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Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?

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The field of cultural diplomacy, which looms large in present-day cultural policy and discourse, has been insufficiently analysed by the cultural disciplines. This special issue engages with the task of filling the gap. The present essay sets out the terms in which the authors have taken up this engagement, focusing principally on Australia and Asia. Distinguishing between cultural diplomacy that is essentially interest-driven governmental practice and cultural relations, which is ideals-driven and practiced largely by non-state actors, the authors pursue a twofold aim. First, to demystify the field, especially when it is yoked to the notion of 'soft power'; second, to better understand how actually-existing discourses of cultural diplomacy and/or cultural relations operate in different national contexts. The essay seeks in particular to scrutinize the current confusion surrounding cultural diplomacy and, in the context of the changing role of the nation-state, to explore its possibilities as an instrument for going beyond the national interest.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; cultural relations; soft power; public diplomacy; national representation; instrumentalisation of culture

Introduction

The term 'cultural diplomacy' looms large today in the foreign policy practice of nation-states as well as in cultural discourse. Yet there is often a distinct lack of clarity in the way the notion is used, on exactly what its practice involves, on why it is important, or on how it works. Much of this indeterminateness stems from the conflation of cultural diplomacy *stricto sensu*, which is essentially interest-driven governmental practice, with cultural relations, which tends to be driven by ideals rather than interests and is practiced largely by non-state actors. Given the present-day intrications between trans-national cultural connections and cultural practice within nations, this phenomenon should be an important concern of the cultural disciplines. Yet so far they have paid scant attention to cultural diplomacy as a key component of the contemporary cultural policy landscape.

While the last decade and a half has seen a wealth of interest in the topic – and the broader rubric of public diplomacy – among specialists in international relations, with an emphasis on the evolution of the so-called 'new public diplomacy' (notably Melissen 2005, Cull 2009, Davis Cross and Melissen 2013; Hayden 2011), critical analysis from the perspectives of Cultural Studies, Cultural Policy

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Studies or Cultural Sociology, is almost non-existent (but see Clarke 2014 and also Paschalidis 2009 in this journal). By ‘critical’ here we do not mean simply a dismissive stance, but a rigorous, theoretically informed analysis which locates actually existing cultural diplomacy practices within their social, political and ideological contexts and examines the complex and sometimes contradictory ways in which they operate. This special issue seeks to engage with the task of beginning to fill this gap, with a specific focus on Australia and Asia. The aim is twofold. First, to demystify cultural diplomacy, notably by deconstructing the ‘hype’ that nowadays accompanies it – especially when it is yoked to the notion of ‘soft power’; second, to better understand how it actually operates across the world today. Such an analysis would also facilitate a consideration of preferred policy parameters in the field and of the question whether, when seen through a cultural lens, there can be such a thing as a cultural diplomacy that operates ‘beyond the national interest.’

Untangling key discursive terms

Apart from the term cultural diplomacy itself, the discourse of the field this special issue explores is dominated by two other notions, ‘soft power’ and ‘public diplomacy.’ The purpose of this section is to set out briefly the frame of reference the three terms together provide. Given that the authors of the other contributions will take these understandings as points of departure, this introductory iteration will help avoid repetition further on.

The three notions have entered the lexicon of international relations and have become standard terms in foreign policy thinking. They are also factored into the policy mix by national, regional and local governments (e.g. cities), as well as by supranational organizations such as the European Union. As mentioned earlier, however, the processes these terms entail have rarely been critically examined. Their emergence as tools of national self-promotion or what Raymond Williams (1984) once called the ‘cultural policy of display’ has been insufficiently unpacked (Paschalidis 2009). Nor has there been much analysis of their place in discourses of cultural nationalism, which is arguably a key dimension of cultural diplomacy as a governmental practice (Isar’s paper in this volume uses Bhabha’s (1990) distinction between ‘pedagogical’ and ‘performative’ dimensions of nationalist cultural display to address this issue).

The semantic field of the term cultural diplomacy has broadened considerably over the years. It now applies to pretty much any practice that is related to purposeful cultural cooperation between nations or groups of nations. In the process, the term has floated some distance away from its original semantic moorings. The American diplomat turned writer Richard Arndt made the necessary distinction between cultural *relations* that ‘grow naturally and organically, without government intervention’ and ‘cultural *diplomacy* [that] can only be said to take place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests’ (Arndt 2006, p. xviii). This distinction has become increasingly blurred.

Although countries such as France have used the term since the late nineteenth century, cultural diplomacy entered common parlance in most other countries only in the 1990s. It was originally used to refer to the processes occurring when diplomats *servicing national governments* took recourse to cultural exchanges and flows or sought to channel them for the advancement of their perceived national interests.

But soon it was expanded into ‘the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding’ (Cummings 2003, p. 1). In point of fact, mutual understanding is only sometimes the object. The true protagonists of cultural diplomacy are never abstract ‘nations’ or generalized ‘peoples.’ *Governmental* agents and envoys are. In other words, cultural diplomacy is a governmental practice that operates in the name of a clearly defined ethos of national or local representation, in a space where nationalism and internationalism merge. Yet as the reigning culturalism of our time has made the term increasingly appealing, the ambit of cultural diplomacy has broadened considerably. Thus the term has come to be used as a partial or total replacement for many previously used notions such as foreign cultural relations, international cultural relations (ICR), international cultural exchange or international cultural cooperation. The different terms in this semantic constellation tend to be used interchangeably (Mitchell 1986), making it a true floating signifier.

The second leading term, *soft power*, was coined by the Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye in 1990. Since then, it has taken international relations and public diplomacy by storm, often in ways that are far removed from what its inventor had envisaged. Nye (1990) distinguished between the command power – economic carrots and military sticks – that the United States of America possessed in ample measure and the co-optive or ‘soft’ power of ‘getting others to want what you want.’ This rests on the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the *preferences* that others are led to express. As Nye observed,

political leaders and philosophers have long understood the power that comes from setting the agenda and determining the framework of a debate. The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions. (Nye 1990, p. 32)

The soft power Nye was advocating that the USA deploy alongside – *not instead of* – its hard power was the universal appeal of its popular culture, as embodied in cultural goods and services, as well as the international influence of what he called the ‘ethnic openness’ of its way of life, or the political appeal of the American *values* of democracy and human rights. In other words, the soft power a country may project is not simply a question of culture, but rests also on ‘its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)’ (Nye 1990, p. 196). While the cultural policy literature presents a number of functionalist descriptions of the governmental apparatuses and discourses deployed in the name of culture as soft power, there has been next to no analysis of the polysemy of the term or of its implications. In this issue Robert Albro underlines how soft power is a peculiarly American articulation: driven by the sheer volume of cultural goods and services the US exports globally, the concept promises influence as a kind of neoliberal deployment based upon the global reach of American-inflected cultural consumption. A later idea of Nye’s that is equally premised on core elements of the American ethos was that of ‘meta-soft power,’ which is a nation’s capacity and introspective ability to criticise itself that contributes to its international attractiveness, legitimacy and credibility (Nye 2002).

A point that has been missed in most writing on soft power is that cultural attractiveness per se is *not* soft power on its own. It can be a soft power resource, provided it is deployed to achieve clearly defined policy objectives under a thought-out strategy. It is not intended to replace ‘hard’ power, but rather to complement it. Nor can there ever be such a thing as a State or supranational entity that defines itself as ‘a soft power,’ but this strange notion is nevertheless sometimes deployed.

In the course of its discursive expansion, cultural diplomacy has also been yoked to the cause of *public diplomacy*, advocated as a more citizen-oriented form of diplomacy than the standard model, whose ‘targets’ are no longer other governments so much as diverse national and global audiences and publics. It is increasingly understood as a trans-national process that can be engaged upon not just by governments and their agencies but by civil society and/or private sector stakeholders as well (Cull 2009), a form of intercultural dialogue based on mutuality and reciprocal listening. This term is also of American coinage. It was launched in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (and founder of the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy that would be set up there) in order apparently to overcome the negative connotations associated with the word propaganda (Cull 2006). By the present century, it had become firmly anchored in US public discourse and had spread to Europe and beyond. Like cultural diplomacy, the practice of public diplomacy has gradually been taken over by branches of government other than foreign ministries and has been deployed in the service of goals such as nation branding and portfolio promotion. At the same time, cultural diplomacy is now often understood as a particular form or dimension of public diplomacy, as a result of which the distinction between the two has become rather blurred.

Take, for example, this first paragraph of the Executive Summary of a landmark US Department of State report, *Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy*, published in 2005:

Cultural diplomacy is the linchpin of public diplomacy; for it is in cultural activities that a nation’s idea of itself is best represented. And cultural diplomacy can enhance our national security in subtle, wide-ranging, and sustainable ways. Indeed history may record that America’s cultural riches played no less a role than military action in shaping our international leadership, including the war on terror. For the values embedded in our artistic and intellectual traditions form a bulwark against the forces of darkness. (US Department of State 2005, p. 1)

Encapsulated in this paragraph is a clear articulation of cultural diplomacy as a national endeavour, conducted in the national interest: it involves the instrumental use of national culture with a view to enhancing national security and the nation’s international standing. The *Linchpin* report was published in response to the fallout from the US’s disastrous invasion of Iraq, which had led to a plummeting of international public opinion against the United States, especially in the Arab world. The report argues that culture – through its deployment in cultural diplomacy – can reverse the erosion of trust and credibility that the US has suffered across the world, and help shape global public opinion in favour of America and the values it claims to stand for. However, while the report clearly considers that advancing the US national interest is foundational, some of the things the work of cultural diplomacy arguably does, as listed by the report, point clearly to outcomes that go far

beyond narrow national interest. These include creating a ‘foundation of trust’ between peoples, providing ‘a positive agenda of cooperation in spite of policy differences,’ creating ‘a neutral platform for people-to-people contact’ and serving as ‘a flexible, universally acceptable vehicle for rapprochement with countries where diplomatic relations have been strained or absent.’

Cultural diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific: in or beyond the national interest?

The brief genealogy offered above shows the deep entanglement of the terms cultural diplomacy, cultural relations, soft power and public diplomacy. As a semantic constellation, they occupy a discursive field centrally focused on a concern with the management of the problematic relationship between the nation-state and its others in the international arena. Needless to say, this concern has become particularly salient in this era of globalisation and the geopolitical shifts in the distribution of economic and political power in the world. The papers brought together in this special issue all engage frontally with these new dynamics, with a particular emphasis on the complex roles cultural diplomacy policies and practices in the Asia Pacific region play in the context of evolving cultural self-representations in the societies concerned.

The point of departure for the special issue was a symposium held at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney in October 2013. The papers presented at this symposium provided a critical scan of the cultural diplomacy landscape of the Asia Pacific region. Although there was a particular focus on Australia, many of the issues that arise in the definition and assessment of that country’s cultural diplomacy practice are germane elsewhere, for several reasons. To begin with, Australian practice in this field has crystallised only fairly recently. In the process it has both drawn upon the established notions discussed above and has also struck out in some new ways. In particular, Australian cultural diplomacy today has a strong regional focus, one that is also becoming increasingly relevant in other regions, as the regional scale is perceived to offer a counterpoise to global forces. There is strong political and policy consensus in Australia that it is in the country’s national interest to establish closer links with the countries in the geopolitical region it finds itself in: Asia or, more broadly, the Asia-Pacific (see Australian Government 2012).¹ Cultural diplomacy is thought to play a major role in this effort of rapprochement: several essays (Lowe, Carter, Roesler) foreground this. At the same time, governments in the region – including those featured in this special issue, China, Japan and South Korea – have strongly stepped up their cultural diplomacy efforts, each with their own distinctive rationales and methods, as discussed in the papers by Wanning Sun (China), Koichi Iwabuchi (Japan) and Hyungseok Kang (South Korea).

