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ARTICLE



Mainstreaming heritages: abstract heritage values as strategic resources in EU external relations

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage has continually been employed as a strategic resource in EU external relations and to foster cohesion between member states and pre-accession countries. In these contexts, authorized and hegemonic versions of European and national heritage have been favoured to use culture as ‘soft power.’ While diversity has been an integral part of European heritage conceptions, it is limited in scope and scale and entails exclusions against perceived foreign or peripheral aspects. As participation and community involvement gain more prominent roles in current heritage developments (e.g. UNESCO, ICH, and the Council of Europe’s Faro convention), marginalized or hybrid elements of heritage and abstract values attached to cultural heritage become more important. Based on comparative policy and document analyses of EU policy programs, the paper asks how, as part of such processes, one can observe an emphasis on value-based approaches to heritage as part of EU external relations rather than on specific contents of cultural heritage. The paper examines how EU institutions aim to integrate dissonant heritages and linkages to non-European aspects into authorized forms of heritage by employing a value-based perception of cultural heritage.

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Introduction

Cultural heritage has continually been employed as a strategic resource in EU external relations and to foster cohesion between member states and pre-accession countries (Vos 2017; Hausler 2019). As part of efforts in cultural diplomacy, perceptions of the role of heritage are diverse and sometimes contradictory, both within the EU and on the international level (Lähdesmäki 2021; Carta 2020). Recently, the ambivalence of the notion of heritage in such contexts has, for example, been highlighted by the 2018 *European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage* (European Commission 2019, henceforth *Framework*), as part of the new *European Agenda for Culture* (European Commission 2018b, henceforth *New Agenda*), and in the context of the European Commission’s ‘European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018’ (European Commission 2022b, henceforth *EYCH*). The breadth of cross-policy initiatives and programs featuring heritage as a central concept illustrates its flexibility and complexity (Groth and Bendix 2017) across policy fields and scales. As part of such uses of heritage, in recent years a ‘mainstreaming’ of ‘cultural heritage into other sectoral policies and actions to maximize its social and economic benefits’ is called for, recognizing ‘the importance of culture in building inclusive and cohesive societies, and in sustaining Europe’s competitiveness’ (Council of the European Union 2018, 20). Cultural heritage, following such an understanding of its potentials, is positioned as a resource adaptable to a range of policy contexts and issues, external relations

prominently among them. Explicitly, the 2018 Framework ‘proposes that cultural heritage should be addressed through many other EU policies beyond culture’ (European Commission 2022a) and ‘puts into practice an integrated and participatory approach to cultural heritage, and contributes to the mainstreaming of cultural heritage across EU policies’ (European Commission 2019, 4). In this context, ‘mainstreaming’ entails strategically harnessing the concept in different areas, including its potential to enable collaboration processes, facilitate nation branding, or enhancing social cohesion (Lähdesmäki 2021).

Significantly, part of this view of culture and its social and economic functions relates to its role in the EU’s external relations. One example for this are the 2018 ‘Council conclusions on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU.’ The conclusions, centrally highlighting the cross-sectoral potential of heritage, its dynamic nature, and the need to mainstream it, propose ‘[t]o continue to support cultural heritage as an important element in the EU’s strategic approach to international cultural relations as well as in the promotion of intercultural dialogue’ (Council of the European Union 2018, 21). This restrengthened articulation of the nexus between heritage and external relations builds on the EU’s ‘integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe’ (European Commission 2014) and its subsequent ‘strategy for international cultural relations’ (European Commission 2016). A mainstreaming of cultural heritage in this context of external relations signifies a strengthened focus on heritage and its pivotal role for diverse policy fields; further, it highlights the integration of cultural heritage as one aspect among other soft policy aspects within the frameworks of the EU and its bodies.

In this paper, I make the argument that heritage is positioned differently to enable such a mainstreaming and the use of heritage in different policy fields. I argue that heritage is emphasized vis-à-vis its role as an abstract *value-based resource*, that is, a resource that foregrounds specific and shared values of cultural heritage, rather than regarding its role as an *identity resource*, that is, a resource that foregrounds the identity of specific groups. I will, in the following, focus on this discursive emphasis on values rather than on identity and show that it strengthens flexibility to the uses of heritage in EU external relations and other policy fields. By doing so, the paper investigates the normative modalities of cultural heritage in the context of heritage diplomacy and asks for their ambivalences and contingencies.

