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EU Heritage Diplomacy: Entangled External and Internal Cultural Relations

Cultural heritage is an expanding yet contested area of EU policymaking, which has recently been identified as an instrument for EU international cultural relations. In this article, drawing from critical heritage studies and recent scholarship on heritage diplomacy, we see external and internal cultural relations as blurred and deeply entangled in EU heritage policies. Empirically, we focus on the European Heritage Label (EHL), a central EU heritage policy instrument. We explore how heritage practitioners at selected EHL sites and EU heritage policymakers understand and give meanings to international cultural relations and explain the role of cultural heritage in diplomatic endeavours. Our method is a dynamic frame analysis of 44 interviews conducted in the European Commission and at eleven EHL sites in ten European countries. The analysis identified four frames of international cultural relations in the data: relations with non-EU countries for peace and stability building, showcasing and branding of cultural heritage for foreign audiences, creating unity in Europe, and small-scale international heritage projects. These frames manifest different understandings of heritage diplomacy ranging from geoculture to shared heritage and from intercultural encounters to the use of soft power.

Keywords: European Union; European Heritage Label; international cultural relations; heritage diplomacy

Introduction

Cultural heritage is an expanding yet contested area of policymaking in the European Union (EU). The EU has been increasingly interested in the instrumental value of cultural heritage for building bridges between people, communities, and societies both inside and outside its borders, as well as between the whole Union and non-EU countries. This development of using cultural heritage for diplomatic purposes draws on EU cultural heritage policies. During the past few decades, the EU has introduced cultural heritage initiatives to advance its internal relations. The aim of these initiatives

is to enhance Europeans' feeling of belonging to the Union, the sense of unity in Europe, and the legitimacy of European cultural and political integration (Lähdesmäki 2016; 2019; Lähdesmäki and Mäkinen 2019; Lähdesmäki et al. 2020).

More recently, the EU has also developed its external relations through cultural heritage in response to global challenges and crises within, at, and beyond its borders. These challenges and crises range from political and armed conflicts to religious extremism and economic instability and from climate change and environmental catastrophes to humanitarian tragedies and social adversities. The EU has launched new policies, projects, and European networks to promote the use of culture and cultural heritage in relations with non-EU communities and countries (see Groth in this issue). These activities reflect different approaches to international cultural relations. One approach draws from cultural diplomacy – a term that the EU itself used in its policy discourse as recently as 2016 when the European Commission launched 'A global strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy'. To implement this global strategy, the EU founded the Cultural Diplomacy Platform based on a consortium of several European national cultural institutes and key European cultural organizations. A few years later, the Commission changed the term to cultural relations – probably because of the problematic history of cultural diplomacy as a concept and practice. Besides the goal of making the world (or at least the EU and countries addressed in its European Neighbourhood Policy) a better place, the EU's aims for its external relations are less altruistic: these policies are expected to 'contribute to making the European Union a stronger global actor' (EC 2016, 16) in the geopolitical and economic power play.

Our study focuses on the central EU cultural heritage action, the European Heritage Label (EHL). It was established in 2011 to strengthen the EU's internal

cultural relations. The preparatory documents of the action, though, note its potential for cooperation beyond EU member states (EC 2010). The European Parliament's and Council's decision on the action states its main objective is to strengthen European citizens' sense of belonging to the EU and reinforce intercultural dialogue (EP&C 2011, 3). The labelled sites are required to advance heritage-related collaboration and cultural relations in Europe, for example through common projects. After the action was established, the European Parliament encouraged the European External Action Service, the core institution facilitating the EU's foreign policy, to take account of the Label as 'a tool to be used in relations with third countries with a view to improving knowledge and the dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples' (EP 2012, 140). The recent EHL evaluation report (PPMI and EDUCULT 2019, 15), is critical of the sites' failure to emphasize this external dimension of cultural relations. At the same time, the report notes how the EHL sites are involved in 'international' collaboration. Even though the EHL is not a strategic instrument in the EU's international relations, it impacts them through creating a specific image of Europe, cultural heritage, and European values as their bases (Čeginskas and Kaasik-Krogerus, forthcoming). In this respect, the EHL can be viewed as a tool in the EU's cross-cutting strategy on culture in international relations.

In this article, we explore how EU cultural heritage policymakers and EHL actors understand and give meanings to international cultural relations and explain the role of cultural heritage in diplomatic endeavours. Our article draws on a frame analysis of 44 interviews conducted with EU officials in Brussels and cultural heritage professionals working in 11 EHL sites in ten countries. The research questions are: How do the interviewees frame international cultural relations? What relations do they talk about? What understandings of heritage diplomacy are constructed in their discussions?

