed for and what may be used by the countries as an easy escape. This paper ends setting a research agenda to raise awareness and generate factual knowledge on the role of supranational governance in setting standards in global ethics, in particular, to guideline heritage conservation.*

**Keywords:** UNESCO; supranational governance; conventions; world heritage; intangible heritage

### INTRODUCTION

UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), considered the "intellectual" agency of the United Nations (UNESCO, 2015a), was created in 1945, to endorse the belief of nation states, urged by two world wars within one generation, where political and economic agreements are insufficient to build a lasting peace. Instead, the promotion of peace, social justice and human dignity requires humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity (Valderrama, 1995; Stoczkowski, 2009; Singh, 2011). UNESCO soon became the formal infrastructure to enable international aid, collaboration and the establishment of standards in global ethics (Meskell, 2012; Von Droste, 2012; Cameron and Rössler, 2014), covering a variety of fields such as education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, heritage, and communication and information.

Four decades later, much seems to have changed in the UNESCO arena (Cameron, 2009; Rao, 2010; Jokilehto, 2011; Albert, 2012). Subsequent generations are considered to be meddling with global ethics, when lobbying for internal political and economic agreements, even while in the UNESCO arena (Pavone 2008; Hoggart 2011; Meskell, 2011; 2012; 2013). The very same agreements UNESCO was once created, to mediate and detach from standards in global ethics. UNESCO audits recently confirmed the escalating politicization of the decision-making process around key UNESCO Conventions (UNESCO, 2011a; 2011b; Siim, 2011).

First of all, some politicization can indeed be found within the processes of UNESCO itself. Recent research confirms a correlation between the countries representing the World Heritage Committee and the location of properties being nominated (UNESCO, 2011a-b; Meskell, 2013). There is also an increasing trend towards the divergence between the official advisory body (International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)) recommendations with regard to property nominations and the

subsequent adopted decisions by the World Heritage Committee (Meskell, 2013). Accordingly, this divergence is argued on the grounds of a decrease of heritage expertise, whether archaeology or ecology, within the delegations themselves.

“UNESCO to blame” is a trend often observed in scholarly work. Whenever countries apply UNESCO standards, UNESCO is said to be imposing their standards to national and subnational communities. If supranational policies are not implemented, UNESCO standards are considered unsuitable. Thus, no matter what, UNESCO is to blame. Particularly, UNESCO is often linked to the Eurocentric perspective of heritage conservation (Willems, 2014). The role of Europe in the globalization of heritage conservation is widely being discussed in academia (Pickard, 2001; During, 2010). European approaches are compared to other world regions (Labadi, 2013; Cremer and Mors, 2013), as Asia (e.g. Taylor, 2009; Nagaoka, 2015), as well as, within European regions, as Southern Europe (e.g. Sajeva, 2006; Agnoletti, 2014). However, such comparative analyses tend to focus on the differences and incompatibilities, rather than on sameness or complementarity (De Cillia et al., 1999). The Eurocentric perspective of heritage conservation is often criticised as being too narrow-minded, material and museological (e.g. Smith, 2006; Byrne, 2008; Smith, 2012; Nagaoka, 2015). It is often assumed that European countries impose “authorized discourses” globally, especially via supranational settings such as CoE and UNESCO. The opposite though, the influence of specific countries in supranational standards, is largely understudied. It is also often overlooked that, a supranational setting is, in fact, no less than a group of countries and their representatives, with own agendas and discourses of heritage conservation. Thus, rather than generalizing Europe as influential, it is most worthwhile to raise understanding to the role of specific countries, inside and outside Europe.

It is argued that each region has its own historical and philosophical perspectives towards authenticity, spirituality and historical significance, and that cultural-specific ways of reading or valuing cultural heritage should be recognized (Winter, 2014). However, this argument is set forward based on case studies with limited scope. Most studies focus on single governmental levels, short time periods, single locations and/or disciplines, while making global claims. Their data and knowledge tend to be restricted to the research team and archived in either analog or unlinked online repositories, which disables comparative analyses. We question the reliability of such assumptions, without comparative studies and global analyses. Instead, we plea for a research agenda aiming to raise awareness and advance on generating factual knowledge on the role of supranational governance in setting standards in heritage conservation.

Already three decades ago, The New York Times published an article by John E. Fobes (Fobes, 1981), titled “Is UNESCO to blame?” Accordingly, UNESCO was considered as the scapegoat for America's failures “to awake to the development and challenges of the free flow of information in the world, locally and internationally, and of our failure to develop an effective response”. So, we wonder if the trend to blame UNESCO is in fact reality or simply an easy escape? Are countries using UNESCO as scapegoat, to veil the unbalances between national and subnational governance? Is this trend also affecting other UNESCO reference texts than the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention? When did UNESCO become target of political and economic agreements? How influential are European countries over time?

This paper starts revealing the role of the countries behind UNESCO, departing from a generalizing criticism to the European approach, based on global data and statistical evidence. The two main inscription-based conventions and their contribution to heritage conservation are studied, while performing a data analysis on the countries behind these texts, and their roles over time. The 1972 World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage are, taken as case study. Based on the results, this paper elaborates on a critical analysis, distinguishing what UNESCO, as well as Europe, can eventually be blamed for and what may be used by the countries as an easy escape.

## METHODOLOGY

To help reducing the gap between countries, UNESCO adopted an Open Access Policy. UNESCO provides free access to scientific information and unrestricted use of electronic data. This research makes use of this data, particularly:

- UNESCO - Member states (UNESCO, 2015b)
- 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention – States Parties (UNESCO, 2015c)
- 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention – States Parties (UNESCO, 2015d)
- 2014 UNESCO Official World Heritage List Statistics (UNESCO, 2014)
- 2015 States Parties and mandates to the Committee (UNESCO, 2015e)

This research applied quantitative methods of data analyses to structure sets of data, primarily available in html format. A systematic empirical investigation was realized via numerical data and semi-automated techniques, in order to reduce rhetorical assumptions. The data is used to reveal the differences and similarities between UNESCO countries and regions, throughout time. Countries were categorized within the five UNESCO regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America. Three data analyses were performed with the data previously listed. These analyses will be detailed on the following three sections:

- 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention (WHC): this data analysis will allow the visualization of the year of adoption, by the countries, per UNESCO region, and per UN European regions, throughout the years (UNESCO, 1972)
- 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (IHC): this data analysis will allow the visualization of the year of adoption, by the countries, per UNESCO region, and per UN European regions, throughout the years (UNESCO, 2003)
- Comparative analysis between WHC and IHC: this analysis will allow the comparison between adoption rate, by the countries, per UNESCO region and per UN European region, during the first decade of adoption after those conventions have been published.