Heritage diplomacy and policy documents

The paper follows an understanding of heritage diplomacy ‘as influenced by and being part of states’ domestic policy goals and governance’ (cf. Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022, 645), here as part of supranational EU cultural policies and informed by processes of brokerage in different policy fields. Central to this understanding is a focus on the uses of heritage, both tangible and intangible, in EU external relations and not limited to heritage as a subject matter. That is, the paper considers heritage as a flexible and often discursive enabler for cooperation processes not necessarily in the field of culture but, for example, regarding issues of urban planning, energy infrastructures, or fiscal policies. In such cases, heritage is positioned as a flexible discursive resource vis-à-vis ‘aspects of unity and diversity, cooperation, national sovereignty, economic policies, and soft power’ (Groth and Bendix 2017, 329). This mainstreaming of culture and heritage entails processes of legitimation on different levels, piercing through local contexts, domestic debates, and supranational processes, catering to specific audiences and interests. Perceptions of heritage are grounded in local contexts and reflect, affirm, or claim different normative stances in negotiation processes on how heritage ought to be conceptualized and promoted. They are infused in domestic and supranational debates and have a bearing on how perceptions of heritage are shaped as part of policy programmes, for example, by the EU. Accordingly, in scrutinizing how such perceptions become tangible as part of EU policies, the paper does not preclude causal intentionality of heritage diplomacy, that is, it does not posit that specific uses or definitions of heritage are the result of strategic considerations to ideally implement heritage as a resource in EU external relations. Likewise, the paper does not posit that

notions of heritage in EU policies and heritage diplomacy are void of strategic intentions and merely the result of social deliberations on normative approaches to heritage. Rather, the paper stresses how these cases are intertwined and how understandings of heritage on different levels and scales mutually inform one another. This opens the view to the fact that 'cultural heritage and power relations are entangled in the conceptualisations and explorations of heritage diplomacy' (Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022, 646), including geocultural aspects of heritage (Winter 2020), heritage activism, and supranational norm brokerage.

In this, I argue that the resulting ambivalence, flexibility, and 'elasticity' (Winter 2021, 13) of heritage as a concept in heritage diplomacy is the result of mediating between different understandings of and interests in heritage, edified in policy documents but contingent on specific (spatiotemporal) constellations which are subject to change. Following research on documents (Freeman and Maybin 2011; Prior 2003; Reed 2006; Wolff 2000; Smith 2012), policy documents have a 'life of their own' and constitute consequential artefacts (Riles 1999). They, likewise, are significant 'actors' in heritage processes as they impact them in different ways: They serve as points of reference in debates, both in terms of critique, support, and the authority imbued in them; they give guidance in negotiations and the implementation of and application for heritage programmes; they are used in drafting policy on the national level; and, centrally, they are foundational texts for subsequent negotiations and policy papers.

The aim of this article is an analysis of policy frameworks in the context of heritage and EU external relations. The article works with the assumption that such frameworks constitute a set of practices that is characterized by its discontinuity, that is, by the fact that documents, such as the New Agenda and other related policies, are often decoupled from their genesis and that their implementation in specific contexts follows loose, ambiguous, and flexible translations. In this regard, the article does not presuppose any continuity between these levels and, by engaging in document analyses in this context, sheds light on policy frameworks as discursive forms in their relation to other fields. It starts against the backdrop of methodological considerations on qualitative document analysis (Bowen 2009) and approaches to documents emanating from institutional contexts (Riles 2006; Harper 1998). Documents can serve to shed light on underlying practices, as has been shown in IR scholarship (Cornut and de Zamaróczy 2021; Bueger 2013). Efforts to deconstruct documents in diverse policy fields (Codd 1988) have illustrated that contexts of emergence are crucial in making sense of ambivalences and ambiguities as typical features of policy documents (Groth 2018). Inquiries into such contexts of emergence, e.g. by ethnographic approaches to supranational fora where documents and policies, such as the New Agenda, are drafted are burdened by difficulties of access and temporal discontinuities; the modalities of and differential intentions behind drafting texts which are subsequently published as policy documents are methodologically hard to grasp, especially so for ex-post analyses of documents. As contextual, temporal, idiosyncratic, and coincidental aspects factor into the wording of policy documents, ambiguities of such texts cannot be fully resolved. The attribution of meaning to such texts is accordingly always contingent. Secondly and more pertinent here, the circulation, reception, and interpretation of such text in life worlds (for example, by heritage professionals or policy experts) is faced with these issues of ambivalence as much as their analytical counterparts. Policy documents, in conjunction with other documents, practices, and institutions related to them, constitute objects of inquiry in and of themselves, decoupled to some extent from their contexts of emergence and characterized by their ambivalence.