The special issue is bookended by Robert Albrow, who compares US and Chinese cultural diplomacy and soft power strategies, and Yudhishthir Raj Isar, who traces the policy evolution of ‘culture in EU external relations,’ the phrase used as an euphemism for cultural diplomacy by the institutions of the European Union, in other words at the supra-national scale. While both these papers underscore the fundamentally nationalist underpinnings of cultural diplomacy visions worldwide, they also point towards different strategies now being advocated with a view to going beyond the national interest. These include an emphasis on dialogue and collaboration based on shared interests that are not articulated in the name of

the nation-state. They also point to the question of whether cultural workers such as artists and arts organizers are actually motivated by such lofty interests, rather than by more concrete purposes such as mutual learning; pooling of resources; co-financing; technical assistance; joint reflection, debate, research and experimentation; and 'in its most complex forms, cooperation in the creative processes, the creation of new artistic works' (Klaic 2007, p. 46). Cull recognizes (2009, p. 19) that 'discomfort with advocacy roles and overt diplomatic objectives have led some Cultural Diplomacy organizations to distance themselves from the term.' On the other hand, they are unlikely to distance themselves equally from the grants the term now brings within their grasp. Recourse to grand cultural narratives such as intercultural dialogue makes it easier for them to adopt this kind of opportunistic stance, just as it makes it easier for governments to advance the national interest cloaked in their mantle (Isar 2010).

The cultural diplomacy landscape that emerges from all the contributions encompasses a complex and sometimes contradictory range of practices, in which objectives, techniques of delivery, and assumed impacts and effects are often misaligned. In this landscape, the scope of what is seen as cultural diplomacy may be very broad, entailing many forms of cultural recognition between nations and cultures, many but not all of which are mediated in some way by states – or narrower – as an 'overplayed hand,' prone to 'ambiguous and overstated' claims, such as its ability to 'manage the international environment' (Isar 2010, citing Cull 2009).

Overall, then, we are faced with a rather confusing terrain, littered by a mismatch between overblown rhetoric and on-the-ground reality. The central contradiction behind this mismatch may be summed up as follows: on the one hand, cultural diplomacy is supposed to advance the national interest by presenting the nation in the best possible light to the rest of the world; on the other hand, it is expected (mainly by non-state actors) to promote a more harmonious international order to the benefit of all. This contradictory understanding rests on the widely held tendency, in current discourses, to elide the fundamental institutional location of cultural diplomacy within the machinery of government and, therefore, the inevitable restrictions imposed on it in terms of the interests it is meant to serve. As noted above, this elision stems from the ambiguity in the ways in which cultural diplomacy is conflated with the broader notion of ICR.

While the distinction between the two must remain analytically important, the pervasive tendency to conflate cultural relations and cultural diplomacy is a significant indicator of the uncertainty, not only about what cultural diplomacy is or should be, but about what it can achieve. Cummings' definition cited above does not refer to 'the national interest' at all, and appears to suggest that the work of cultural diplomacy, while initiated by governments, is capable of going beyond any partisan, national interest by fostering mutual understanding, which presumably is of common interest. However, it is reasonable to assume that there is a tension between national interest and common interest. Since this tension cannot simply be swept under the carpet, how might it be reconciled? To put it more precisely, how can cultural diplomacy be *both* in the national interest *and* go beyond the national interest? Hence the question mark at the end of this special issue's title.

The nation-state in a world of flux

The current modishness of cultural diplomacy – and public diplomacy more generally – should be seen in the context of the changing architecture of international relations in an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world. Nation-states are still the primary actors in the international political arena, but their sovereign status has been steadily eroded by globalising forces which have heightened the transnational – and often disjunctive – flows of people, products, media, technology and money (Appadurai 1996). The fact that cultural diplomacy is often folded into cultural relations is in itself a reflection of the diminishing authority and capacity of national governments to act as the pre-eminent representatives of ‘the national interest’ (or even to define what the latter consists of). As Rosenau (2003) has observed, in the past few decades the world stage has become ever more dense, with a vast range of non-governmental actors, operating both locally and globally and interacting with each other horizontally through transnational communication networks, often intersecting with or even contradicting government-defined purposes and objectives. ‘In earlier epochs,’ says Rosenau (2003, pp. 61–62), the global stage was occupied mainly by states and their intergovernmental organizations, but in the emergent epoch the cast of characters has multiplied time and time again. States still occupy important roles in the routines of world affairs, but their ranks have become thin relative to all the organizations that now reach across boundaries to conduct their affairs. As a consequence, national governments have seen a decline in ‘their ability to claim the final word at home or speak exclusively for the country abroad’ (Rosenau 2003, p. 69).

This has serious implications for the governmental practice of cultural diplomacy. If cultural diplomacy, to reiterate Arndt’s (2006) definition once again, pertains to orchestrated government intervention to channel the flow of culture to advance national interests, then in the new world (dis)order it will have to compete with an flood of other transnational flows of culture, which are beyond the control of governments and may or may not be in line with their definitions of the national interest at all. For example, Cynthia Schneider, a prominent American advocate for cultural diplomacy, in critiquing the apparent reliance of the US government on the free market distribution of US popular culture to do the work of cultural diplomacy, comments: ‘While popular culture contributes – sometimes positively, sometimes not – to communicating American ideas and values, the most effective interface between government-sponsored cultural diplomacy and the free flow of popular culture has yet to be determined, or even analysed’ (Schneider 2005, p. 161). Schneider goes on to suggest that US cultural diplomacy could deploy popular culture proactively to help restore the global reputation of the US after it nose-dived in the wake of the widely-condemned War on Terror in the early 2000s: ‘Strategically investing in popular culture by targeting the distribution of desirable products would reap rewards in the court of world opinion’ (Schneider 2005, p. 164). However, this begs a number of questions: who should decide what ‘desirable products’ are, and what criteria should be used? How exactly does popular culture communicate ‘American ideas and values?’ How does one know whether and which products will have a positive impact on ‘world opinion?’ How can one ensure that ‘desirable’ products are received in ‘desirable’ ways, for whom and according to whom? For example, when Michael Moore, the controversial US documentary filmmaker, won the *Palme d’Or* at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival for *Fahrenheit 9/11*,

his highly critical film about George W. Bush's war on terror, was this a triumph for American cultural diplomacy, as Schneider's advocacy might seem to suggest? Or did the film's success only add further fuel to anti-Americanism around the world? Albro also points in this issue to the naivety of 'allowing the entertainment sector to assume the job of communicating the US's image to the world,' when commodified popular culture products express 'a US-specific lexicon of personal freedoms exercised as consumer choices in ways that often fail to engage with the perspectives or grievances of foreign publics.' In this view, the prevailing cultural policy of display elides dialogical processes in adhering to a 'correspondence theory of truth,' which is ill equipped to account for the nature of audiences and diverse ways of interpretation.

In short, government-driven cultural diplomacy is only one strand of cultural flow in the web of intersecting cultural relations being spun incessantly by myriad small and large players between nation-states and across the globe. Moreover, in a world where opportunities for global exchange and networking are ubiquitous, the rise of counter-hegemonic forms of cultural diplomacy, driven by forces that are working *against* established nation-states, is a distinct possibility. The concerted publicity stunts of the terrorist organisation ISIS, such as the dissemination of sensationalist videos of beheadings of hostages on the Internet as a recruitment tool for new jihadists among disaffected youth in the West, is an extreme case in point, highlighting that the domain of ICR is an intensely contested one in the current global condition, in which the role of government-initiated cultural diplomacy is highly circumscribed.

We would argue that it is precisely because the global cultural arena is now inhabited by ever denser flows of ideas, images, perceptions and messages, in which a wide range of people are taking part in ever greater numbers, that the stakes in the struggle to shape ICR through cultural diplomacy have become so much higher for nation-states, even as success in this field becomes ever more difficult to achieve. This is a point Holden (2013) gestured at in his British Council report *Influence and Attraction: Culture and the Race for Soft Power in the 21st century*. Holden observed that the appetite to invest in cultural diplomacy is especially high in newly 'emerging' nations such as the BRICS countries, whose governments are deploying heightened cultural diplomacy activities to raise their international profile and standing befitting their rising global economic power. Wanning Sun's paper in this issue, focusing on China, provides ample empirical support for this observation. Chinese analysts are well aware of the incongruence between China's growing economic clout and the country's political credibility. The major weak link is seen to be the interface with foreign media and reporting on China. The contradiction here is that while the Chinese government is clearly at pains to lift its credibility and legitimacy through its 'Going Global' media policy, its often heavy-handed approach runs the risk of achieving the opposite effect. Sun notes that the term 'external propaganda' (*wai xuan*) is still in use in Chinese policy writings: few academics or policy-makers are willing to abandon the paradigm of propaganda and control in which the media are expected to be the 'throat and tongue' of the Party.

The appearance of independence from state control requires a balancing act for all players in the international communications field. For instance, the UK's recognition of the value of arms-length bodies like the BBC World Service and the British Council to provide 'global public goods,' based on a stance of

independence and impartiality, has been a longstanding strength of UK cultural diplomacy. On the other hand, as a recent House of Lords (2014) report demonstrated, there are calls for greater policy coordination between foreign affairs and cultural/media services to maximise public diplomacy and soft power outcomes for the UK. Presumably, winning in this game means having it both ways.

The discontents of ‘soft power’

Holden’s reference (2013) to a ‘race for soft power’ is important to highlight here. Soft power as they understand it is now pursued by many governments as a central objective of their foreign policies, mainly through projections of the attractiveness of their ‘national culture.’ Although this is a misreading of Nye’s conception of how culture can become a soft power resource, it has resulted in a distinctly enhanced focus on international cultural activity. The Chinese government’s huge investment in this regard, its so-called ‘charm offensive,’ is exemplified by the rapid expansion of Confucius Institutes around the world, as described by Albro. Both Japan and South Korea have also relied on the idea of soft power in devising their cultural diplomacy policies, as argued respectively by Koichi Iwabuchi and Hyungseok Kang. Cultural relations, here, are imagined in a strictly one-sided, nation-centric way: as the positive feelings or attitudes of foreign publics towards the nation that has performatively deployed and displayed its ‘national culture’ in a proprietary manner, as a means to achieve competitive advantage over other nations. In other words, the discourse of soft power has been instrumental in a heightening of cultural competition between and among nation-states.

As with many other notions in today’s cultural lexicon, soft power appears to be a highly mutable policy concept, one that lends itself to being mobilised in quite diverse contexts. Attention should therefore be given to the way in which ‘policies are not only remoulded when they are adopted in a new place, they are also reshaped in, and through, the process of mobilisation itself.’ (McKann and Ward 2013, p. 10) In the view of Melissen (2011, p. 249), soft power ‘fits East Asia like a glove.’ While Asian countries discussed in this issue do not articulate a specifically different account of soft power, Melissen argues that a ‘normative soft power’ is in operation in East Asia, based on ‘shared values,’ multilateral approaches and regional roles, where ‘soft power is conceived as a fundamentally relational concept’ (pp. 251–252). This places East Asian soft power agendas in contrast to the more ‘affective’ style of Nye’s ‘attractive’ soft-power dimensions. Apart from the doubtful implication about Asian cultures and their ‘normative’ inclinations, the perspectives in the East Asian cases collected here do not seem to support this view of shared, as opposed to nation-centric strategies. For example, while he does not deny the potential for contemporary media cultures to enhance intercultural understanding, Iwabuchi argues that the branding strategies that have accompanied the promotion of ‘Cool Japan’ tend to propel one-way cultural promotion, eschewing exchange and dialogue that might generate some amelioration of historical antagonisms affecting relations with other nations including Korea and China.

Sun’s analysis of Chinese academic and journalistic writing concerned with the PRC’s ‘Going Global’ initiative is also revealing in this regard. These writers generally acknowledge a soft power deficit in the media and communications sphere in relation to the West, leading to a loss of ‘our discursive autonomy to speak on our own terms’ (to quote a report by the government’s official National

Image Research Team). At odds with Western analysts of a 'China threat,' Sun sees the dominant affect at play in these writings as a sense of grievance about perceived Western domination in the communication and information sphere: China's 'Going Global' and allied cultural diplomacy strategies can be seen as defensive and compensatory and they thus serve to trigger a 'dialectic of control' that undermines the credibility of China's attempts to develop media services on a global scale.