Specifically, these data analyses are expected to feed factual knowledge into the discussion around the following three assumptions:

- The Eurocentrism of UNESCO Conventions over time, by comparing the role of European countries with the other countries, while adopting, listing World Heritage properties, and joining the World Heritage Committee, and
- The raise of politicization of UNESCO Conventions over time, by comparing the ratio of countries nominating properties in their territories, while in mandate, i.e., as members of World Heritage Committee
- The difference in results between UNESCO Conventions, being the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention far more Eurocentric and politicized than the 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention

## DATA ANALYSIS

Since 1948, UNESCO has published 74 reference texts: conventions (29), recommendations (32) and declarations (13). Conventions are supranational policies, setting standards primarily by experts in representation of UNESCO Member States, eventually, in cooperation with other international organizations, which sign or agree to endorse the convention, being these added to the list of state parties. Instead, recommendations and declarations are adopted during the General Conference of UNESCO, without lists of state parties (UNESCO, 2015f). Figure 1 shows

the publication of UNESCO reference texts over time, and the total overview of reference texts, according to the categories already mentioned.

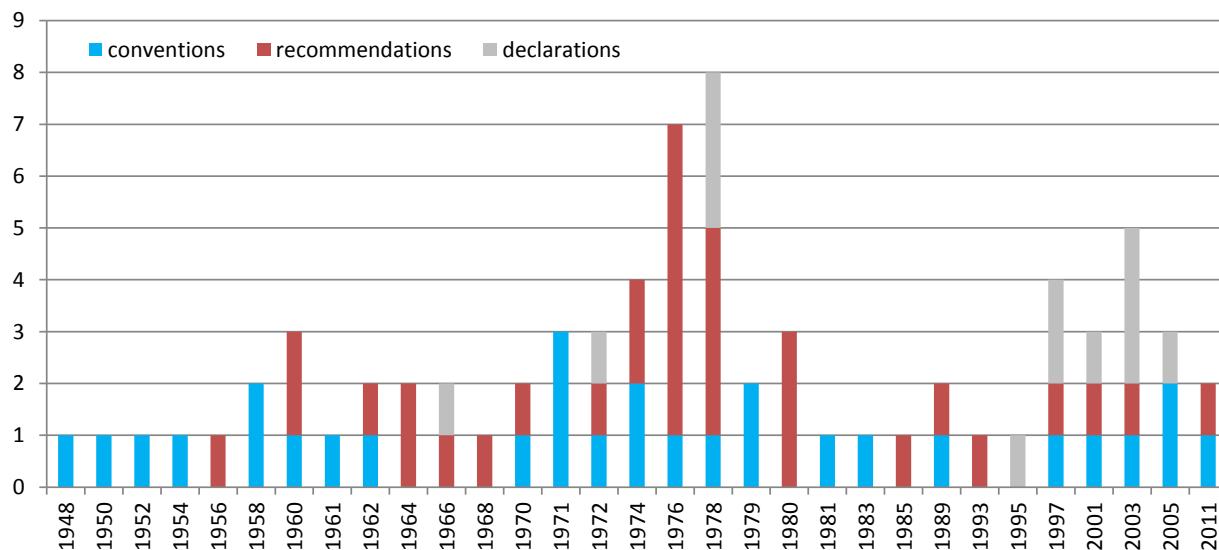


Figure 1. The publication of UNESCO reference texts, over time (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

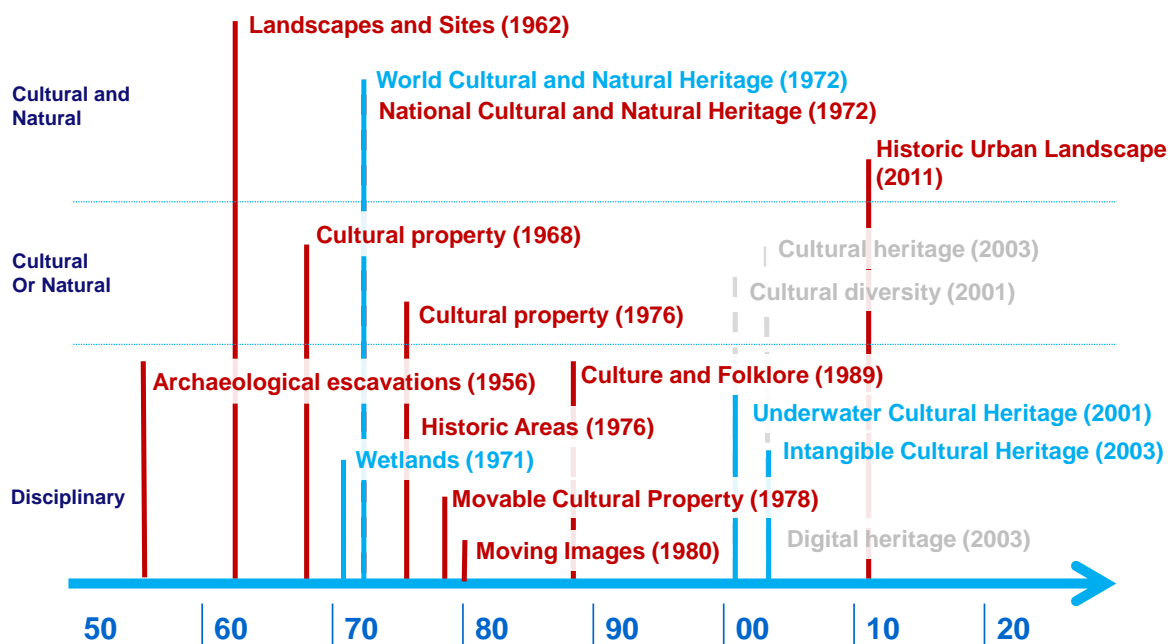


Figure 2. An illustration of reference texts, according to category and focus (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

The publication of UNESCO reference texts is not cyclical and has no yearly limitation. It ranges from one reference text (e.g. 1948) to eight reference texts (1978). There are two periods with an influx of reference texts published. Those are respectively, the periods between 1971-1980 and 1997-2005. UNESCO has developed few specific reference texts of relevance to culture, but there are many more reference texts endorsing standards in global ethics, to guideline heritage conservation.