In analysing a corpus of documents of relatively recent policy documents on the role of culture in EU external relations, focussing here on nine documents from that corpus, the paper employs a discourse-analytical approach to identify discursive shifts in how heritage is positioned in these texts and as part of recent development in EU heritage diplomacy. The corpus has been chosen based on the relevance and centrality of documents to EU external relations, culture, and cultural heritage. Additionally, documents not directly related to external relations have been sampled to follow the specific themes of mainstreaming heritage and abstract heritage values. In detail, this

paper focuses on six documents from the European Commission, two documents from the Council of the European Union, and one document from the Council of Europe. Grounded in the assumption that framework policies on culture and cultural heritage are consequential for EU external relations, the European Commission's 'New European Agenda for Culture (COM/2018/267 Final, 2018)', 'Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe (COM(2014) 477 Final, 2014)', 'European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage (2019)', and the Council of Europe's 'Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005)' have been included as they are constitutive for a value-based approach to culture and cultural heritage; the Council of the European Union's 'Conclusions on the Need to Bring Cultural Heritage to the Fore Across Policies in the EU' (2018/C 196/05, 2018) have been included as they are pivotal regarding the mainstreaming of cultural heritage in policy areas not limited to but including external relations. At the core of analysis and directly related to heritage diplomacy are the European Commission's 'Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations (European Commission 2016)' and the Council of the European Union's (2021) 'Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises'. Finally, two policy documents from the context of European Commission's neighbourhood policies have been chosen as examples of the application of a value-based approach ('A Credible Enlargement Perspective for an Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans', European Commission 2018a; 'The EU and Its Southern Neighbourhood', European Commission 2021). The documents analysed here are complemented by ethnographic case studies from secondary literature.

Heritage and secondary norm setting

As will be argued in this section, in recent developments in cultural heritage, a moderate shift as part of which heritage as a specific set of objects and practices loses its pivotal role in policy frameworks can be observed. While certified heritage and specific instances of tangible or intangible heritage continue to play a role in heritage policies, broader principles, norms, and ideas tied to cultural heritage such as creativity, social cohesion, and identity gain importance across policy fields. Alongside this shift towards decentring and, in the process, also mainstreaming cultural heritage, a focus on more abstract cultural values can be observed. Such values are understood to be part of cultural heritage but fundamentally more cross-cutting and more diverse, that is, not constricted to specific locales or groups but in principle applicable to diverse contexts. While the inclusion of abstract values in heritage policies in the EU and in relation to EU external relations are not novel, current policy documents – as will be shown below – include more poignant emphases on them. This facilitates the concept of cultural heritage to be employed throughout different policy sectors of the EU, crucially including the EU's external relations. It has the potential to bypass dissonances and conflict-related entanglements by focusing less on specific object, practices, or implementations, and more on abstract and, at the same time, ambivalent norms, and values.

A central example for this norm setting practice of the EU in the realm of cultural heritage is the New Agenda, formulated in 2018. The values the New Agenda attaches to culture and cultural heritage entail an 'active citizenship, common values, inclusion and intercultural dialogue within Europe and across the globe' (European Commission 2018b, 1). In this context, heritage is supposed to 'bring people together, including newly arrived refugees and other migrants,' and helps to 'feel part of communities. Culture and creative industries also have the power to improve lives, transform communities, generate jobs and growth, and create spill over effects in other economic sectors' (ibid.). While much of this language is not new in terms of EU cultural policy, the focus on active citizenship and participation in this and other passages of the New Agenda, including the explicit references to migration and refugees, is notable. Likewise, the Council conclusions 'on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU' (Council of the European Union 2018) and the EU's 'strategy for international cultural relations' (European Commission 2016), while stressing the importance of heritage for societies

and cohesion in the EU, only tangentially make the inherent value of heritage a topic. What is foregrounded are secondary effects of heritage such as strengthening cultural ties, reinforcing cooperation, promoting dialogue, or stimulating social and economic development. Further, social cohesion, fairness, and inclusion gain central importance in this conception of heritage, mirrored as well in the principles of the related Council of Europe's *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Council of Europe 2005, henceforth *Faro convention*). The Faro convention is emblematic for an approach to cultural heritage that focuses not on objects or practices of heritage but on normative principles of participation (Schofield 2015; Colomer 2021); it is 'predicated on the principle of citizens' inclusion and co-operation' (Rabbiosi 2019, 1).

As folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes on heritage as a meta-cultural operation, the accreditation of heritage puts centre 'interests, choice, freedom, democratic notions of inclusion, participation, consent and investment' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 184) rather than issues of inheritance, ancestry, and descent. Here as well, heritage as a resource in various social and economic sectors is tied to normative values only indirectly linked to its contents and historic trajectories; foregrounded are abstract values and normative frameworks. Likewise, in her work on heritage instruments in pre-accession countries in the EU, anthropologist Claske Vos shows that what matters most in the regional implementation of heritage programmes in countries such as Serbia are not historical trajectories or the content and entanglements of heritages with other EU heritages, but rather the form, that is, institutional structures, guidelines, regimes of expertise, and selection processes (Vos 2011). As Vos illustrates, the 'resulting pragmatic stance can be seen as related to the problems faced by the European institutions in their attempt to relate heritage to reconciliation and regional cooperation' (ibid., 236). Focusing on content and specific regional entanglements, such as shared heritage, has in this case resulted in potential conflict and failed reconciliation. Actors involved in the respective 'Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe' resisted a focus on their shared heritage with other countries and their entangled pasts and, with it, efforts of reconciliation. According to Vos, stressing both frameworks and abstract values rather than content has shown, if not quantifiable metrics of success, at least hopes to further cooperation and economic activities in the heritage sector (ibid.). Underlying values of heritage programs are in this and other cases a pathway for cooperation and development, or so the rationale of such programs goes.

In recent developments in EU heritage policies, the 'Council Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises' acknowledge this tension between heritage as mitigation strategy and source of conflict. Para. 2 of the conclusions reads:

The Council recognises the role of cultural heritage as an important vehicle for peace, democracy and sustainable development by fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, reconciliation, inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue, mitigating social tensions and preventing renewed escalation into violent conflict. At the same time, the Council also recognises that cultural heritage can be instrumentalised as a trigger for and a target in conflicts and crises and can be subject to disinformation or information manipulation. (Council of the European Union 2021)

No clear mitigation strategies are outlined in the conclusions, yet the necessity of a 'conflict sensitive approach' (para. 2) is stressed in line with a foregrounding of a value-based perception of heritage, as outlined in para. 6:

The Council highlights the importance of the EU's value-based approach when engaging in the protection of cultural heritage in conflicts and crises. It also emphasises the need to adopt a conflict-sensitive approach and respect the 'do-no harm' principle. (Council of the European Union 2021)

Kristin Hausler argues that these conclusions and preceding policy documents signify a marked shift in the EU's understanding of heritage in external relations 'from a vulnerable asset considered exclusively through the prism of protection, to a driver of peace and development' (Hausler 2021, 195). The secondary effects of heritage are, in this context, applied to situations of conflict and crisis, enabling their use as tools in EU external relations.