First, we explain our theoretical framework. After this, we introduce our empirical data and methods and then conduct the frame analysis of the interviews with EU officials and heritage professionals. We conclude by discussing the frames and their potential in the context of heritage diplomacy.

Theoretical approaches to international cultural relations and heritage diplomacy

Following critical heritage studies, we understand cultural heritage as an inherently political phenomenon characterized by change and struggle over the meanings, ownership, and uses of heritage (e.g., Graham and Howard 2008; Harrison 2013; Lähdesmäki, Zhu, and Thomas 2019). Cultural heritage is thus a challenging political tool in international cultural relations as it can be used to strengthen connections and build bridges (Winter 2019), but it may simultaneously create boundaries and hierarchical power relations between people, communities, and states both intentionally and unintentionally (e.g., Smith 2006; Harrison 2013; Lähdesmäki 2017).

During the past decade, more scholars have explored international cultural relations with the concept of heritage diplomacy, which emerged from the notion of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is commonly defined as cultural relations, framed in self-promoting one-sided actions and soft power to impact on 'outsiders' and the conditions 'outside' one's own borders (Winter 2015). Culture has been deployed to increase soft power particularly in various nation-branding projects. Also heritage diplomacy is often connected to state-led or state-initiated high-level collaboration and the work of official networks and international organizations dealing with heritage – it is 'intrinsically connected with a country's foreign policy' (Winter 2015, 14–15). Several scholars have noted how discourses and practices of both cultural and heritage

diplomacy may echo (cultural) imperialism and power relations stemming from colonialism and Western exceptionalism (Reeves 2007; Nisbett 2013; Meskell 2015).

However, non-state actors also plan and implement heritage diplomacy projects. These actors include non-governmental organizations, networks of local stakeholders, and individual experts, such as archaeologists working at heritage sites (e.g., Luke and Kersel, 2012; Clarke 2018). Non-state heritage diplomacy can be considered as fostering people-to-people diplomatic relationships. For instance, Kersel and Luke (2015, 70, 79, 87) note how heritage diplomacy may function as a 'contact zone between people' enabling 'sources of knowledge and catalysts for new relationships – both within and between communities' and as an 'open and honest dialogue' where 'productive and lasting relationships emerge' (see also Chalcraft 2021; Čeginskas and Kaasik-Krogerus, forthcoming). In this view, heritage diplomacy involves cultural encounters that may facilitate intercultural dialogue based on the negotiation of common values and accounting for the past (Andersen, Clopot, and Ifversen 2020; Clopot, Andersen, and Oldfield 2022). While the same international power dynamics that govern cultural diplomacy are entangled in heritage diplomacy, critical heritage scholars have argued that a relational perspective of cultural flows and exchanges in commemorating and communicating the past to shape international relations can help overcome some of these effects (Winter 2015; see also Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022).

A key topic in the discussions on heritage diplomacy centres around the controversial idea of shared cultural heritage. Winter's (2015) seminal theorization identifies two approaches to this idea: is the cultural heritage perceived as shared between the parties in heritage diplomacy, or not? Identification of shared heritage may draw on more or less invented narratives of a joint history and cultural connectivity.

One example is the EU policy narrative on a shared cultural heritage in Europe (Lähdesmäki 2016; 2017). Not everyone approves this politically motivated narrative: as in any heritage narrative, while there is connectivity, there are also differences.

In practice, it may be difficult to clearly distinguish between domestic and international policy goals for international cultural relations: the outcomes of heritage diplomacy may support national policy objectives and strategies (Riviera 2015). To explore the complexity of cultural relations in diplomacy, Winter (2019) developed the concept of geoculture. Culture is, for Winter, a constant parameter of intertwined international and domestic power relations that blurs rigid distinctions between internal and external objectives, policies, and practices in states' international relations. In geoculture, disconnected strategies may find coherence in a grand narrative that not only serves international relations and domestic governance, but also makes the distinction between them irrelevant.