Figure 2 illustrates a classification of these reference texts, according to their focus: disciplinary, cultural and/or natural. They reveal a predominance of disciplinary reference texts as the 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention (addressing a sub-category of cultural heritage properties), as well as, highlights the innovative aspect of 1972 World Heritage Convention, which still today remains the only convention, and one of the few reference texts, addressing nature and culture sciences together. Though, the conventions studied in this paper do have one thing in common: they are both inscription-based conventions. Next sections follow the results of their comparative analyses.

### The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention

The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention (WHC) is also known as the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. An innovative convention, joining natural and cultural conservation under the same standards of global ethics. Even if aiming at heritage conservation worldwide, independent from its category, the WHC is most famous for the World Heritage List, including today 1007 properties with 161 States Parties. The World Heritage List includes 779 cultural, 197 natural and 31 mixed properties (UNESCO, 2014). It is important to state that from a total of 195 countries members of UNESCO, 190- excluding Holy See (not included in the UNESCO countries) - have ratified the WHC, thus, 98% from the total of countries. Thus, not only does this convention foster the protection of heritage of outstanding universal value. The convention itself is almost becoming of outstanding universal value.

The first analysis, illustrated on Figure 3, shows a graph with the cumulative percentages of countries, grouped by UNESCO regions, which have adopted the WHC throughout the years. It shows that the Arab States were the first to reach 100% of adoption, followed by Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Instead, the two UNESCO regions, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific, have not yet reached 100% of adoption rate. In contrast, some countries did not yet ratify the WHC, namely: Somalia, South Sudan, Timor Leste, Tuvalu and Nauru.

Figure 4 details the process of adoption through the four decades after the WHC convention. The first decade (1973-1983) is led by the Arab States (82%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (52%), Africa (40%), Europe and North America (36%), and Asia and the Pacific (17%). During the second decade (1984-1993), both Europe and North America (80%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (79%) got closer to the Arab States (94%), as opposed to Asia (52%) and the Pacific to Africa (59%). The third decade (1994-2003) is notable for the total adoption of Arab States countries, only reached a decade later by Europe and North America and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The first country ratifying the convention was United States of America in 1973, followed by nine pioneer countries in 1974. They were respectively, four Arab States countries (Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and Algeria), three African countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Niger), one European country (Bulgaria) and one country in Asia and the Pacific (Australia).

Europe and North America is indeed the UNESCO region with more countries (50) represented in the WHC. Though, this region is closely followed by the regions Africa and Asia and the Pacific, each represented by 45 countries. Latin America and the Caribbean include 33 countries. Arab States is the smaller region, including 17 countries. When comparing the number of countries in Europe and North America with the total number of other countries adhered to the WHC it can be concluded that countries in Europe and North America have never been in majority. Instead, they ranged from 25% (1974) to 44% (1976; 1996; 1997). In average, Europe and North America countries are fairly higher than 1/3 of the total countries.

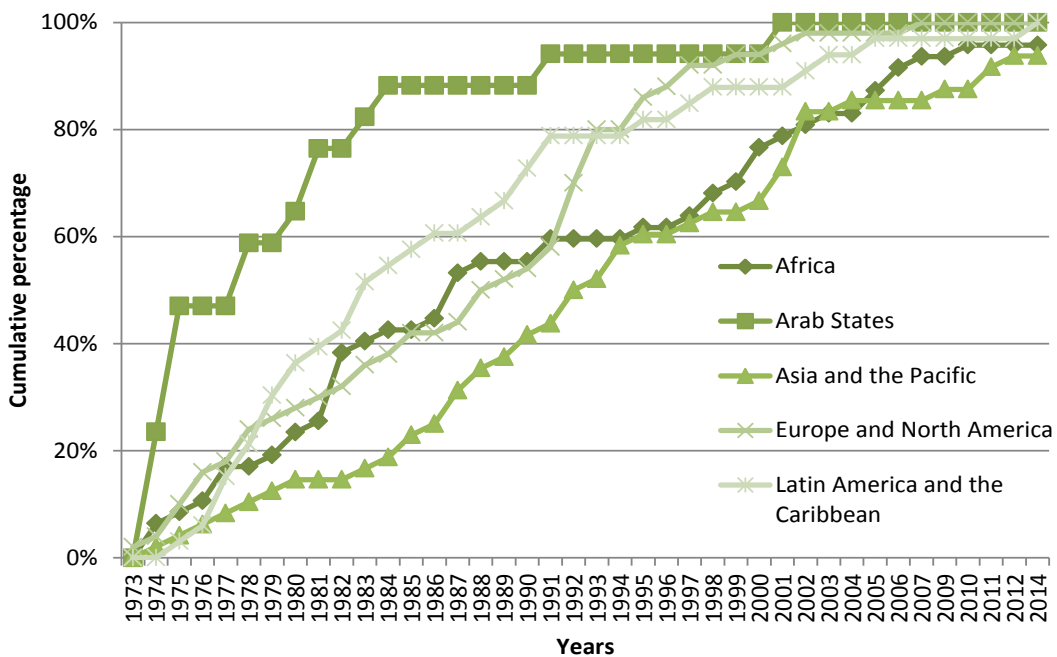


Figure 3. The ratification of the WHC, per UNESCO region, over time (Source: UNESCO, 2015c).