Heritage's compatibility and flexibility in external relations

In the EU policy frameworks and documents as well as in the examples discussed above, the focus shifts from issues of heritage and identity to abstract values and formal dimensions as normative resources across policy areas. EU heritage policy frameworks argue that both *content*, that is, the EU's diversity and quality of heritage, and *process*, that is, the EU's experiences in administering, promoting, harnessing, or safeguarding heritage, are 'considerable asset[s] to promote cultural policies as drivers for peace and socioeconomic development in third countries' (European Commission 2016, 2). Forms of representation and the question whether local heritage programs fit in pre-existing EU frameworks and perceptions are key in such cases, making tangible that conditions of appropriateness for heritage in EU external relations are subject to negotiation and crucially rely on compatibility – or more precisely, the ability or potential of local implementations of heritage to connect to or communicate with existing frameworks. This compatibility (or 'Anschlussfähigkeit', cf. Luhmann 2021) is, in system theoretical terms, a central element of EU cultural diplomacy: The ability of distinct and disparate systems to relate to each other and to enable social practices to proceed and, centrally, to enable cooperation. A closer look at Luhmann is helpful in distinguishing two cases: first, a self-referential process within a system, for example, within a single heritage regime; and second, a relational process between different systems, for example, between distinctive and potentially incommensurable systems. While the first case presupposes a shared system, such as UNESCO's *World Heritage*-regime with its lists and institutionalized communications or the EU's *Heritage Label*, the second case does not rely on shared logics or practices. Rather, what is needed to connect different fields or systems is some sort of common denominator – Luhmann calls this a *relation* or '*Bezug*' (ibid.). In terms of heritage regimes, the first operates with shared logics and frameworks such as the World Heritage-regime in its earlier stages with clear criteria of evaluation and conditions to participate, while the second only requires a flexible and loose relation such as the abstract values put center in recent heritage policies in the EU. Without requiring too much adaptation and restructuring, they are, in Luhmann's terms, able to communicate with each other and enable cooperation processes.

This loose coupling of heritage in different fields is already part of the focus on form and not on content which has been highlighted in critical heritage studies (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006; Vos 2011; Tauschek 2011). As they stress that not distinct and strict criteria, but rather general form and values are centred, for example, in the implementation of EU heritage programs in pre-accession countries, they hint at the fact that this allows different field logics to operate alongside each other. Accordingly, countries (or local actors) are not forced to comply with a fixed set of criteria or processes, but rather compelled to follow steps which enable compatibility, and which deliver a *representation* of shared values – not necessarily their actualization. The shift to values in heritage policies highlights this. Values such as social cohesion, fairness, and inclusion – central to the conception of heritage in EU external relations – constitute an opportunity for different fields to communicate with each other without following identical logics or processes. It suffices that the commitment to such values is *performed* by actors. Especially in EU external relations, this constitutes a significant opportunity to enable cooperation, both culturally and economically, without *enforcing* shared standards. Without requiring too much adaptation and restructuring, different fields can communicate with each other and keep practice going.

Such flexibility is specifically pertinent regarding dissonant heritages, that is, potentially conflicting, or divergent views of heritage emanating in different policy fields. In cases of 'dissonant' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Lähdesmäki et al. 2019) or 'difficult' (Logan and Reeves 2009) heritage, an identity-based approach runs the risk of emphasizing lines of conflict and differences; in contrast, a value-based approach to heritage in face of conflict and crisis (Hausler 2021) or conflicting heritage narratives (Logan 2015) has the potential to stress inclusive dimensions (Tracey and Lilley 2020) by focusing on abstract normative perceptions. A focus on abstract values attached to heritage as a framing of cultural heritage in EU policy programmes rather than

a focus on heritage itself or on its specific and contextual features, has the potential to allow to circumvent issues of conflict by favouring abstract values instead of specific forms or shared administrative or regulative frameworks. This is especially the case as the entanglement of heritage in colonial constellations (Timm Knudsen et al. 2021), populism (De Cesari and Kaya 2019) processes of migration (Chechi 2019; Giglito, Cioffi, and Bosswick 2022; Holtorf, Pantazatos, and Scarre 2018), and issues of discrimination (Giakoumis 2020) has been highlighted in recent years. Resulting debates on heritage ethics (Schofield 2015) or conflict management in heritage (Sasse 2009) illustrate potential downsides of heritage diplomacy. For example, Lähdesmäki, in a study on the *European Heritage Label*, shows that EU heritage practitioners express concerns about 'challenging power relations stemming from a postcolonial global history' (2021, 59), requiring reflection on how to manoeuvre normative dimensions of heritage processes as they pertain to relations both within and between states. Such issues have been understood to be core challenges to previous heritage policies, leading, for example, to the formulation of a 'European Heritage Days Inclusive Events Toolkit' (Hamilton, Leo and Council of Europe 2020) to ensure that heritage events pay specific attention to, among other things, accessibility, inclusion of minority groups, or issues of social justice. While an emphasis on abstract values rather than on the specific contents of heritage practices and materialities does not eradicate potential conflicts or crises, it has the potential to alleviate them.