Indeed, we do not draw a rigid distinction between internal and external cultural relations, but instead perceive these dimensions as blurred and deeply entangled in EU cultural heritage policies and initiatives. This is because EU external policies have an impact on the EU's internal cultural policies and cultural relations, and EU internal policies impact its external relations in various ways. In today's global world, people, cultures, and ideas move quickly and the exchange between the 'European' and 'non-European' people takes place also within Europe (Helly 2012; Trobbiani 2017). Communicating European cultural heritage beyond the EU constructs it simultaneously within EU member states. In a political union such as the EU, whose foreign and cultural policy only supports or complements those of its member states, defining the internal and external proves extremely complex. Within individual member states, 'international' can refer to relations with any countries, while in the EU discourse, it

mainly means relations with non-EU countries. The EU's external and internal cultural relations should be perceived as two sides of the same coin.

Data and methods

To explore the conceptions and practices of international cultural relations in the context of cultural heritage, we analyse 44 interviews conducted as part of broad field research on the EHL. In November 2017 in Brussels, six EU officials were interviewed who worked on cultural heritage in the contexts of EU cultural policy, external relations, research, and/or specific heritage actions, including the EHL. Their roles ranged from directors to project managers in two directorates-general: Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and Research and Innovation. A core member of the EHL selection panel appointed by the European Commission was also interviewed. Besides these seven interviewees representing the EU discourse (and referred to below as EU actors), 37 heritage professionals working at eleven EHL sites in ten European countries (referred to as EHL actors) were interviewed in autumn 2017 and early 2018 at the following EHL sites: Alcide De Gasperi House Museum, Italy; Archaeological Park Carnuntum, Austria; Camp Westerbork, The Netherlands; European District of Strasbourg, France; Franz Liszt Academy of Music, Hungary; Great Guild Hall, Estonia; Hambach Castle, Germany; Historic Gdańsk Shipyard, Poland; Mundaneum, Belgium; Robert Schuman's House, France; and Sagres Promontory, Portugal. These sites range from archaeological ruins to educational and political institutes and from popular tourist attractions to small home museums. They were selected for the study because they are located in different parts of Europe, represent various historical periods

and focuses, and include exhibitions intended to tell their stories to a broad audience (about data selection and collection, see Lähdesmäki et al., 2020).

The semi-structured interviews focused on heritage-related topics, including questions on heritage diplomacy and intercultural dialogue (for interview questions see Lähdesmäki et al., 2020). The interviews were conducted mainly in English, but in some, other languages (Dutch, Estonian, French, German, Italian, and Portuguese) were used. All interviews were transcribed and translated into English. To do justice to non-native-speaking interviewees, the quotes from these interviews are sometimes slightly revised for syntax, grammar, and false cognates. These corrections do not affect the content of these interviews nor the results of the analyses. The interviews are coded to ensure the anonymity of the informants. The coded references E1–7 indicate the EU actors, while codes P1–37 refer to the EHL actors.

We examined the data with a frame analysis that draws from a social constructionist tradition of scrutinizing the creation and interpretation of meanings. Based on Goffman's early theoretical work on the method, we understand frames as 'principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them' (Goffman 1974, 10–11). For Goffman (ibid. 21), frames are essential tools for sense-making in all social situations and practices: they function as 'schemata of interpretation' that help people to 'locate, perceive, identify, and label' events and action. During the past decades, several scholars (e.g., Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Pan and Kosicki 1993) have developed Goffman's notion of frame by emphasizing its socially and culturally shared nature, its emergence in symbolic forms of expression (Reese 2001, 16–17), and its ability to assemble a narrative by culling a few elements from perceived reality (Rein and Schön 1996;

Entman 2007; van Hulst and Yanow 2016). The different emphases share the core idea that the frame is a principle for structuring the social world.

We see frames as dynamic instead of stable principles. Drawing on the criticism of conventional frame analysis (e.g., van Hulst and Yanow 2016; Björnehed and Erikson 2018), we focus our exploration of the data on the framing process, that is, we identify the construction of the meanings of international cultural relations in the interviews and the effects that this framing process has on the idea of heritage diplomacy. We also explore how the framing process reflects institutionalized views on international cultural relations and power dynamics. This exploration is important since 'frames are grounded in the institutions and discourses that sponsor them' (Björnehed and Erikson 2018, 112). People tend to use or adopt institutionalized frames, which their interpretations of social reality tend to follow and reproduce (Benincasa 2017, 83–84).

In the analysis, we compared our observations and interpretations of the interview transcriptions, mixed deductive and inductive structuring of perceived frames, and identified keywords, metaphors, and examples (Entman 1993; Wimmer and Dominick 2006; Linström and Marais 2012). To strengthen the reliability of our analysis five scholars read and re-read the data and regularly compared and jointly evaluated their observations, in a process of methodological triangulation. As a result of our collaborative work, we have constructed four interlinked frames and identified framing devices commonly used in them. Following the dynamic approach to frame analysis, we do not present our results as a rigid taxonomy (van Hulst and Yanow 2016) but discuss how the framing processes work in our data and to what effect. These frames help us to explain how international cultural relations and heritage diplomacy are conceptualized and practiced at European heritage sites.

