Museum Diplomacy: Parsing the Global Engagement of Museums

By Sascha Priewe

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Abstract

Museums are increasingly recognized as significant actors in public and cultural diplomacy. This essay examines the international and global webs of relations that museums are steeped in and approaches the global work of museums as a diplomatic activity. In so doing, it recognizes the agency of museums and their diplomatic potential. The essay analyzes the ways in which the recognition of museums as diplomatic actors speaks to the reshaping of the diplomatic landscape that has widened and leveled the playing field for an increasing number of actors. Museums have become one of myriad actors in the "network" of diplomatic actors that have added to the diplomacy exercised by the "club" of the nation-states. With the resurgence of academic interest in cultural diplomacy, there has been an attendant growth in interest in the role of museums in cultural diplomacy. This essay studies the international work and internationalization of museum work, the ways in which this work is better understood as bridging the local and the global than purely understood as international, and establishes a theoretical framework for museum diplomacy within the context of the "new diplomacy." It is hoped that this work will contribute to better understanding the international/global work of museums and realizing museum diplomacy as a practice in its own right, which can occasionally, and at times deliberately, be aligned with foreign policy priorities of nation-states, but one that is deeply rooted in the principles, values and interests of the museums themselves.

1. Introduction[1]

"Museums are at the vanguard of cultural work—they are the diplomats of the 21st century... They can be used as a platform for dialogue and exchange, especially when working with challenging partners." (Görgen, 2016)

This comment made by a high-ranking diplomat, such as Andreas Görgen of the German Foreign Office, highlights that museums are increasingly being recognized as significant actors in public and cultural diplomacy.[2] In this essay, by developing the groundwork for a framework for museum diplomacy, I address Görgen's statement that museums are the diplomats of the 21st century to examine the way in which this speaks to the reshaping of the diplomatic landscape that has widened and leveled the playing field for an increasing number of actors—from the exclusive "club" of the nation-states to the "network" of myriad actors beyond the nation-state but of which the nation-state is part and parcel to, and in many cases still the principal actor. The door is open to develop an approach to the global work of museums that amounts to museum diplomacy in its own right.

While I share the overall enthusiasm that emanates from Görgen's statement, I am uneasy with the notion that museums "can be used" by the state. This may be true in some if not many parts of the world, as museums sit in various degrees of proximity to the nation-state that can lead to alignment with its foreign policy. While acknowledging and mindful of these constellations that have a direct impact on museum practice in many instances, in this essay, I chart a notion of museum diplomacy as a practice deeply rooted in the principles, values and interests of museums. The definition of diplomacy that is used is "handling relations between groups," which has the power to play out the consequences of a diplomacy of an ever-greater number

of actors. Thus it is understood that the agency for their diplomatic engagements is in the hands of the museums, thereby challenging them to think differently about their international work.

In a broadening diplomatic playing field that is accommodating an ever-greater number of players, it is important to recognize the ways museums have long been active internationally. Museums have always been international, i.e., active at the intersection of nation-states as well as global, which is a category that is more encompassing and not limited by being framed by national boundaries. Their activities include everything from the collecting practices that filled the museums, their research and field work to exhibitions (Amsellen, 2016, pp.11–12). In recent years, the scope of international museum activities has intensified as demonstrated through increases in traveling exhibitions, satellite museums, museum summitry and digital initiatives. With the resurgence of academic interest in cultural diplomacy, there has been an attendant growth in interest in the role of museums in cultural diplomacy. And while scholars in the fields of museum studies and political science as well as museum practitioners are paying closer attention to the international work of museums,[3] there has been little effort to apply a diplomatic lens to global museum practice and to fully develop a framework for museum diplomacy. This essay seeks to rectify this shortcoming by studying museums' global work and their internationalization, the way in which this work is bridging the local and the global—by establishing a museum diplomacy framework—and by briefly discussing the pressing need for and benefits to museums for acting diplomatically today.

What is a museum?

The following definition by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has been in use since 2007 (and is currently being debated by the ICOM community with a view to updating it):

> A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." (ICOM, n.d.)

While this definition is adequately broad, it only partially reflects an important paradigm shift that museums, certainly in parts of the Global North but also elsewhere, have been undergoing. The activities included in the definition are still core to what museums are about, but, as an institution, they have been undergoing a marked outward shift, "from being about something to being about somebody" (Weil, 1999, pp. 229–258). Museums have been slowly shifting from being institutions that are more inwardly focused on their collections and associated activities to increasingly outward-facing institutions that place their audiences at the heart of their activities. These tend to include improving the visitor experience, public programming for various age groups, educational offers, various forms of digital engagement, as well as an approach to exhibition-making that centers on the visitor. The following table captures the ways in which many museums have been changing:

Figure 1. From the "traditional museum" to the "reinvented museum." From Anderson, 2012, pp. 3–4. All rights reserved.

Reinventing the Museum Tool

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Institutional Values	
Values as ancillary · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Values as core tenets
Institutional viewpoint · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Global perspective
Insular society · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Civic engagement
Social activity · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Social responsibility
Collection driven · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Audience focused
Limited representation · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Broad representation
Internal perspective · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Community participant
Business as usual · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Reflective practice
Accepted realities · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Culture of inquiry
Voice of authority · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Multiple viewpoints
Information provider · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Knowledge facilitator
Individual roles · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Collective accountability
Focused on past · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Relevant and forward-looking
Reserved · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Compassionate
Governance	
Mission as document · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Mission driven
Exclusive · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Inclusive
Reactive · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Proactive
Ethnocentric · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Multicultural
Internal focus · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Expansive perspective
Individual vision · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Institutional vision
Single visionary leader · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Shared leadership
Obligatory oversight · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Inspired investment
Assumed value · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Earned value
Good intentions · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Public accountability
Private · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Transparent
Venerability · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Humility
Caretaker · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Steward
Managing · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Governing
Stability · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Sustainability

Reinventing the Museum Tool

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Management Strategies	
Inwardly driven	Responsive to stakeholders
Various activities	Strategic priorities
Selling	Marketing
Assumptions about audiences	Knowledge about audiences
Hierarchical structure	Learning organization
Unilateral decision-making	Collective decision-making
Limited access	Open access
Segregated functions	Integrated operations
Compartmentalized goals	Holistic, shared goals
Status quo	Informed risk-taking
Fund development	Entrepreneurial
Individual work	Collaboration
Static role	Strategic positioning
Communication Ideology	
Privileged information	Accessible information
Suppressed differences	Welcomed differences
Debate/discussion	Dialogue
Enforced directives	Interactive choices
One-way communication	Two-way communication
Keeper of knowledge	Exchange of knowledge
Presenting	Facilitating
Two-dimensional	Multi-dimensional
Analog	Virtual
Protective	Welcoming

Note: This chart was originally presented in *Museum Mission Statements: Building a Distinct Identity,* edited and written by Gail Anderson and published by the American Association of Museums Technical Information Service in 1998. It was featured in the 2004 edition of *Reinventing the Museum* and has been significantly updated for this edition.

