
**Towards Efficient Roles of NGOs
for Safeguarding ICH
in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Chapter 3

Empowering ICH NGOs as Catalyst for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

UNPLI, the Italian network of Pro Loco associations, represents approximately 6,000 Pro Loco associations (a unique type of Italian association devoted to promoting a specific town or location) from various municipalities and old medieval towns, where approximately 600,000 members work as volunteers organizing over 10,000 events, fairs, festivals and much more.

Many Italian towns and small cities have a Pro Loco, a civic membership association of volunteers that works with schools, universities and institutions in order to project ways to enhance the town and provide assistance to visitors.

In 2010 UNPLI created the online inventory on YouTube “Progetti UNPLI” with hundreds of videos and interviews with craftsmen, musicians, local experts and many other people on their connections with the cultural heritage of their regions: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ProgettiUNPLI>.

UNPLI in collaboration with SIMBDEA, another Italian accredited NGO, is working in order to build an Italian network for ICH. These NGOs are collaborating

in the building of a participatory inventory strategy in Cocullo, a little town in Abruzzo, where every 1th of May takes place the “Feast of San Domenico Abate and the rite of snakes”. Since 2013 UNPLI runs the website of the ICH NGO FORUM (www.ichngoforum.org) and the Facebook’s page “Intangible cultural heritage and civil society”.

I. The Network of Pro Loco Associations and the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

UNPLI, the Italian network of Pro Loco associations, represents approximately 6,000 Pro Loco associations (a unique type of Italian association devoted to promoting a specific town or location) from various municipalities and old medieval towns, where approximately 600,000 members work as volunteers organizing over 10,000 events, fairs, festivals and much more.

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From 2003 UNPLI started to work on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage with several national projects.

With these projects (www.progettunpli.it) UNPLI wanted to address the social problems related to depopulation of at least 1/3 of the Italian municipalities. UNPLI always acted in order to promote a sustainable development of these places by promoting a sustainable tourism in these places and increasing interested visitors. At the end of each project we have presented a touristic book written with the collaboration of the local communities. Our staff travelled all around Italy in order to collect contributions and materials from our network. In every place we’ve been we had a public assembly where we invited local institutions and citizens to reflect and debate about the opportunities of the 2003 Convention and the need of a sustainable development of these fragile territories.

Pro Loco associations have been the tool for the involvement of the local communities in the projects concerning the intangible cultural heritage because many of them already worked for the promotion, enhancement and transmission of many local traditions.

UNPLI created a national library (2009) about the Italian cultural heritage with almost 4.000 documents coming from all the country about traditions, rites, local heritage and much more, and collected from Pro Loco associations, municipalities, universities, schools and other associations.

In 2010 UNPLI created the online inventory on YouTube “Progetti UNPLI” with more than 760 videos and interviews to craftsmen, musicians, local experts and many other people on their connections with the cultural heritage of their regions: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ProgettiUNPLI>.

The channel is an important example of how the local communities have been involved in our activities. The channel it’s been realized with the informed consent of the local communities and includes hundreds of interviews. It has become a true repository for traditions, rites, social events, enogastronomy and the arts and crafts.

Now (July 2014) the channel reached more than 750.000 views. Most of the views are from Italy but a relevant part it’s registered in the countries where live communities of emigrants that left our country recently or many years ago (like Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia).

Since our accreditation (2012) we started to raise the awareness of Pro Loco associations about the aims of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, stimulating debates about the opportunities given by its text and underlining the strategic role of the network of the Pro Loco associations in safeguarding the Italian heritage and the urgent need to work in a network with experts and institutions.

UNPLI started to organize and promote different projects about the safeguarding and transmission of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and its expressions.

In January 2013 UNPLI launched the first Local Languages and Dialects’ Day. Every year on January UNPLI organizes, all around Italy, hundreds of events in which the relevant element is the protection and the transmission of these particular ways of communication, still used in many parts of our country. Cultural associations, schools, universities, institutions and municipalities are constantly involved in these activities.

At the end of the 2013 UNPLI organized a National literary Prize linked to the Local Languages and Dialects’ Day. The prize “Save your local language” is now at its second edition and it’s going to become one of the most important literary prizes on these topics with the collaboration of many internationally renowned linguists

(like Prof. Tullio De Mauro) and with the patronages of many ministries and institutions.

