



## Green cultural diplomacy: How environmental values are transmitted through art, heritage, and cultural policy?

### Diplomacia cultural verde: Como os valores ambientais são transmitidos por meio da arte, do patrimônio e das políticas culturais?

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**ABSTRACT:** In the context of the global environmental crisis, there is a growing need to rethink the role of culture as a tool for transmitting environmental values. The relevance of the study is due to the need to integrate environmental issues into the system of international communication, where cultural diplomacy increasingly performs the function of soft power. The aim of the article is to analyze how environmental meanings and values are transmitted through art, cultural heritage, and cultural policy within the framework of green cultural diplomacy. The research methodology is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of cultural studies, international relations, environmental ethics, and political ecology. The methods of case analysis, narrative analysis, and comparative studies were applied. The study revealed that contemporary art, museum practice, and institutional cultural policy are actively involved in the formation of environmental consciousness in society. A number of international practices are analyzed, including the activities of European cultural institutions, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization programs, and environmentally oriented art projects.

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Special attention is paid to the Ukrainian context, where environmental issues are gradually being integrated into cultural initiatives and strategies. The conclusion is made that green cultural diplomacy is a promising tool for intercultural dialogue and sustainable development. At the same time, the need for institutional support for eco-cultural projects and avoiding the superficial use of environmental rhetoric in the cultural sphere is emphasized.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage; ecological art; environmental awareness; public diplomacy; sustainable development.

**RESUMO:** No contexto da crise ambiental global, cresce a necessidade de repensar o papel da cultura como ferramenta de transmissão de valores ambientais. A relevância do estudo decorre da urgência de integrar as questões ambientais ao sistema de comunicação internacional, no qual a diplomacia cultural desempenha cada vez mais a função de *soft power*. O objetivo do artigo é analisar como significados e valores ambientais são transmitidos por meio da arte, do patrimônio cultural e das políticas culturais no âmbito da diplomacia cultural verde. A metodologia da pesquisa baseia-se em uma abordagem interdisciplinar que combina elementos dos estudos culturais, das relações internacionais, da ética ambiental e da ecologia política. Foram aplicados métodos de análise de casos, análise narrativa e estudos comparativos. O estudo revelou que a arte contemporânea, as práticas museológicas e as políticas culturais institucionais têm participação ativa na formação da consciência ambiental da sociedade. São analisadas diversas práticas internacionais, incluindo atividades de instituições culturais europeias, programas da Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO) e projetos artísticos com foco ambiental. Atenção especial é dada ao contexto ucraniano, onde questões ambientais vêm sendo gradualmente incorporadas em iniciativas e estratégias culturais. Conclui-se que a diplomacia cultural verde é um instrumento promissor para o diálogo intercultural e o desenvolvimento sustentável. Ao mesmo tempo, enfatiza-se a necessidade de apoio institucional a projetos ecoculturais e de evitar o uso superficial da retórica ambiental no campo cultural.

**Palavras-chave:** patrimônio cultural; arte ecológica; consciência ambiental; diplomacia pública; desenvolvimento sustentável.

## Introduction

The prerequisites for the emergence of green cultural diplomacy were formed gradually. Being a part of the state's soft power, culture has been shaping the global agenda since the second half of the 20th century; it helps strengthen interstate ties and evoke certain values in public consciousness. Environmental diplomacy, in turn, appeared as a sphere of international cooperation for solving environmental problems (KRISHNAN, 2024). Thus, green cultural diplomacy appears as a purposeful activity of states, international organizations, cultural institutions, and artists aimed at promoting environmental values, forming a sustainable ecological worldview, and strengthening environmental awareness through art, heritage, and cultural policy.

The European Green Deal outlines “green diplomacy” as a political priority that has not only an environmental but also a humanitarian and communication dimension (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019). In March 2024, the European Union (EU) Council, understanding the consequences of the ongoing war in Ukraine for the environment, confirmed the European Union's intention to promote global climate justice through active cooperation with partners, including Ukraine. Against this background, culture does not present a secondary addition to the policy of change but a transmitter of ecological issues and empathy toward nature and the creator of new ethical frameworks (GREEN TRANSFORMATION OF UKRAINE, 2024). This article supports Lane's (2013) position that cultural diplomacy, traditionally seen as a tool for promoting national image, needs to be rethought from the perspective of global environmental responsibility.