Coupled with a search for increasing relevance (Simon, 2016), museums have started to shift "away from the idea of a museum as a *container*, *shrine* or *temple* to the museum as a *forum*, *contact zone*, *platform* or *social activist*" (Mason et al., 2018, p. 19, emphases in original). Museums remain some of the most trusted organizations in society (Britain Thinks, 2013). They are increasingly challenged to no longer give preference to the stories of the dominant social group in society, limiting themselves to "winners' history" as it were (Jessup and Brison, forthcoming). They are now increasingly called on to be more equitable and inclusive institutions to reflect the societies of which they are a part. This pertains to diversifying their staff and developing practices that are more broadly representative of diverse histories and cultures and told by authentic community voices rather than by the authoritative voice of the museum. This crucial paradigm shift in the way museums work is far from finished and remains a work in progress, but it demonstrates museums to be ever-adapting organizations that illustrate their "extraordinary flexibility ... as a form of social technology" (Mason et al., 2018, p. 207).

Why focus on museums? Do they even matter? Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to museums were growing with relatively new entrants from China to the lists of most-visited museums proving the point (Sharp and da Silva, 2019). In the U.S., museum visits were much larger than the combined attendance at major league sporting events and theme parks (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.). While the visitation is not evenly distributed and many museums may not experience this trend, the growth in visitation "has become a recognisable, international phenomenon in many societies" (Mason et al., 2018, p. 11). Museums continue to be built as exemplified by the museum construction boom in China or the Gulf. From the perspective of states or nations, museums remain one of the primary vehicles for

the channeling of aspirations, fostering of communities, economic development and projection on the world stage. Given museums' stubborn prominence, regardless of their governance and funding models, studying and establishing their diplomatic potential has never been timelier.

While the general thrust of this essay aims at providing substantive steps toward the establishment of a framework for museum diplomacy, I am conscious of the fact that this is not a position that all museums may find themselves in to deliver on. The ample room to maneuver that I will be proposing in the following pages is most applicable to museums that are situated either independently or at least at arm's length from government. Other museums are much closer to their government and may find themselves directly feeding into the government's foreign policy agendas, but with some room to maneuver as to how to go about it, while in other cases museums are so tightly connected to the foreign policy apparatus that they find themselves with limited agency of their own. In addition to the governance model, there are other factors to consider, such as financial barriers, staff, time and other resource limitations, difficulties in establishing and maintaining international contacts and partnerships, barriers that arise out of working cross-culturally, language barriers and lack of experience (TBR, 2016, fig. 17). It is not the goal of this essay to account for every single permutation that a particular organization may find itself in but to offer possibilities to rethink the global work of museums as a diplomatic activity that could then be tailored to the particular circumstances an organization is experiencing.

2. The International Work of Museums

Museums have been active on the global stage for a long time. As noted by Jay Wang and Sohaela Amiri for city

diplomacy, but with equal application to museum diplomacy: "The phenomenon is nothing new; what is new is that the nature and scope […] have deepened and broadened" (Wang and Amiri, 2018, p. 1). According to Tony Bennett, museums have been embroiled in global networks since the second half of the 19th century, and this "has been an important aspect of their constitution and functioning" (Bennett, 2006, p. 46). "To understand what is new about the ways in which museums organize and operate within global networks means looking at quite specific matters concerning, for example, the technical means of organizing those networks (the Internet contrasted with earlier networks centered on rail and navigation, telegraphy and telecommunications), the forms of expertise they interconnect, and the new styles of cosmopolitanism they effect, rather than any generalized preglobalization/postglobalization contrast" (Bennett, 2006, p. 49). Museums have long been international.[4] But what do their activities look like?[5]

Loans:

Lending objects is a core activity of museums that makes objects available to various publics domestically as well as by crossing borders. Loans between museums can be both short- and long-term. In most cases, loans are requested by the borrowing institution and are either used to contribute to permanent displays, temporary exhibitions or for research. In the case of research, the recipients can be other museums as well as universities or other research institutions. At times, loans make the headlines, such as the loan of the "Cyrus cylinder" by the British Museum to Tehran, which was heralded as an example of how culture can maintain relations between countries whose diplomatic ties are under pressure (BBC, n.d.).

Exhibitions:

Exhibitions are another key element in the collaboration between museums. Oftentimes entire exhibitions are borrowed from other museums as travelling exhibitions. When this is not the case, loans of single or a group of objects form an important part of the exhibitions a museum organizes. Additionally, museums often form consortia to jointly organize exhibitions that travel between the collaborating venues.[6]

Research:

Museums collaborate with other museums and also universities or other organizations and individuals to conduct research. This research includes joint fieldwork, such as excavations or scientific expeditions, research on the collection of a museum, research questions that pertain to museological issues, such as on audiences or in relation to technology, as well as involvement in teaching university students. Research into collections has been increasingly enabled by making digitized collections available online.

Collections:

Among the collaborative work that pertains to collections, many examples are possible, such as provenance research, i.e., research into the ownership history of an object. The acquisition of objects but also their repatriation, for example Indigenous human remains or ancestral objects, or restitution, the request for formal return of an object to the source country by its current government. Also, conservation is an avenue of collaboration as is cultural and natural heritage protection.

People-to-people Connections:

Museums and their staff are members of museum associations. Globally, ICOM is most prominent, but staff also participate in other networks and organizations that support the museum sector, whether devoted to subject specialisms or certain museum functions. There is also an increase in international training opportunities or programs, such as fellowships, internships or staff exchanges, for placements at an institution. The provision of advice and the sharing of best practices on an informal basis also happens on a day-to-day basis. Consultancies as provided by museums to other museums would also be included here.

Audience Engagement:

Museums engage with global audiences and often play a key role in attracting (international) tourists. Global audiences also engage online with museums. Additionally, museums often play a prominent role in the projection of certain images of a city and a state as well as in the attraction of investment and trade to a place.

Against the background of these activities that have had a long pedigree in museum practice, recent decades have seen an intensification and broadening of many of these activities as well as the addition of new types of activities, thanks to the impact of increased global flows that have affected a shift in the landscape of diplomatic actors. We are now living in a "network society" (Castells, 1996), thanks to unprecedented connectivity due to information and communication technologies, and ease of travel. In this changing context, museum activities have expanded:

Traveling Exhibitions:

While travelling or touring exhibitions have long been a feature of how museums work together, there has been an increase of this practice in the last few decades (Davidson and Pérez Castellanos, forthcoming). Such exhibitions may include exhibitions curated and shown at one museum and then toured to others, or exhibitions exclusively organized for international touring.