Empirical analysis: Framing the international

Based on our data, we identify four interrelated frames through which the interviewees constructed international cultural relations in the context of EU heritage policy and the EHL. We name these frames: relations with non-EU countries for peace and stability building, showcasing and branding cultural heritage for foreign audiences, creating unity in Europe, and small-scale international heritage projects.

Our analysis seeks to cover and organize the complexity of views presented in the interviews. While our data do not include any major accounts that are at odds with the frames identified by us, the interviews bring out some single voices that may go beyond or lie between the frames. For instance, two interviewees, one from the Commission and one from an EHL site, approached international cultural relations at heritage sites by paying attention to colonial history and the challenges it creates for contemporary interaction between European and non-European actors (see Lähdesmäki 2021; Turunen 2021). Moreover, two EHL actors saw that their site is not practicing cultural diplomacy per se, but all interviewees were able to identify contacts, connections, and collaboration beyond national borders. The interviewees had different positions in their organizations, and thus they approached the topics of diplomacy and international cultural relations from varying points of view. The following four frames capture the most common and frequently occurring views and notions of international cultural relations in our data.

Relations with non-EU countries for peace and stability building

In our first frame, international cultural relations are constructed as an instrument for building peace and stability that includes collaboration between the EU and non-EU actors in and outside Europe. This frame structures the power of heritage in international relations as a response to existing or potential conflicts, particularly in the EU's neighbouring regions. In our data, these conflicts were conceived as causing instability and crises outside the EU that influence the Union, for instance by increasing the risk of terrorism. The interviewees repeatedly chose keywords such as crises, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace, and dialogue to determine international cultural relations in this frame. The attempts at building peace and stability abroad are simultaneously about strengthening peace and stability in the EU, manifesting the intermingling of external and internal goals (Riviera 2015).

This first frame was particularly common among EU actors. It relies on the institutionalized narrative typical for EU policy discourses that reproduce the founding narrative of the EU as a peace project (Mäkinen 2019). Using metaphors like 'cultural bridges', the frame underlines the EU as a patron of peace not only within but also beyond its borders. Here, cultural heritage has potential to construct dialogue and cooperation, build peaceful relations, and reconcile conflicts with and within countries of strategic interest to the EU. As one EU actor (E1) explained:

> you must use cultural heritage to build or share the interpretational history of the past, so you contribute to intercultural dialogue. That's what we did in Northern Ireland, in Kosovo, in Bosnia. That's what we are trying to do in the more complicated regions of the world right now.

These 'more complicated regions' included Mali, Iraq, and Syria, where the EU had recently participated in joint heritage protection projects with the Council of Europe and UNESCO. In this frame, heritage diplomacy was not only justified by the EU strategy for international cultural relations (EC 2016) but also policies of its project partners, particularly the Council of Europe and UNESCO. This frame enabled the EU to position itself as an altruistic patron concerned of conflicts and cultural heritage outside the EU, and to construct itself as a global geopolitical power player. Some of the interviewed EU actors acknowledged the EU's competition with China and the USA in the sphere of cultural relations. Through the EHL and other heritage-related activities, the EU seeks to mobilize selected aspects of culture and history and create cultural cooperation and people-to-people contacts in international relations. Moreover, it embeds these efforts in the grand narrative of the EU as a peace project. This exemplifies Winter's (2019) notion of geoculture as strategic exercise of geopolitical power.

This frame commonly referred to conservation projects involving tangible cultural heritage, such as archaeological sites, historical buildings, and monuments. In these projects, the EU offered non-EU countries scientific knowledge and expertise, material aid, and technical and financial support. This frame thus follows the way heritage diplomacy is commonly framed and understood (see Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022). The heritage-related projects built on a traditional Western notion of what cultural heritage is by emphasizing its material continuity and authenticity (see Stille 2002). Interviewees justified the need for such projects using keywords such as terrorism, illicit trafficking, and endangered cultural heritage, and frequently using phrases about European heritage expertise. The EU actors sometimes implied that EU countries were better able to preserve, conserve, and value cultural heritage; thus, underlining Eurocentric power relations (see Lähdesmäki 2021; Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022). An EHL actor (P36) gave a positive example of a conservation project enabling collaboration and dialogue between heritage professionals across borders:

The Moroccan delegation, they come to speak with us, how do you work, how, what are your problems, what do you do in terms of conservation, restoration. And we do the same with them. That's a kind of dialogue.