In Kang's account of South Korean cultural diplomacy, soft power emerged as a central concept in the mid-2000s. Culture was then recognised explicitly as a 'pillar' of diplomacy and associated directly with the Foreign Affairs ministry. However, Kang argues, referring to Ahearne's distinction between explicit and 'implicit' cultural policy that Korea's cultural diplomacy efforts have long corresponded to the latter, aimed firstly at the internationalization of Korean culture, at pursuing cultural recognition equivalent to its rising economic status, and later at advancing the recognition – and marketing – of its cultural goods and services, notably those associated with the 'Korean wave' (*hallyu*). The point is here that the adoption of soft power discourses was hardly the beginning of Korean strategies to enhance its cultural status, and in the process attempt to influence other strategic and economic dimensions. Nevertheless, it did bring about a shift in the institutional positioning of the country's cultural diplomacy.

Hall and Smith (2013) argue that the intensifying race for soft power in Asia may in fact lead to a hardening rather than a softening of international hostilities in the region. One implication is that the race for soft power, when conceived as a struggle for national cultural ascendancy, is not particularly helpful in improving ICR. Indeed, Hall and Smith cite mass public opinion data to argue that the recent surge in soft power initiatives in the region has generally failed to have a positive effect on world public opinion, despite the massive resources poured into them. Iwabuchi is forthright in asserting that Japan's 'pop culture diplomacy' activities have simply fuelled a 'soft power rat race in their conflation of soft power and nation branding methods.' All this points to inherent tensions in contemporary cultural diplomacy between the opposing dynamics of competition and mutuality. Indeed, we can argue that the widespread adoption of the discourse of soft power has been instrumental in impeding, rather than enhancing the development of ICR beyond the national interest.

Why has the concept of soft power been so attractive to governments? Hall and Smith (2013) argue that a major reason is that policy makers actually *believe* in the effectiveness in soft power strategies. From the perspective of cultural theory, this belief can be critiqued as being underpinned by two implicit yet mistaken assumptions about culture and communication. First, 'culture' tends to be reified, in other words seen as a thing, a discrete entity, consisting of content – images, ideas and values – that is readily presentable. Second, it is assumed that the communication of these images, ideas and values, packaged in distinct cultural products, is a linear, one-way process, in which the receiving end (i.e. the target foreign audience) simply absorbs the messages contained in these products. It is not surprising, given the pervasiveness of these assumptions, which Albro sees as the 'folk theory of cultural diplomacy,' that cultural diplomacy practitioners often talk about 'messaging' and 'image projection' in descriptions of what they aim to achieve. Albro's survey of US public diplomacy officers demonstrated the widely-held assumption that American cultural products have meanings which were 'self-evident, portable and

contextless' and are unproblematically seen as 'vehicles for national values.' As Clarke (2014, p. 8) has pointed out, 'any claim of a straightforward relationship between the role of cultural products in cultural diplomacy policy and soft power outcomes' needs to be treated with scepticism. Indeed, a more appropriate approach, standard within Cultural Studies, would be to take the role of audiences into account as active meaning makers when they consume cultural diplomacy products: there is no guarantee that the way they read, interpret or understand such products will be in line with the original intentions of cultural diplomacy, on the contrary. As Clarke (2014) suggests, the effects and impacts of cultural diplomacy 'messaging' or 'image projection' can never be determined in advance. In this regard, many soft power strategies can be regarded as based on an illusion – the illusion of transparency.

Proliferating cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy, then, is a messy landscape, rather than a coherent body of policies and strategies that can readily be evaluated in terms of its success or otherwise for a given nation-state. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy as policy seems particularly prone to a disorganised coexistence of divergent rationales within government practices. Indeed authors in this issue have used a range of adjectives such as 'fragmented,' 'ambiguous,' 'superficial' or 'vague,' in describing the plethora of cultural diplomacy policy discourses and programs. Perhaps consistency and coherence cannot be expected of a field that encompasses very different conceptions of 'culture,' varying aims and types of instrumentalisation, and a range of institutional locations, including foreign affairs departments, cultural ministries, trade promotion agencies, and a multiplicity of relationships with non-state cultural bodies.

The situation in South Korea is particularly illuminating. According to Kang, there is a 'perpetual ambiguity,' an 'unclear separation' between the modalities of foreign affairs and cultural policy since the formation of the modern Republic of Korea after the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945. The Korean state explored many approaches over time: nation building from the 1950s, 'national modernization' in the 1960s and 1970s, cultural industries policy aiming to industrialize culture and support international competitiveness in the context of globalisation and finally the 'neo-liberal turn.' The twenty-first century, particularly from 2005, saw the influence of concepts of soft power, public diplomacy, and nation branding coalescing into the promotion of the Korean Wave and its various branding extensions – K-Pop, K-Drama, K-Food, K-fashion, etc. At the same time, a multiplicity of activities and functions associated with international cultural exchange in a globalising environment are distributed across a range of government and quasi non-government bodies. The proliferation of Korean cultural diplomacy activities has generated a blurred terrain of overlapping activities. Should this be described as 'a lack of cohesive strategic goals' in Korea's cultural diplomacy program, as a European Union report puts it (Fisher 2014), or as a series of divergent framings that nevertheless constitute a 'key national agenda' for Korea, as Kang describes it?

There is value in comparing Korea's policy distributions of cultural diplomacy with those of Australia, a country that adheres to a pragmatic and smaller scale approach to cultural diplomacy in the national interest. The Australian government was relatively isolationist in relation to the Asian region until the 1960s. But

increasing economic integration with East Asia required Australia to develop stronger ties with the countries of its North beyond the economic sphere (Edwards and Goldsworthy 1999). An ICR Branch was set up within the Foreign Affairs Ministry in the late 1960s to promote positive images of Australia, a major early focus of which was on the touring of visual arts exhibitions in Asia (Manton 2003). From the 1970s distinct bodies were set up by the government to facilitate the building of cultural relations with specific countries, including the Australia Japan Foundation (founded in 1976), the Australia China Council (1978), the Australia-Indonesia Institute (1989) and the Australia-Korea Foundation (1992). While centrally hosted by Australia's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), these bilateral bodies operate in a relatively arms-length manner and aim to enable long-term engagement strategies through arts and educational programs. At the same time, DFAT has organised annual 'country focus' programs to showcase Australian culture in designated countries through the Australia International Cultural Council. However, this body was abolished in 2014 in a cost-cutting exercise by the government. DFAT also works with other agencies whose task is more specifically concerned with the export promotion of Australian cultural industries, notably tourism (Tourism Australia and state tourism agencies), educational services (Australian Trade Commission and the university sector), audio-visual production (Screen Australia), the hosting of major sporting events (Australian Sports Commission and state offices of sport) and diplomatic events (such as the G20 meeting held in Brisbane in November 2014). This is the side of cultural and public diplomacy most engaged in leveraging national economic interests and promoting Australia's soft power. However, Australia's nation-branding exercise, *Brand Australia* and its digital platform Australia Unlimited, are now largely inactive.²

Program descriptions easily convey a sense of coherent and 'joined-up' activity, but closer examination shows a messier picture (see Ang *et al.* 2015, Chapter 4). Australian cultural diplomacy is quite dispersed, in spite of government efforts to develop a more integrated approach (most recently around the rubric of 'economic diplomacy') and is in truth a small, indeed contracting activity, subject to almost continual budget erosion over the past fifteen years, leading some commentators to speak about Australia's diplomatic deficit (Lowy Institute for International Policy 2009). The role of non-state cultural organizations is highly important in establishing cultural relations, including with Asian countries. But these bodies are often small and their participation in international engagements is often self-funded and/or reliant on volunteer activity (Alway *et al.* 2013).

Between cultural diplomacy activities in South Korea and Australia there are some parallels, but more divergences. There are commonalities as regards the division of labour, namely the twin categories of foreign affairs departments and cultural agencies with international ambits. In both countries there is a hierarchy of official policy and diverse networking bodies promoting sectoral interests through government agencies. The most glaring difference – apart from the obvious difference in scale of government investment – is that in the Korean context the promotion of national culture is upfront, while in the Australian context there is much less orchestrated emphasis on this goal. In other words, while the Korean endeavour, as dispersed as it is, tends to be bound together by a determined shared effort to raise Korea's distinctive international profile as a nation, such coherence is much less in evidence in the Australian case.

Indeed, maintaining a coherent policy narrative in relation to diverse cultural diplomacy programs is perceived as a more general problem in other settings too. The House of Lords (2014) report on UK soft power recommends the development of a 'strong strategic narrative' which can support a 'shared, long-term, national strategy,' linked to greater coordination of cultural diplomacy activities. The report quotes Simon Anholt, the nation branding guru, who pointed out that the lack of a compelling national narrative

is the reason why our instruments of soft power do so very well on their own account yet achieve only a small part of what they *could* achieve for the country and its standing, if only they were really working together. (quoted in House of Lords 2014, point 292)

From a cultural-theoretical point of view, however, we should problematize this concern to elaborate a unifying national narrative as the pre-condition for effective cultural diplomacy. In today's globalised world, characterised by intensifying, multidirectional transnational flows, the attempt to impose a unifying national narrative on the intrinsically diverse range of cultural diplomacy/relations activity may prove an elusive pursuit. While it may still appear more achievable in relatively homogenous societies such as that of South Korea, a super-diverse nation-state such as Australia (or the UK) will always struggle to forge an image of cultural unity for itself. Rather than critiquing the lack of 'strategic alignment,' therefore, it may be better to take actually existing practices and their diversity on their own terms and examine precisely what they achieve.

Toward different understandings

In order to move on from a focus on soft power projection, cultural diplomacy policy and practice we would do well to adopt an understanding of culture and communication derived from contemporary cultural theory, which stresses culture as an ongoing process and as inherently relational, and communication as a social process of co-production of meaning. Such an understanding would help legitimise and buttress the more dialogic, collaborative approaches to cultural diplomacy that have begun to be proposed (see e.g. Zaharna *et al.* 2013; also European Union 2014).

We thus advocate a more ethnographic perspective, which would focus on the on-the-ground processes generated by cultural diplomacy projects and actors. Such a perspective would shed light on the actual processes of relationship building nurtured through such projects and highlight how they are shaped 'by accident and accommodation, organizational culture and personalities, local cultural politics and circumstances' (Paschalidis 2009, p. 286). In such analyses what would be considered 'in the national interest' (or beyond) cannot be predetermined; indeed, in many cases the very notion of the national interest may not be a relevant issue for the actors concerned. The Australian essays in this special issue (Lowe, Carter, Roesler) attempt to develop methodologies adequate to the difficult but necessary task of examining cultural diplomacy programs from the perspective of participants and audiences. Bettina Roesler's analysis of the Asialink artist residency program, which has sent more than 700 Australian artists

to different locations across Asia, examines the highly diverse and open-ended intercultural processes enabled by the program. In doing so, Roesler argues for the value of open-ended and often indeterminate exchanges that are well beyond the current policy grasp. Nevertheless, such openness may well contribute to the development of more fine-grained, cosmopolitan capacities, which Roesler considers an important priority for cultural diplomacy. David Lowe analyses Australia's strong involvement in the British Commonwealth-sponsored Colombo Plan from the 1950s, which entailed sponsorship for tens of thousands of Asian students to study in Australia at a time before restrictive White Australia immigration policies had been dismantled. The strong people-to-people links established with Asian countries have remained as an enduring collective memory of the Colombo Plan, perhaps a forerunner to Australia's later multicultural orientation. For Lowe, voices rather than images animate the understanding of an 'everyday' or 'vernacular' internationalism, as the Asian students came into close contact with ordinary Australians. Such attention to the specifics of intercultural dialogue can enrich our thinking about possible outcomes of cultural diplomacy programs, beyond the customary level of measurable 'impacts.' David Carter's investigation of Australian Studies centres in China is focused on the potential for greater engagement from academics with a stake in cultural analysis. He observes the reticence of humanities academics to become involved in cultural diplomacy projects, perceived to be tainted by nationalist agendas. Carter challenges them to move beyond negative critique and to contribute to the nation as a 'policy horizon and terrain for action, as a set of institutions for mobilising resources and forms of expertise.' In all these three cases, 'the national interest' emerges not as a top-down target imposed by government decree, but as a generative mechanism for *overcoming* narrow or exclusionary notions of the nation, in favour of more relational and open understandings. These examples show how by focusing on the cultural *relations* being built, the work of cultural diplomacy can go beyond the national interest in an iterative way: indeed, what these Australian examples show is the possibility that going beyond the national interest *is* in the national interest.