Satellite Museums:

Traditionally locked into place in terms of their location, several museums have started to establish satellite branches of themselves elsewhere in the world. Best known are the various local incarnations of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, exemplified by the archetype of a satellite museum: the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Other examples include the Louvre in Abu Dhabi or the Hermitage Amsterdam (Goff, 2017). In other cases, such activity is limited to long-term displays (Smithsonian Institutions in London) or rotating exhibitions (Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Shanghai and Qatar).

Museum Summitry:

High-level gatherings between museum directors seem to be a relatively new phenomenon. For example, since 2013, the Asia Society has brought together museum leaders from across North America, Europe and Asia. There have been several summits between museum leaders from the U.S. and China specifically.

Digital Initiatives:

As with everything else, museums have not been immune to digital media and technology. Museums are sharing collections online, providing online learning experiences, online exhibitions, acquiring born-digital works, maintaining an active presence on social media and so forth. Consequently, "[t]he museum is becoming a "transmedia" institution working on different media "platforms" of which the gallery space is only one (Kidd 2014)" (Mason et al., 2018, p. 11).

Why are museums working internationally?

Jane Weeks has compiled the following list of benefits for working internationally for UK museums, where a more concentrated effort has been made to internationalize the museum sector (Weeks, 2013, pp. 3–4):

- "Developing skills and knowledge

- Bringing a different perspective on your collections and your institution

- Creating a different perspective on shared heritage

- Bringing an important new dimension by linking to living communities and museums overseas

- Attracting new audiences, especially young people who have a more global perspective

- Sharing knowledge

- Raising your museum's profile, both nationally and internationally

- Raising the awareness of a UK audience keen to know more about the world around them

- Developing a broader understanding of the meaning of identity and the role of the museum

- Developing a potential new income stream."

The complexity of motivations is aptly captured in a model of "international exhibitions drivers," developed by Lee Davidson and Leticia Pérez Castellanos (2019, pp. 9–12), that easily extends to all international and global museum activities. The drivers are organized into three "domains:" mission, market and diplomatic. Drivers relating to the mission comprise "visitation, audience development, institutional reputation, strengthening international partnerships, scholarly exchange, museological innovation and professional development" as well as "social change, justice, human rights and intercultural understanding" (Davidson and Pérez Castellanos, 2019, p. 11). Generating revenue by way of ticket fees, food, shops, membership, other fee-based services and revenues through sponsorships constitute the market domain. The way in which museums are driving tourism is also included here. The diplomatic domain is largely seen as museums' involvement in state-driven diplomacy, but, as I will show later, the diplomatic domain can be adapted to the diplomatic interests and priorities of the museums themselves, and does not require being solely derived from those of the state. However, taken together, the three drivers provide an interlinked, overlapping picture of the complexities of museum work on a global stage, thereby defying simple, mono-causal explanations.

3. Museums in the Local-global Continuum

The preceding sections describe museum activities as happening inter-nationally. And that might be a fair description of the way in which these activities are considered and perceived by the museums themselves. I could have also used the term trans-national. Yet both terms "inter-national" and "trans-national" are limiting as they use the nation-state as the point of reference, when museum activities could be more productively understood as global (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, p. 3). In this section I discuss the limitations of this largely unquestioned linkage and, based on the work of Darian-Smith and McCarty (2017), introduce the notion of the global as a way to expand the conceptual and practical possibilities of conceiving museum practices in the world. The fundamental flaw of employing the inter-national is its perpetuation of the notion of culture that is bounded by and treated as an expression of the nation-state, i.e., national culture. This connection and its extension into diplomacy is an artifact of the creation of the modern states in the 18th and 19th century, in which territory, people and culture are required to form a unity around national identities (Zaharna, 2019, pp. 117–133). These "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983):

> involved projecting sentiments of belonging and brotherhood way beyond those of direct experience, but only up to a specified 'edge'— the boundary of the national community. As individual identification with the nation-state and the numerous unknown 'brothers' could not rest on experienced social relations it had instead to be cultural—a matter of shared knowledge and practice, of representation, ritual and symbolism" (Macdonald, 2003, p. 2).

The development of museums in Europe is intricately linked to the emergence and fostering of the nation (Crooke, 2006, p. 174). Museums, especially national museums, were complicit in shaping the nation. And such developments are not simply a phenomenon of the past as:

> [m]aterial representations of traditionality and age help to legitimate an ethnic group's claims to a unique identity and political power and to their attempts to create a sense of unity among themselves. This is a major reason why the creation of a museum is often seen as vital to those groups seeking wider visibility in order to be granted greater political rights, autonomy, or "national" status" (Kaplan, 2006, pp. 153–154).

Yet, the claim for the linkage between a nation-state and its culture is tenuous at best. In this essay, culture is understood "to be both the lived and creative experience for individuals and a body of artifacts, symbols, texts and objects; in other words, both heritage and contemporary creation, involving both enactment and representation. In this broad yet bounded vision, culture embraces art and art discourse, the symbolic world of meanings, the commodified output of the cultural industries as well as the spontaneous or enacted, organized or unorganized meaning-linked expressions of everyday life, including social relations. It is constitutive of both collective and individual identity" (Isar et al., 2011, note 1).

Culture thus defined has the pesky quality of not being confined by or ending at national borders (Zaharna, 2019, 124). Global ties have undermined spatially bounded notions of culture that the nation-state tries to preserve. Pertierra (2004, p. 121) suggests the notion of "deterritorialized cultures" due to the "images, representations, and objects

circulating freely across national boundaries," which is not insignificantly expedited and enabled by digital communications, a statement echoed by Zaharna (2019, p. 125) who writes: "If culture resists boundaries, it is because people and goods, as carriers of culture, tend to resist boundaries."

And it is not just the globalization of cultural connections that undermine the central tenets of a national culture. Assumptions of homogeneity are readily subverted by cultural diversity within states. This means that the environment that museums are operating in has become increasingly complex. And museums are increasingly responsive to the global webs they are enmeshed in and to becoming more inclusive and equitable spaces accommodating diversity among the ranks of staff and among visitors and other audiences. "Globally the ideas of cultural diversity, multiculturalism and the promotion of good relations are influencing how we develop museum policy and plan new initiatives" (Crooke, 2007, p. 81). Such developments can be described as attempts to tackle the vagaries of cultural diversity unbound by the frontiers of the nation-state. Museums, as inherently locally anchored organizations, often simply by sheer rootedness in place through physical attributes such as their building(s) and location, are called upon to address these shifts.

