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The cultural heritage of a people is the memory of its living culture. It is expressed in many different forms, both tangible (monuments, landscapes, objects) and intangible (languages, knowhow, the performing arts, music, etc.). The origins of this heritage are multifarious, too. In retracing its own cultural lineage, in recognizing the many different influences that have marked its history and shaped its identity, a people is better able to build peaceful relations with other peoples, to pursue what is often an age-old dialogue and to forge its future.

Koichiro Matsuura at the inauguration of the UN Year for Cultural Heritage (2002)

Following the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in 2001, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. The aim was to make public authorities, the private sector and civil society realise how cultural heritage could be an ‘instrument for peace and reconciliation’ and a ‘factor of development’. While mourning the recent destruction of heritage, the UN Year also celebrated the internationalisation of preservation since the Second World War and the thirtieth anniversary of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. As the words of former UNESCO Secretary General Koichiro Matsuura indicate, efforts have focussed not just on increasing identification with a common world heritage or on promoting knowledge about other cultures. Additionally, care for one’s own heritage is fostered as the crucial prerequisite to peaceful relations between peoples. Globally, heritage is increasingly promoted as a force of good. Preservation policies are firmly integrated into the bureaucracies of many modern states, but as local, national and international activities are seen as building upon each other they are also linked

2 Ibid.
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through a plethora of international and non-governmental organisations. Civic engagement and heritage-related activities have also continuously been growing. For instance, across European countries, European Heritage Days are a magnet for tens of millions annual visitors. In Britain, the National Trust alone has more members than all political parties put together. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the protection of one’s heritage has become a quasi human right. As a result, heritage is mobilised by a variety of actors for a wide variety of purposes. It is adduced to frame the restoration of cathedrals, as well as the preservation of fox-hunting, or the marketing of local cheese, but also for the regeneration of post-industrial regions and the reconstruction of post-conflict communities.

Why did heritage become so important? Where does the belief in its potential to bring prosperity, peace and international understanding come from? Paradoxically, while heritage is used as a universal category in public discourse, the origins of international concern for heritage are perceived to be relatively recent, only dating from the post-war period. Instead, historians have sought explanations for the birth of heritage during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century overwhelmingly in national contexts. It is frequently claimed that a national ‘special path’ determined the appearance of heritage consciousness. This is particularly, but not solely, the case for the three European countries forming the object of this study. To put it in a stereotypical way: French heritage is often perceived as the creation of the state, in order to rally the citizens; German heritage as having been developed by the bourgeoisie as a means of self-representation, and English heritage as having been imposed by a threatened ruling class for its own protection.

Every country thus imagines it has invented heritage. But did they all magically imagine heritage at more or less the same time? And why is heritage now seen as an international phenomenon? It makes sense to go back and look at the international origins that were there all along, though for various reasons denied by actors and historians. As explanations for the emergence of heritage have been looked for in relation to the dominant questions in national historiographies, historians not only failed to consider

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a wider appropriation of heritage by diverse social groups in each country, but they neglected the emergence of similar ideas and practices in different national contexts and ignored the connections between them. Across countries, major developments occurred repeatedly at the same moments. First, during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the destruction of symbols of the old order, changing ideas regarding national community, the nationalisation of property by the Revolutionary government and art looting by the French armies, led to a new notion of ‘national heritage’ across Europe. The 1830s and 1840s, then, saw the first Europe-wide debates about the protection of the past by the state. While history started to become established as an academic discipline, splendid restorations resurrected lost monuments and a popular culture of heritage emerged. Between 1870 and 1914, finally, modern preservationism was established. The fanciful restorations of national treasures were replaced with a new idea of authenticity emphasising the value of age. What was considered worthy of preservation also changed. The idea of heritage broadened to include vernacular alongside monumental traces, recent alongside distant pasts, nature alongside culture, and traditions alongside objects. Changing popular attitudes manifested in the foundation of a plethora of voluntary associations and meshed with growing concern on the part of the State translating into a wave of legislation.

Can these similarities be purely understood in terms of parallel, and maybe competing national developments? At first sight, it makes sense to look for national explanations, as the long nineteenth century was strongly framed by outbursts of nationalism and a disregard for foreign heritages. The period starts with a nationalist reclaiming of the past during the French Revolution, accompanied by widespread looting of art. The beginning of a new era seems succinctly captured by a petition addressed to all members of the Republic of Letters, asking them to ‘stop being cosmopolitans’ and restrain their ‘vast affection that embraces the entire universe’ and instead love their ‘fatherland a little more’. The end of the period is likewise dominated by war and destruction, symbolised by the burning of Louvain Library and Rheims Cathedral by the German army in 1914. However, despite this nationalist framing, one only needs to open any preservationist periodical from the nineteenth century to realise that developments across countries did not happen in isolation, but that heritage-makers from different nations were in constant touch with each other. All key moments in the conceptualisation of heritage during the long nineteenth century coincided

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with an increase in international contacts between preservationists. Personal travel and correspondence were complemented by the use of diplomatic channels and formalised exchanges between private societies. Since mid-century, the world’s fairs and international congresses also provided regular venues for such exchanges. While contacts were mainly used to improve the national situations during the first two waves described above, during the third wave, internationalism became more pronounced. Heritage-makers increasingly used the transnational space not only to exchange ideas about their national situation, but also debated the creation of international institutions and the protection of a common heritage of humanity.