The conditions for and the actual practical dynamics of idealised processes such as dialogue and collaboration must, however, be carefully analysed in order to bring out the difficulties, contradictions and actual achievements of such processes. Albro, for example, exposes some of the fallacies of diplomatic 'folk theories' of US cultural diplomacy. He points to a very specific national 'cultural imaginary' on the part of cultural diplomacy officials that feeds on a certain cultural triumphalism, or the lack of it, as the contrast with Chinese policy thinkers, as outlined by Sun, shows. Isar, focusing on the evolution of the European Union's 'Culture in External Relations' agenda, has found a certain polyvocality in an agenda setting process that has been significantly driven by non-state actors, for whom 'culture' has been a key stake for a convergence of interests in reshaping a narrative of Europe 'in a pattern rather distinct from the manner in which cultural diplomacy is elaborated by national governments.' In this perspective, the polyvocality of the policy *process* is of equal value as the programs supported. Indeed the EU's policy settings may provide the current benchmark for the adoption of more cosmopolitan ideals in cultural diplomacy.

Conclusion

In this Introduction we have sought to clarify the tangled contemporary understandings of cultural diplomacy. In doing so we have located the central dilemma of cultural diplomacy in its primary aim of serving strategic interests of national governments while at the same time holding out the promise of moving beyond the national interest to support a greater good through mutual cultural exchanges. Associated with this key contradiction are the following tensions affecting national cultural diplomacy practice in today's world of flux:

- Since cultural diplomacy must valorise the general interest *as well as* strategic national interests, nations have to play a double game, for example the balancing of impartiality and strategic advantage in international broadcasting activity in order to achieve credibility and legitimacy.
- The national interests embodied in cultural diplomacy are never simply guided by purely instrumental or calculative thinking. Rather they are embedded in distinct ideas and affects about the nation and its place within an imagining of other nations, including 'folk theories' and blind spots that are relatively immune to rational argument and reflection. Studies of cultural diplomacy should explicitly draw on wider understandings of nationalism and specific national imaginaries: cultural diplomacy is a testing ground for possibilities for the politics of recognition between and perhaps beyond nations.
- There are persistent tensions between 'traditional' cultural diplomacy activities grounded in social and cultural exchange such as people-to-people engagements, collaborative projects, etc. on the one hand and activities premised on sectoral and market competition within globalising cultural fields on the other. Given the proliferation of types of activity in recent times – we haven't even mentioned the burgeoning field of digital diplomacy – within the cultural diplomacy domain, it may be useful to disaggregate the very notion of 'cultural diplomacy' and examine separately its various modalities, each with its differing dynamics, various incorporations within specific cultural and professional fields, and participating communities.

Such tensions have been sharpened by policy discourses and strategies affecting cultural diplomacy in the past two decades, most notably soft power and nation branding (Aronczyk 2013), that are centred on competition between nations. Has the rise of soft power discourse – as interpreted and implemented in so many diverse ways – contributed to a specific instrumentalisation of cultural exchange? Has it in the process perhaps limited the potential for cultural diplomacy to generate new intercultural understandings, and to reduce mistrust? Or will other tendencies in ICR, such as the directions exemplified by the EU's Culture in External Relations agenda, develop sufficient momentum to move cultural diplomacy towards greater mutuality? The Australian cases featured in this special issue suggest that cultural diplomacy can move beyond the national interest only if this move itself can be understood as being *in* the national interest. Further research, including in other countries and regions, is required to finesse the implications of this understanding.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

1. Recently the Australian government has begun to use the term 'Indo-Pacific' so as to be able to include South Asia, particularly India, in this regional construct.
2. Australia's international broadcasting service, the Australia Network, which broadcast to some 45 countries in the Asia Pacific and India, was severely scaled down in 2014 following a highly public disagreement between the government and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which, the government alleged, was not fulfilling its public diplomacy requirements (Tapsell 2014).

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The disjunction of image and word in US and Chinese soft power projection

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This article compares US and Chinese national soft power strategies, using the cases of the US Shared Values Initiative for the Middle East in the aftermath of 9–11 and the present operation of Chinese Confucius Institutes in the US. Comparing these two national programs, I describe a consistent disjunction between visual image and spoken word for each. Regardless of variations in national approaches to soft power, this disconnect between seeing and talking is a limitation of soft power as a cultural tool of diplomatic communication. First, public diplomats' unexamined folk theories about culture's instrumental role in messaging emphasize spectacle in ways inimical to reciprocal engagement. Second, as a cultural policy of display, soft power image projection discourages opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue. Third, government-sponsored national image management and branding are often controversial elsewhere, in the process touching off boundary-patrolling public debates instead of helping to build international relationships.

Keywords: soft power; cultural diplomacy; spectacle; intercultural dialogue; US–China

Introduction

In the broader project of public diplomacy, culture is often assumed to be a vehicle that facilitates processes of listening and of dialogue among different publics and across national boundaries. Typical of this is the well-known story of how a Dave Brubeck concert engineered a successful 1988 US-Soviet nuclear arms reduction treaty by getting people talking again, in this case about jazz, after negotiations had stalled at a Moscow summit (Schudel 2008). The mandate and cultural programs of organizations like the US Information Agency, charged with 'telling America's story' to the world, best typify this set of ideas (see Arndt 2007). The USIA was, of course, shuttered in 1999. But pervasive largely unexamined assumptions about the efficacy of culture for diplomacy, particularly when presented as performance and spectacle, still linger. This is not just the case for the US, but for other national efforts of soft power projection.¹

In the context of the US's 'Asia pivot', countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region are reassessing their diplomatic footprints, given the need to navigate new realities of foreign policy amid the potential emergence of a full-blown regional rivalry between the US and China (see Perlez 2014). This is a contest on multiple

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fronts. But the increasing visibility of Chinese soft power, along with renewed US efforts to project its own soft power in the region, have made cultural diplomacy one of these fronts (see Nash 2014). However, while the term – ‘soft power’ – enjoys wide international circulation and is now routinely used as part of domestic discussions about national cultural projection in such countries as China, India, Brazil, Iran, and elsewhere, as Isar (2013) has noted, it is also an increasingly ‘polysemic term’ reflecting an extensive ‘range of representational purposes and assumptions’. In other words, it is an error to assume that international efforts of soft power projection are up to the same things. A growing corpus of comparative research has begun to explore and to highlight the differences among national soft power strategies (see Hayden 2012, Nye and Sun 2014).

US and Chinese soft power both instrumentalize culture, but not in the same ways. However, as I argue here, more fundamentally every national soft power approach largely adopts a comparably uncritical orientation to cultural spectacle in diplomacy that tends to produce the same effect: a division between image and spoken word that undermines sustained dialogue. In what follows I focus upon US and Chinese practices of soft power, with particular attention to how each understands the relationship of culture to diplomacy. I examine the responses of the ostensible ‘target audiences’ of two soft power efforts, the US Shared Values Initiative after 9–11 and the increase of Chinese Confucius Institutes (CI’s) in the US and elsewhere, as a means to investigate both efforts of messaging through culture, where the ‘representational’ purpose of spectacle works to undermine the often touted goal of inter-cultural dialogue. One effect of the tendency of soft power programs to introduce fault lines between international image projection and dialogue has been to reinforce frontiers between these different national conversations about culture. In fact, China’s soft power efforts in the US have aggravated the possibilities for more constructive dialogue between the two. If culture has become an explicit subject of political and policy discourse for both China and the US, so far these are largely non-overlapping conversations.

Diplomacy and spectacle

Between 2009 and 2011, I administered a cultural diplomacy survey,² which was designed to provide an opportunity for respondents – both active and retired public diplomacy officers in the US – to articulate their own understandings of how cultural diplomacy works. In other words, how do those professionally engaged in such work define to themselves successful outcomes for what they do? The survey also elicited diplomats’ beliefs about how culture works as a vehicle of communication in diplomacy. Here I summarize key features of a working theory, operative among Foreign Service professionals, that emerged in survey responses and which addresses culture’s diplomatic efficacy as an instrumental means to advance mutual understanding in international affairs.

In addition to a notable lack of consensus among cultural diplomacy practitioners about the meaning of ‘culture’ itself,³ respondents consistently advanced a theory that I will identify, borrowing from McGuigan (2004, pp. 61–64), with a ‘cultural policy of display’, where it is assumed that the state is not simply the main sanction for political power but also the primary source for the display of national culture.⁴ In this mode, governments promote spectacles of nationhood as forms of national aggrandizement. Of particular interest for present purposes is the

regular connection drawn by respondents between a cultural policy of display – of showing or representing the nation through cultural spectacle – and the efficacy assumed for culture itself. Here I point to some of the unanticipated consequences of this preference for the performative and visual goals of representation among cultural diplomats.

Respondents consistently equated the concept of culture with the task of representation. They defined ‘cultures’, for example, as the ways different peoples ‘express themselves’. Again, culture is the ‘presentation’ of ‘a society’s thoughts and values’. Or, a culture is a community’s ‘outlook’. The arts are ‘expressions of American society’. As was noted, cultural diplomacy is ‘the efforts nations make to portray their societies and values’. It is a case of the ‘projection’ of culture abroad. Likewise, ‘The best way to explain our culture is by putting it on display’. Cultural diplomacy is effective when using ‘the most visible forms of outreach to large audiences’. Or, similarly, cultural diplomacy is a case of ‘explaining’ by ‘demonstrating’. It is effective when it helps people elsewhere ‘gain a firsthand view’ or a ‘more accurate picture’ of American culture. A majority of respondents described communicational success through cultural diplomacy as analogous to effective visual representation – as being able to pull off a ‘show’.

Survey respondents, in short, advanced the concept that for diplomacy cultures are self-evidently national cultures. In keeping with the history and practice of US cultural diplomacy, respondents also equated cultural performance with acts of expression primarily understood as representation (usually of ‘American society’ or desirable American values like ‘freedom of expression’). In so doing they took for granted that: cultural expressions correspond to cultural values; they are self-evident, portable, and contextless; and they further assumed that these expressions are unproblematic and effective vehicles for national values when incorporated into acts of exchange and performance in staged cultural events. Cultural values – discussed as transparently expressed through diverse cultural vehicles of performance like the arts – were understood to be relatively straightforwardly extractable and easily accessible to international audiences. Practitioners appeared to accept that cultural spectacle amounted to an effective representational strategy and worked as diplomatic communication.

When prompted to offer examples of such activities of cultural diplomacy, respondents favoured activities conducive to spectacle, most frequently listing exhibitions, motion pictures, radio programs, TV broadcasts, the digital arts, music, dance, or theater, the plastic and visual arts, and related activities. This should not be surprising, since such activities have been a staple of US cultural diplomacy programming for some time. Arndt (2007, p. 412) has offered vivid details about the work carried out by the cultural offices of U.S. embassies during the Cold War, which was ‘to publicize, present, and stage events’. Arndt characterizes the diplomatic efforts to ‘internationalize America’s arts’ as a case of ‘the US export of performances’, which, it was hoped, were a ‘highly visible’ means to expose international audiences to, in Arndt’s words, the ‘sounds and sights of democracy’.