One of the EHL actors pointed out how the unequal power relations under colonialism continue to create challenges for relations between the EU and non-EU-countries: '[h]ierarchy of knowledges, hierarchy of cultures […] still exists' (P37), and this can lead to lack of empathy and xenophobia against refugees arriving Europe. According to her, Europeans do not always live up to the principles of conflict resolution and humanitarianism: even though 'solidarity and fraternity' should be part of 'European values […] it's still very difficult for us to put ourselves in the other people's position' (P37). She claims that through intercultural events and mutual learning, Eurocentrism, the harmful attitude of European superiority, and the comparisons and confrontations between 'our culture' and 'other culture' can be remedied. She suggests that the EHL should be expanded outside Europe for creating partnerships with the non-European areas enabling 'sharing experiences and debating ideas' (P37) in the spirit of exchange, dialogue, and reciprocity.

The EHL actors commonly emphasized cultural heritage as a sphere in which peace with non-EU countries is built through everyday practices, exchanges, and cooperation. For instance, one interviewee (P26) described how the Freedom Festival organized by the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk, Poland, showed movies from 'around the world … [including] a movie about the war in Donbass, about democracy in Belarus, we have something about Burma, we have something about the refugees in Calais'. Here, peace was built by discussing raising awareness of 'difficult' topics, crises, and conflicts at the heritage site. Moreover, the EHL actors often framed international cultural relations by emphasizing their collections and archived material related to countries outside the EU, which bring them into contact and dialogue with researchers and visitors from these countries.

Showcasing and branding cultural heritage for foreign audiences

The second frame constructs international cultural relations as a mode of showcasing cultural heritage to foreign audiences abroad or at the EHL site, facilitated or promoted through high-level governmental and foreign policy actors. This frame creates contradictory expectations for cultural heritage, since the EHL sites are perceived as arenas for showcasing simultaneously local, regional, national, and European cultural heritage. Showcasing cultural heritage and promoting its narrative and key meanings helps to make the site, region, country, or Europe, more visible on the international arena. This branding could be targeted simultaneously to domestic audiences and foreign audiences within other EU member states, and beyond the EU. Hence, the domestic and international objectives intermingle.

This frame highlights official diplomatic relations, using keywords such as embassy, consulate, ambassador, diplomat, government, image, and marketing. The EHL actors who used this frame acknowledged that their heritage sites had potential to create and maintain international cultural relations and 'to do a little more specific projects with different countries, different consulates, or embassies' (P32). The sites did this through contacts with regional and national authorities, diplomats, and official representatives from other countries. Utilizing these high-level contacts, the sites attempt to increase the visibility and recognition of their cultural heritage among broader international audiences and to raise the positive profile of its host community. The frame reveals national governments' interest in promoting activities that create or strengthen international cultural relations through cultural heritage. This frame thus reflects Winter's (2015, 1009) understanding of heritage *in* diplomacy that highlights 'the various ways in which heritage figures into existing diplomatic ties and policy structure built around trade, the bonds of colonialism, conflict or other strategic alliances'. The connections with high-level actors and their interests in using soft power

for cultural diplomacy may create an unequal power balance in international cultural relations.

In practice, such international relations concretized through projects creating exhibitions for foreign audiences or using the site as a venue for international meetings and high-level official visits. In this frame, the interviewees commonly explained such activities by referring to institutionalized narratives of national cultural heritage and history. For instance, an EHL actor (P23) from Hambach Castle, Germany said that 'there is a certain tradition for using this site for such exchanges', such as the Franco-German Conference, organized by the federal state government. In showcasing cultural heritage through exhibitions, the sites could adjust their heritage narratives for foreign audiences by putting site narratives in a broader context and utilizing internationally relevant themes. In addition, many of the EHL actors considered their multilingual practices and activities offered to foreign visitors to their sites as a contribution to building international cultural relations.

Creating unity in Europe

The third frame in our data highlights international cultural relations between people living in the EU to create intercultural understanding, unity, and cohesion within the EU member states vis-à-vis diverse international challenges. The EU and EHL actors similarly named these challenges as nationalism, populism, Euroscepticism, political polarization, migration, and Europeans' weak identification with Europe and/or the EU. This third frame seeks to respond to such challenges by emphasizing cultural heritage as a sphere for developing internal, transnational heritage diplomacy in the EU. As one of the EHL actors (P27) at the European Solidarity Center described this view: 'we can be

united and use culture as a common language' in the context of 'many crises in a political world'.

