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Sun Park

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The ambivalence in the ambiguity of UNESCO’s cultural policy remit: a structural description of the Common Heritage of Mankind in the Cultural Diversity Convention

Sun Park

The Department of Sociology, The University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

ABSTRACT
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has adopted cultural Conventions since the 1950s, specifying aspects of culture that its Member States should protect and promote as the ‘Common Heritage of Mankind (CHM)’. This article argues that UNESCO has accumulated the concepts of the CHM in four cultural Conventions into the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Cultural Diversity Convention), making UNESCO’s cultural policy remit ‘ambiguous’. This article further posits that the accumulation of the concepts of the CHM into the Cultural Diversity Convention lies in a rhetorical structure; The rhetorical structure allows the Convention to set ambivalent policy agendas encompassing the protection of past culture and the promotion of contemporary cultural industries. A historical analysis of UNESCO’s five cultural Conventions demonstrates that UNESCO has developed its description of the CHM and the following policy ambit to respond to social changes in the cultural sector as well as the political relationships of its Member States and other international organisations. The discussion about the use of cultural description to extend UNESCO’s cultural policy ambit sheds new light on the ambiguity of cultural policy in the context of how to use historical knowledge of culture.

Introduction
UNESCO has used the term ‘Common Heritage of Mankind’ as a key concept within its cultural policy agendas. The Common Heritage of Mankind is a notion originally used in the field of international law on natural resources such as the high seas, Antarctica and the Moon, where it forbids national claims on those spaces and their resources (Monden and Wils 1986). UNESCO uses the concept in a cultural sense, understanding that heritage meaningful to humanity should be preserved and promoted by humanity’s collective actions (Droit 2005). Additionally, in 1954, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflicts (hereinafter the ‘Hague Convention’), the first major international legal instrument that understands the Common Heritage of Mankind in the context of cultural property, including artistic objects (Monden and Wils 1986).

Following the Hague Convention, UNESCO has continued to adopt cultural Conventions that its Member States ratify to be State Parties implementing the Conventions. Compared to UNESCO’s other normative instruments, such as its Recommendations and Declarations, the
Convention has the highest legal position; in that, it requires a two-thirds majority vote (UNESCO 1945). As of March 2022, UNESCO has five main Conventions in the cultural sector, including 1) the Hague Convention; 2) the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property adopted in 1970 (hereinafter the ‘Illicit Trafficking Convention’); 3) the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in 1972 (hereinafter the ‘World Heritage Convention’); 4) the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in 2003 (hereinafter the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention’); and 5) the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted in 2005 (hereinafter the ‘Cultural Diversity Convention’). Each of these Conventions has been studied by the following researchers in relation to their main international policy agendas and relevant issues. For instance, the practical influences of the Hague Convention on heritage protection in armed conflict (Van der Auwera 2013), the legal efficacy of the Illicit Trafficking Convention to prevent illicit trades of artistic objects (Veres 2014), the politicisation of the World Heritage List system (Meskell 2013; Bertacchini, Liuzza, and Meskell 2017) and the commodification of World Heritage sites (Bertacchini, Saccone, and Santagata 2011), the paradigm shift from tangible culture to intangible and viable culture with the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (Bortolotto 2007) and the culture-development nexus in the Cultural Diversity Convention (Hahn 2006; Wiktor-Mach 2020).

Rather than discussing the international implications of each of these Conventions in turn, we will take a wider perspective to examine UNESCO’s five cultural Conventions to demonstrate how UNESCO has developed its cultural policy remit since the 1950s. From the perspective of historical institutionalism (Fioretos 2011), this historical study of UNESCO’s cultural Conventions reveals the organisation’s change and continuity in reshaping its former cultural policy agendas, as a means of responding to politically, socially and technologically important events relating to UNESCO’s mandate to construct and maintain international peace by implementing its international cultural policies. The change and continuity of the policy agendas of UNESCO’s five cultural Conventions can explicate how UNESCO has built its current remit of cultural policies.

To do so, the article will utilise a theoretical framework that considers cultural policy agenda to consist of cultural and political actions towards various organisations’ conceptualised culture, and that this conceptualisation functions as a structure for policymakers to specify the purposes, targets and measures to protect and/or promote the cultural field. Considering the function of the conceptualisation of culture in setting cultural policy agendas, the article focuses on the concepts of the Common Heritage of Mankind and policy actions that each of UNESCO’s cultural Conventions stipulates. The political relationship among UNESCO Member States and UNESCO’s clout in the international organisation sector will be examined as factors that have led UNESCO to extend its policy ambit since the 1950s.

In studying the extension of UNESCO’s policy remit, this article describes how UNESCO’s policy ambit has created ‘ambiguity’ in the context of policy studies. Ambiguity in this instance referring to a flexibility and multiplicity about the perception of knowledge and phenomena surrounding policy issues (Cairney 2012; Zahariadis 2014). The notion of ambiguity can be compared with ‘uncertainty’, an imprecision or a lack of quality and/or quantity of information about political and policy issues (Cairney 2012; Martinez et al. 2005). Based on the conceptual framework of ‘ambiguity’, we use the term ‘ambivalence’ to indicate a form of the ambiguity of policy.