At the end of January 2014 UNPLI organized a meeting in the Italian parliament in which we showed the results of our activities and the opportunities of the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

Every year UNPLI usually organizes training courses in which a relevant part is dedicated to raising the awareness of the Pro Loco associations about their strategic role in the safeguarding and transmission of the intangible heritage. Now some of our associations are filming and inventorying themselves the items that they consider important for their communities. A sort of documentation realized directly by the communities, with a community-based point of view.

UNPLI plays a very active role in the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention by organizing cultural events, involving communities, institutions and universities, stimulating reflections and debates around the aims and the tools of the Convention.

At the international level UNPLI is an NGO accredited to the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and participate every year at the meetings organized by the ICH NGO FORUM. Since 2013 UNPLI proposed and created the website of the ICH NGO FORUM (www.ichngoforum.org) and now runs it. UNPLI also runs the Facebook page "Intangible cultural heritage and civil society", an open platform where communities, organizations, institutions and individuals interested in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) can share information. These tools are increasing the visibility of the Forum and involving people, cultural and local communities in our activities.

II. An Italian Network for ICH

After the Committee of Bali in 2012, noting the distance between the system of Italian cultural heritage and values of community participation and sustainable development expressed by the UNESCO Convention 2003, the NGO "SIMBDEA" has taken the initiative to propose a process of "Italian network for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage". The initiative, supported also by

UNPLI encourages the exchange of experiences, sharing of problems, training and communication between local, national and international subjects.

SIMBDEA gathers ethnographic museums and associations related to the world of studies and research (anthropology and social sciences) while UNPLI is an extensive network of local associations (almost 6.000 associations are members of this network).

In January 2013, an international conference, "Intangible cultural heritage among civil society, research and institutions" brought together some Italian NGOs with regional and national institutions, and with the contribution of scholars and specialists of ICH as Antonio Arantes, Chiara Bortolotto, Marc Jacob.

In 2014, SIMBDEA it's been appointed to a monitoring mission by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, for the preparation of a report about the state of the intangible cultural heritage in Italy. The report (NGO contribution for the Italian periodic report) it's been delivered in the month of April 2014 and it's been written with the collaboration of many Italian subjects, including ethnographic museums, Universities, Pro Loco associations, cultural associations, networks and communities.

Reflecting the discussion about criteria of accreditation, this Italian initiative aims to strengthen NGOs participation at all levels: a) the international level (through the NGO forum and the sharing of experiences, good safeguarding practices and formation's projects); b) the national level (contribution, through the NGOs network in dialogue/partnership with national institutions to the Italian Periodic Report); c) the local level (involving communities and sensitizing citizens and institutions).

At local level, SIMBDEA and UNPLI are also collaborating in the building of a participatory inventory strategy. In Cocullo, a little town in Abruzzo, where every 1st of May takes place the "Feast of San Domenico Abate and the rite of snakes", we are making an experimental project aimed at the inscription of this ritual (paying attention to the context of this local society and economy, and building a participatory safeguarding process) on the List of Urgent Safeguarding, tool still not used in our country.

For further informations write to gabriele.desiderio@unpli.info.

Links:

Visit and subscribe to our webchannel: www.youtube.com/user/ProgettiUNPLI

The website of the ICH NGO FORUM: www.ichngoforum.org

Integrating Culture in Planning & Action for Sustainable Development : Role of ICH NGOs

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Abstract

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and its Operational Directives outline the important role of NGOs in creating awareness on the Convention, generating space for dialogue and the exchange of good practices and challenges for inputs to programming and policy making at varied levels, and facilitating community participation in taking safeguarding measures through knowledge and tools support and capacity building. The contributions of ICH NGOs have been manifold, including building the capacity of communities, researching and documenting ICH, upholding distinct identities of places and communities through cultural tourism, facilitating transnational flow of creativity, strengthening cultural resources, and developing artist organizations. Now the ICH NGOs need to play a critical role in enabling the inclusion of cultural dimensions in the post-2015 development policy framework. So far culture is not identified as a goal in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, culture may be explicitly integrated as a target or as