Here, the EU is framed as a central coordinator that provides platforms for developing cultural relations (such as the EHL) and a 'common language' between the member states. The EHL and its policy discourse offered the interviewees institutionalized understandings of cultural relations. In the EHL discourse, European integration is based on common values and ideals and Europe is both diverse and shares a cultural heritage. This was affirmed by an EHL actor (P27):

> I think that this tool [the EHL] is very, very important, because it really can show our unification, cultural unification, and also our difference, or difference between us as a part of unification, European unification.

This reflects Winter's (2015) notion of heritage *as* diplomacy drawing on shared heritage. The keywords interviewees chose, such as diversity, unity, tolerance, and solidarity, echoed the EHL policy discourse. This frame relied on the EU motto 'united in diversity' to construct the idea that shared cultural heritage and cultural values are formed through historical cultural exchanges between Europeans. This understanding of cultural heritage could 'reunite the countries who are really different, be it in terms of politics, etc', in the words of one EHL actor from Mundaneum, Belgium (P28). In their interviews, the EHL actors gave concrete examples of how they maintain international cultural relations in Europe through the EHL action. These examples included collaboration with other EHL sites and participation in the EHL networking events organized by the European Commission.

As the third frame draws on existing political discourses and the power that the EU has over European heritage professionals in the context of the EHL, it may reproduce fixed notions and practices of international cultural relations and hinder their transformation or reinterpretation. However, some EHL actors implied contestation with the official EU and EHL discourses on using cultural heritage for creating belonging to Europe by arguing that 'Europe overlaps only at times with the European Union' (P4) and that 'producing a European nation is not meaningful' (P21). Indeed, for some of them, international cultural relations involved attempts to broaden the current understanding of Europe and the European and to acknowledge the different realities in the EU member states. Here, international cultural relations centred on an open-minded and inclusive approach to different groups of people in Europe based on mutual respect, attempts to listen, and the willingness to work for unity based on participatory projects (on this notion of heritage diplomacy, see Clopot et al. 2022).

Although cultural heritage was commonly constructed in this frame as a unifying element, some interviewees pointed to Europe's dissonant heritage. In dealing with Europe's culturally diverse history, rather than creating an exclusive idea of 'the common European past', they wanted to 'find … a good middle way' between differing perspectives, including between the parties of the Balkan wars in the 1990s, or Estonian and Russian speakers in Estonia, as noted by an EHL actor (P19) from the Great Guild Hall, Estonia. Heritage was, thus, framed as useful for creating intercultural understanding within one country.

The third frame was also used to explore the potential of cultural heritage for including immigrants into Europe. The interviewees commonly underlined the past of European countries as interrelated and multicultural due to historical experiences of migration and cross-border mobility, including seeking refuge, and recognized that

mobility characterizes today's Europe. The EHL actors gave examples of using cultural heritage to support the inclusion of people fleeing wars or political conflicts in Eritrea, Belarus, Syria, and Chechnya and described 'how we can work with the refugees or immigrants from different backgrounds' (P26). Moreover, several EHL actors described how cultural heritage can foster antiracism and an open-minded attitude towards immigrants as well as increasing empathy and understanding towards people living outside Europe.

In this frame, the interviewees' views on migration shaped their idea of cultural heritage. As an EHL actor (P8) from the Archaeological Park Carnuntum, Austria noted: in the context of 'refugee crisis and integration and multicultural society', values constitute a more important shared heritage 'than buildings and concerts or churches'. Through global mobility, the international was embedded within the European, national, and local. Global mobility thus blurs the interviewees' notion of the boundaries between external and internal cultural relations.

Small-scale international heritage projects

Our fourth frame was chiefly developed by the EHL practitioners who identified small-scale collaboration through bilateral or multilateral international projects as essential to building international cultural relations, based on their practical experiences and work. This kind of collaboration included people-to-people connections between heritage professionals and their foreign counterparts working below the EU level and below national and regional governments. Besides heritage professionals, the main actors of such international cultural relations included universities, schools, cultural institutions,

civil society organizations, and international organizations and networks working on cultural heritage within and beyond the EU.