Taking into account these developments, in which imaginaries and divides such as the national/inter-national or the domestic/foreign are less suitable frames of reference, there is an alternative analytical lens to the national that opens up new practical possibilities. This is the global (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, p. 3). The global de-centers the prominence of the nation-state and delegitimizes the dominance of "methodological nationalism," which centers the "nation/state/society [as] the natural social and political form of the modern world" and as the dominant frame of

reference (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002, pp. 301–334). It is more useful to employ a "global imaginary [that] includes nation-states, but also a huge array of non-state actors, organizations, collectivities, processes, relations, ways of knowing, and modes of interaction across, between, and within national and transnational contexts" (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, p. 3). This notion is compatible with the shift to network diplomacy described below. Injecting this global imaginary into our way of conceiving museums does not undermine the local rootedness of museums. To the contrary, "[t]he local and the global are mutually constitutive, creating and recreating each other across conceptual fields in a constant dynamic" (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, p. 4).

The global imaginary also offers an alternative to the vertically nested scales of local, national and international, into which museums are also plugged, as exemplified by Gray's (2015) study of the politics of museums, which distinguishes between local, national and international politics of museums. As Darian-Smith and McCarty (2017, p. 7) suggest, such thinking continues to privilege the nation-state as everything is conceptualized in a spatial relationship to it. They offer a more compelling understanding in which "global processes should always take into account the people and communities who ultimately feel the impact of those processes even when impacts are unintended or unforeseen." And further, they see "local places as historically contingent and embedded within and refracted through global processes" (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, p. 43). All museums are consequently embedded in these processes and are simultaneously local and global. For example, a museum dedicated to the documentation of biodiversity may find it difficult to disentangle this work from climate change. Hence, museum practices may be better understood and activated through the lens of the "local-global

continuum," which "is a more distributed, decentralized and deterritorialized understanding of overlapping and mutually constitutive geopolitical and conceptual sites and arenas" (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, p. 45).

Therefore, a global framing of museum practices, instead of framing them through national or inter-national (or trans-national) lenses, permits museums to see the global connectivities that are shaping the world and link those to the local particularities that they are embedded in by being physically rooted in place and community. And it allows seeing global processes through their local manifestations. When museums engage globally, these activities are not limited to those that are usually considered inter-national, e.g., the loan of an artwork across borders, but are more expansive as well as pervasive, including activities that would otherwise not be considered as being international. This may include tying a museum's program to work with disadvantaged youth more explicitly to those detrimental effects of globalization that may have caused the inequalities the program is trying to address. Hence, from this point forward, I will speak of the global engagement of museums to ensure a more holistic way of thinking and acting that is not from the outset constrained by being refracted through the national. An additional, attractive feature of the global is its challenge leveled at the privileging of Western ontologies (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017, pp. 37–39). The inclusion of non-Western knowledge and multiple voices is a pertinent challenge that museums are currently grappling with and that could be advanced by injecting the global into museum work.

4. Toward a Museum Diplomacy Framework

In what follows, I will develop a conceptual framework for museum diplomacy. Having captured the imagination

of some museum scholars and professionals, I begin by discussing soft power and show its inadequacies when applied to museums. Then, I proceed to locate museums within the "new diplomacy" and also discuss public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. Next follows a discussion of museums' agency for global work as rooted in their values, priorities and interests. Finally, based on Paul Sharp's definition of diplomacy, I offer a take on museum diplomacy as well as cultural diplomacy that not simply replicates a state's diplomatic functions by applying these to other actors but establishes the ways in which museums emerge as diplomatic actors through their own global activities.

The Trouble with Soft Power

With its seductive qualities, soft power (Nye, 1990) continues to hold the imagination of foreign policy and public diplomacy scholars and practitioners and has started to make substantial inroads into how the international work of a wide variety of actors is being perceived. The concept has started to be applied to museums—as museums having soft power, not just as contributing to it. While Nye also admits the soft power of other actors, such as non-state actors, his work is almost exclusively dedicated to the powers of nation-states. The powers they wield are not just the hard power of coercion and payment, as exemplified by military and economic activities, but also of attraction and coercion, i.e., soft power aimed at winning hearts and minds (Nye, 2004). "The soft power of a country rests heavily on three basic resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye, 2013, p. 566). The possessive framing of culture as belonging to

the state obviously renders as deeply problematic the entire notion of soft power.

While Nye acknowledges that soft power is difficult to wield as many of its sources act independently on the world stage, such as civil society actors, the state can deploy public diplomacy to "create an attractive image of a country that can improve its prospects for obtaining its desired outcomes" (Nye, 2013, p. 571). Museums are not only seen as being swept up in these efforts, but nowadays also as having and employing soft power themselves. For example, the Louvre opening a satellite of itself in Abu Dhabi would be understood as demonstrating that museum's soft power (Grincheva 2020; Hunt, 2018). While I am sympathetic to the notion of seeing museums as rightful players on the global stage, the push to imbue them with soft power is not only conceptually problematic but undermines that entire endeavor to empower museums on the global stage and ignores the transformative discussions that are being had in museums today.

Among the reasons as to why soft power is misguided when applied to—and sits uncomfortably with—museum practice is the fact that soft power does not exist in a vacuum unto itself. As Nye has made abundantly clear, in particular in his work on "smart power" (Nye, 2011), which is "the ability to combine hard and soft power resources into effective strategies" (Nye, 2013, p. 565), soft power exists in combination with hard power. To leave no doubt: "Hard and soft power sometimes reinforce and sometimes undercut each other, and good contextual intelligence is important in distinguishing how they interact in different situations" (Nye, 2013, p. 566). Recognizing this essential feature of soft power as constituting one part of the full swath of power resources that a country is supposed to employ renders doubtful the applicability of soft power to actors other

than nation-states. What is the hard power that museums would be wielding alongside and complementary to their soft power? While I will discuss power and museums below, as there are real issues for museums to contend with, it is difficult to perceive the range of power options available to museums. When the notion of soft power is applied to museums, this is happening in the one-dimensional fashion that Nye is strongly arguing against in relation to the power resources of the nation-states. These conceptually muddied waters and misunderstandings of soft power are eclipsed by larger concerns.