The article presents how UNESCO has accumulated the concepts and issues of culture in adopting its cultural Conventions, thus showing the ambiguity of its policy remit since the 1950s. The article argues that the Cultural Diversity Convention, the latest cultural Convention of UNESCO as of March 2022, uses a rhetorical structure that allows itself to encompass contradictory cultural policy agendas, forming an ‘ambivalent’ cultural policy. The case study of two Free Trade Agreements of the State Parties to the Cultural Diversity Convention will show how such contradictory cultural policy agendas work under the Cultural Diversity Convention. The role of assembling multiple concepts of
culture in developing a policy remit implies that cultural policy researchers and policymakers need to adopt multi-dimensional approaches with which to describe ‘culture’, especially when they deal with cultural policies covering diverse disciplines and other policy areas.

The partial ambiguity of UNESCO’s cultural policy remit: from the Hague Convention to the Intangible Heritage Convention

UNESCO was established in 1945 after World War II, as a United Nations special agency to build international peace by promoting collaboration among its Member States through education, science and culture (UNESCO 1945). This organisational mission explains the underlying meaning of the Common Heritage of Mankind. Julian Huxley, the first Director-General of UNESCO (1887–1975), argued for a philosophical approach, ‘scientific world humanism’, in his pamphlet ‘UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy’ (Huxley 1946). Huxley claims that UNESCO should tie its Member States into a unified way of using conceptual and normative knowledge, for example, which this paper argues, what is meant by culture.

UNESCO has expressed this emphasis on the conceptually and normatively unified knowledge of its Member States into the terminologies, ‘common heritage’ and ‘(hu)mankind’. UNESCO uses the terms to underscore the intellectual and cultural development that the human species has collectively achieved. The terminologies ‘common heritage’ and ‘(hu)mankind’ function as restoring the lost sense of common humanity after World War II and the Cold War (Droit 2005; Duedahl 2011). To consolidate the notion of the Common Heritage of Mankind, UNESCO’s 1947 General Conference instructed its Director-General to produce books about the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind and their mutual contributions to the common heritage (UNESCO 1948). As part of this, UNESCO operated the International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind from the 1950s to the 1970s to publish ‘History of Humanity’. The seven-volume series cover a universal history and progress of humans from prehistory to the 20th century, beyond the ethnic, economic, social and cultural difference among nation-states (Robin and Steffen 2007; Betts 2015). In this vein, UNESCO’s notion of the Common Heritage of Mankind is a rhetorical and institutional tool to replace the nationalistic and colonial idea of the cultural difference of nation-states, with the idea of cultural diversity comprising the whole culture of one human species. Part of the UNESCO’s normative instruments concerning the Common Heritage of Mankind is the adoption of cultural Conventions.

The cultural Conventions that UNESCO adopted from the 1950s to the 1970s had a consistent cultural policy agenda of preserving historical tangible heritage. One of the main backgrounds of UNESCO’s cultural policy in the 1950s was that World War II destroyed buildings and artistic properties. This international affair seems to have urged UNESCO to discuss physical properties damaged during armed conflict as a means of maintaining international peace. UNESCO adopted the Hague Convention in 1954 which considers cultural property – movable/immovable property with great importance for all mankind (UNESCO 1954) – as the Common Heritage of Mankind. This idea of ‘culture’ reveals its roots in artistic products as physical evidence of a linkage between nations’ aesthetic expressions and national spirituality. UNESCO problematised certain areas where original owners of cultural properties shall preserve them, the owners’ territories. The Hague Convention stipulates this issue in Chapters One and Two. Article 4, for example, specifies that High Contracting Parties undertake to respect cultural property situated within their own territory, and the territories of others, during armed conflict (UNESCO 1954).

The emphasis on the physicality of artistic products and the territorial boundaries where artistic products should be located, was sustained in the 1970 Illicit Trafficking Convention. Art property theft was prevalent in post-World War II, especially at the end of the 1960s (Veres 2014). When, against UNESCO’s mandate of international peace, private collectors and trafficking from the North illegally imported art from the South, triggering conflict between the two regions (UNESCO 2021b). Given that small-sized art properties are easy trafficked, the Illicit Trafficking Convention includes
collections of historical objects, paintings, postage, stamps and archives as ‘cultural property’ (UNESCO 1970). Therefore, in the Preambles of the Illicit Trafficking Convention it was necessary for UNESCO to demand restitution from its Member States’ concerning illegally exported properties.