Despite the growing interest in the topic of environmental diplomacy in academia, there is a lack of systematic interdisciplinary research that combines the analysis of cultural practices with environmental ethics, political ecology, and international relations. Existing research mostly focuses on the political and legal aspects of “green” diplomacy, while the cultural dimension is presented fragmentarily (ALFRED, 2004).

However, cultural initiatives, such as contemporary art and museum exhibitions, film festivals, or educational projects dedicated to environmental issues, act as a channel for visualizing complex ecological challenges and forging empathy for nature, while the state and cultural institutions become mediators between artistic vision and political initiatives (WINTER, 2021).

In Ukraine, the integration of the environmental aspect into cultural diplomacy is in the initial phase; no clear policy has yet been developed. Russia's war against Ukraine has increased the value of the natural environment as part of national identity. Thus, the object of research in this article is green cultural diplomacy as a complex form of public influence, which is implemented at the intersection of environmental activism, artistic creativity, heritage preservation, and cultural policy. The article aims to examine how environmental values, transmitted through art, cultural heritage, and cultural policy within the framework of modern public diplomacy, form new models of international environmental solidarity.

For the first time in the academic discourse, green cultural diplomacy is analyzed as an element of public diplomacy and a tool for raising global environmental awareness. A distinctive feature is the emphasis on the synthesis of critical art, cultural eco-capacity, and ecological heritage as components of a new cultural ethic. An attempt is made to conceptualize "ecology of restoration" as a potential Ukrainian diplomatic narrative in the post-war context.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Foundations**

Cultural diplomacy is a component of the broader category of soft power, developed by Nye (2004). In the traditional sense, cultural diplomacy involves institutional activities aimed at promoting national culture abroad. However, as Doeser and Nisbett (2018) note, the distinction between state policy and cultural relations gets preferences among contemporary academia, where the last ones are seen as horizontal, often informal, connections between cultural institutions, artists, and activists, existing

independently of government strategies. In his research, Bennett (2018) also considers cultural diplomacy a network ecosystem of cross-border cultural communication. “Green diplomacy” is a concept that emerged in response to global challenges related to the climate crisis, environmental degradation, and resource depletion.

As for the Latin American studies, Gomes (2018) argues that Western conceptualizations of ecology and peace often exclude indigenous cosmologies that emphasize relationality, mutuality, and coexistence with nature. Gomes’s (2018) notion of “peace ecology” calls for integrating ancestral wisdom and indigenous worldviews into ecological communication as forms that reveal non-exploitative ways of being with nature. Similarly, Gama and Costa (2021) highlight culture as a transversal vector in global governance and the sustainable development agenda. Their research thus reinforces the communicative role of culture in shaping the ethical imagination of global citizenship. Cabral and Gehre Galvão (2023) suggest introducing a new Sustainable Development Goal that directly focuses on culture, arts, and communication. They do not view culture as a supporting field but as a strategic space to counter disinformation, stop climate change, and foster symbolic resistance. Considering these perspectives allows for a more pluralistic and decolonial understanding of green cultural diplomacy.

From a communication studies perspective, green cultural diplomacy can also be understood as a system of mediation. Mediation in this sense links symbolic production with reception, transforming cultural artifacts (pieces of art, exhibitions, or heritage sites) into communicative interfaces. The perception of environmental messages depends on the social and cultural context of the audience (CRUZ COSTA ALVES, 2025). Therefore, the effectiveness of green cultural diplomacy lies in the production of artistic or political initiatives and in the dialogical process through which these meanings are interpreted by the public.

The central concept of Soini and Birkeland’s (2014) approach is ecological consciousness, a cultural construct formed through symbols of nature, ideas about beauty, landscape sacralization, and collective memory. The notion of symbolic consumption is crucial for understanding how

environmental consciousness functions within global media and cultural markets (ZHAO, 2021). Environmental aesthetics becomes a form of cultural consumption where ethical values are encoded in lifestyle and identity practices. Green cultural diplomacy appears to mediate between environmental ethics and symbolic consumption, constructing new modes of cultural legitimacy and affective belonging in an era of climate change (NISBETT, 2016; MULSKA *et al.*, 2022).