In recent work on "knowledge diplomacy," Jane Knight (2018, pp. 5–7) observes with concern the higher education sector's attraction to soft power. Her particular and, to my mind, justified concern, that is as applicable to museums as to higher education institutions, is soft power's location within the power paradigm. Comparing the characteristics of diplomacy and (soft) power, Knight establishes the differences in their respective functions and approach as well as the values they are rooted in.[7] Knight sees diplomacy as including negotiation, communication, representation, conciliation, collaboration and mediation, whereas power, from hard to soft, operates on a spectrum from coercion, co-option, compulsion and control to attraction and persuasion. While diplomacy is rooted in the values of reciprocity, mutuality, compromise and understanding, power approaches espouse domination, authoritarianism, competition and supremacy. She asserts that "[i]t is naïve to deny that in international relations self-interests are a strong motivating factor; but a diplomatic approach recognises that self-interests have to be mediated to find areas of mutual interest and benefits for all parties/countries involved" (Knight, 2018, p. 6).[8] Comparing hard with soft power, she concludes that the outcomes are identical and are those of control, self-interest and self-promotion. The diplomatic

approach that Knight applies to and sees embraced by the international relations of higher education, innovation and research is fundamentally at odds with the (soft) power paradigm. I would argue that the same applies to museums. Soft power sits uncomfortably with, appears to limit and is inadequate to describe global museum practice. This essay aims at developing a diplomatic paradigm that is more conducive to museums' global work so that practitioners and academics can resist the lure of soft power.

While I reject the application of soft power to museums, museums have been and continue to be embroiled in often asymmetrical power relationships, in particular with but not limited to so-called "source communities" (Peers and Brown, 2003a).[9] Many museums, especially those in the Global North had as their "raison-d'être to collect the 'other' defined by time or geography or both," for example, museums collected cultural materials from (colonized) communities and places around the world, often without the community, from which these materials were sourced, having had a say in the matter (Mason et al., 2018, p. 45). "During the great age of museum collecting which began in the mid-nineteenth century, this was a one-way relationship: objects and information about them went from peoples all over the world into museums, which then consolidated knowledge as the basis of curatorial and institutional authority. Often this relationship was predicated on another set of relationships, between museums as institutions within imperial powers and source communities in colonised regions" (Peers and Brown, 2003b, p. 18). Descendants in these source communities are now often working with museums and are figuring more significantly in museum considerations than before. Source communities are asserting authority over their culture, which in turn informs new types of relationships between them and museums.

Yet, as noted by James Clifford (1997, p. 208, quoted in Peers and Brown, 2003b, p. 19), museums may continue to be "perceived as merely paternalistic by people whose contact history with [them] has been one of exclusion and condescension," reaffirming and continuing the coloniality at the root of the relationship. The way forward for museums is to "alter [...] the traditional relations of power between museums and source communities," to move toward "partnership rather than superficial involvement" (Peers and Brown, 2003b, p. 19). The continued acknowledgement and understanding of the history of asymmetrical power relationships that museums have been involved in remains crucial alongside a fundamental overhaul of the ways in which museums have historically understood authority over collections and knowledge as well as ethics and access. Relationships governed by a diplomatic rather than a (soft) power framework would be more productive and appropriate in advancing these important decolonial activities of museums, which would amount to a "radical re-envisioning of the nature of museums," as "[b]ringing source community members into museums turns these ordinarily dominant-society institutions into arenas for cross-cultural debate and learning, and can lead to extraordinary exchanges of knowledge as well as opportunities for people from all walks of life to begin to understand the views of someone from another cultural group" (Brown and Peers, 2003b, p. 20). In this scenario, museums do not remain inviolable but are profoundly changed and transformed by these processes of engagement.

Public Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Relations

After challenging the appropriateness of soft power to understand museums' global engagement, one remains left with a set of terms, a "semantic constellation" (Ang et al., 2015, p. 367), within which to locate museum diplomacy.

These are public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. The broadest of these is public diplomacy, which, according to Nicholas J. Cull (2009, p. 12), can be defined as "an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public," and which includes the components of listening, advocacy, exchange diplomacy, international broadcasting and cultural diplomacy. While previously seen as a practice restricted to the state, public diplomacy is being practiced by a much broader range of actors, so much so that the term "new public diplomacy" was coined to set it apart from the more conventional understanding (Melissen, 2005). Whether seen as encompassed by public diplomacy or not,[10] the same evolution toward a broader, more encompassing understanding has occurred with cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy, in a popular and broad definition by Milton Cummings (2003, p. 1), may then be understood as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding."[11]

Yet despite the opening up of public and cultural diplomacy to more actors, both are often seen as distinct from cultural relations. A recent literature review by the Goethe-Institut and British Council (2018) exposes a number of fault lines, especially between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. Cultural relations is here defined as "interventions in foreign cultural arenas with the aim of enhancing intercultural dialogue and bringing about mutual benefits connected to security, stability and prosperity" (Goethe-Institut and British Council, 2018, p. 5). And, while there is plenty of conflation between the various terms used, a hard line is often drawn between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. Rivera's (2015, p. 35) is a typical description as to how the two terms are seen to relate to one another: "Cultural diplomacy takes a promotion and advocacy approach, using cultural

content for the specific purpose of supporting foreign policy objectives and the national interest. Cultural relations take place outside the sway of government, building mutual trust and understanding, and generating amity and influence in the process." According to that line of thought cultural diplomacy is solely conducted by governments, whereas cultural relations is a practice embraced by non-governmental practitioners, yet also embraced by, for example, the arm's-length British Council, which tends to contort itself by both executing the UK government's public and cultural diplomacy and soft power agendas, while also practicing an independent flavor of cultural relations, yet trying to maintain that distinction (Rivera, 2015; Rose and Wadham-Smith, 2004). This dogmatic approach to distinguishing cultural diplomacy from cultural relations tends to ignore the broadening of the range of actors involved in cultural diplomacy. We shall see that a new understanding of diplomacy renders redundant the distinction between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations and can provide answers to the fears of cultural relations practitioners of being politicized and instrumentalized (Goethe-Institut and British Council, 2018, pp. 9–11).

The "New Diplomacy"

Museums are easily subsumed under any of these concepts. Museums and other cultural institutions and individuals, such as artists and other practitioners, are well served for their global engagement to be approached through the lens of the so-called "new diplomacy." While this approach has had an influence on shaping both public and cultural diplomacy for a while now, it is quite often the case that those who write about cultural diplomacy pay little attention to the new diplomacy literature in international relations,[12] reifying the public/cultural diplomacy and cultural relations divide. Challenging the primacy of the state in the

conduct of diplomacy, the "new diplomacy"[13] is characterized by its recognition of an increasing array of diplomatic actors other than the state. Though certainly neither fully realized nor accepted by all, the "club" of the nation-states has nonetheless given way to "network diplomacy" practiced by other actors alongside the states (Cooper et al., 2013). "Many of those with influence are not nation-states[,]" writes Richard Haass (2013, p. 16). "Indeed, one of the cardinal features of the contemporary international system is that nation-states have lost their monopoly and, in some domains, their preeminence."