UNESCO developed international cooperation for preserving cultural sites in the World Heritage Convention in 1972. In 1959, the governments of Egypt and Sudan requested UNESCO’s support to protect the Abu Simbel temples from the construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt. Solidarity to preserve the temples led to other heritage-conservation international campaigns (UNESCO 2021c) that systemised international cooperation to protect national heritage sites and buildings as humanity’s universal heritage. Risk factors do not only include international conflicts and war, but even general damage, such as housing and commercial development, and natural disasters (WHC 2022). Also, in the World Heritage Convention, a territorial boundary functions as a tool to show national jurisdiction of UNESCO Member States, acknowledging national authority that can nominate and manage their artistic products and heritage sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. UNESCO combined the previous issue of national ownership of art properties in the Hague Convention and the Illicit Trafficking Convention, in the context of armed conflict and illegal import of art products, with the new issue of international cooperation for the preservation of national heritage in general, thus forming a new agenda in the World Heritage Convention. This Convention operates with ten criteria to internationally recognise the ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ of national heritage sites. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO advises its State Parties on how to implement the World Heritage Convention under their national laws.

In this vein, the three Conventions summarised above, consistently share a policy agenda that tangible artistic products should be preserved by the State Parties to maintain international peace. This overarching agenda of cultural policy focuses on protecting the tangible culture of each nation via artistic products, including small antiquities, buildings or a group of buildings and heritage sites. Policy measures targeting that specific scope of culture are also unified under the umbrella of the preservation and protection of tangible culture which has been made in and transmitted from the past. Motivations to prepare and adopt each Convention were contingent upon different international cultural sector issues, but over the years the type of culture that UNESCO dealt with expanded from artistic buildings and objects in armed conflicts and trafficking, to historic and cultural buildings and sites in general, within the idea of tangible historical culture. The consistent cultural policy agenda of the three Conventions shows that it was not until the 1970s that UNESCO’s cultural policy remit became ambiguous.

UNESCO discussed a new concept of culture from the 1980s in its policy agenda of the Common Heritage of Mankind. Of course one cannot clearly pinpoint a particular year as the exclusive moment that UNESCO changed the notion of the Common Heritage of Mankind. But this paper posits that there were critical junctures that triggered UNESCO to actively consider alternatives to understanding culture, compared to its previous concepts of culture. For example, in 1982, UNESCO held the World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City, with 126 participant countries out of the 158 Member States redefining culture to contain spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features (UNESCO 2021d). This emphasis on the ‘right of peoples to self-determination and existence’ (UNESCO 1982, 7) implies the fundamental right to define ‘who we are and how to live our lives’. This anthropological understanding of culture was possible because of the non-western Member States of UNESCO, especially from Central and Eastern Europe, that had been independent after the end of the Cold War and decolonisation and started to join UNESCO as officially independent countries (Hüfner 2000). These new Member States of UNESCO – which needed to express their sovereign national identities – conceptualised culture through the notion of identity expressions. UNESCO benefited from accepting non-Western countries’ identity-based concept of culture into their political agenda, as a means of building international peace.
This notional shift from ‘culture as physical artistic products’ to ‘culture as identity expressions’ led the State Parties of the World Heritage Convention to criticise that the Convention focused on the tangibility of heritage, which western elites in the field of archaeology had tended to shape, so-called ‘authorised heritage discourse (Smith 2006)’. This was part of the decisive moments that UNESCO accepted broader frameworks to recognise culture, followed by the adoption of the ‘Living Human Treasures Systems’ proposed by the Republic of Korea in 1993, the ‘Nara Document on Authenticity’ adopted by ICOMOS, an advisory group of UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in 1994, a ‘Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral Heritage of Humanity Programme’ led by Morocco in 1998, and the adoption of the ‘Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity’ in 2001.

This gradual acceptance of the notion of intangible culture triggered UNESCO to adopt the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention in 2003. But in describing the intangible cultural heritage of humanity that should be safeguarded by the universal will and the common concern of State Parties, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention does not discard the previous idea of culture encompassing physical artistic products that the Hague, Illicit Trafficking and World Heritage Conventions focus on. Conversely, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention adds the intangible to the physicality of culture, in defining intangible cultural heritage as:

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith [Emphasis added] – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage

(UNESCO 2020, 5)

This evolutionary definition of the Common Heritage of Mankind implies that UNESCO recognised, at this stage, the notional value of physical artistic products. Consequently, UNESCO accumulated the idea of culture ‘as historical and artistic products’ as well as ‘as identity expressions’ in its conceptualisation of the Common Heritage of Mankind. This shows the conceptual flexibility and multiplicity between two ideas of culture. UNESCO had recognised the physical aspect of culture in resolving its past policy issues related to historical and cultural objects and sites, such as armed conflicts, illicit trafficking and the international cooperative system for heritage preservation in general. Along with UNESCO’s old knowledge of physical culture that was incorporated in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, the issue of national ownership was useful for each Member State to institutionally strengthen its national identity in the UNESCO community. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention addressed the notion of identity expressions, requesting the State Parties to respect different identities comprising the international community. Alternatively, the purposive actions of the Hague, Illicit Trafficking, World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions are consistent with the preservation of culture transmitted from the past, i.e. the protection of historical and cultural objects and sites and the safeguarding of traditional knowledge and practices. Thus, UNESCO’s cultural policy remit until the Intangible Cultural Convention was partly ambiguous concerning the conceptual flexibility and multiplicity between artistic products and identity expressions.