In modern humanities, ecological art intervenes in ecosocial processes, thus destroying the boundary between the aesthetic and the political (FAUCHER; ZHU, 2025). For example, the practice of posthumanist ecoart questions anthropocentric ideas about nature, proposing new models of interspecies ethics and interdependence. In this connection, the concept of cultural eco-capacity is defined as the ability of cultural systems to respond to environmental challenges, transforming without losing their value integrity (WINTER, 2021). Based on the analysis of international and Ukrainian literature, the research develops a typology of green cultural diplomacy (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – Typology of green cultural diplomacy

Type	Content	Examples	Effect
Articulatory	Formation of environmental sensitivity through art	Ice Watch, Venice Biennale, eco-performances	Aesthetic eco-education, empathy
Representational	Use of heritage, museum practices, eco-tourism	Green museums, Patrimoines en mouvement, UNESCO	Building the environmental image of the state
Transformational	Creating new ethical models and ecosystems of co-creation	Art residencies (Gate 27, Sitka Center, NAHR), community art	Developing new ethical models

Source: developed by the authors.

Articulatory diplomacy uses visual and performative arts to express ecological issues and foster environmental empathy, as seen in Olafur Eliasson's Ice Watch (2014) and eco-pavilions at the Venice Biennale. Representative diplomacy connects environmental protection with

national identity through heritage, museums, and sustainable tourism, shaping a state's ecological image, as promoted by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s "green museums." Transformational diplomacy encourages intercultural collaboration and ethical rethinking of human–nature relations via art residencies, community projects, and local initiatives.

## Results

### Art as a tool for environmental communication

In the modern art environment, new practices are being formed that focus on the theme of human-nature interaction. These include, in particular, ecological performance, land art, installations from recycled materials, and digital projects that visualize climate change or the consequences of human activity. A significant example of an artist working at the intersection of art, science, and ecology is the Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson (2014). His projects, including *Ice Watch*, highlight the fragility of ecosystems and visualize abstract climate processes in public space. In this project, Eliasson (2014) brought blocks of Arctic ice to the centers of European cities (Copenhagen, Paris, and London) so that people could physically touch the consequences of climate change. Another important platform for the presentation of environmental art is the Venice Biennale, one of the most influential international exhibitions of contemporary art. In 2018, many national pavilions, including Lithuania, Finland, and Great Britain, addressed climate threats, changing landscapes, and the problem of waste disposal (IPCC, 2018).

The Lithuanian pavilion "Sun & Sea (Marina)" is an opera about climate change, taking place on an improvised beach, which won the Golden Lion award for the best national exposition (VASILENKO, 2019). Critics noted, "this opera is something different in climate change art... it does not scare but leads to resignation through everyday scenes." *Weather Report: Forecasting Future Exhibition* is a joint project

of Argentina, Sweden, and Finland, presented at the Nordic Pavilion. It showed the coexistence of humans, microbes, and algae to raise awareness of multi-life and climate threats (STEAD, 2019). The 2022 Biennale also focused on posthumanist ideas, including the coexistence of humans and nature, environmental traumatization, and ecofeminist visions (BURLEIGH, 2022).

The Art for the Environment residency at the University of the Arts London, founded by artist Lucy Horta, brings together international artists engaged in projects related to biodiversity, sustainable development, water resources, and human rights. Its partnership programs are implemented in the United Kingdom, Canada, Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, etc. (UAL, 2024). Similar initiatives exist in many European countries. The British Royal Society of Arts took on the project “Arts & Ecology” from 2006 to 2010. It was designed to study the climate crisis through cultural practices and resulted in the anthology publication called “Land Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook.” This anthology analyzed artistic responses to landscape degradation and ecosystem change (KASTNER *et al.*, 2006). In Italy, the Nature, Art & Habitat Residency (NAHR) has hosted an annual summer program in Valtellina since 2015, bringing together artists, designers, and ecologists to explore bio-inspiration, architecture, and ecosystems. In 2024, NAHR also presented a publication on eco-focused art practices in the United States (MAZZOLENI *et al.*, 2024).

It is worth mentioning Gate 27, the Turkish residency, which focuses on regenerative approaches. These approaches involve creating pieces of art in a sustainable agriculture garden or in collaboration with local communities. Gate 27 conducts open public lectures and workshops (GATE 27, 2023). In the United States, the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology has been inviting artists and researchers to interact with forest, marine, and river ecosystems since 1970. This is a long-term format initiative. It lasts for several months to ensure a deeper immersion in the natural environment and the creation of complex artistic and ecological reflections (SITKA CENTER, 2023).