As Anne-Marie Slaughter (2017, p. 7) puts it: "The chessboard view of 190-odd competing states—as well as the much smaller numbers that are players in any given bilateral, regional or global game—remains accurate and relevant much of the time. But it is not the only view, and seeing the world only through a chessboard lens obscures another equally important and relevant landscape." The chessboard is joined by a web, which requires recognizing "a world not of states but of networks, intersecting and closely overlapping in some places and more strung out in others. It is the world not only of terrorists but of global trade, both licit and illicit; of drugs, arms and human trafficking; of climate change and declining biodiversity; of water wars and food insecurity; of corruption, money-laundering and tax evasion; of pandemic disease carried by air, sea and land. In short, it is the world of many of the most pressing twenty-first-century global threats" (Slaughter, 2017, p. 7). And this is also the world of culture(s) and the global links between and across them, which happily disregard national boundaries.

Yet, what is new about it? In section 2, I argued that museums have long been involved in international (and global) work. And this is also true for cities and other subnational governments, Indigenous communities, NGOs

and other actors (Constantinou et al., 2016, p. 36). Newness is rather constituted by the changes in and intensity of cross-border flows engendered by globalization that have increasingly blurred the distinction between the domestic and the foreign (Kleine, 2013). These changes have been exacerbated by "the emergence of a technological system of information, telecommunications, and transport that has connected the planet in a network of flows" (Kleine, 2003, p. 56), thereby creating a "network society" (Castells, 1996). Kelley (2010, p. 292) adds that the users of those technologies have become rather adept at employing them to great effect leading to a "grander scale of non-state action." These conditions have enabled the activities of many actors to go global on an unprecedented scale and for the global to become a defining characteristic of the local.[14] Newness also resides in the realization of these flows and the location of one's work within and along these flows. For museums, these developments are difficult to ignore as museum audiences diversify, often marginalized constituents assert their rights, and challenges are posed through digital and other technologies: "As the world evolves, museums must evolve to align themselves with a new set of realities marked by changing demographics and unprecedented global interdependence" to "sustain their relevance" (Royal Ontario Museum, 2019). The "new" diplomacy is both a challenge and opportunity for museums' global engagement.

What kind of diplomacy is practiced by those new diplomats? A recent study of think tank diplomacy illustrates this point (Tyler et al., 2017). In establishing think tanks as non-state actors in diplomacy, the authors derive the following four diplomatic functions based on previous understandings of diplomatic activity by Hedley Bull and others: "negotiation between states; communication with foreign publics; information-gathering and reporting; promoting friendly relations and minimising friction in

international affairs" (Tyler et al., 2017, pp. 24–25). "[I]t is sufficient if think tanks through their various activities can be shown to be contributing to these functions, either directly or indirectly, within the norms of diplomatic culture. If so, they are playing a role in diplomacy by fulfilling functions and roles that traditionally rested with diplomatic actors" (Tyler et al., 2017, p. 25). The authors then go on to demonstrate the ways in which think tank activities directly or indirectly contribute to these functions. While this approach could be regarded as promising when contemplating the diplomacy of non-state and other actors, there is a good degree of discomfort with it. By mapping onto these actors even a skeletal set of diplomatic functions that are usually reserved for the state, the diplomatic activity of the state becomes the blueprint on which the diplomatic activity of these actors is modeled. Rather than decentering the primacy of the states in diplomacy, this approach reifies that primacy. Additionally, while there may be some overlap between these state functions and those activities of non-state actors, they are not states. This far from ground-breaking realization challenges us to scrutinize what non-state actors as well as many other actors are actually doing on the global stage, and analytically deal with those behaviors. And it also challenges us to essentialize our understanding of diplomacy.

Toward a Basic Definition of Diplomacy

It is a tremendous task to challenge the epistemic dominance of diplomacy as tethered to state. Yet there is a more productive way of seeing diplomacy, which is provided by a "*diplomatic understanding* of human relations" as developed by Paul Sharp (2009, p. 10, emphasis in original). He sees diplomacy as a means to manage "relations of separateness" between human communities: "It is when they know each other exists that relations become possible. It is when people want those relations with one

another, but also want to keep apart, that the conditions of separateness are created. And these conditions provide the space in which diplomacy and diplomats work" (Sharp, 2009, p. 84). And these "[r]elations of separateness exist, therefore, where people believe or feel that the claims of others upon them have less emotional pull, legal force or moral weight. We owe more to our own, and they to us, than we do to strangers" (Sharp, 2009, p. 85). The notion of separateness is also scalable and does not solely exist at the international level but between any human groups as well as an internal condition of people vis-à-vis others. Sharp sees the need for the maintenance of these relations, which is achieved through diplomacy. Yet that maintenance does not need to be achieved by conventional diplomats but is rather characterized by "the omnipresence of relations in need of diplomacy" (Sharp, 2009, p. 291).

Sharp's "simple" approach to diplomacy opens the doors as to whom can be counted as diplomats and as to what relations they can conduct. Thus understood, diplomacy is no longer the sole purview of the state and its diplomats and enables others to become diplomatic. We can then no longer privilege "diplomacy as an institution," and the functions derived from this way of understanding diplomacy, over "diplomacy as a behaviour" (Kelley, 2010, p. 286). Diplomacy as a behavior "is rather located in the everyday, cross-cultural and interstitial space" (Constantinou et al., 2016, p. 50). If it is the work of diplomats to build bridges between groups, then this understanding maps well onto ways in which the outcomes of cultural relations can be understood, as for example by the British Council and Goethe-Institut (2018, p. 7) as "greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction, rather than coercion." An essentialized approach

to diplomacy as proposed here maps onto the "relations" of cultural relations, leaving little room for a dogmatic distinction between the concepts, especially as diplomacy is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of the nation-state. Cultural diplomacy can then be understood as the various forms of global cultural engagement by a variety of actors to achieve diplomatic outcomes, such as those encapsulated in the cultural relations definition used by the British Council and Goethe-Institut. This non-territorially bounded, non-state-centric understanding salvages the concept of diplomacy for application to a wide range of global activities and behaviors, including those of museums.