In the framing process, the interviewed EHL actors often referred to their host institution's webpages, brochures, and other promotion discourses and emphasized international activities inscribed in their institutional strategies. The international and diplomatic aspect was manifested through the core narratives of the sites. At the European Solidarity Center, they 'try to show to the public the power of cooperation between people and nations. And also power of talks and negotiations as a mean of resolve of social and political problems' (P27). A practitioner from Hambach Castle (P22) argued that because of the site's history, which is related to freedom and cooperation of various nationalities and social classes, 'I think this is a place, where you can meet and establish a connection'.

Choosing keywords such as collaboration, partners, projects, and networks and giving numerous examples of joint projects and connections, the interviewees underlined direct, practical, and personal international contacts and constructed international cultural relations as a commonplace practice. The interviewees described how the international manifested in their day-to-day work at the heritage sites, for instance, through multilingual communication to international audiences, international contents of their activities, and pragmatic contacts with foreign partners. As one of the EHL actors (P27) noted:

> I think that we, in fact, do... in the basic level cultural diplomacy. Showing this
> multilingual and multicultural context of solidarity and other values. So, I think
> that we are a part of cultural diplomacy.

Concretely, this included lending out items to other museums, participating in professional meetings abroad, collaborating in international heritage conservation projects, or organizing joint exhibitions with foreign partners. In the practices of this frame, international and 'non-international' connections were sometimes even difficult to distinguish.

Framing international cultural relations in terms of an everyday, pragmatic small-scale collaboration puts personal intercultural encounters at the heart of heritage diplomacy (see Andersen et al 2020; Clopot et al. 2020). This frame underlines how heritage diplomacy can facilitate people-to-people encounters at heritage sites or through common cultural heritage projects that help to create relationships between people from different countries and cultural backgrounds. These encounters were commonly based on daily practices at the heritage sites, such as audience engagement, knowledge exchange, and cooperation in research. Through such activities, the sites practiced informal heritage diplomacy based on personal contacts and interaction.

In sum, the interviews with EU actors and cultural heritage practitioners at the EHL sites indicate that cultural heritage has an important role in fostering international relations. Culture was even perceived as the most important arena of diplomacy: 'If diplomacy works in some sector, it is culture [...] In fact, it can be a pretty strong weapon if used wisely' (P21).

Conclusions

We have constructed four interrelated frames based on how the interviewees understood international relations: as 1) relations with non-EU countries for peace and stability building, 2) showcasing and branding cultural heritage for foreign audiences, 3) creating

unity in Europe, and 4) small-scale international heritage projects. The first frame was mainly used by the EU actors, the second and fourth frames mainly by the EHL actors, and the third frame by both interviewee groups. Based on our analysis, discussions related to different frames constructed slightly different understandings of heritage diplomacy, and heritage was endowed with various meanings and conceptions. The discussions emphasized different level actors from high-level officials to individuals involved in the grassroots practices at the sites.

The first frame constitutes heritage diplomacy as a response to existing or potential conflicts, instability, and crises, particularly in the EU's neighbouring regions. It emphasizes tangible heritage, its material continuity and authenticity, and indicates a conservational approach to cultural heritage underlining aid and expertise. In this understanding, heritage is a 'thing' rather than a controversial political process. In the first frame, ideal heritage-based international relations are constituted by partnership, knowledge creation, and teaching and learning experience in the context of heritage governance. Although seeking to build bridges, this form of international relations does not necessarily even seek to create equal partnership between all parties. While heritage projects can offer mutual benefits in terms of promoting tourism or increasing employment, this framing may create or strengthen existing divisions due to historically unequal power relations (e.g., colonial regimes). Manifesting the understanding of cultural diplomacy as soft power, this frame strengthens the EU's role in global geopolitics. In the second frame too, cultural diplomacy is soft power: diplomacy means branding the heritage site and its local, regional, national, and European surroundings for domestic and foreign audiences.

In the third and fourth frame, however, international relations are more equal. Instead of teaching, helping, or showcasing, the focus is on collaboration, mutual

exchange, as well as creating and finding common denominators in the sphere of culture and beyond. The third frame perceives cultural heritage as a platform for developing internal, transnational heritage diplomacy in the EU and creating intercultural understanding, unity, and cohesion within the EU or one country. It implies that international relations involve negotiating a balance between unity and diversity, and highlights the intangible aspect of heritage. Since this frame draws on the idea of shared cultural heritage – and values – in Europe, it can be seen as an example of heritage *as* diplomacy (Winter 2015). For this process to succeed, interviewees stressed the need for listening and mutual respect (on listening in diplomacy, see Turunen & Kaasik-Krogerus in this volume).