The article identifies common patterns of modern green art diplomacy. First, most projects are interdisciplinary, combining art with biology, climatology, and urban studies, which shifts art from aesthetics to communication and activism. Second, many initiatives such as NAHR, Sail Britain, and the Sitka Center engage directly with the natural environment, turning it into a participant in the creative process. Third, artistic projects increasingly use participatory formats involving communities and audiences to embed environmental narratives in society. Finally, the visibility of these practices in global media and international exhibitions demonstrates the globalization of environmental art as a tool of public diplomacy (OSTAPENKO *et al.*, 2024).

Despite common patterns in green art diplomacy, the strategies for visualizing environmental issues differ a lot. Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Finland, and others) tend to conceptual installations transmitting the ideas of multi-life and posthumanism, while southern Europe (e.g., Italy, France) often uses narrative-empathic formats (bio-inspiration, anthropocentric metaphors, etc.). In Britain and Canada, visual representations focus on the artistic environment's transformation into a space of sustainable thinking (residences on the water, mobile locations). In countries of the Global South, art, as a rule, performs cultural and social protest functions; it becomes a tool of environmental justice and a way to visualize the traumatic experience of pollution or resource exploitation (POTAPCHUK, 2023).

### **Cultural heritage and the green narrative**

The term “green heritage” denotes a paradigm according to which the conservation of cultural heritage sites is viewed through the prism of environmental sustainability, low-carbon technologies, ethical use of resources, and respect for the relationship between people and nature (JONES; YARROW, 2013). One of the key areas of ecological transformation in the field of cultural heritage is the implementation of the principles of sustainable tourism. This involves adapting tourist routes,

limiting mass access to vulnerable sites, promoting local resources, and informing visitors about environmental challenges (HARRISON *et al.*, 2020; KRYVOVYAZYUK *et al.*, 2025).

Within the framework of the UNESCO program “World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism,” strategies for sustainable management of World Heritage sites are being implemented, which take into account environmental, social, and economic factors. The program emphasizes the importance of the participation of local communities in decision-making, which allows integration of traditional knowledge and environmental practices into global policies (UNESCO, 2012). In France, energy-efficient modernization programs for historic buildings while preserving architectural authenticity are being implemented within the framework of the program “Patrimoine en mouvement” (ARCHITECTURE & PATRIMOINE, 2022). In Germany, the German Archaeological Institute (2025) studies the impact of temperature and humidity fluctuations on historic architecture. In Sweden, the national cultural policy strategy includes requirements for “ecological management” in museums, archives, and architectural monuments (SWEDISH NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD, 2024). The green narrative that links cultural diplomacy with environmental policy embraces preserving individual objects and rethinking heritage as a system that can contribute to the ecological transformation of society (ORR *et al.*, 2021). A comparative analysis of environmentally-oriented practices in the field of cultural heritage allows us to identify a number of key patterns (Chart 2).

The differences between countries lie in the dominant vector of implementation. In France, the emphasis is on architectural modernization with an energy-efficient focus, while Germany emphasizes research on climate impacts on cultural monuments. Sweden, in turn, develops environmental standards for cultural institutions. Another significant distinction is the degree of community involvement. UNESCO programs and models of community-based heritage management actively engage local populations, enhancing the sustainability and adaptability of such initiatives.

Chart 2 – Green practices in the field of cultural heritage

Form of heritage	Objective	Mechanism of influence	Efficiency	Geography
Green museums	Environmental education, reducing carbon footprint	Information programs, green exhibitions, environmental standards	High	Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom
Sustainable heritage tourism	Minimizing impact, local sustainability	Restriction of mass flows, local routes, visual communications	Medium-high	France, Italy, Spain
Restoration with ecological principles	Preserving authenticity with an ethical approach	Energy-efficient solutions, natural materials, reuse	High	France, Germany
Community-based heritage	Strengthening local participation, sustainable development	Integration of traditional knowledge, community participation, adaptation to climate challenges	Medium-high	Latin America, South Asia
Cultural landscapes	Balancing the natural and cultural	Recognizing the interaction between humans and nature, preserving traditional practices	High (with proper management)	Globally (UNESCO sites)

Source: developed by the authors.