Museums, the State and Instrumentalism

And yet, I do not wish to be naïve about the relationship between museums and the state. Depending on the organizational set up and the structure of the cultural sector, museums operate at various proximities and distances from the state that may enhance or limit their freedom and independence of their operations. And various levels of government continue to establish museums for a variety of reasons (Mason et al., 2018, p 42). The Louvre provides a clear example for a high degree of proximity to the state, in which international activities are linked to the state, whose collections it holds. The aim of this museum's international work is to contribute to France's "cultural influence" (*rayonnement culturel;* Le Louvre, 2016). By contrast, the UK national museums fiercely invoke the arm's length principle, which has been ensuring their autonomous operations (from the state). Yet as we shall see, they have been very apt at instrumentalizing themselves. While museums are regularly seen as delivering on the cultural diplomacy of a state, which they support as passive agents, often it is difficult to disentangle the one from the other, but one must acknowledge the great diversity of institutional

arrangements, funding models, working relationships with various levels of government, alignments with policy, the explicit and implicit power of states over museum activities and so forth as the broad spectrum of possibilities in which museums' international work is nested.[15]

However, museums do possess agency over their international (and global) activities. As shown by Cai Yunci in her analysis of the Singapore-France cultural collaboration, a bilateral cultural diplomacy initiative between the two states that involved the exchanges of exhibitions, some of the exhibition collaborations started prior to this cultural diplomacy project and emerged from existing networks between museums. The cultural diplomacy project did not provide the motivation for collaboration but permitted an additional funding source. As stated by one interviewee: "[Cultural diplomacy] was not a major motivation. We just thought: what would turn the Singapore public on? We would have our own brainstorming sessions about what we want to do, but allow MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] to ride on us for cultural diplomacy if they want to. Because we need people to come in and see the exhibition, we can't do things just because MFA is happy" (Cai, 2013, p. 134). In another study on loan exhibitions from China in the UK, Da Kong (2019, pp. 97–98) states that "museums are no longer passive cultural diplomacy tools waiting to be called upon by the government. Acting independently, they exert their own influence on cultural diplomacy. They can take the lead in this and exploit the government's own ambitions for soft power to fulfil their own agendas." This argument is made in relation to the British Museum's terracotta warrior exhibition with loans from China, which helped place China in favorable light when this was desired in the run up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. This favorable alignment helped secure the prestigious loans and, in turn, built China's image.

For museum professionals, these insights may be hardly surprising and merely reflective of standard museum practice. Without reference to the "new diplomacy," in these accounts cultural diplomacy is driven by the state(s), thereby surfacing another fear often raised by cultural relations practitioners, which is that of the state instrumentalizing cultural relations as well as cultural organizations (Goethe-Institut and British Council, 2018, p. 11). Instrumentalism, the use of "cultural ventures and investments as a means or instrument to attain goals in other areas" (Vestheim, 1994, p. 65), is a claim leveled at (statist) cultural diplomacy and hence often rejected (Nisbett, 2013, p. 558). Through an analysis of the genesis of the World Collections Programme (WCP), a UK government-funded project to enable partnerships of six national cultural institutions including several museums, with counterparts in Africa, the Middle East and China, Nisbett complicates the conventional understanding of instrumentalism. By commissioning the think tank Demos to produce a report on cultural diplomacy that highlights the ways cultural organizations contribute to cultural diplomacy and that call for greater investments in this area, these cultural organizations "opportunistically and proactively led the way in generating the WCP as a new policy, justified in instrumental terms" (Nisbett, 2013, p. 568). With their own institutional needs in mind, "the organisations persuaded the Government to *see* their international activity as instrumental," allowing these organizations "to continue doing the work that they already do." Usually applied in a top-down manner from government to cultural organization, instrumentalism has thus been "inverted" (Nisbett, 2013, p. 568).

Similar to Cai, Nisbett's study suggests that "if indeed there are diplomatic benefits, they are secondary and may be an unintentional consequence of the goals and aspirations of the museums" (Nisbett, 2013, p. 572). This,

of course, refers to the diplomacy of the state as it is conventionally understood. From the perspective of the conventional understanding of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations, several scenarios present themselves to museums: some museums, due to their proximity to the state or by choice, are comfortable in actively supporting state-driven cultural diplomacy objectives; other museums pursue international work that happens to feed into state-driven cultural diplomacy, and they do not see an issue with it; yet other museums pursue their international work without any consideration of government or in opposition to government. In all of these cases, government may be needed for export and permissions, visas or other support mechanisms that help realize museums' international work. Previous studies have identified a museum's agency in such scenarios. I am proposing to go a step further.

The dissolution of the cultural diplomacy/cultural relations distinction, as argued for above, produces an understanding of (cultural) diplomacy that hinges on the reconceptualization of museums' global activities that produce an institution's own diplomacy, foregrounding the agency of museums in the process. This way a museum's values, interests and priorities drive what the institution cares about and wishes to pursue globally in accordance with its own agenda. And this agenda can be mapped employing Davidson and Pérez Castellanos' (2019, pp. 9–12) model of international exhibition drivers that distinguishes mission-related, market-related and diplomacy-related drivers as discussed above. In my revision of the model, their diplomatic driver, which is derived from the cultural diplomacy of the state, is changed to reflect museums' own diplomatic priorities, which, if so desired by the museum, can be linked to those of the state. For this notion to be fully realized by museum professionals, nothing less than a loss of innocence is required as it would establish an

assertive and affirmative framework for global activities. Museums that embrace these possibilities and opportunities and observers who grasp museums' full agency and agenda realize the full diplomatic potential of museums by thinking through to its proper conclusion the consequences of the "new diplomacy."

5. Conclusion

This essay aims at developing a framework for museum diplomacy, a diplomacy that is rooted in a museum's values, principles, priorities and, hence, interests, foregrounding the room for a museum's agency in global engagement. Museums' "international" work has usually been seen as hitched to and derived from the cultural diplomacy of the nation-state, in which a museum is located, without much attention paid to the interests of the museum itself. If one fully embraces the tenets and implications of the "new diplomacy," such an approach is no longer sufficient nor keeps with our networked world. Both practitioners in museums as well as those analyzing museums have the opportunity to change the starting point of their approach to museums' global and international work: begin with the museum and its interests. What is the museum doing globally? Who is it engaging with? For what reason? Is it linking itself to cultural diplomacy objectives of the state? If so, for what reasons? Is the museum self-instrumentalizing to achieve other objectives of its own?

Such questions are the logical consequence of the "new diplomacy," in which each actor is pursuing its own global agendas, often independent from but sometimes aligned with nation-states, international/supranational organizations and other more governmental arrangements. This realization requires several adjustments to approaching diplomacy. If the state is one of the many actors in a world

of network diplomacy, part of the "web," then diplomacy itself needs to be defined in a way that it is stripped of its statist connotations. Sharp's understanding of diplomacy helped the development of a basic notion of diplomacy that defines it as the handling of relations between groups. Additionally, the diplomatic activities of many actors, then, do not need to find reflection in the diplomatic functions usually attributed to states but that emerge from their own behaviors. For museums, this leaves us with important challenges and opportunities. Museums have long been active internationally, carrying out activities that are derived from their core functions. They are often primarily mission-driven but usually sit within a complex set of drivers.

The essay foregrounds the notion of the global, as locating museum practice within the local-global continuum enables us to realize the interconnectedness between global currents and the local contexts in which museums operate. This is not a merely academic point but has practical implications for museum practice, as activities that are not usually seen as international would be considered global and hence within the remit of a museum's global engagement. Here, one might think of more obvious areas, such as climate change or migration, but global elements can be found in any area of museum work. In this light, the program that brings museum-developed, hands-on, object-based learning experiences to youth in disadvantaged communities can be linked to inequalities brought on or expedited by globalization.