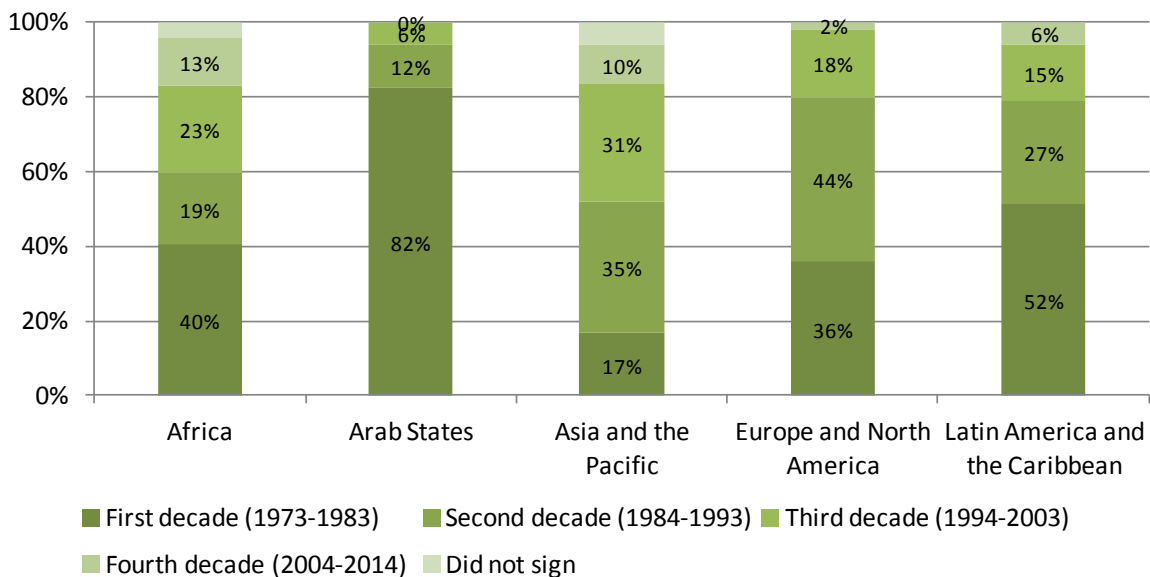


Figure 4. The ratification of the WHC, per UNESCO region (Source: UNESCO, 2015c).

Focusing on the outcomes of the WHC in relation to the UN European countries (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#europe>), Figure 5 shows that the Northern European countries were the first to reach 100% of adoption rate, in 1995, while the Western European countries did it one year later, in 1996. Figure 6 details the process of adoption in four decades. The first decade (1973-1983) is led by Western Europe (63%), followed by Southern Europe (36%), and equalled by Northern and Eastern Europe (20%). During the second decade (1984-1993), Eastern slightly (90%) overpasses Western Europe (88%) and

Northern Europe (70%) is nearly matching Southern Europe (71%). This last, is the only region being totalized in the fourth and last decade. All other three regions reach their total number during the third decade (1994-2003).

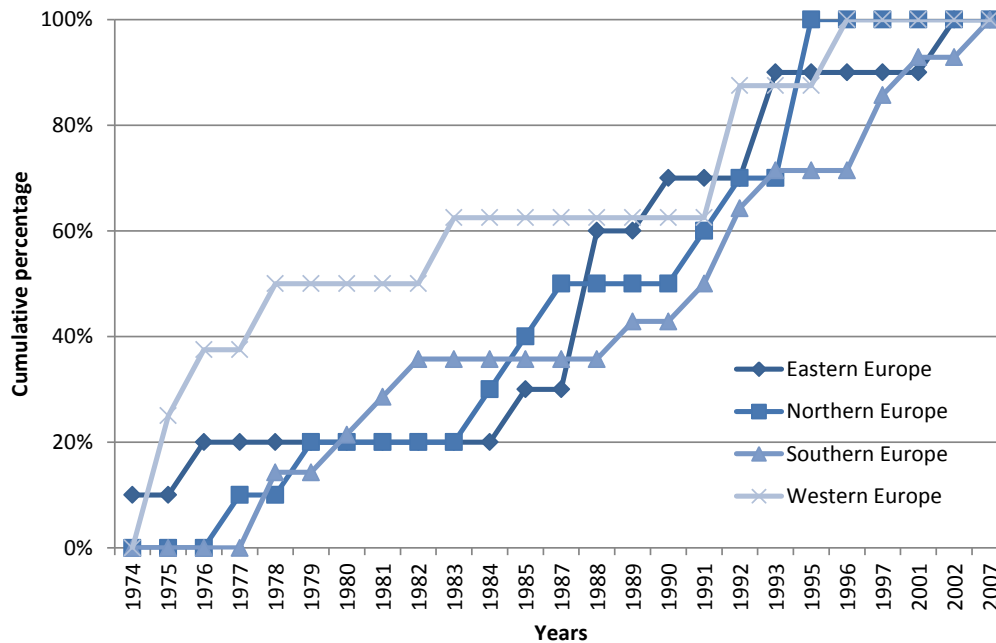


Figure 5. The ratification of the WHC, per UN European region, over time (Source: UNESCO, 2014)

The expected sequence of events countries would follow after the WHC Convention would be first, the ratification of the WHC and second, the nomination of World Heritage (WH) properties. However, as it was already stated, a correlation has been confirmed between the countries representing the WH Committee and the location of properties being nominated (UNESCO, 2011; Meskell, 2013). What follows on Table 1 is the elicitation of the countries in relation to the number of properties inscribed on the WH List, while countries were members of the WH Committee, i.e., during a mandate. We focus on the absolute number of WH properties inscribed during a mandate, but also on its percentage in relation to the total number of WH properties listed by the country.

Italy, France and China are the three countries with a higher absolute number of WH properties nominated while in mandate. Those numbers are, respectively, 36, 32 and 30 properties. They represent, respectively, 70.6%, 82.1% and 63.8% of the total of properties listed as World Heritage. Bulgaria, although the absolute number is only 9 WH properties, has 100% of the WH properties were nominated during mandates. Therefore, the absolute number and the percentages are both important to be taken into consideration. Moreover, Table 1 also shows the share between the three categories of WH properties: cultural, natural and mixed.

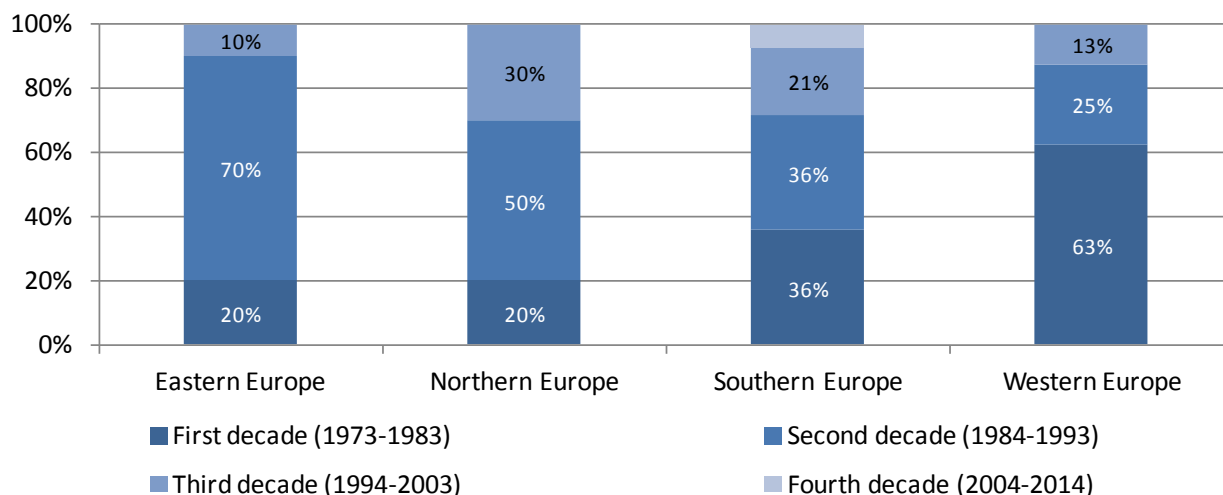


Figure 6. The ratification of the WHC, per UN European region (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

Table 1. WH properties listed during mandates, total number, % from total and share between categories (Source: Authors).