### Cultural policy and environmental diplomacy

In the 21st century, cultural policy increasingly responds to the climate crisis and sustainable development. A new paradigm of green cultural policy integrates environmental priorities into strategic planning, institutional cooperation, and cultural diplomacy. As UNESCO (2023) notes, culture should become “an integral part of the ecological transition” because it shapes values and promotes environmental awareness. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals,

particularly Goals 11 and 13, guide the rethinking of culture's role in environmental transformation. EU cultural programs reflect this integration. The European Green Deal introduces cultural aspects through green architecture, circular economy, and sustainable urban design (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019). The New European Bauhaus initiative promotes culture and art in shaping inclusive and ecological cities (EUROPEAN UNION, 2021). Creative Europe explicitly supports environmental projects, requiring contributions to the "green transition" (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023). Leading institutions such as the British Council, Goethe-Institut, and French Institute implement eco-oriented programs linking art, research, and civic activism (BRITISH COUNCIL, 2021; GOETHE-INSTITUT, 2022; FRENCH INSTITUTE, 2023).

In Ukraine, the issue of ecology is only gradually gaining systemic importance in cultural policy, but there are examples of both state and civic response. Within the framework of the National Economic Strategy of Ukraine until 2030, culture is identified as one of the factors ensuring sustainable development, in particular through the support of innovative environmental practices (CABINET OF MINISTERS OF UKRAINE, 2021). Regional strategies, for example, in Lviv and Zakarpattia Oblasts, include cultural and environmental components: the development of ecotourism, the preservation of landscape heritage, and the support of eco-festivals. GogolFest is one of the most illustrative examples of cultural and environmental initiatives in Ukraine. In recent years, GogolFest has been thematizing the climate crisis, changing resource policies, and sustainable art. The festival implemented projects that combined theatrical productions, environmental installations, and public lectures within the concept of "ecological thinking through art" (RÜSSBERG, 2020; RUDENKO, 2021).

The review of European and national initiatives shows common features in the environmental policies and the activities of cultural and diplomatic institutions (Chart 3).

Chart 3 – Comparison of environmentally oriented cultural policy practices

Art initiative	Objective	Mechanism of influence	Efficiency	Geography
Climate Connection (British Council)	Formation of a global cultural and ecological dialogue	Exchange platforms, partnerships, interviews, art projects with activists	High	UK
New Nature (Goethe-Institut)	Education and interdisciplinary reflection	Residencies, lectures, artistic interventions	High	Germany, EU
Nouveaux Commanditaires (Institut Français)	Artists' participation in the rethinking of space	Artistic commissions from citizens, environmental representation in public space	Medium-high	France
A New European Bauhaus	Eco-urbanism, environmental transformation	Design, architecture, culture as part of urban planning	Medium	EU (focus on urbanism)
Creative Europe: Culture Cluster	Integration of ecothemes into cultural production	Project selection criteria, financial support for green initiatives	High (in projects)	EU
ТогольFest (UA)	Cultural reflection on climate challenges	Art, installations, lectures, eco-focus in theater productions	High (local level)	Ukraine
Regional cultural strategies (UA)	Ecotourism, preservation of landscape heritage	Cultural events, grants, support for local initiatives	Medium	Lviv and Zakarpattia Oblast

Source: developed by the authors.

The comparative assessment of effectiveness, presented in Chart 3, is based on three interrelated dimensions: institutional impact, public engagement, and transformative potential. Institutional impact refers to the extent to which the analyzed initiative is embedded in national or international cultural policy frameworks (strategic documents, funding, and institutional partnerships). Public engagement reflects the outreach, inclusiveness, and participatory nature of the activity (means of engaging

audiences and local communities in environmental reflection). Transformative potential indicates the ability of the initiative to lead to long-term changes in attitudes, behavior, or cultural norms related to environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

The indicators “high,” “medium-high,” and “medium” were assigned through a comparative content analysis of available reports, project documentation, and expert assessments provided by the relevant cultural institutions. In cases where the observed results were limited to specific projects rather than systemic programs, the assessment reflects contextual rather than structural effectiveness. Therefore, the effectiveness rating in Chart 3 should be interpreted as an analytical one that illustrates the relative scope, coherence, and impact of the practices studied within the broader framework of green cultural diplomacy.