The further ambiguity of UNESCO’s cultural policy remit: the Cultural Diversity Convention

The scope of UNESCO’s cultural policy agendas until the Intangible Heritage Convention are partly ambiguous because the purposive actions for culture are consistent with the preservation of culture from the past. UNESCO further developed its cultural policy agenda with the Cultural Diversity Convention in 2005, making UNESCO’s cultural policy remit more ambiguous. As part of the background of the Cultural Diversity Convention, the international market expanded for the cultural industries with globalisation and the development of media technologies from the 1990s, causing the discussion of artistic products and services to spread to international policy areas that were not explicitly named the ‘cultural sector’ but did relate to this sector. The World Trade Organisation (hereinafter the ‘WTO’) addressed arising issues of artistic products and services. The WTO
recognised the non-economic value of artistic products and services, by stipulating cultural exceptional Articles, including screen quota, in the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (WTO 1994). But this trade organisation unsurprisingly maintained its economic perspective on artistic products and services, by encouraging its member countries to import and export products and services in the cultural industries. This situation led France and Canada to argue more strongly for cultural exceptionalism, adopting a defensive position against the impact of globalisation on their national identity. France and Canada tried to find an international organisation that they were able to lead to shaping international agendas of cultural industries, with cultural exceptionalism. This can be considered ‘venue-shopping’, a strategy that policy-makers encountering obstacles in their policy-making seek new venues for a more amenable policy-making to their preferences (Guiraudon 2000).

Consequently, these two countries persuaded UNESCO to invent a legal measure for protecting cultural industries from the WTO’s economic logic, submitting a proposal of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. At UNESCO’s General Conference in November 2001, the proposal was unanimously adopted, which was a starting step toward the Cultural Diversity Convention (Azzi 2005).

Not only did the WTO motivate UNESCO to deal with the issues of the relationship between non-economic development and cultural diversity in the cultural industries, but the United Nations’ (hereinafter the ‘UN’) Millennium Development Goals (hereinafter the ‘MDGs’) in 2000 seems to have overwhelmed UNESCO. I argue this is the case because the MDGs did not specify a goal that explicitly referred to culture: the UN did not discuss the role of culture on the MDGs until their first review in 2005 (UNESCO 2017). This lack of consideration of culture in the MDGs connotes that UNESCO’s main policy area, culture, had little clout in international debates about world development in the context of globalisation, in the early 2000s. This institutional tension may have urged UNESCO to conceptualise its version of world development in a cultural context, by adopting the Cultural Diversity Convention.

The Cultural Diversity Convention stipulates that ‘cultural diversity forms a common heritage of humanity’ (UNESCO 2005, 1). The Convention uses the notion of the ‘diversity of cultural expressions’ which includes the economic and non-economic flourishment of mankind. Namely, the exchange of human beings’ artistic products – embracing the WTO’s trade logic for the cultural industries. This industry-oriented perspective of dealing with culture attracted UNESCO Member States that sought to boost economic benefits from their cultural and creative industries. The diversity of cultural expressions also signifies humans’ intellectual and spiritual expressions, in line with the fundamental rights embedded in the UN’s MDGs. As has been discussed earlier, it was helpful for UNESCO to use the idea of ‘culture as identity expressions’ in the Intangible Heritage Convention, when accepting non-Western countries’ concepts of culture. This notional benefit of ‘culture as identity expressions’ is also appropriate for the Cultural Diversity Convention to attract UNESCO Member States with a defensive attitude towards global cultural markets.

Conjointly, the Cultural Diversity Convention’s conceptualisation of the Common Heritage of Mankind as the diversity of cultural expressions, adds a new concept of culture. It includes artistic products and services that people in the current era produce and consume, such as entertainment and the contemporary arts. Even though UNESCO has used the idea of artistic products in its cultural policy agendas from the 1950s, such as historical and cultural objects and heritage sites, ‘contemporary’ artistic products and services are new concepts that stem from the context of the everchanging cultural and creative industries. Thus, UNESCO accumulates the antiquated idea of ‘culture as tangible and intangible culture produced and transmitted from the past’ with the new concept of ‘culture as contemporary artistic products and services’. Thus, producing a comprehensive idea of ‘culture as the economic and non-economic development of humanity’. Propounding these three concepts of culture, the Cultural Diversity Convention has two main policy agendas: the protection of each country’s identity and knowledge from the past, and the promotion of contemporary artistic products, both of which seek to strengthen the economic and non-economic development of humanity. These two policy agendas seem contradictory because the former focuses on the status quo of culture in the
past, while the latter concentrates on the open exchange of contemporary culture. These contradictory purposive actions about different aspects of culture make UNESCO's cultural policy remit more ambiguous than UNESCO’s policy scope, until the Intangible Heritage Convention emerged in 2003.