Country	Total number of WHC sites	Number of WHC sites approved during Mandate	% Total	Cultural	Natural	Mixed
Italy	51	36	70.6%	35	1	
France	39	32	82.1%	29	2	1
China	47	30	63.8%	21	7	2
Mexico	32	26	81.3%	22	3	1
Germany	39	24	61.5%	23	1	
India	32	22	68.8%	15	7	
United States of America	22	18	81.8%	7	11	
Japan	18	17	94.4%	13	4	
Greece	17	14	82.4%	12		2
Australia	19	14	73.7%	2	8	4
Spain	44	14	31.8%	11	2	1
Brazil	19	13	68.4%	10	3	
Bulgaria	9	9	100.0%	7	2	
Turkey	13	9	69.2%	7		2
Canada	17	9	52.9%	4	5	
Russian Federation	26	9	34.6%	4	5	

Figure 7 hints the dispersion of countries inscribing WH properties during mandates, over time. The leading countries inscribing WH properties during mandates, by number of WH properties, (see Figure 8) are the countries in Europe and North America, followed by Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Arab States and Africa. Though, when contextualizing these numbers to the total number of WH properties, the results change considerably. Latin America and the Caribbean (52%), closely followed by Asia and the Pacific (51%), are the two UNESCO regions with about half of the WH properties in their territory, inscribed while their countries were in mandate. This tendency is noted ever since the first



decade (21%), having escalated considerably during the third decade (32%) (1994-2003), and again decreased (26%) during the fourth and last decade (1994-2004).

There are only 15 countries (out of 86 with mandates) that never nominated WH properties during their mandates. They are alphabetically, Bahrain, Croatia, Iraq, Mali, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Serbia, Sudan, Sweden and the Syrian Arab Republic.

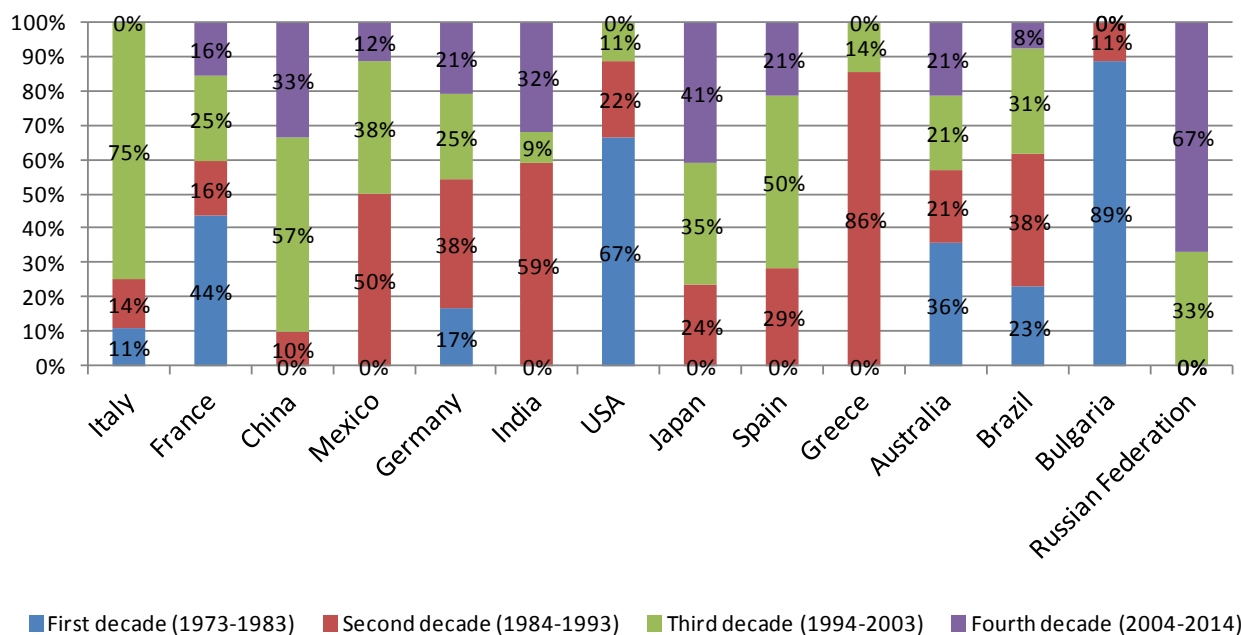


Figure 7. The leading countries inscribing WH properties during mandates (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

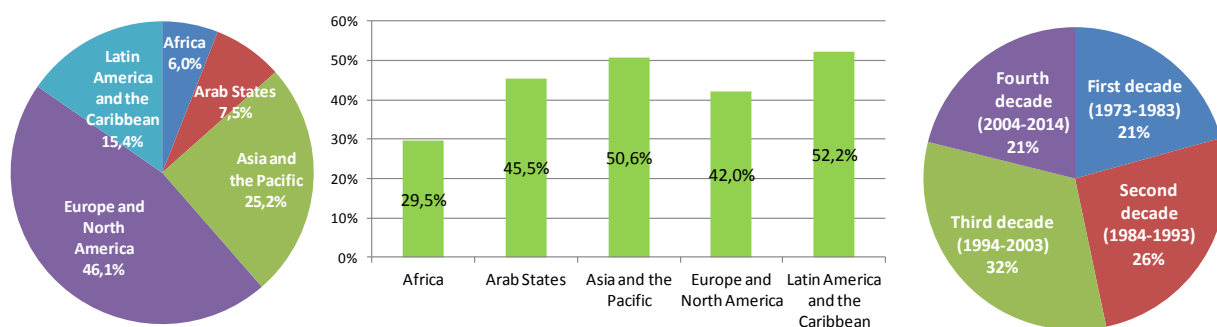


Figure 8. The total number of WH properties inscribed during mandates, per UNESCO region (left), per total number of WH properties (centre), and per decade (right) (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

### The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

The 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention (IHC) is also known as the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (IHC). A convention created due to concerns about globalization and the loss of indigenous knowledge and practices, departing from a history of pressure for a less Eurocentric definition of World Heritage (Beazley and Deacon, 2007). Even if the IHC is dated 2003, the list of IH properties already includes 413 properties, split into the

representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (361), the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (38), and the Best Safeguarding Practices (14).