Hence, this book will argue that the rise of heritage cannot be understood without its transnational dimension. It shows how heritage could become an important universal category by analysing the history of heritage in France, Germany and Britain between 1789 and 1914 as an ‘entangled history’. To this end it combines a comparison of the three countries with an analysis of multi-directional ‘cultural transfers’. It distinguishes between parallel national developments, competing, mutually induced, national developments, and developments at the international level, which had national effects. By showing which similarities and differences were due to indigenous factors, and which had broader transnational origins, it revises explanations given in the three separate national historiographies. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, by inscribing the entanglements between the three countries into much broader interactions, the book reveals the importance of the global level for the rise of heritage.

The general benefits of comparison have often been pointed out. By revealing that apparently different events can relate to similar causes and that similar events can stem from different reasons, a comparative approach can overcome what Marc Bloch labelled the explanatory lure of ‘local pseudo causes’. As such the ‘comparative method is capable of rendering historians the most remarkable services, by introducing them to the road that can lead to the real explanations, but also, and perhaps most importantly, if we might begin with a more modest but necessary benefit, by deterring them from certain paths that are nothing but dead ends’.

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11 Ibid., p. 24.
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comparison also has its pitfalls. In particular there is a danger of constructing the entities for comparison artificially and of assuming that national cultures are distinct and closed. Marc Bloch already pointed out that societies close in time and space are likely to influence each other. This inspired a school of ‘cultural transfer’ historians to emphasise the constant reconstruction of cultures through incorporation and ‘acculturation’ of foreign elements. However, as most transfer studies looked only at one specific transfer, they can implicitly reintroduce the comparative element and assume transfer from one distinct national culture to another. As a result it has been suggested to combine the two interdependent approaches, looking at multinational transfers and re-transfers. Yet it remains difficult to combine comparison and transfer in writing, as one privileges synchrony and macro-history, the other diachrony and micro-history. It also remains challenging to capture all multinational transfers and re-transfers as an almost cubist perspective of simultaneity would be needed. ‘Entangled history’ suggests resolving the dilemma by being self-reflexive about the categories used and to emphasise asymmetries rather than glossing over them. Yet, while theoretical debates have been flourishing, empirical examples are lacking. Hence, it is one of the aims of this study to advance the debate about transnational and global history through empirical work.

Heritage and history

Understanding why the transnational dimension has been written out of the history of heritage, and why different national historiographies have conceptualised this history so differently is an important prerequisite. Despite a long-established comparative angle in art-historical work, and a growing

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14 For recent methodological reflections see G. Budde, S. Conrad, O. Janz (eds.), Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien (Göttingen, 2006).
concern with comparative and transnational questions more broadly, the main standard works on the history of heritage have often extrapolated from national experiences under the cover of a universalist title, cherry-picking rather than comparing international examples. More recently, attention has been drawn to the differences between Western and non-Western understanding of heritage, but intra-European differences and global connections are rarely highlighted. The recent efforts to establish ‘heritage studies’ as a discipline have also not shed much light on this question, as their concern is more with heritage in the present than in the past. The rich historiographies, which exist at the national level, on the other hand are often shaped by national traditions of administering heritage. Broader historical work has seen the history of heritage mainly through the lens of other dominant questions in national historiographies. Casting aside some nuances, in France, the debates about the history of heritage are still to a certain degree about assessing the legacy of the French Revolution. In Germany, the study of nineteenth-century heritage has been conducted as part of the German Sonderweg debate, while in Britain the 1980s’ Heritage Debate, dominated by worries about the rise of the heritage industry in relation to the decline of the industrial spirit and the revival of ‘Victorian Values’, has cast a long shadow.

A large part of the literature on heritage is more or less openly a littérature engagée, using the history of preservation for particular agendas in current
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heritage politics. Assumptions about heritage have also been particularly shaped by presentist concerns in the field of memory studies. Although many conceptual nuances exist between ‘heritage’ and ‘memory’, the two notions have often been used interchangeably. Importantly here, the national focus of heritage studies can in part be explained by the trend towards orchestrating an explicit revival of national history through the history of memory. Especially Pierre Nora’s Lieux de mémoire played a major role in fostering a national orientation. Whilst the idea of invented memory seemingly deconstructs nationalist assumptions, Nora presented the writing of the Lieux de mémoire as a patriotic endeavour to preserve vanishing memories, offering a way to reinvent the writing of national history through commemoration in a Europeanising and globalising world.