In summary, UNESCO accumulated three main cultural policy agendas from the 1950s to the 2000s: 1) the preservation of past artistic products, 2) the preservation of traditional identity and knowledge from the past for the development of humanity, 3) and the promotion of contemporary artistic products for the development of humanity. These multiple concepts of culture and purposive actions for culture, have formed UNESCO’s ambiguous cultural policy ambit. Along with this ambiguity at the level of UNESCO’s whole cultural policy remit, the next section shows the ambiguity of UNESCO’s particular policy agendas, by examining how the Cultural Diversity Convention can encompass contradictory agendas.

The Ambivalence in the Cultural Diversity Convention

The structural description of culture in the Cultural Diversity Convention

The third section explicates the political and institutional background of how the Cultural Diversity Convention utilises the three cultural concepts in describing cultural diversity as the Common Heritage of Mankind: artistic products, identity expressions and the development of humanity. These multiple ideas of culture form two main contradictory purposive actions in the Convention: to protect past culture for non-economic development, and to promote contemporary culture for economic development. This section examines a descriptive structure that correlates these three concepts of culture in the Cultural Diversity Convention. Although the Convention does not explicitly define the term ‘culture’, some Preambles and Articles of the Convention imply a relationship of the three aspects of culture: culture as ‘content’, ‘conduits’ and ‘consequences’. The third Preamble of the Convention describes one consequence of cultural diversity as being the development of individuals’ capacities and societal condition:

> Being aware that cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations

**UNESCO 2005, 1**

Individual and societal developments from cultural diversity have non-economic and economic value, as described in Article 2(5):

> Since culture is one of the mainsprings of development, the cultural aspects of development are as important as its economic aspects, which individuals and peoples have the fundamental right to participate in and enjoy

**UNESCO 2005, 8**

Thus, the Convention regards individual and societal developments with economic and non-economic value as ‘consequences’ that arise from the diversity of culture and cultural expressions. The Convention also describes culture as ‘content’ and ‘conduits’ that produce economic and non-economic development for individuals and society. Article 1(G) says that cultural products, activities and services convey identity, values and meaning:

> to give recognition to the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning

**UNESCO 2005, 7**

Article 1(G) implies that ‘culture as content’ includes identity, values and meaning – equivalent to the Common Heritage of Mankind in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention – which are delivered by ‘culture as conduits’, such as artistic products which are equivalent to the Common Heritage of Mankind mentioned in the Hague, Illicit Trafficking and World Heritage Conventions. Thus, this article argues that the Cultural Diversity Convention cognises culture in a structural description as follows: the economic and non-economic developments of individuals and society enabled by identity expressions, and which artistic products convey.
The Cultural Diversity Convention also reveals the purposive actions surrounding this structural notion of culture. Article 1(A) stipulates that one of the objectives of the Convention is ‘to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions’ (UNESCO 2005, 6). Considering the Convention’s structural description of ‘culture as consequences’ requires that ‘culture as conduits’ and ‘culture as content’ embedded in the conduits both flourish. The Convention intends that these conduits should thrive, in so far as they should not lose the spirit and value of their diverse content, including national identity. This proviso can further specify Article 1(A): that ‘to protect the diversity of cultural expressions’ is to protect culture as content, ‘to promote the diversity of cultural expressions’ is to promote culture as conduits. The laying out of these bifurcated policy agendas indicates that both should be implemented by State Parties to the Convention.

This article describes these contradictory agendas of the Convention as an ‘ambivalent’ policy. If we pause to define this for a moment, the meaning of ambivalence etymologically originates from the combination of two words, the Latin ambi or ambio which means ‘around or both’ in English, and valentia which means ‘value’ (Lorenz-Meyer 2001). In the field of policy studies, Hoggett (2006) argues that public organisations have a wide range of beneficiaries that they need to serve, and cannot help but embrace various conflicting needs of the public and their beneficiaries. Policymakers’ ambivalence, in Hoggett’s terms, refers to impartiality that seeks a holistic perspective, for all-inclusive policymaking at least, because if policymakers take an all-inclusive policy, it can support the status quo of their organisational power. Hoggett’s discussion of the administrative nature of public organisations, however, cannot demonstrate ambivalence in a policy, as a conceptually necessary factor for policymakers to complete a structural understanding of culture in response to political and social changes. This conceptually necessary ambivalence can be further explained by William Empson’s Seven Types of Ambiguity (1963). Empson’s fourth type of ambiguity is ‘two or more meanings of a statement do not agree among themselves, but combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind’ (Empson 1963, 133). By seizing Empson’s idea of ambiguity, the article defines the ambivalence of a cultural policy – a type of the ambiguity of policies – as a purposeful policy logic in the Cultural Diversity Convention that embraces contradictory agendas to constitute measures framed by a structured understanding of culture. The next subsection illustrates how this ambivalence is implemented in the Cultural Diversity Convention.