The fourth frame shows how international cultural relations between the EU and the countries and regions beyond its borders are performed and enacted in everyday practices and personal and intercultural exchange. It thus constructs a notion of informal heritage diplomacy based on facilitating people-to-people encounters. This mundane aspect, combined with a view of heritage as unpolitical, makes international cultural relations seem like an 'apolitical' everyday process. As a result, heritage and culture may in some cases become the key diplomatic sphere, especially when dealing with difficult issues or countries. In these cases, cultural heritage can build bridges, but this does not address the complex questions related to the unequal power relations or the politics inherent in cultural heritage and international relations.

The first and the third frames are strongly institutionalized in the grand narrative of the EU as a peace project. These two frames emphasize the role of cultural heritage in peace building and strengthen the profile of the EU as a 'peace builder' both within and beyond the Union. The interviewees extended the EU motto, 'united in diversity' beyond its boundaries by framing the 'European' as wider than the Union. Indeed,

several frames intermingled the domestic and international objectives of heritage diplomacy. Hence, the analysis shows that the EU's external and internal cultural relations can be perceived as two sides of the same coin. This comes close to the concept of geoculture, in which Winter (2019) finds it impossible and irrelevant to make a clear distinction between international and domestic relations. In the case of the EU as a multilevel actor, international may refer to the relations within the EU as well as beyond.

In all frames, the international condition is either seen as a reality or an ideal still to be achieved or tapped, but in either case, it carries a strong normative impetus as desirable. Accordingly, in only a few concrete cases did interviewees feel the need to draw a distinction between 'domestic' and 'international'. All frames mediate willingness to build bridges and facilitate collaboration as intrinsic to international cultural relations. This does not necessarily actualize in practice due to the inequality inherent in these relations.

The four frames in our research can be understood as different approaches to heritage diplomacy in EU heritage initiatives. The same actors could use several frames to explain the activities at EHL sites and the functions and roles of cultural heritage in general. While all interviewees agreed with the importance of international contacts, connections, and collaboration, the data include some contestations between the EU and EHL actors' expectations for heritage diplomacy (see Lähdesmäki 2021). The EU actors underlined that the EU was the main player in EU heritage diplomacy, implemented in third countries jointly through EU delegations and local actors in EU-funded heritage-related programmes, actions, and initiatives (see Čeginskas and Lähdesmäki in this issue), while for the EHL actors, heritage diplomacy typically meant projects that they implement independently with their partners at their heritage sites.

Our analysis showed that the EHL actors' understanding of heritage diplomacy displays the tension between showcasing the EU and its values to foreign audiences on the one hand and engaging in bottom-up projects of international heritage collaboration on the other. The same tension characterises the EU's current international cultural relations policy (Dâmaso 2021; see also Čeginskas and Lähdesmäki in this issue). In contrast, EU actors referred to the political instrumentalization of cultural heritage for building peace and stability, which repeats the EU's cross-cutting approach on culture in its policy discourse. These understandings reflect the EU's wavering strategy on international cultural relations, which alternates between short-term approaches of communicating positive images and ideas about the EU and long-term approaches based on dialogue and cooperation through building cultural relations between the EU and third countries (see Dâmaso 2021, 22–23). It is striking that both EU actors and cultural practitioners working at EHL sites framed heritage diplomacy primarily in terms of strengthening the internal unity of the EU. This suggests that both official actors and cultural practitioners in Europe interpret the relevance of cultural heritage chiefly in the context of the EU's internal integration and identity policy rather than foreign policy. This problem is addressed in a recent report that identifies negotiation between the member states' different national interests and the EU's common interest into one joint strategy as one of the biggest challenges for the development of the EU's international cultural relations (Dâmaso 2021, 16, 22–23).

The international world order and especially the EU's international relations have profoundly changed due to the Russian military attack on Ukraine after our fieldwork data was gathered. This means that different narratives and understandings presented here are challenged by more recent events. It remains to be seen whether and how the grand narrative of the EU as a peace project will be revised in the context of

this war. By autumn 2022, more than 7.2 million people have fled the war in Ukraine to other countries (UNCHR.org). Consequently, the 'refugee question' in Europe has clearly become more urgent and complicated since 2014, when the continent faced the arrival of increased numbers of refugees and migrants from non-European countries. For instance, Central and East European countries, which were reluctant to accept those refugees, have now become the main hosts of the people leaving the war in Ukraine. Last but not least, it is clear that the war has completely ruined political relations between the EU and Russia for quite some time. It remains to be seen what the potential of heritage diplomacy will be for changing this situation when the war ends.

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