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**Striking a balance between local and global interests:
communities and cultural heritage protection in
public international law**

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Citation

Starrenburg, S. H. (2024, May 2). *Striking a balance between local and global interests: communities and cultural heritage protection in public international law*. Meijers-reeks. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3750283>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Striking a balance between local and global interests

Communities and cultural heritage protection
in public international law

S.H. STARRENBURG

This dissertation explores the impact of international cultural heritage law on individuals and local communities, particularly through the lens of cultural heritage law's use of universalising language such as the 'cultural heritage of mankind'. It argues that this rhetoric empowers states to prioritise purportedly common interests over local ones, potentially erasing living heritage value in the process.

The dissertation places cultural heritage law in the context of broader international legal trends, in particular the tension between the pursuit of common interests through international law and the enduring influence of state sovereignty as a structuring principle of that law. It argues that contemporary cultural heritage law often fails to effectively limit state powers or protect the interests of individuals and local communities. It thus calls for stronger guarantees of participation within cultural heritage law, drawing upon legal standards developed within environmental law and human rights law.

The dissertation suggests a rethinking the concept of 'universal interest' in heritage law to qualify the operation of state sovereignty and to better accommodate the interests of individuals and local communities, emphasizing their role as central actors and the need to bridge the gap between local and global interests in cultural heritage protection.

This is a volume in the series of the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of the Leiden Law School of Leiden University. This study is part of the Law School's research programme 'Exploring the Frontiers of International Law'.