**State Parties’ contradictory cultural policies under the ambivalence of the 2005 convention**

This subsection explores how the State Parties use the structural description of culture in the Cultural Diversity Convention, based on the three aspects of culture (i.e. culture as ‘content’, ‘conduits’ and ‘consequences’). To do so, the subsection analyses the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union (hereinafter ‘CETA’) and the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea (hereinafter the ‘EU-Korea FTA’). It could be argued that the discussion on trade agreements seems irrelevant to examine cultural policy. But the case study of the two trade agreements allows us to examine how the State Parties implement the Convention. Firstly, the two trade agreements explicitly reference the Convention in their Preambles, compared to other international or regional trade agreements in which the other State Parties to the Convention have signed. Given that Preambles in treaties function as the principles to guide their trade measures, CETA and the EU-Korea FTA show that the EU, Canada and the Republic of Korea, use the concepts and policy actions of the Convention, at least partially, as the basic principles of their trade agreements. A Preamble of CETA, for instance, states:

AFFIRMING their commitments as parties to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions [...] to support their cultural industries for the purpose of strengthening the diversity of cultural expressions, and to preserve their cultural identity, including through the use of regulatory measures and financial support  
(Official Journal of the European Union 2017, 24)
In the EU-Korea FTA, a Preamble of the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation (hereinafter the ‘PCC’) says that:

AFTER HAVING RATIFIED the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions [...] intending to effectively implement the UNESCO Convention and to cooperate within the framework of its implementation, building upon the principles of the Convention and developing actions in line with its provisions (Official Journal of the European Union 2011, 1418)

Not only do the two trade agreements explicitly show that part of their objectives involves implementing the Cultural Diversity Convention, in addition the international trading of artistic products and services demonstrates the extent to which countries circumscribe the cultural sector, separating it from other trade sectors. These trade agreements enable us to examine how the EU, Canada and the Republic of Korea adopt specific ideas and approach issues of culture, depending on shared concerns, such as globalisation and national circumstances, under the context of the Cultural Diversity Convention. Therefore, this article compares CETA to the EU-Korea FTA to explore how their contradictory cultural policies work to implement the Convention.

The definition of cultural industries in CETA shows how the trade agreement understands culture:

Cultural industries means persons [Emphasis added] engaged in: (a) the publication, distribution or sale of books, magazines, […]; (b) the production, distribution, sale or exhibition of film or video recordings; (c) […] of audio or video music recordings; (d) the publication, distribution or sale of music in print or machine-readable form; or (e) […] all radio, television and cable broadcasting (Official Journal of the European Union 2017, 25)

CETA regards cultural industries as ‘persons’ who produce, distribute, sell and exhibit artistic products and services. This article posits that the definition of cultural industries in CETA connotes that ‘culture as content’ originates from individual persons’ mental activities. On the other hand, artistic products and services are ‘culture as conduits’ presenting individuals’ identities and artistic talent.

Based on this focus on ‘persons’ in culture, ANNEX 9(A) ‘Understanding on National Treatment with respect to the Cross-Border Supply of Services’ stipulates trade policy with cultural exceptionalism:

(a) in the case of Canada, a provincial or territorial government of Canada accords more favourable treatment to a service supplier which is a person of another provincial or territorial government of Canada, or to a service supplied by this supplier; and (b) in the case of the EU party: (i) a government of a Member State of the European Union accords more favourable treatment to a service supplier which is a person of another Member State or to a service supplied by this supplier (Official Journal of the European Union 2017, 278)

This defensive measure for foreign products and services may originate from the two Parties’ attitudes toward culture and identity. Canada has experienced conflict between Quebec-speaking French and English-speaking regions, including Quebec’s sovereignty movement from the 1960s. This internal multiculturalism leads Canada to avoid actively pursuing overseas content in its territory to avoid worsening cultural clashes. The EU has established a shared European identity, by adopting the Copenhagen Declaration on European Identity in 1973 and implementing broadcasting policies (Collins 1994). The two Parties may share the opinion that globalisation threatens their national and regional cohesion, agreeing with taking protective measures in trading cultural products and services.

Compared to CETA’s focus on protecting national and regional identities transmitted from the past, the EU-Korea FTA selects promotive measures for exchanging contemporary art. While the EU has a clause to exclude audio-visual services from Chapter Seven in the FTA, this clause would not be strong enough to exert cultural exceptionalism, due to the PCC in the FTA that aims to form favourable conditions for the exchange of artistic products and services. Under this open cultural trade position, Articles 4(1)(B) and 4(3) designate specific areas of exchange: visual and performing artists, providers of entertainment services, music recording, theatrical producers, singer groups and dance instructors, etc. This cultural scope deals with artistic creation that contemporary people in
each Party produce and consume, rather than protecting past tradition or identity of nations. The PCC refers to heritage in Article 10, but this Article aims to exchange experts’ preservation techniques for heritage sites, rather than claim any significance for national and regional identities.