Searching for environmentally oriented cultural policy practices combined a purposive sampling strategy with desk research of European and Ukrainian sources, including reports from cultural institutions, UNESCO, and EU policy documents, and official websites of key cultural diplomacy actors. Additional cases from Ukraine were identified through media archives, open-access cultural platforms, and interviews with local stakeholders. This selection was not intended to be exhaustive; it prioritized initiatives that clearly integrated environmental goals into their cultural or diplomatic programs, demonstrated continuity of implementation, and provided publicly available evidence of results.

## **Discussion**

While the institutionalization of green cultural diplomacy has advanced in the countries outlined above, the situation is significantly different in developing and low-income regions. In many parts of the Global South, environmental and cultural diplomacy is constrained by economic instability, weak institutional infrastructure, and asymmetric flows of cultural resources and funding. As postcolonial communication scholars have emphasized, global cultural programs often reproduce hierarchies

of power, where models of sustainable development and environmental ethics are exported from the North without adequate adaptation to local epistemologies and socio-economic realities (DELOUGHREY, 2011).

However, diverse practices are emerging in the Global South, such as community eco-art projects in Latin America, indigenous cultural diplomacy in Oceania, or environmental heritage initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. These initiatives typically operate through grassroots networks, informal alliances, and artistic activism rather than formal institutions, reflecting different understandings of what “green” diplomacy might mean outside of Eurocentric frameworks (GRAHAM; TIFFIN, 2016). In this sense, the global dialogue on cultural ecology should move toward recognizing these pluriversal models that integrate ancestral knowledge, local narratives, and environmental justice as legitimate and necessary components of global sustainability. There are pressing issues related to the financing and accessibility of green cultural diplomacy initiatives. Limited financial resources often lead to the elitism of certain cultural projects, concentrating participation in privileged institutions or international networks (GRAHAM; TIFFIN, 2016). This dynamic can unintentionally exclude local actors and communities, even when their participation is crucial for ecological transformation.

Thus, a country’s political orientation largely determines the priorities of green cultural diplomacy. Changes in government programs, ideological preferences, or international agreements can support the redirection of funding flows and the reevaluation of which forms of green culture are considered politically relevant (WEARING *et al.*, 2015). Thus, the institutional sustainability of green cultural diplomacy depends on economic factors and a complex of political will and ethical frameworks that guide cultural policy. Addressing these challenges requires greater transparency in resource allocation, inclusive participatory mechanisms, and cross-sectoral partnerships.

While most European countries develop top-down institutionalized approaches to green diplomacy, the Ukrainian model evolves as a hybrid, combining local initiatives, mobile formats, and adaptability to military

conditions. Despite limited resources and the challenges of war, Ukraine demonstrates intensive activity at the level of communities, artistic communities, festivals (GogolFest), regional programs, and intersectoral initiatives. In this context, the basis for the Ukrainian model of green cultural diplomacy is being formed, based on the principles of horizontal partnership, local ecological ethics, and traumatic memory of nature as a victim of war.

A comparative assessment of the approaches embedded in European and Ukrainian initiatives is summarized in Chart 4.

Chart 4 – Approaches to green cultural diplomacy in Ukraine versus the world

Country and initiative	Objective	Mechanisms	Institutionalization	Features
France (Institut Français)	Thinking about public space with an environmental focus	Public art commissions, in partnership with communities	High	Posturbanism, eco-symbolism
Germany (Goethe-Institut)	Climate education	Lectures, residencies, artistic interventions	Low	Interdisciplinarity, educational focus
UK (British Council)	Formation of a global cultural dialogue	Online platforms, joint projects, public discussions	High	Interdisciplinarity, educational focus
Ukraine (GogolFest, Carpathians, communities)	Ecological ethics of restoration	Theater, visual arts, mobile formats	Low	Traumatic environmental experience, micro-practices
Ukraine (Strategies 2030, local initiatives)	Integration of eco-themes into politics	Regional programs, eco-festivals, residencies	Partial	The potential of a hybrid model

Source: developed by the authors.

In the context of the full-scale war in Ukraine, environmental issues acquire philosophical significance. The destruction of ecosystems

exposes nature's vulnerability as a silent victim of human conflict and reflects the historical marginalization of the natural world. For centuries, nature has been treated as an external resource for exploitation, reinforcing the divide between humanity and the environment. This instrumental view has impeded sustainable development as a cultural and ethical transformation rather than a purely technocratic process (OSTAPENKO *et al.*, 2024). The Ukrainian experience of ecological trauma can be a turning point for rethinking environmental diplomacy through the prism of shared vulnerability and shared responsibility. Combining vertical and horizontal approaches can ensure the institutionalization of environmental action and the emergence of cultural frameworks that support ethical transformation at both local and global levels.