This set of assumptions remains widespread. As stated in the first sentence of the first page of an influential State Department report on public diplomacy (2005, p. 1), ‘It is in cultural activities that a nation’s idea of itself is best represented’. This sentence has since reappeared verbatim in multiple reports and discussions, such as the 2010 report of the US Center for Citizen Diplomacy’s International Cultural Engagement Task Force. ‘Share America’, a new website launched by the

US Department of State, also appears to assume this representational transparency as a prerequisite for the extractability of political values from cultural images. The website offers ‘compelling stories and images that spark discussion and debate on important topics like democracy, freedom of expression, innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and the role of civil society’.⁵ Others describe it as providing ‘bite-sized nuggets of video, photos, and text’ (Scola 2014), to be fed into Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and comparable social media platforms. Beyond content sharing, how these discussions will be ‘sparked’ is not clear.⁶

The elision by respondents of acts of cultural spectacle with acts of representation is reminiscent of Langer’s (1942) idea of ‘presentational symbols’. She describes these as conveying otherwise abstract ‘ideas’ because they correspond in form or by analogy to that which is symbolized, as a ‘projection’ of it. Presentational symbols function independently and they work all at once like a ‘picture’. Langer’s conception reflects a long-standing philosophical commitment to the so-called correspondence theory of truth, an influential set of assumptions historically ubiquitous across post-Enlightenment European and US interpretations of art and culture. As Harris (2010, p. 69) has put it when talking about the ‘great debate’ in art, ‘At the heart of that tradition is the unspoken premise that depiction is another form of naming’. For example, with his well-known distinction between what can be shown and what can be said, Wittgenstein divided the possibilities for expression in ways comparable to the disjunctions between the image and the spoken word taken-for-granted by US public diplomacy practitioners described here. This legacy continues to shape public conceptions of the expressive possibilities of culture and art. But as Rorty (1989) has shown, a representational theory where knowledge is understood to be acquired through a process of ‘mirroring’, mistakenly assumes meaning is like a picture that faithfully ‘represents’. Rorty argues that we are better off treating this representational theory as our own folk theory.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to think that cultural diplomacy as a display directed at a public is not the best route to intercultural dialogue. The effort to perform, express, and project, might succeed in conjuring an audience among international publics, but in so doing this can also build barriers to conversation, which I explore here. An audience member watches the show but is seldom an active participant in it.⁷ Audience members typically occupy a different world from that of the players. The representational assumptions of diplomacy can inhibit dialogue, in other words, when publics are recruited as audiences for cultural spectacles. If meaningful reciprocal dialogue is a goal of public diplomacy, ‘to think of language as a picture of the world’ in Rorty’s words (1989, p. 295) – to displace opportunities for talk with cultural representations of nations – makes conversation more of a challenge.

The US soft power conversation

Joseph Nye’s concept of ‘soft power’ has, over the years, been the subject of substantial critique and debate, with Nye regularly defending and refining the term’s scope (see Nye 1990, 2011, 2014, and Ang, Isar and Mar’s introduction to this issue). I will not revisit these discussions here. But, I will briefly place the term in the context of a particular US account of economic and cultural globalization, as this was assumed to operate, primarily among US policy makers in the post-Cold War era. In other words, while Nye has tended to discuss soft power in descriptive

terms and as an analytic concept, I suggest it makes more sense to treat the term as a key feature of a largely normative and policy discourse that illustrates an American-centric conception of international affairs, one that in the present era is increasingly contested by competing national approaches to soft power.

Nye has been clear that soft power springs not from states but ‘largely from individuals, the private sector, and civil society’ (Nye 2013). If, for Nye, soft power inheres largely in the intangible resources of ‘cultural and ideological attraction’, American popular culture takes the form of ‘products and communication’, which, in turn, are effective when they ‘embody liberal, free-market principles that coincide with US society’ (Nye 1990, pp. 168–169). But such an unproblematic understanding of how the liberal values of the free market might come to inhere in cultural products disregards the process by which meanings or values come to be associated with cultural expressions. In this disregard it is reminiscent of the formulation of cultural efficacy offered by the cultural diplomats I surveyed.

In a book with the subtitle ‘how globalization is changing the world’s cultures’, the economist Tyler Cowen (2002) offered an account of cultural goods and services in the global marketplace, which we can also view as an elaboration of Nye’s soft power concept with an eye to policy makers.⁸ For Cowen, cultural creativity and diversity – as represented by US culture industries like Hollywood – are subject to a Schumpeterian process of ‘creative destruction’ in ways enhancing the global consumer’s ‘menu of choice’ (Cowen 2002, p. 12), but also closely echoing current prevailing discourse among US Silicon Valley tech and information companies.⁹ For Cowen, freedom – what he calls ‘positive liberties’ – is equated with consumer choice. His market-centric account of cultural soft power as global trade reads like a policy blueprint for the immediate post-Cold War era of US global dominance.

My interest in these ideas is not to evaluate whether they are a descriptively accurate account of the subsequent unfolding of the relationship of culture to economic globalization. Rather, I am more interested in the ways that this concatenation of ideas about the work of culture, has acquired in Hayden’s words a ‘compelling justificatory logic’ (2012, p. 2) in US foreign policy circles. Nye has often been at pains to clarify that soft power effectively operates outside of government. Yet, over the previous decade, US foreign policy figures have often articulated instrumental purposes for cultural content using a soft power discourse.¹⁰ This discourse, therefore, has become one important dimension of the intersection of culture with international affairs in US policy. It expresses a conversation among US government decision-makers about the role of culture in global debate, with culture viewed as an instrument to recruit foreign publics to stated US values of liberty and choice in largely commodified form, through the free market, and outside of government.

US infomercials and nation branding

An inauspicious example of US government efforts to implement a soft power strategy is the short-lived Shared Values Initiative. Launched in 2002 in the immediate aftermath of 9–11, it was discontinued after less than a month.¹¹ The campaign was the brain-child of Charlotte Beers, a Madison Avenue executive and the first woman to appear on the cover of *Fortune* magazine, former CEO of Ogilvy & Mather (a Manhattan-based international advertising, public relations, and

marketing firm), and the first US Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy after 9–11. A pioneer of branding strategies, her goal was to communicate the intangible assets of the US to a skeptical Muslim audience in the Middle East. To do this, she relied upon a mass media-based business approach to marketing using the language of ‘corporate strategizing’ (Plaisance 2005, p. 257). As Snow (2003, pp. 84–85) has put it, Beers thought making a ‘convincing pitch for Uncle Sam’ was a question of marketing American values through smart ‘brand stewardship’.

Explaining her strategy to more effectively combat, in her words, ‘the outrageous myths and lies’ about Muslim persecution in the US circulating in the Middle East, Beers (2002) put it this way, ‘We needed pictures, not words’. Soon a new State Department website documented ‘Muslim Life in America’ with pictures of mosques and of smiling American Muslim families. This was complemented by the production of a series of videos in the style of infomercials that featured American Muslims from different walks of life, including a Libyan-born baker, a hijab-wearing school-teacher, a Brooklyn-born paramedic, as well as an Algerian-born director of the National Institutes of Health. All discuss their lives in America, emphasizing such US values as egalitarianism, religious pluralism and freedom. The videos were produced by McCann-Erickson – the advertising firm responsible for the Rice-a-Roni jingle and the ‘Army Strong’ campaign for the US Army – and were dismissed in the *NY Times* (Perlez 2002) as ‘Muslim-as-apple-pie videos’.

The campaign proved a spectacular failure. It met almost immediate opposition from governments in the Middle East, with Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan refusing to air the videos. As Olins (2007, p. 178) notes, ‘The focus of a national branding programme is usually a visual symbol’. And Beers’ campaign relied on specific imagery of all-American Muslims in their suburban kitchens and at baseball games. People spoke, but their voices were enlisted for the instrumental purpose of ‘representation’, and the broadcasted videos exercised an ‘antidialogic’ effect (Rampton and Stauber 2003, Plaisance 2005, pp. 251, 258). As Snow (2003, pp. 97, 105) emphasizes, the audience was encouraged to view Americans ‘predominantly as a product’. While this might indeed be how marketing firms approach the domestic US market, Snow is also clear that the campaign’s designers fundamentally misunderstood their ‘target audience’.

For critics at home and abroad the fundamental problem with the Shared Values Initiative was that it sought to answer a question that had not been asked: whether Muslims in the US were discriminated against; while, as Rampton and Stauber (2003) assert, it failed to take up the issues at the core of Muslim resentment of the US: its policies in the Middle East, particularly regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, and military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This was compounded by a corporate branding strategy that discouraged mutual engagement through dialogue, and that pursued national policy goals by putting US government messages ‘in someone else’s mouth’. As Rampton (2007) suggests, rather than facilitating engagement with people in the Middle East on their own terms, the Shared Values campaign was more revealing of ‘how the propagandists see themselves’. This campaign failed because it illustrated a largely US conversation and set of expectations about diversity and citizenship, in the process unintentionally highlighting the parochial specificity of this conversation to the exclusion of more open-ended discussion and debate with counterparts in the Middle East about the US’s role in the region.

As a normative rather than descriptive account of global US policy goals for ‘culture’, Nye’s concept of soft power has become a part of the lexicon of US

government engagement with the world. But when the US government seeks to instrumentalize its soft power resources, the limits of this strategy are often made apparent and, in fact, can themselves become a source of friction. Singh (2010) has pointed to the regular anxiety provoked by the global circulation of the cultural content of entertainment industries like film and TV, perceived to undermine the cultural sources of national identity. And Bayles (2014) has suggested that allowing the entertainment sector to assume the job of communicating the US's image to the world has been disastrous, since such cultural content is too often violent, sexualized, anti-religious, politically cynical, and celebrates rootless individual freedoms outside of any social or collective context. All of this contributes to a lack of meaningful dialogue with counterparts who quite often speak from within social worlds variously defined in collective or religious terms.

Part of the problem is the limiting of soft power to a US-specific account of culture as globally circulating and competitively branded goods and services, which are routinely if abstractly elided with freedom of choice. Use of commercial branding encourages the idea that all national cultures fit into a US vision of neoliberal globalization, where the elision of cultural policy with marketing plays up zero-sum competitive national points-of-difference even as it flattens out the plurality of voices constitutive of the nation and its critics (see Aronczyk 2014). The overly simplistic equation of cultural content with American values that target audiences are expected to extract, discourages mutual engagement. Policy commentary on the efficacy of commodified popular culture expresses a US-specific lexicon of personal freedoms exercised as consumer choices in ways that often fail to engage with the perspectives or grievances of foreign publics, particularly with respect to different expectations about the role of culture in public life. The Shared Values Initiative illustrates a US version of the disjunction between spectacle and dialogue that government-sponsored soft power programming can introduce.

Soft power for the Middle Kingdom

Culture has become a linchpin of Chinese soft power only recently. During the Cold War era, for the most part, for official Communist China 'culture' referred to the backward-looking 'traditional culture' from which the country needed to liberate itself in order to embrace Mao's version of Marxism. During the Cultural Revolution, for example, Mao famously denounced 'Confucian dogs' (Li 2005). However, beginning in the 1980s, the debate over Asian values in the human rights context heated up, which gradually put cultural questions back on the Chinese government's agenda (see Bauer and Bell 1999). While the US often assailed China in particular in human rights terms, China and other East Asian countries rejected the universality of the US account of human rights. Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew (1994, pp. 111, 114), the early face of this regional movement, sharply contrasted 'the expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave' in the US with the 'filial piety' characteristic of Asian countries and conducive to well-ordered societies. China quickly followed Lee Kuan Yew's lead, also adopting an 'Asian values' position that prioritized collective cultural rights within a national framework, in contrast to a US tendency to champion universal individual civil and political rights.

A notable dimension of this about face has been the 'rehabilitation' of Confucianism – along with other classical Chinese philosophical traditions – from

its pariah status during the Mao era. Among China's leadership Confucianism, emphasizing society's collective interests over those of the market or individual, is now considered representative of Chinese traditional culture and critical for 'understanding the national characteristics of the Chinese' (Gardels 2014). Beginning in the early 2000s, soft power has also become an increasingly frequent term of reference in China (see Mingjiang 2008, Li and Chen 2011), with culture recognized by China's leadership as 'the core resource of a state's power' (Glaser and Murphy 2009, p. 10), and with Confucianism as the most important source of 'traditional Chinese virtues' (see also the treatment of Chinese media diplomacy in this issue).