Fully embracing a museum-driven understanding of diplomacy, as explored in this essay, has advantages.[16] It would help both the ways in which museums approach, for example, the relationship between themselves and groups, as well as create spaces in the museum for the building of bridges. Museums often sit in asymmetrical power relations

especially with "community groups." Approaching these relationships diplomatically would foreground notions of mutuality, reciprocity and bridge building, and inject a deep sense of humility. A diplomatic approach is consequently not far removed from existing work in equity, diversity and inclusion and community engagement as conducted by some museums. There seems to be an expectation or at least some form of understanding that museums could be "a means of fostering a culture of dialogue and tolerance" and to engender mutual understanding (Mason et al., 2018, 209). This, in essence, is a diplomatic understanding of museum work. There is something to be said about the propensity of museums to enable an understanding of the world and our place in it, understanding one another, learning with and about others, and delivering on more cosmopolitan ideals. Diplomacy could become a behavior and mission for museums.

We have seen in the discussion of instrumentalism that some museums are already reading themselves into cultural diplomacy as conventionally understood. In many cases this enabled museums to do more of what they were already doing. Given the challenges our world faces today, the "to what end" question engenders a greater sense of urgency. In a world marked by the rise of authoritarian populism, the building of walls and vilification of "Others," now is the time not just for museums but for everybody to involve themselves in a (cultural) diplomacy directed at mitigating such cultural conflicts (Jessup, 2019). These conflicts are primarily culturally driven, a veritable "cultural backlash," and only secondarily by economic considerations (Norris and Inglehart, 2019), and they involve the culturalization of economic and geopolitical divisions. Cultural conflicts thus require cultural solutions. The challenge might well be extended from cultural conflicts to all sorts of global crises, from the immediate challenge of COVID-19 and its

biopolitics to the ongoing environmental degradation of the planet we live on. Culture is needed to address conflict and crisis, bounce back from them, and build capacity to face the future. Museums might not be the diplomats of the 21st century quite yet, but they possess, as I have hopefully shown, all the right ingredients to become those diplomats if they wish to grasp this opportunity and make a difference in global challenges.

Author's Biography

Sascha Priewe is the Associate Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships, Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, Canada. Before joining the ROM, he was Curator of Chinese and Korean collections at the British Museum and prior to that served as a diplomat in the German Foreign Office, including as a cultural attaché at the German Embassy in Beijing.

Priewe co-founded the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI: culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com), a think tank that has created a transdisciplinary partnership including academics, policymakers and practitioners from North America and beyond to establish cultural diplomacy as a critical practice.

He is a 2019–21 CPD Research Fellow at the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, a Senior Fellow of Massey College, Toronto, and an Associate Member of the Posthumanism Research Institute at Brock University. Priewe is also cross-appointed as Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art at the University of Toronto, and is Affiliated Associate Professor in Cultural Studies at Queen's University. He also serves on the board of ICOM Canada, is a councillor of the Ontario Museum Association, and Vice-President of the Society for East Asian Archaeology.

Priewe holds a Ph.D. in archaeology from the University of Oxford, an M.A. in art history and archaeology from SOAS University of London, and an M.A. in culture and media management from the Hamburg University of Music and Theatre. He completed his undergraduate degree in public administration at the German Foreign Office.

His research has focused on Chinese art and archaeology, Korean art, museum studies, city/subnational diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. As the co-editor with Sarah E.K. Smith, he is working toward the publication of *The Handbook of Museum Diplomacy*.

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Endnotes

1. This essay will not cover all possible ways of looking at the global work of museums and certainly primarily employs Anglophone literature and examples. The study is also influenced by the particular subject position of the author who has been working in arm's length, partially government-funded museums. It is hoped that those whose own particular ways of looking at this field find some applicability of what is being discussed and advanced here to their own professional practice and research.

2. Görgen makes this comment in an article in *The Art Newspaper* to discuss the public diplomacy significance of a collaboration between the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin and the MaXXI museum in Rome. The planned exhibition was intended to be the first exhibition of modern art from this Tehran collection abroad.

3. Book-length contributions include Sylvester, 2009; Dickey et al., 2013; Lord Blankenberg, 2016; Davidson and Pérez Castellanos, 2019; and Grincheva, 2020.

4. The statement that museums have always been international, while true, also serves as a "legitimizing narrative" (Kaldor, 2003, p. 2) for the purposes of this essay. Such narratives have also been adduced for cultural diplomacy in general, see e.g., Arndt, 2005. Analogous to Kaldor's statement about civil society, "[b] y clothing the concept in historical garb, it is possible

that the past has imposed a kind of straight jacket which obscures or even confines the more radical contemporary implications" (Kaldor, 2003, p. 3). That imposition, as in the case of civil society, is the notion of territorial boundedness of both culture, which includes museums, and diplomacy and hence cultural diplomacy.

5. The description of activities follows NMDC, 2002, and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019. More detailed discussions of the various activities will be provided in Priewe and Smith, in preparation.

6. See Davidson and Pérez Castellanos, 2019, for an excellent, recent study of travelling exhibitions.

7. Knight is hardly the first one to raise issues with the power in soft power. See, for example, several contributions in Berenskoetter and Williams, 2007.

8. The diplomatic functions listed by Knight are of course derived from those of diplomacy as conducted by the nation-states. As I will show below, this approach is flawed as it relates to non-state and many other actors. However, the general thrust of Knight's critique is commendable.

9. The term "source communities" includes "every cultural group from whom museums have collected: local people, diaspora and immigrant communities, religious groups, settlers, and indigenous peoples, whether those are First Nations, Aboriginal, Maori, or Scottish." Peers and Brown, 2003b, p. 19.

10. Pamment argues that cultural diplomacy is not necessarily part of public diplomacy and that cultural diplomacy's "recent rearticulation as a 'component' of

public diplomacy represents the decline of a unique approach to international relations." Pamment, 2013, p. 46.

11. One pertinent problem with this definition is the use of "their people," which indicates an anachronistic territorial boundedness.

12. Even dialogue between these two literatures is missing (Sending et al., 2011, p. 533).

13. Foundational texts are Cooper et al., 2002; Riordan, 2003.

14. See discussion above.

15. The current argument is not intended to undermine government funding for museums. Just the opposite. In constellations, for example, in which museums are at least partially funded by yet operate at arm's length from government, that funding ensures the autonomy and diversity of cultural expressions. The current argument extends this more consciously into the global field. A government's cultural diplomacy strategy aimed at expanding a country's footprint beyond its borders would do well to increase funding for the global activities of institutions, artists and others to both enable and catalyze global engagement.

16. Naturally, this overall approach can be applied broadly across the cultural industries/cultural economy.

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