This is, to give an example, spelled out partly in events under the umbrella of the EU neighbourhood policy (ENP) in which this relational view of heritage as an enabler for cooperation is represented. In the strategy for the *Western Balkans*, the EYCH and a 'heritage route' are programmatically positioned as facilitators for 'good neighbourly relations' (European Commission 2018a); in the strategy for the *Southern Neighbourhood* – including countries such as Algeria, Syria or Lebanon –, heritage is used as one of four key elements (European Commission 2021) and a thematic scope across policy fields.¹ It serves as a gateway to enable cooperation and to set a range of shared values which do not require administrative restructuring or policy commitment. Cultural heritage in such contexts is used in cross-sectoral policies in EU external relations to establish a value-based 'shared ground' without presupposing or requiring strict guidelines of implementation but relying on the commitment to values which can be flexibly dealt with. While such an approach does not alleviate conflicts on the ground, it externalizes them from heritage processes and allows for cooperation and collaboration across policy sectors. In that sense, opposing or divergent heritage practices can co-exist in this constellation, if a set of shared values is affirmed.

Conclusion

In the process of putting the emphasis on values rather than on identity, cultural heritage in terms of its contents takes on a diminished role. This change is integral to current developments in cultural heritage as well, for example, as part of the European Council's Faro convention, UNESCO heritage conventions, and the prominent role of participatory governance and community involvement in heritage (Adell et al. 2015; Bortolotto et al. 2020), both within the EU and in external relations. The focus on cultural values is mirrored in recent processes in cultural heritage which highlight specific values tied to or connected to heritage, rather than qualities of heritage. The Faro convention, for example, strongly emphasises issues of participation, inclusiveness, and diversity, framed in the convention as specific European values (Council of Europe 2005). Similarly, initiatives in the context of the New Agenda and the EYCH have explicitly spelled out that (and how) cross-sectoral core values such as diversity and inclusiveness can and must be applied to cultural heritage, directly and indirectly affecting how cultural heritage can play a role in EU external relations. The shift to or focus on cultural values is a crucial development in EU external relations as it repositions heritage and other cultural aspects to avoid topics of potential conflict in cooperation processes. Accordingly, abstract values such as participation, cooperation, inclusiveness, diversity, social cohesion, tolerance,

and fairness are infused in EU cultural policies, both in frameworks and directly related to EU external relations and heritage diplomacy.

A focus on abstract values and forms of representation rather than content can prevent open conflict. The focus on values in the EU's new agenda for culture takes this lesson and applies it to a broader range of sectors. An analysis of respective EU policies sheds light on how flexibility and a focus on values are introduced across different fields. For the uses of heritage in EU external relations, this introduces flexibility to implement and regulate heritage (or heritage-based) programmes. With a focus on values attached to heritage rather than a focus on heritage itself or on its specific and contextual features, such a framing of cultural heritage in EU policy programmes allows to circumvent issues of conflict by favouring abstract values instead of specific forms or even shared administrative or regulative frameworks – if these values remain abstract and open enough to allow for compatibility with other fields. This is especially the case as, as research in critical heritage studies and the anthropology of policy has shown, local implementations of EU policy frameworks rely on such leeway to translate policy to local contexts (Müller, Sutter, and Wohlgemuth 2019), including the creativity of local heritage bureaucracies to interpret values (Bortolotto et al. 2020) and to deal with local frictions (Rabbiosi 2019). Understanding 'heritage management as human rights-based cultural practice' (Logan 2012), the disjuncture between supranational administrative frameworks and local practices of dealing with them is often glossed over by making use of flexibility and ambiguity (cf. Berger 2017). Abstract values, such as those entailed in current EU heritage policy frameworks, enable such flexibility and ambiguity to be strategically harnessed in external relations, to facilitate cooperation and to collaborate while bracketing contentious issues. In the sphere of heritage diplomacy, this can, however, also be understood to be a possible pitfall of a value-based approach to heritage in EU external relations. As the range of values attached to cultural heritage in Europe broadens to include diversity, specifically minority (Giglietto, Cioffi, and Bosswick 2022) and LGBTQ (Dierschow 2014) rights and as these values gain visibility in the European heritage discourse, they have the potential to restrict compatibility as they are contested in certain contexts.

Note

1. For example, events under the umbrella of the ENP Southern Neighbourhood in 2019 included urban planning, creative industries, and green technologies as topics related to cultural heritage.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

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