The analysis of the adoption rate of the IHC throughout the years, per UNESCO region is illustrated on Figure 9. It shows a graph with the cumulative percentage of countries which have adopted the agreements of the IHC. From a total of 195 countries members of UNESCO, 161 have signed the agreements of the IHC, thus, around 82%. More specifically, the Arab States have the highest adoption (94%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (91%), and Europe and North America (84%). Instead, the two UNESCO regions, Africa (81%), and Asia and the Pacific (73%). None have yet reached 100% of adoption rate, but are quite close. Although there are 34 countries which have not yet ratified the IHC convention, Nauru (a country in the UNESCO region Asia and the Pacific), which was one of the five countries which did not ratify the WHC, was found to have ratified the IHC.

Analyzing the adoption rate of the IHC per UN European region, Figure 10 shows that the Western European countries were the first to reach 100% of adoption rate, in 2013. The other European regions are yet far from reaching the totality.

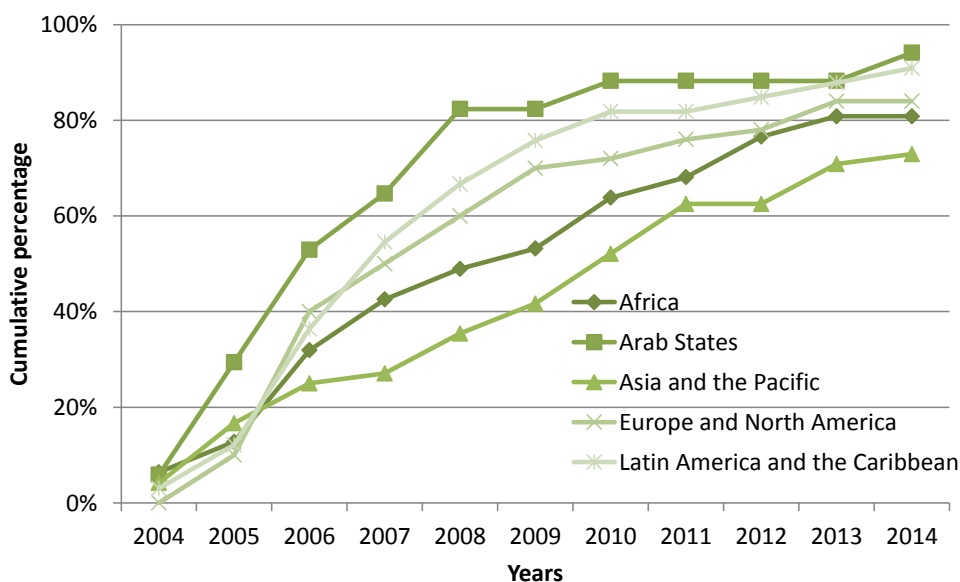


Figure 9. Year of deposit of instrument referent to the IHC, per UNESCO region (UNESCO, 2015c).

Table 2 shows the list of countries which have nominated Intangible Heritages properties (IH) while members of IHC Committee. We focus on the absolute number of nominated IWC, but also on its percentage in relation to the total number of IH. It can be observed that Croatia, China and Republic of Korea are the three countries with a higher absolute number of IH nominated while in mandate. Those numbers are, respectively, 13, 13 and 12 properties. They represent, respectively, 92.9%, 34.2% and 70.6% from the total of properties listed as IH. Even though China appears on the top 3 list of both WHC and IHC Conventions, the percentage in relation to the total number of heritages is smaller in the context of the IHC (34.2% against 63.8% of the WHC). Moreover, Table 2 also shows the share between the three categories of IHC: Best Safeguarding Practices, Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

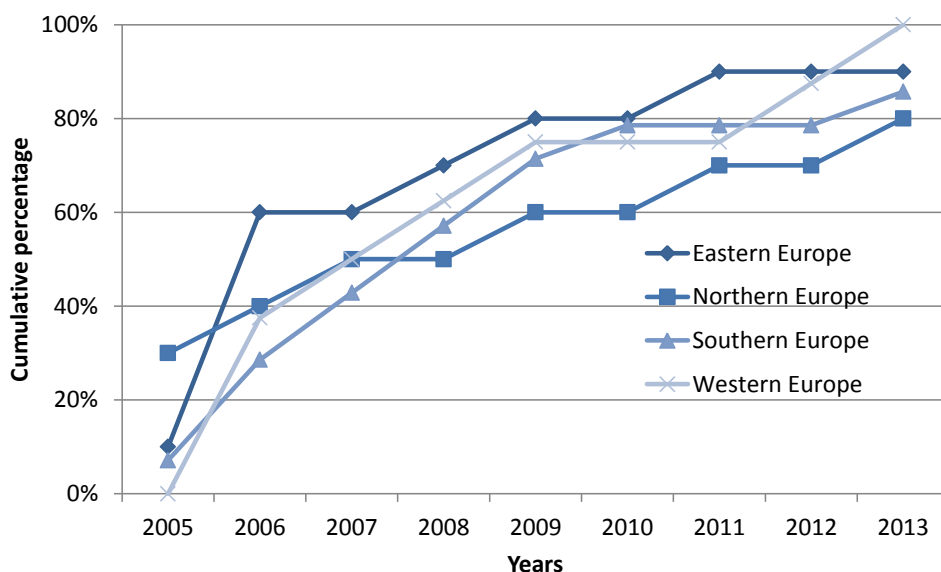


Figure 10. Year of deposit of instrument referent to the IHC, per UN European region (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

Table 2. IH sites approved during mandates: number, percentage from total and share between categories (Source: Authors).