The EU-Korea FTA’s trade-driven measure under the Cultural Diversity Convention, may derive from the Republic of Korea’s general and the EU’s partial neo-liberal attitudes towards globalisation. The Republic of Korea has regarded globalisation as an opportunity to boost its economic profits since the early 2000s. For example, the government of President Lee Myoung-bak (2008–2013) merged the Ministry of Culture and Tourism with the Ministry of Information and Communication into the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in 2008. The new Ministry developed market-oriented policies for increasing exports of Korean media and films (MCST 2008). The EU holds a defensive position on global markets, as CETA illustrates, but they have gradually commenced exchange and cooperation for capacity-building, and activities in the cultural industries (Singh 2011). Such cultural exchange is allowable for the EU because intellectual exchange and co-production are mutually open. The EU considers them controllable, through negotiation with its partner countries, compared to the unexpected mass consumption of foreign goods and services in its region. Article 3bis of the PCC introduces the Committee on Cultural Cooperation, as the institutional tool for such negotiation. Therefore, the Republic of Korea’s neo-liberal approach to globalisation matches the EU’s partial openness as a regional strategy, facilitating the exchange of contemporary arts.

In summary, CETA and the EU-Korea FTA have different focuses on the ideas of and the purposive actions for culture. The former implements the Cultural Diversity Convention, by protecting ‘culture as content’ transmitted from the past through excluding the regional and national identity from an economic logic. The latter implements the Convention by promoting ‘culture as conduits’ produced in the contemporary industries, including contemporary arts in trade logic. The contradictory cultural policies of the Convention’s State Parties make the ambit of the Convention ambivalent between defensive cultural policy for protecting identities and neo-liberal cultural policy for opening and boosting cultural industries.

The contradictory cultural policies between CETA and the EU-Korea FTA co-exist under the Cultural Diversity Convention because those two measures complete the Convention’s structural description of culture. As has been discussed, the Convention identifies culture, by correlating three concepts of culture in a rhetorical structure: identity expressions (content) are conveyed via artistic products (conduits) and it generates individual and social development (consequences). The ‘content, conduits and consequences’ aspects of culture form the rhetorical structure that links the three concepts of culture (identity expressions, artistic products and individual and social development) together. Under the structural description of culture, if the content of cultural products is exchanged and consumed only for economic profits (e.g. without national spirit embedded in cultural products), then a conduit intervenes in the essence of content. This proviso to maintain ‘culture as content’ allows CETA’s policy protecting national and regional identities to be under the policy logic of the Convention, as a means of maintaining the diversity of identities. The Cultural Diversity Convention’s agenda supports this defensive cultural policy, by preserving a human group’s way of life. Conversely, the Cultural Diversity Convention also allows the EU-Korea FTA’s policy to boost contemporary cultural industries to develop artistic product diversity. This concerns another part of the Convention’s structural description which supports industry-oriented policy, by facilitating contemporary arts in global trades. Recall Empson (1963) fourth ambiguity, that incongruous statements support a complicated state of mind, and therefore ambivalent cultural policy agendas are a necessary descriptive factor for UNESCO to assimilate the complex concepts of culture.

Policy research has discussed such a role for rhetoric in policy formation as an intended political strategy (Rein and Schön 1993; Cairney 2012). From this perspective, UNESCO comprehensively uses the three concepts of culture under the Cultural Diversity Convention to obtain the balanced support of conservative Member States, including France and Canada, and neo-liberal Member States, including the Republic of Korea, about the global cultural industries. I would call this a ‘proactive ambivalence’ that derives from UNESCO’s institutional manoeuvre to strengthen its status quo.
However, such a political viewpoint cannot fully explain the ambivalence that emanates from the accumulative ideas of culture in this instance, due to the political and social changes that UNESCO has not been able to proactively control. From the 1950s to the 2000s – the historical context of the end of World War II, the Cold War, decolonisation and globalisation – UNESCO has not discarded previous notions of culture which were necessary to react to previous global issues. Rather these notions were inherited as established structural ideas within UNESCO. Historical events, political and social, have led UNESCO to gradually accumulate definitions of culture when accepting new concepts of culture, forming a ‘reflective ambivalence’ in the Cultural Diversity Convention. UNESCO’s evolutionary process of setting policy agendas implies that the ambiguity of cultural policy lies, partially, in such retrospective knowledge development concerning human history.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated how UNESCO has established an ambiguous policy ambit that accumulated the multiple ideas of culture. UNESCO has reshaped and accumulated its past ideas and issues of the Common Heritage of Mankind in producing new cultural policy agendas in its Conventions. This knowledge adaptation has assembled three main policy agendas that make UNESCO’s policy area heterogeneous. Most recently, UNESCO conceptualises the Common Heritage of Mankind in the Cultural Diversity Convention, by using three aspects of culture: ‘culture as content’, ‘culture as conduits’ and ‘culture as consequences’. This paper has argued that the structural identification of the Common Heritage of Mankind in the Cultural Diversity Convention highlights UNESCO’s ambivalent cultural policy that contains contradictory agendas. Agendas that emphasise each different idea and issue of culture: embracing cultural exceptional policy for protecting identities and neo-liberal policy for boosting cultural industries.