This appealed to other countries too and national Lieux de mémoire projects soon followed across Europe in the 1990s. A range of scholars have since challenged the primacy of the national in studies of memory, stressing the need to pay more attention to the local context on the one hand and to European and postcolonial perspectives on the other. Yet some of these attempts are no less charged with identity-building objectives. The aim of this book is not to argue that European or international origins are more enobling than national ones, but simply to open a dialogue between

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different national and disciplinary traditions and understand how a process could simultaneously lead to different national approaches and to a common culture of heritage. By historicising heritage in such a way, I hope to contribute more generally to explaining the origins of many current debates and offer a way to question hegemonic accounts of how heritage should be interpreted.

Words and things

Despite the confident tone of some of the definitions of heritage, there is much debate on what is meant by ‘heritage’ and whether it can or should be defined at all. Designations range from enumerations of potential remains, to defamations of heritage as ‘anything that sells’ or celebrations of it as ‘anything you want’. Most current definitions stress that virtually any legacy from the past, tangible or intangible, can become heritage, as long as a community wants to claim and transmit it. This attitude is captured in UNESCO’s definition of ‘heritage’ as ‘our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations’, and which can be ‘expressed in many different forms, both tangible (monuments, landscapes, objects) and intangible (languages, knowhow, the performing arts, music, etc.)’.

However, neither this definition nor the word heritage itself have been used in this way for more than a few decades in English, while other languages have different terms that do not necessarily have the same resonances. This poses obvious problems for studying the history of ‘heritage’. Applying the word and the broad definitions of today retrospectively is anachronistic. A prospective definition is equally problematic because a plethora of different words, ideas and movements with different names could be taken as a starting point.

This problem of course does not just apply to heritage, but to the history of any concept. As Jacob Burckhardt long ago observed, ‘sharply defined terminology belongs to Logic but not to History’. Whereas philosophical terminology needs to be as ‘definite and compact as possible’, historical terminology needs to be ‘as floating and open as possible’ to take

18 Matsuura, ‘United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage’.
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into account the changing nature of definitions over time. Moreover, a transnational approach is not only confronted with asymmetries between categories in different times but also with asymmetries between cultures which remain often untranslatable. Whereas today, both English and French have generic, albeit not congruent terms (heritage and patrimoine), there is no corresponding single word in German. In addition to Kulturerbe a variety of expressions are needed such as Kulturgüter (cultural property), Denkmal (monument) or Heimat (nominally ‘homeland’, but carrying implications that translations are not quite able to provide). To complicate matters further, the semantic field of ‘heritage’ has been steadily changing and growing with the evolution of the concept. While patrimoine and heritage were already in use in the nineteenth century, at this time people referred more generally to monuments in all three languages. Yet a number of partial synonyms also exist in all languages, many of these come from a common Greco-Latin pool.

The scholarly vocabulary also varies, stemming from, and in turn leading to, different foci in the respective scholarly traditions. In French a number of neologisms are employed to describe the process of conceptualisation and institutionalisation which do not have an English or German equivalent, such as patrimonialiser (to turn something into ‘heritage’), patrimonialisation (the process of creating (the concept of) ‘heritage’), conscience patrimoniale (‘heritage-awareness’), champ patrimonial (everything that is included in the notion of ‘heritage’) and most recently patrimonialisateur (‘heritage-maker’). German on the other hand has developed a number of compounds since the late nineteenth century on the basis of Denkmal and Heimat: Denkmalfachwesen (the care of monuments), Denkmalschutz (the legal protection of monuments), and similarly Heimatpflege and Heimatschutz (the latter had beforehand referred to the military defence of the homeland). The preservation movement is designated as Denkmal- and Heimatbewegung. ‘Heimat-“buffs”’ were called Heimatkundler (Heimat-scholar), Heimatschützer (Heimat-protector) or

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simply Heimatler, whereas Denkmalpfleger (monument-carer) increasingly designated a professional conservator. Heimatgedanken, Heimatsinn, Heimatgefühl, Heimatliebe (Heimat-thoughts, -sense, -sentiment and -love) led to all sorts of Heimathstellungen (Heimat-endeavours), including the development of Heimatkunst and Heimastil (Heimat-art and Heimat-style), all engendering a veritable Denkmalschutz (cult of monuments). The totality of all monuments was called Denkmalsbestand. Finally there even is a word for the concept of monument: Denkmalbegriff.

The evolution of key words has been studied to different degrees for the respective languages, but no small amount of confusion remains about why and when words evolved and replaced each other. The differences in words between different cultures have also often been noticed, but explanations for these differences remain unsystematic and lack a proper engagement with foreign cases. For instance, Robert Hewison’s assertion that patrioine was derived from patrie, and therefore indicates a more national content of the French patrioine than the English word ‘heritage’ with its alleged emphasis on private property, is flawed. Both patrie (from...