Country	Total number of IH	Number of IH approved during Mandate	% Total	Best safeguarding practices	Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding	Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
Croatia	14	13	92.9%		1	12
China	38	13	34.2%	1	4	8
Republic of Korea	17	12	70.6%			12
Belgium	12	11	91.7%	1		10
Spain	14	9	64.3%	2		7
Japan	22	9	40.9%			9
Peru	9	8	88.9%	1	1	6
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	10	8	80.0%		2	6
Brazil	8	7	87.5%	2	1	4
India	11	5	45.5%			5
Turkey	12	5	41.7%			5
Kyrgyzstan	5	4	80.0%		1	3
Mali	8	4	50.0%		1	3
Viet Nam	9	4	44.4%		1	3
Nigeria	3	3	100.0%			3
Estonia	4	3	75.0%			3

Figure 10 illustrates the share between UNESCO regions in relation to the number of inscribed IWH during mandates. In this case, when compared to the 1972 Convention, Asia and the Pacific surpass the Europe and North America region, with percentages respectively, of 37% and 35%. The region Latin America and the Caribbean has again the third position (15%), while Africa has now a higher share (8%) than the Arab Countries (5%).

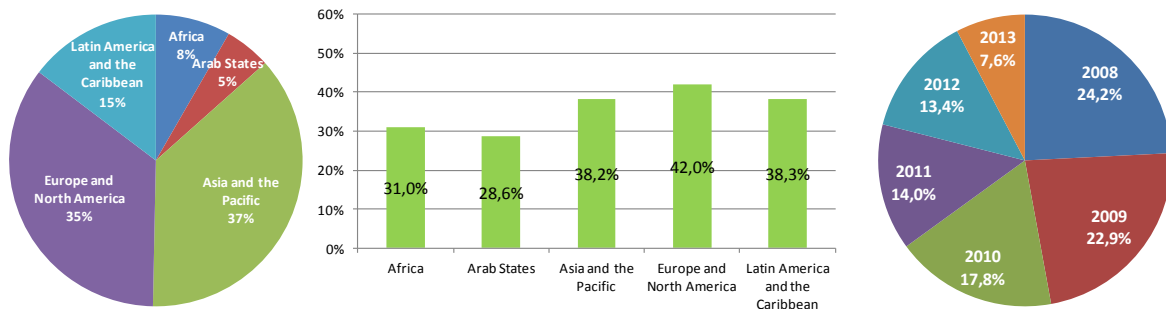


Figure 11. Intangible World Heritages inscribed during mandates, per UNESCO region (left), and percentage of inscribed IWH from the total number of IWH (center), and per year (right). (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

Though, when contextualizing these numbers to the total number of inscribed IWH, the results change considerably. Europe and North America have 42% of the IWH inscribed while in mandate. The other regions have smaller, but not considerably different percentages. This tendency is noted to decrease from the first, to the last years, respectively 2008 (24.2%) and 2013 (7.6%). It is important to state that there are only 11 countries (out of 50 with mandates), which never nominated Intangible World Heritages during their mandates. They are alphabetically: Albania, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Czech Republic, Jordan, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Niger, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Zimbabwe.

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Although the WHC and IHC Conventions are different in nature, they both address heritage conservation. WHC is broader in focus, addressing natural and cultural, tangible and intangible, while IHC is tailored to intangible cultural heritage. For allowing the comparison between the WHC and IHC Conventions, the analysis will focus on 10 years after the conventions took place, thus respectively, from 1973 until 1983, and from 2004 to 2014.

As earlier mentioned, from a total of 195 countries members of UNESCO, 191 have today signed the agreements of the WHC by August 2014 (UNESCO, 2014). However, when analysing Figure 12, only 76 countries (39%) have signed it a decade after the publishing of the convention, thus, between 1973 and 1983. In relation to the IHC, as already on the previous analysis, 161 countries (83%) have signed the agreements of the convention after a decade of its occurrence. It may indicate that with exception to the Arab States, that follow a similar pioneer adoption pattern, other UNESCO regions were by far faster with the adoption of IHC, than with the WHC. Africa, Europe and North America and Latin America and the Caribbean nearly doubled their adoption ratings. Particularly, Asia and the Pacific tripled their adoption rating.

In relation to the adoption rate per UNESCO region, Figure 13 shows that around 80% of the Arab countries have adopted the agreements of the WHC after a decade of its occurrence, while only 50% of the European and North American countries have done it by 1983. Asia and the Pacific countries have the lowest adoption rate by 1983 (less than 20%). As for the IHC, in general all regions have a higher adoption rate when compared to the WHC, with the lower point of 73% for the Asia and the Pacific countries. Again, the Arab States have the higher adoption rate (around 94%) and Europe and North American countries the third highest (around 84%).

Figure 14 shows graphs comparing the adoption rate per European regions, between the WHC and IHC, in the first decade after the occurrence of the conventions. As observed for the UNESCO regions, on Figure 12, Figure 13 also indicates that in general the adoption rate is higher for the IHC than for the WHC. In both cases, the Western European countries have a higher adoption rate than the other countries. However, this rate is only 62.5% after a decade from the WHC, whereas it is 100% after a decade from the IHC.

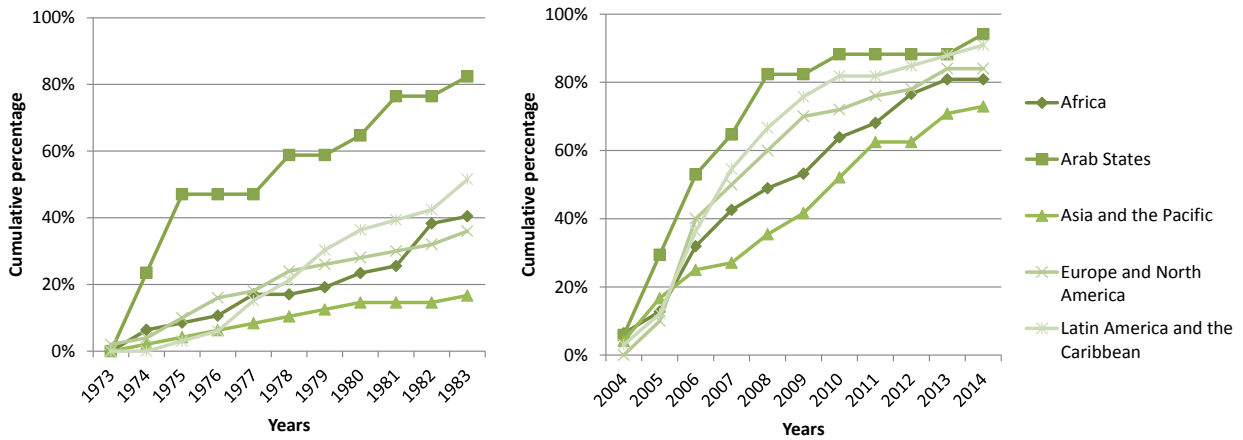


Figure 12. Comparison between the first decade of adoption of the WHC (left) and IHC (right) Conventions, per UNESCO region (Source: UNESCO, 2015c).