The ambiguity of cultural policy has been studied in the context of the contested nature of the concepts of culture (Ahearne 2009; Throsby 2009), and/or policymakers’ deliberate choice to achieve non-cultural policy ends (Vestheim 1994; Hadley and Gray 2017), or to gain financial and non-financial resources for implementing cultural policies (Gray 2002, 2017), or to tackle disagreements among stakeholders (Gray 2015). From the perspective of the extension of UNESCO’s policy remit, this article therefore sheds new light on examining the ambiguity of cultural policy. It explicates that the ambiguity of UNESCO’s cultural policy remit does not lie in the unclear concepts or knowledge of culture but that ambiguity derives from the mobility of concepts or knowledge of culture, which produces accumulative and structural understandings of culture. The case of UNESCO further implies that not only has UNESCO had political intention to accumulate ideas of culture, but UNESCO has inevitably developed its knowledge of culture, as a result of recognising the political and social changes occurring within its Member States and UNESCO’s competitive relations with other international organisations. UNESCO’s description of the Common Heritage of Mankind in the Cultural Diversity Convention structures ‘culture as content’, ‘culture as conduits’ and ‘culture as consequences’, efficiently responding to and encompassing the complex issues of the cultural policy sector from the 1950s to the early 2000s.

This discussion about the ambiguity of the cultural policy ambit suggests an additional approach to analysing organisation’s cultural policies in the cultural sector. When researchers scrutinise an organisation’s cultural policy, they may experience difficulties in categorising heterogeneous measures that a policy has. They may need to prioritise identifying a notional correlation of multiple definitions of ‘culture’ in an organisation’s policy. Examining, for instance, how a policy identifies culture structurally. They can then explore institutional mandates and purposes and external phenomena that affect such internalities of the organisation. This analysis process can explain how and why a policy encompasses heterogeneous measures for achieving multiple consequences concurrently. Studies of cultural policies that adopt such an approach to the conceptualisation of culture in a descriptive way, would become more effective or important, especially for the research of cultural policies that cover multiple sectors, because the policies of cultural and creative industries can be used to produce more complicated understandings of culture. Especially, in relation to the development of technologies in
the cultural sector, such as the Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) of artistic pieces, digital heritage collections and/or museums and the creation of artworks by Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms. These advanced technologies in the cultural sector require researchers and cultural policymakers to understand and conceptualise diverse forms and aspects of culture. For instance, an artistic piece can be understood as source data to make NFTs or training data for AI algorithms to create artworks, beyond a trading item in the cultural and creative industries. A broader relationship between technological developments and the cultural policy sector raises the question of how cultural policymakers and researchers perceive such emerging forms of cultural content and applications situated between the technological sector and the cultural sector. The notion of culture to be re-structured by technological perspectives reminds us of Ahearne (2009)’s description of ‘implicit cultural policies’ that are not labelled manifestly as ‘cultural’, but that shape cultural attitudes over given territories (Ahearne 2009). Extending Ahearne’s idea of implicit cultural policies to the whole cultural policy sector, this paper concludes that the need for trans-sectoral approaches to adapt to technological developments in or adjacent to the cultural policy ambit, can stretch the area of implicit cultural policies, encouraging cultural policymakers and researchers to determine more multi-dimensional ways of defining culture.

Notes

1. Although seven Conventions exist under the culture sector as of March 2022 (UNESCO 2021a), this article does not discuss two of them: the Protection of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights and the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. This is due to its focus on the issues of copyright and heritage in water respectively, rather than the ideas of culture per se.

2. The Outstanding Universal Value, so-called ‘O.U.V’, means ‘cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity’ (WHC 2021, 24). A cultural or natural property shall meet one or more of ten criteria of the Outstanding Universal Value (WHC 2021) to be registered on UNESCO’ World Heritage List.

3. The document acknowledges a broader meaning of authenticity of heritage, considering not only tangible attributes but immaterial attributes, spiritual meaning and locational settings of heritage.

4. Article IV of the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of the WTO stipulates that ‘(a) Screen quotas may require the exhibition of cinematograph films of national origin during a specified minimum proportion of the total screen time actually utilized, over a specified period of not less than one year, in the commercial exhibition of all films of whatever origin, and shall be computed on the basis of screen time per theatre per year or the equivalent thereof [. . .]’ (WTO 1994).

5. Of course, the Cultural Diversity Convention deals with other cultural policy issues concerning the diversity of cultural expressions, including human rights, education and public awareness and the participation of civil society. But this article focuses on the cultural field that the Convention addresses as its main policy area or target.

6. This article emphasises that this is one way of interpreting the concepts of culture within the Cultural Diversity Convention, rather than an absolute perspective.


8. The European Union ratified the 2005 Convention in 2006 as a regional economic integration organisation, apart from its Member States (UNESCO 2022).

9. The agreement was signed on 30 October 2016, entered into force on 21 September 2017, provisionally. Most of the agreement now applies (European Commission 2021).


11. The agreement was signed on 6 October 2010, entered into force on 1 July 2011 (European Commission 2022).

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Notes on contributor

Sun Park is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick. Her research interests centre on the sociology of policy knowledge, the collective knowledge in the legal instruments of UNESCO, the ontology and epistemology of culture and art creators and the art of Artificial Intelligence.

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