In his address to the 17th national congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2007, then party general secretary Hu Jintao promoted the doctrine of a 'socialist harmonious society', and stressed the need to enhance Chinese cultural 'soft power' in order to build 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Jintao 2012). Discussion of soft power in China has similarly focused on effectively adapting the concept 'with Chinese characteristics'. Notably, in contrast to use of this term in the US, in China soft power encompasses both domestic and international purposes (Mingjiang 2008). On the one hand, culture is extolled as an important source of national cohesion with soft power a matter of 'cultural security' (Keane 2010); on the other, it is a privileged means to project a positive image of China for international audiences (see Jintao 2012, Xiaoling 2012, Gardels 2014).

In contrast to a US conception of soft power, which emphasizes the global circulation of contemporary popular cultural goods and services, for China's leadership and among a majority of Chinese scholars, 'China's ancient history and traditional culture' are viewed as a 'valuable source of soft power'. In this sense, concepts of 'harmony' articulated in and allied with Confucian thinking have been repackaged by the CPC (Angang 2006), and represented in notions of 'harmonious society', 'harmonious co-existence', or the 'harmonious world' concept, initially offered by Hu Jintao at the Asia-Africa summit in 2005 (Glaser and Murphy 2009, pp. 13–14). This approach is at least in part calculated to combat the 'China threat' thesis of a potentially destabilizing new global power. But, again, in contrast to use of the concept – soft power – in the US to indicate the suasive possibilities of culture in international affairs, for China's leadership 'soft power' (or, *ruan shili*) is directly identified with traditional national cultural values,¹² with the concept of 'harmony' an expression of and a key for Chinese hearts and minds (see also Hayden 2012, p. 179).

Most recently, China's president Xi Jinping has set a more combative tone, at once promoting the virtues of China's Confucian-based national culture and international goals of 'harmonious co-existence' while criticizing overtly Western cultural expressions among Chinese artists and cultural producers, including 'unrestrained extreme individualism', material pursuits, and the vulgarity of commercial success (see Gardels 2014, Thiruchelvam 2014). Most recently, China's education minister criticized the use of textbooks in college classrooms that promote 'Western values' (see Buckley 2015). If China continues frequently to discuss its soft power, in large part this is less a conversation about an international audience and more often a domestic debate about China's national cultural identity and its relationship to the ongoing rule of the CPC (see Zhang and Li 2010), where 'soft power' is a way of talking about principles of traditional Chinese culture.

At the same time US and Chinese conceptions of their own soft power appear, often purposefully, to be almost diametrically opposed. The US policy conversation

revolves around contemporary popular culture, the global circulation of cultural goods and services, personal freedoms, and consumer choice. While in China soft power is most often embodied in classical or traditional cultural values, concerned with domestic cultural cohesion, and pitched as a goal of domestic and international harmony, in explicit contrast to vilified individualisms and market excesses of various sorts. In other words, when articulated in the register of soft power, the very meaning of culture in international affairs begins to look a lot like a zero-sum normative contest, in this case between the US and China. This has become apparent in recent controversies around the increase of CI's in the US, a case to which I now turn.

China's soft power and CI's

Over the last decade China has also ramped up its own soft power projection. China's program of CI's, founded in 2004, promotes the study of Chinese language and culture and sponsors Chinese cultural events. Globally there are upwards of 475 CI's and 851 classrooms in 126 countries, which serve over 3,450,000 students, according to the numbers offered at last December's 9th Confucius Institute Conference in Xiamen, China.¹³ The program has publicized a goal of 1000 CI's worldwide by 2020 (ICEF Monitor 2014). Western liberal democracies have the highest concentration of CI's (Wang 2014, p. 9), with almost 100 in the US alone. On average, we are told, a new Institute is set up somewhere in the world every six days (Ruan 2014). They have become a major expression of China's global soft power aspirations and an important strategic part of Chinese global and political competition with 'the West' (see Sahlins 2013, 2015).

CI's are hosted by in-country academic institutions, but the CI program is managed by a branch of the Chinese government, Hanban, which is associated with the Ministry of Education. CI's are intended to create 'an improved global image' for China (Hubbert 2014a, p. 34), and China's propaganda chief, Li Changchun, has described them as 'an important part of China's overseas propaganda setup' (quoted in Redden 2012). In addition to language study, they seek to increase the attractiveness of Chinese culture by foregrounding cultural accomplishments in classical poetry or art and engaging in frequent public programming and outreach, sponsoring extracurricular activities such as Chinese films, art exhibitions, stage presentations, cultural performances, trips to museums, celebrations of festivals like the Chinese New Year, student summer camps in China, and even dance and cooking classes.

In her ethnographic study of CI's, anthropologist Jennifer Hubbert has described the activities sponsored by CI's as designed to achieve two soft power-inspired policy goals of China's government. They encourage alignments of 'witness' to the tangible results of China's spectacular rise. They also represent China in terms of an 'exceptionalist narrative of modernity' that locates Chinese culture in an 'essentialized and exoticized but depoliticized and palatable past' (Hubbert 2014b, pp. 34–35, p. 39, p. 41), for example, highlighting the Chinese opera or the terracotta warriors of Xi'an as opposed to the country's more controversial present. The image making activities of CI's work to divorce 'Chinese culture' from the sometimes fraught contexts of China's current great power aspirations and the country's often contentious role in the global economy and in world politics.

This approach has been derided by critics, who have described the cultural offerings of CI's as a quaint and packaged form of 'cultural retention' (Redden 2012), with CI faculty turned into 'entertainment specialists' for an agency of the Chinese government. At the same time, the attention to 'pandas and chopsticks' has been interpreted as displacing discussion of the current Chinese state as a 'repressive regime' (Redden 2014a). When understood as a 'one-stop China shop' (Redden 2012), critics have suggested, Institutes can routinely deflect attention from more controversial and politically sensitive topics such as human rights violations, Tibet, Tiananmen Square, Falun Gong, or the recent Hong Kong protests (see Norrie 2011, Sahlins 2013, 2015, Redden 2014a).

Hubbert takes this further, showing how the invitation to witness cultural spectacle is met with skepticism. Participants in Confucius Institute-sponsored programs often equate efforts to manage China's image and the absence of classroom discussion of topics considered sensitive in China with acts of censorship and 'totalitarian control' (Hubbert 2014a, 2014c), which were in turn taken to be signs of a more 'authentic China'. The particular cultural policy of display and witness practiced by CI's, in other words, is perceived by their 'Western' targets to be in direct tension with more grounded and realistic discussions of China's current role in the world. This suggests the relative ineffectiveness of CI's as instruments of soft power. And, just as with the case of the US's Shared Values Initiative, one source of this ineffectiveness appears to be the disjunction between showing and talking, or spectacle and dialogue, characteristic of state-sponsored soft power efforts.

US debates about Chinese soft power

Particularly in the US, Europe, and Australia, CI's have been popular but also controversial. On the one hand, CI's bring significant economic and human resources to already taxed US public school and university campuses. They have been welcomed by school administrators seeking to offset diminishing public funding and sometimes drastic budget cuts (especially in such areas as foreign language study), and as a part of sound financial planning in the context of higher education's market-driven transformation over the past quarter century (e.g. Redden 2012, Marcus 2013, Hubbert 2014a, p. 332). In the context of China's emergence as a global power, CI's have also been treated as a welcome resource for US and other students who will need to know more about China in the near future if corporations from these countries, in particular, are to remain globally competitive (see Hubbert 2014c, McCord 2014).

On the other hand, as Nye (2013) has suggested about CI's, at least so far 'China has earned a limited return on its investment'. They have been the subject of controversy on multiple university campuses in the US and elsewhere. In 2013 the University of McMaster in Canada terminated its relationship with Hanban after an instructor complained of having to conceal her affiliation with Falun Gong, a spiritual practice outlawed in China (Cai 2014b). In Australia, Sydney University was criticized when its Institute hosted a Chinese Tibetologist critical of the Dalai Lama in 2012, initially called off a scheduled talk by the Dalai Lama in 2013, and then attempted to restrict news coverage, external marketing and use of the university's logo for the event (Lau 2013). And at a meeting of European sinologists in 2014, the Chinese director general of the Confucius Institute program

ignited controversy by removing information about a Taiwanese organization from official conference materials (Cai 2014a).¹⁴

In the last few years, the climate of reception for CI's has become less welcoming. In Canada both the universities of Manitoba and British Columbia turned down proposals for CI's on their campuses, while in the US University of Pennsylvania faculty were successful in doing the same. In addition, organized faculty objections preceded the eventual establishment of Institutes at the universities of Chicago, Stockholm, and Melbourne respectively (Marcus 2013). Following its Canadian counterpart, the American Association of University Professors (2014) issued a report this past June identifying the CI program as an 'arm of the Chinese state' advancing a 'state agenda' in ways inconsistent with 'academic freedom'. This was followed by the University of Chicago and Penn State University opting to close their CI's this fall (Redden 2014b, 2014c), with each citing comparable concerns. Most recently the US House Foreign Affairs Committee organized a public hearing in December of 2014 to examine the perception of the growing influence of CI's in US higher education, including the outsourcing of academic control, self-censorship, compromising of free speech, and the status of liberal ideals on college campuses. In this hearing, a US congressional representative described American universities as 'islands of freedom' for foreign students, and the committee recommend that the US Government Accountability Office review all academic partnerships with China (Fischer 2014, Mulhere 2014).

Particularly since CI's are embedded in host universities, in the context of growing controversy about them, critics in the US, Europe, Canada, and Australia have raised their concerns primarily in the terms of academic freedom. These include: a lack of transparency, the possibility of restrictions upon free speech and open debate, the potential for self-censorship, the compromising of institutional autonomy, and the potential role of CI's in propagating state-sponsored propaganda. These are important issues. But, notably, as expressed they are not really 'in dialogue' with Chinese counterparts. These are, rather, recapitulations of arguments that are particularly characteristic of higher education in the US and elsewhere in the 'West', and part of the broader discourse and focus on liberties informing US policy conversations about Nye's conception of soft power, as discussed previously.¹⁵

The chair of the AAUP report committee pointedly emphasized that CI's are incompatible with '*American standards of academic freedom*' (emphasis mine; quoted in Redden 2014a). Meanwhile, human rights observers concerned about CI's have emphasized the role of universities in the US to be one of upholding '*Western ideals of free speech*' (emphasis mine; Hansen 2014). Sahlins (emphasis mine; 2015, p. 5) explains the source of his objections to the growth of CI's in US colleges and universities, noting that, in the absence of more critical engagement among China scholars, 'Regrettably, it becomes necessary for people like me to take up these essentially *domestic*, US issues of academic integrity'. If these are basic values that underpin the purpose and development of US higher education, for the objectives of cultural diplomacy, they are inward-looking concerns that do not engage, say, higher education in China. They function to reinforce already frequently discussed and widely shared core values of US higher education.

In other words, instead of promoting intercultural dialogue, China's soft power strategy appears primarily to have provoked boundary-patrolling behaviour in the US public sphere. Hubbert (2014a, p. 42) similarly concludes that US participants

in CI's perceive the Chinese language as a potential mechanism for their own 'empowerment in the U.S. context'. In a comparable argument, Clarke (2014) has called for more attention to the reception of cultural diplomacy programs among target audiences, emphasizing the ways cultural products are used to address meaningful concerns around self-identity. US and Chinese soft power programs have not, in short, led to a shared dialogue.

Conclusion: dialogic prospects

The effectiveness of Chinese or US soft power projection is, at best, an open question. Both the Shared Values Initiative and CI's inadvertently fueled controversy and debate in the Middle East and in the US respectively. As I have emphasized, part of the reason for this is a prevalent set of beliefs among public diplomacy professionals, apparent in responses to my cultural diplomacy survey, and which we can think of as a folk theory they maintain regarding the role of culture. This folk theory, which I have called a cultural policy of display, privileges cultural spectacle in diplomacy as an effective vehicle of communication, and takes for granted that spectacle offers the unmediated cultural representation of national values in other national contexts.