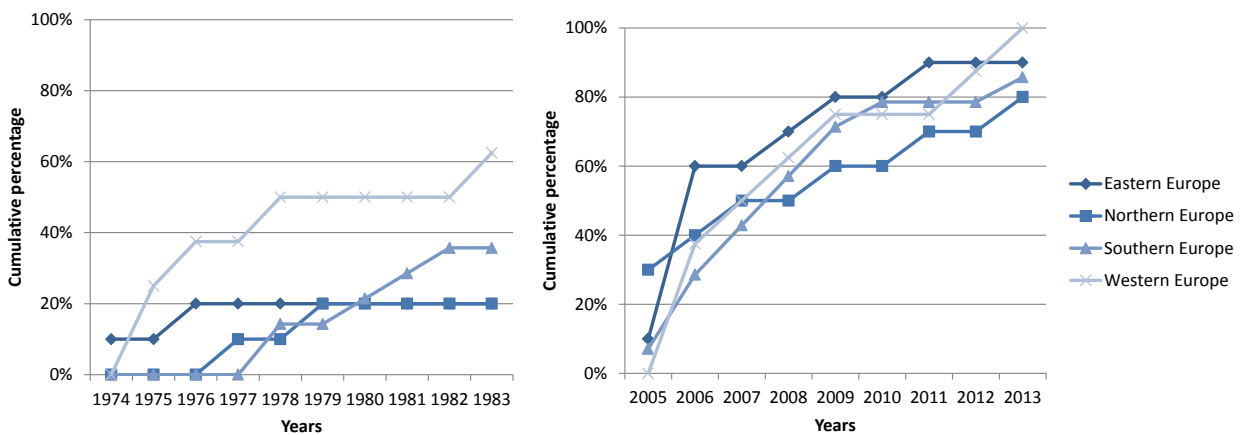


Figure 13. Comparison between the first decade of adoption of the WHC (left) and IHC (right) Conventions, per UN European region (Source: UNESCO, 2014).

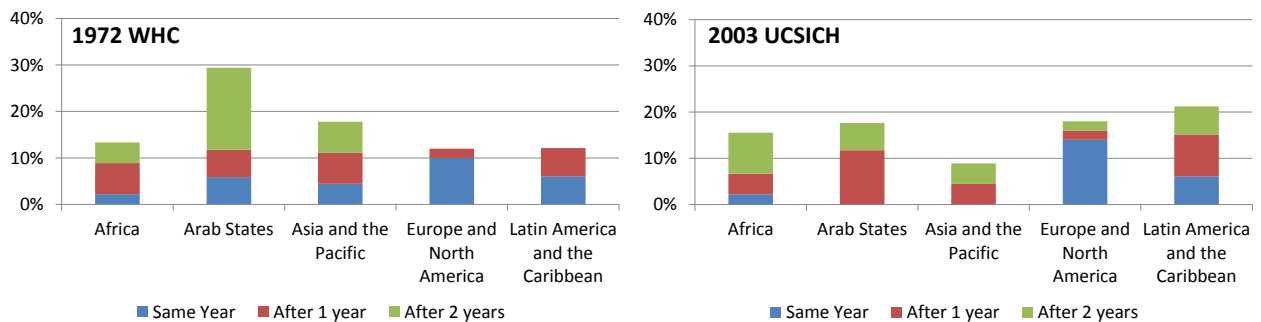


Figure 14. Committee Member in relation Year of Adoption of the WHC (Left) and IHC (Right) Conventions (Source: Authors).

## CONCLUSIONS

This research aimed at validating three assumptions, keys to the international debate around standards in global ethics guide lining heritage conservation. Results demystify the Eurocentrism of these two UNESCO Conventions. United States of America was the first country ratifying the WHC, but Europe was never the leading UNESCO region in neither of the two conventions. Arab States do have this extraordinary performance, both in WHC and IHC. Moreover, the European countries were never a majority in number, neither in WHC nor in IHC. However, Europe and North America countries do have the highest rate of WH nominations while in mandate. Though, they are slightly advanced at IHC, by China, leading the IH nominations while in mandate. Europe is easily labelled as Western. There is however, difference in patterns between Western and other European regions. Future research could try to explore this relationship further.

The politicization of UNESCO WH Convention over time increased, when comparing the ratio of countries nominating WH properties in their territories, during their mandates. Though, the IHC presents an inverse pattern. The analysis over time, however, partly demystifies the nostalgia towards a less politicized period, as to an initial phase of WHC. The nomination of heritage properties while in mandate, as it turns out, has always been fairly common, not a recent trend. This procedure, even while legal, allows for the influence of national biases on international political and economic agreements and decision-making processes. Added to the previously referenced decrease of agreement between the WH Committee and its Advisory Bodies, further research could bring light to the politicization. Given that IHC is decreasing in IH nominations while in mandate, more lessons could be learned, by keep comparing these two conventions and their operational guidelines.

Results confirm a difference between the studied UNESCO Conventions, being the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention indeed more Eurocentric and politicized than the 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention. Though, the differences are not that extreme as hinted by the State-of-the-Art. A repetition of the research, one decade later, could help clarify and reveal sharper trends, as the conventions differ 30 years in implementation. Also, assumptions could be made, that the countries and their representatives might have learned from WHC to improve IHC. After all, even WHC is decreasing in the number of nominations while in mandate. Though, further research and actor network analysis could enable more factual knowledge on the relations between these two conventions and their stakeholders. IHC does have, however, a far higher rate of nominations, to date 413 IH properties, compared with 163 WH properties enlisted during the first decade.

To conclude, UNESCO to blame, seems indeed more as an easy escape than a reality, just as the Eurocentrism echoed throughout the State-of-the-Art, having this research proven that even European regions differ considerably in patterns and that there are clearly prominent countries, in all five UNESCO regions. A more thorough research into the discourse analysis of these conventions, and comparison with national policies, before and after implementation, could perhaps reveal more grounds to feed discussion and help validate these still rhetorical, but most relevant assumptions. We have demystified the assumption of Eurocentrism and politicization by the evolution in ratifications, and nominations while in mandate of the two main inscription-based conventions. Though, that does not mean that further research necessarily provides the same results. To be continued!

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## NOTE

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