Thus, the suggested concept of restorative ecology takes on a broader meaning: it envisages recovering post-war consequences and overcoming the legacy of alienation that has shaped modernity itself. This multidisciplinary initiative in the field of cultural diplomacy would unite countries with similar experiences of post-war environmental transformation, in particular the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), Central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary), and the South Caucasus (Georgia and Armenia). This platform can become a unique platform for:

- Collective development of new cultural and ecological narratives based on the traumatic experience of environmental losses;
- Development of formats of “culture of co-recovery” through joint festivals, mobile exhibitions, art residencies, and educational programs;
- Research and archiving of environmental damage caused during conflicts as a basis for diplomatic initiatives and international law;
- Support of cultural and artistic initiatives in regions that have suffered ecocide, including ecological heritage as an element of reparation;
- Formation of an “Eastern European narrative of sustainable peace,” where ecological responsibility appears as a central humanitarian category.

This platform would differ by the ecological thinking integrated into post-war reintegration, where cultural diplomacy forms the ethical framework of new partnerships. The concept of “restorative ecology” transforms the ecological discourse from utilitarian to symbolic-cultural: the environment is thought of not only as a resource, but also as a carrier of collective memory, a witness to violence, and a potential space for reconciliation. Ukraine, as a state that has experienced a large-scale eco-catastrophe as a result of war, can initiate this platform, demonstrating a new approach to foreign policy, where instead of “export identity,” the model of transnational eco-solidarity dominates. The idea of the Restorative Ecology Platform is currently still in the conceptual design stage, being developed through academic collaboration and pilot cultural initiatives. The project currently has no permanent institutional funding, but preparatory discussions are ongoing with partner organizations and cultural foundations to secure international support for its future implementation.

## **Conclusions**

The article explores how green cultural diplomacy contributes to the transmission of environmental values through art, heritage, and cultural policy, and reveals its potential as a soft power tool in the global context of sustainable development. Drawing on Paulo Freire’s (2005) understanding of consciousness as a dialogical and experiential process, it cannot be imposed or entirely shaped by external influences. Rather, it emerges through reflection, experience, and critical engagement with the world. In this sense, cultural diplomacy does not create ecological consciousness but facilitates a space for awareness raising and collective reflection, enabling individuals and communities to reconsider their relationship with nature.

From a communication and educational perspective, it is therefore more accurate to speak of awareness raising than of its “formation.” Awareness involves dynamic interpretation and personal transformation, influenced by diverse social and cultural repertoires. Cultural and artistic initiatives can inspire, inform, and mobilize. However, their impact

depends on how audiences perceive and reinterpret these messages in their lived realities. Recognizing this distinction strengthens the participatory and dialogic dimension of green cultural diplomacy and prevents its impact from being reduced to one-directional persuasion.

The discussion field identified a number of challenges that affect the effectiveness of green cultural diplomacy: the risks of superficial environmental populism, the lack of institutional support, the limited duration of projects, the need for ethical standards, and interagency coordination. At the same time, the prospects for intercultural environmental interaction remain extremely relevant, especially in the context of the global climate crisis. The scientific novelty lies in the comprehensive theoretical justification of green cultural diplomacy as a new direction of cultural policy that combines environmental ethics, artistic practice, and transcultural communication in the context of the climate crisis. The proposed concept of “ecology of restoration” can become the basis of Ukrainian cultural contribution to the formation of international environmental diplomacy.

In this context, green cultural diplomacy has the potential to serve not only as an effective tool of soft power, but also as an ethical and symbolic framework for shaping a new environmental consciousness. Its successful implementation requires interdisciplinary approaches, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the development of a coherent cultural policy that positions culture as a central — not peripheral — component in achieving a sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

**Conflict of interest:** nothing to declare.

**Funding:** none.

**Authors' contributions:** Hovpun, O.: investigation, project administration, writing — original draft. Marchenko, V.: resources, methodology. Nefedov, S.: conceptualization, software, validation. Shmandrovskyy, A.: visualization, formal analysis. Samoilenko, S.: writing — review & editing, supervision, data curation.

**Data availability statement:** The dataset supporting the results of this study is published in the article itself.

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Received on: 08/25/2025

Approved on: 10/17/2025