As I have developed the argument here, as a folk theory this set of ideas promotes soft power-type strategies of image projection that often undermine intercultural dialogue while promoting boundary-patrolling discourse that serves more to re-entrench national differences than to cross them. In large part this is because the folk theory of representation in diplomacy disincentivizes talk in favour of image making. For the US, at least, the government's Shared Values Initiative and public reception of increasingly numerous CI's have served to highlight largely coextensive and parochially narrow national conversations or debates that have further elaborated or re-inscribed bright lines around specifically American perspectives and preoccupations while not, in general, opening up a wider international conversation.

But there are alternatives to this approach. One is to consider the diplomatic potential of proliferating US–China transnational and collaborative advocacy networks. These networks can be found across a broad range of initiatives, often involving academic institutions and think tanks in the US. While space does not allow a fuller discussion of these here, some notable networks specifically concerned with culture include: the ongoing collaboration between the Getty Conservation Institute and China's State Administration for Cultural Heritage, which resulted in the bilingual 'China Principles' for heritage conservation¹⁶; and the China–US Folklore and Intangible Cultural Heritage Project,¹⁷ an ongoing collaboration between US-based folklorists and their Chinese counterparts contributing to the further internationalization of folklore studies.¹⁸

Such a focus on professional arts and culture networks between the US and China builds on Keck and Sikkink's (1998) pioneering analysis of the work of framing accomplished by 'transnational advocacy networks' in human rights fields. It also extends Cross's (2013) recent study of the 'knowledge-based transnational networks' behind the governance framework for European integration, and the 'epistemic communities' they form. All three cases suggest the advantages of focusing attention on what circulates through networks, and the ways this can generate shared frames rather than agonistic arguments.

The activities of transnational applied humanities networks offer a different approach than that of the cultural policy of display: the advantages of working through collaboration by ceding authority and promoting the agency of others in the co-production of shared knowledge. Instead of government-sponsored programs pitched at the global or international level focused on competitive values-based message delivery, these proliferating collaborative networks tend to be issue-specific and they build directly on already shared often professional commitments as a way to break new ground (as also argued in the article by Isar in this issue).

Such a collaborative approach is more dialogic in orientation. These cases of networked collaboration do not simply assume soft power message delivery through the alchemy of image projection. Nor do they take for granted the unmediated and unidirectional representation of national values through cultural spectacle. Instead, shared frames about the relation of culture to policy become subjects of mutual attention and dialogue and emergent outcomes of these collaborative networks. Building on expressed commitments already shared by counterparts, such applied humanities networks hold out the possibility of effectively enlarging a shared conversation around culture in international affairs.

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Notes

1. To cite several examples, the initial charge of the Australian International Cultural Council (AICC) was to engage with overseas audiences, to promote exchange and creative collaboration, tell Australian stories to the world, and project a positive and contemporary image of Australia. Further details about the work of the AICC can be found here: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aicc/>. Meanwhile, Shambaugh (2007) identifies the basic mission of the Hanban Governing Council, charged with overseeing the work of Confucius Institutes (CI's), in the following terms: to tell China's story to the world; publicize China's government policies, in particular, foreign policies; promote Chinese culture abroad; and counter hostile foreign propaganda about China.
2. The survey was conducted online using SurveyMonkey, and was administered with the support of my then research assistant, Yelena Osipova. It was designed to be short, composed of seven questions, and open-ended. These questions were intentionally basic in order to encourage respondents to make explicit their working assumptions about what cultural diplomacy is and how it works. Answers took narrative form, and were often quite elaborated. Out of a total of 151 respondents – largely composed of active and retired US Foreign Service officers and career diplomats in the public diplomacy cone – 51 completed the entire survey. What follow are the survey questions in order: (1) What is cultural diplomacy? (2) What is the meaning of ‘culture’ for cultural

- diplomacy? (3) How is cultural diplomacy different from other forms of diplomacy? (4) When is cultural diplomacy successful? (5) Are there circumstances when cultural diplomacy can backfire? (6) When might cultural diplomacy be inappropriate? (7) How can we do cultural diplomacy better?
3. Further discussion about the ways that respondents tended to identify or to define 'culture' can be found in the following blog post of mine: <http://robertalbro.com/2012/02/models-as-mirrors-or-cultural-diplomacy/>.
 4. McGuigan himself took this term from Williams (1984).
 5. Additional details about Share America can be found here: <https://share.america.gov/>.
 6. In discussing these findings from my cultural diplomacy survey, in particular the propensity for public diplomacy practitioners to assume that culture's efficacy is primarily as spectacle, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only principle operative among cultural diplomacy practitioners. Rather, I am pointing to one evident folk theory among practitioners and exploring its several effects. Taken as a whole, US public diplomacy composes a more variegated field of activities than discussed here.
 7. This is in contrast to a growing body of scholarship, primarily in cultural studies, focused on different forms of 'active spectatorship', and more balanced attention to the reception of cultural expressions as opposed to its production. This scholarship builds on such starting points as Hall's (1993) distinction between 'encoding' and 'decoding'. For applications of Hall's work to cultural diplomacy, see my blog post: <http://robertalbro.com/2012/05/cultural-engagement-and-glocal-diplomacy/>. For attention to the reception end of cultural diplomacy programs, see Clarke (2014).
 8. Cowen has advised US trade representatives in their negotiations pertaining to the multilateral frameworks governing the global circulation of cultural goods and services (see Albro 2005 for further details of these contentious negotiations). As such, his account of US cultural goods and services can also credibly be said to have informed how the US government understands the role of cultural expression in international affairs.
 9. References to 'creative destruction' and 'creative disruption' have been mainstays of Silicon Valley's business model of late (e.g. Henton and Held 2013).
 10. The most conspicuous example of the ways 'soft power' has become a part of the lexicon of the US foreign policy establishment over the past decade is the regular pitch made in 2007–2008 by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates on the talk circuit for more resources to go to the Department of State to expand its soft power diplomacy (e.g. Shanker 2007). In 2014 the US Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy, Richard Stengel, was on the talk circuit pitching the idea that it is time for the US to 'harden' its soft power.
 11. While this article compares the US's short-lived Shared Values Initiative to China's CI's, the reader should not assume that the Shared Values Initiative fully represents the broad range of US public diplomacy activities, then or now. For a more representative sampling of the broad variety of US public diplomacy strategies, programs and tools employed in pursuit of the 'last three feet', consult Snyder (2013). I use the case of the Shared Values Initiative here because of its notoriety, since it is a good example of the cultural policy of display, and because there is a now well-established body of analysis of this failed program. In other words, the case effectively illustrates a consistent problem associated with the use of culture as spectacle in diplomacy. While a marked trend in the explanations of public diplomats and public diplomacy practice, a cultural policy of display does not characterize the entirety of the public diplomacy field.
 12. At the same time, it is important to stress that 'soft power' is still very much under discussion in China, and there are disagreements over how to translate the term, the extent of its application, and what role it should have in China's domestic and foreign policies.
 13. These and further details can be found here: <http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/confucius-institutes-look-back-and-future-9th-annual-ci-conference>.
 14. Numerous additional examples of controversy regarding the presence or activities of CI's, either directly or indirectly influencing curricular development, topics for planned

- events, and in discouraging critical discussion of contentious aspects of recent Chinese history and government behaviour, have been recorded in Sahlins (2015, pp. 14–60).
15. The debate about CI's on the campuses of US colleges and universities closely resembles another recent debate about the perceived militarization of higher education in the US (e.g. Albro 2008, Giroux 2008). In both cases, the promise of budgetary relief has been sharply contrasted with concerns about the intrusion of powerful state institutions and interests in nontransparent ways that potentially undermine institutional autonomy and academic freedoms.
 16. Details about the 'China Principles' and the Getty Conservation Institute's ongoing collaboration with China's State Administration for Cultural Heritage can be found here: http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/china/index.html.
 17. Details about project goals and history can be found here: <http://www.afsnet.org/?page=FICH>.
 18. While here I discuss just a couple such US–China collaborative networks because of their explicit attention to cultural topics, these networks continue to proliferate, particularly involving academic institutions and think tanks in the US. Notable US–China transnational networks, for example, include the National Endowment for the Humanities' 'Bridging Cultures' initiative, the Brookings-Tsinghua Center for Public Policy, ongoing collaboration between the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Chinese counterparts on science ethics, and a new UCLA-Hong Kong University of Science and Technology cooperative program of study in the humanities, among many others.

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Slow boat from China: public discourses behind the ‘going global’ media policy

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What mission and objectives does China want to achieve through its project of globalizing Chinese media? What are its moral and intellectual justifications? What key recommendations are being made in its policy deliberations so far, and to what extent do they represent continuity with or departure from China’s past? I pursue these questions in this paper through an analysis of a range of policy statements and scholarly research published in China. First, I examine the extent to which China’s public diplomacy policy has shifted, paying particular attention to both continuity and change over time. I then outline the major policy recommendations that have been proposed as part of China’s efforts to improve its global image through media expansion. Finally, I consider the ways in which various moral and intellectual resources have been marshalled to justify and propel such initiatives.

Keywords: China; public diplomacy; media; going global; policy

Introduction

Both English-language and Chinese-language literature on China’s soft power have identified a significant discrepancy between how China sees itself and how the world sees China. This discrepancy is succinctly summarised by Jian Wang, the editor of *Soft Power in China* (2008). Wang believes that the challenge facing China in the international arena manifests itself in the form of three key divergences in ‘popular perceptions’. The first is a divergence between how China sees itself and how the world sees China. The second is a divergence in perception between China as a polity, which is largely critical, and China as a culture and society, which is mostly admiring. The last is the divergence between how China sees the United States, which is mostly positive, and how the United States views China, which is largely negative.

China is acutely aware of these discrepancies. In fact, they have become the most important *raison d’être* for China’s public diplomacy policy implementation. This awareness started to grow as early as the 1990s but was heightened in 2008, following both China’s success in hosting the Beijing Olympics and its failure to convince the Western world of its territorial claim to Tibet and its handling of the human rights issues related to it. Public diplomacy policies and objectives started to become more detailed and explicit, and the public diplomacy role of the media

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to improve China's international image became clearly enunciated (Xiang 2013). In 2009, the central government decided to boost the media globalization (or 'going global') initiative by announcing funding of around US\$ 6 billion (Hu and Ji 2012, p. 33). As part of this initiative, China has invested money and efforts to move its public diplomacy activities into 'higher gear' (d'Hooghe 2008) and to increase its own media presence globally, with the main purpose of reducing or even eradicating these divergences.

Ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly, China's actions have become new sources of anxiety for the West. They seem to reinforce the West's fear of a 'China threat'. China's efforts to globalize its own media have been read by as a covert attempt to move propaganda offshore, export communism, and take over the symbolic space of the free world. China's expansionist impulse is seen to be imperialistic in design and intent, with its ultimate goal to achieve global dominance and 'rule the world'.¹ In comparison with the hyperbole of the 'China threat' discourse, a more balanced and rational way of thinking has also emerged. This alternative position advocating engagement with China has been widely adopted and articulated by the leaders of Western countries. As Robert Zoellick, the then US Deputy Secretary of State, said in his remarks to the National Committee on US-China Relations, 'We can cooperate with the emerging China of today, even as we work for the democratic China of tomorrow' (Zoellick 2005).

To date there has been little consideration of both how and why these discrepancies occur and what strategies and solutions may be available to resolve them. In fact, we are not even clear about how these issues are understood and discussed in the policy-making circles of the Chinese party-state. To put it simply, we are confronted by both the symptom and the cause of a systemic problem. The continuous existence of these discrepancies serves neither China's agenda for media globalisation nor the West's agenda to engage with China. At the same time it represents a gaping hole in policy studies.

In the meantime, a sizeable body of both scholarly and journalistic writing both within and outside China has responded to China's officially declared goals and development. Despite many differences, these publications share several common themes. First, they point to the incongruence between China's status as an economic power and China's deficit in soft power. Second, they all acknowledge that the media and communication sector forms the backbone of China's 'going global' effort, in comparison with other cultural sectors such as academic exchange, language teaching, sport and education (e.g. the Confucius Institute). Third, they suggest that if the ultimate goal is 'to let the world know and understand China' from the Chinese perspective, then the Chinese government's troubled relationship with foreign media and foreign correspondents presents itself as the weakest link.

There is, of course, also a notable difference between research published in the West and in China. Literature published in the West offers assessments and prognoses about the efficacy of China's 'going global' strategy and its prospects for future success. International relations specialists and to a lesser extent political scientists have concerned themselves with developments in China's soft power and international relations in general.² At the same time, the developments in China's media expansion have been the focus of media and communication scholars. This literature has pointed to major impediments and challenges facing China in its quest for strategies to globalise its media. On the whole, the prognosis tends to be pessimistic.³

In contrast, it should not surprise anyone that Chinese-language writings on this topic published inside China are much less critical. Most authors are state-funded intellectuals, including university academics, scholars from government research institutes and those affiliated with government think tanks. Published and distributed nationally for general domestic readership, these publications are often in the form of research monographs, edited volumes and conference proceedings published by China's prestigious presses. As will become clear, these publications, though predominantly scholarly in outlook, also seek to include policy statements and perspectives from government officials and policy-makers. Scholarly writings on this topic also appear as research articles in Chinese-language academic journals such as *Contemporary Communication*, *Journalism and Communication Research*, *University of Journalism*, and *Chinese Journalist*. They are often in the genre of scholarly analysis combined with policy recommendations. While not all the recommendations are translated into implemented policies, some do get taken up. Given that recommendations from academics do sometimes end up being used or considered seriously, these works provide evidence of the public impact of academics. These works generally take as their point of departure China's challenge – in the form of the three divergences outlined above – and recommend techniques, strategies, solutions and remedies. Examples of these conventional approaches include exploring the challenges and opportunities facing China's media globalization exercises (e.g. Zhao 2013, Sun 2010), or describing China's global media expansion in institutional, infrastructural and other material terms (e.g. Wang 2011, Zhang 2011, Zhu 2012).

However, in this article I approach the issue from a different perspective. Rather than dismissing policy statements from top leadership and scholarly deliberations in Chinese-language literature as little more than official verbiage or uncritical and wishful thinking, I argue that these statements should be treated as important empirical sources from which we can seek to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of China's intentions and motivations in the domain of media globalization.

In this paper, I read China's policy statements and recommendations with the following questions in mind: What mission and objectives does China want to achieve through its project of globalizing Chinese media? What are their moral and intellectual justifications? What key recommendations are being made in policy deliberations so far? And to what extent do they represent continuity or departure from China's past? I pursue these questions in two sections below. In the first section, I examine the extent to which China's public diplomacy policy has shifted, paying particular attention to both continuity and change over time. In the second section I then outline the major policy recommendations that are proposed as part of China's efforts to improve its global image through media expansion, and consider the ways in which the various moral and intellectual resources have been marshalled to justify and propel such initiatives.

A set of conceptual relationships and distinctions between public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and media diplomacy come to bear on this discussion. The first relates to the difference as I see it between public diplomacy and media diplomacy. Government officials engage in *media diplomacy* with the objective of influencing government officials of a foreign country in their negotiations for purposes of promoting mutual interests. By contrast, in *public diplomacy*, state and non-state actors use the media and other channels of communication to influence public opinion in foreign societies for purposes of promoting one's national interests (Gilboa 2008).

Following this distinction, it becomes clear that this paper is more concerned with China's public diplomacy, albeit with a strong focus on media. The second set of distinctions is between media-dependent public diplomacy and what is often referred to as cultural diplomacy. The concept of culture is more encompassing than media. Few discussions of cultural diplomacy actually include efforts in the media domain. Yet in reality there is a more of a symbiotic relationship between the public diplomacy that is pursued through the media and cultural diplomacy than is commonly acknowledged. In this sense, media diplomacy ought to be seen as one facet of cultural diplomacy. Like cultural domains such as the performing or visual arts, the media constitute a key symbolic and discursive space within which a nation's everyday experiences, values and identities are narrated and represented. By arguing that it is essential to examine the cultural, moral and intellectual resources behind the public discourses of China's public diplomacy, this discussion aims to break down the often artificial distinction between public diplomacy (which prominently features media) and cultural diplomacy.

From external propaganda to external communication

Although the expressions 'soft power', 'public diplomacy', 'public relations' and 'impression-management' did not become part of the policy lexicon in China until the last couple of decades, awareness of the need to explain China to the world has existed for as long as has the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). From as early as the 1930s, the CCP has at different times published newspapers that targeted Western countries. Its cultivation of friendly relationships with Western journalists like Edgar Snow and pro-China Western individuals like Norman Bethune indicated an acute awareness of the need to explain to the world the CCP's vision of revolution. In the early 1940s, before the CCP declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) under its rule, English-language broadcasting was established in Yan'an by Xinhua, which today remains China's only official national news agency. Understandably, these early efforts were, small, patchy and of relatively limited impact (Qu 1998).

With the founding of the PRC in 1949, the CCP knew only too well that while it had won the revolution, it had by no means won the support of the international community. Surrounded by nations hostile to communism and which did not want to recognise the legitimacy of the new PRC, China had a lot of explaining to do. In 1955, Chairman Mao publicly expressed his displeasure at Xinhua for failing to reach out to global audiences. He complained that there were too few Chinese reporters outside China and too little news about China produced by Chinese journalists. He urged Xinhua to act quickly to send out its own correspondents to all parts of the world, and to start transmitting their own news so that the entire world could hear China's voice. Summarising his vision for Xinhua in the grandeur and hyperbole that was his rhetorical hallmark, Mao told Xinhua to act promptly and 'take control of the earth' (*bao diqiu kuan qilai*) (Mu 2013).

Although Mao's words uttered 60 years ago could very well be the battle cry for today's global initiatives, there has been a dramatic shift in the objectives, focus and direction of China's international communication. Chinese scholars (e.g. Tang 2013a, Wang 2010) suggest that the years since the founding of the PRC can be divided into three phases. In the first phase (1949–1965), China's broadcasting, press and foreign language book publishing started to take shape. In the second

phase (1966–1976) of the Cultural Revolution, most international outreach initiatives came to a halt. Scholars describe this phase as one plagued by extreme left-wing ideologies and the use of hyperbolic propaganda techniques. This phase was characterised by an excessive focus on positive news on the one hand, and a consistent failure to differentiate domestic audiences and international audiences on the other (Tang 2013a). It is during the third phase (from 1977 to the present) that China, eager to integrate itself within the world, has started to develop in earnest its capacity for external communication.

Significant shifts

While this three-phase classification may be crude, it nevertheless provides a useful basis from which to understand important shifts in policy thinking. As early as the first phase, it was realized that China needed to shift from promoting revolution to promoting the newly established republic. However, during the first two phases there was little understanding of the fact that domestic and international audiences constituted different ‘interpretative communities’ and therefore should be addressed differently. It was not until the third phase that policy thinkers began to see internal propaganda and external propaganda as discrete processes. This is not just a shift in perception. Rather, it carries important implications, particularly for the structure of the propaganda bureaucracy and for the day-to-day operation of and relationships among various propaganda departments. Throughout the early days of the economic reforms, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the term most commonly used was ‘external propaganda’ (*wai xuan*), understood as a shorthand expression to denote any efforts to promote China favourably to the outside world.

For many decades under the rule of the CCP, the media continue to operate according to the paradigm of propaganda and control. In this paradigm, government-owned and government-operated media are expected, first and foremost, to function as the ‘throat and tongue of the Party’. Ruling out notions of press freedom and media autonomy as ‘Western’ and ‘bourgeois’, this paradigm views control and censorship of anti-CCP media content to be an integral part of effective propaganda. In the past three decades of economic reforms, a commercial media sector has come to co-exist with the party-state media, and in recent years, privately owned media outlets have attempted to make inroads into news production. In the last decade or so, the notion of ‘propaganda’ has been the subject of much discussion. Realizing that propaganda is a ‘dirty word’ in Western ways of thinking, some scholars argue that China should stop describing its work as propaganda and start calling it communication. In fact, one of the many publications espousing this shift is simply entitled *From propaganda to communication: research on television’s external communication* (Li 2013). This change in terminology is notable in the public policy statements of top leaders, and heralds a shift in the core mission of China’s international efforts. In December 2008, addressing Chinese media practitioners, Li Changchun, the then propaganda chief of the CCP and a senior member of the Politburo Standing Committee, urged the Chinese media to develop ‘communication capacity’ (*chuanbo nengli*):

We must go ‘global,’ strengthening our foreign language channels, expanding our partnership with foreign television organizations, vigorously pushing for the international transmission of our television programs, so that our images and voice can reach thousands of homes in all parts of the world. (Li 2008)

Wang Chen, the previous director of China's State Council Information Office, now principally charged with the task of managing external media relations including foreign correspondents in China, went further and spelled out the government's rationale for the new focus on communication:

In this day and age, when information technology is highly developed, those who can influence the world with their ideas, culture and values are those who possess the most advanced means of communication and the strongest communication capacity (Wang 2011, p. xv).

This shift in focus from propaganda to communication cannot be read as simply a shift in semantics; it has implications for what techniques would be adopted, which department or ministry would be given more responsibility and power, and which development pathways would be considered most effective. Interestingly and somewhat poignantly, for a couple of decades in the 1980s and 1990s, communication studies in Chinese universities were looked upon with suspicion, as smacking of Western liberal democratic ideals. Nowadays, even government officials seem to have some basic knowledge of communication theories from the West.

The shift from a unified notion of propaganda to the differentiation between internal/external propaganda and then to a focus on external communication required the development of a more nuanced idea of who the intended audience is. As Chinese scholars rightly point out (e.g. Chen 2011a), it is not enough to differentiate domestic and external audiences (*nei wai you bie*). It is equally important to realize that the external audience is not a monolithic entity and that there are vast differences between various foreign cohorts (*wai wai you bie*). In the first phase, China's propaganda targeted individuals and audiences from those countries who were sympathetic to or supportive of China, especially in the developing countries of Africa and Latin America, which China saw as allies. In contrast, the current target recipient of China's communication consists of the general public of the world, with a clearly articulated focus on the West (Guo 2003), 'in particular the US' (Zhou 2011, p. xix). However, despite the replacement of 'external propaganda' with 'external communication', even today, *wai xuan* (external propaganda) continues to be used in Chinese intellectual and policy circles as a shorthand description of China's public diplomacy through media.

Ongoing debates

While academic and policy-making circles seem to agree on the necessary shift in the objectives and audience, opinions diverge on two points. The first centres on the question of how China should position itself as a player in the arena of international communication. Some see the agenda of China's media expansion to be mainly about boosting China's capacity to tell its own story to as many people as possible, and in doing so, to contest the hegemonic representation of China (Hou and Guo 2013, Zhang 2005, Guo 2003). Others – and this is the less dominant view – project a far more ambitious vision of China's place in the world's communication system. In this vision, the Chinese party-state would like its media to become genuine global players, rivalling major news agencies such as AP and Reuters, and competing for influence and credibility with key media institutions such as the BBC, CNN, and the *New York Times*. Following the logic of this

vision, Chinese media need to be not only the main source of China-related content in the world, shaping the world's opinion of China; they also must be key players in covering world events, regardless of their connection to China. On numerous occasions, Chinese scholars cite Al-Jazeera as a model worthy of emulating (Yu 2011). In summary, the competing agendas concern whether China's international communication should be merely China-centred and driven by the Party, or whether China should aim to be a global media player, covering world events as the global media companies do, adopting international news gathering, selection and news writing practices.

The difficulty of reaching a consensus in response to this question is directly related to the second point of contention that underscores much of the policy debate: If communication, rather than propaganda, is the core business of China's media abroad, should it still function as the 'throat and tongue' of the Party?

Chinese leaders, policy thinkers and scholars alike embrace Joseph Nye's argument that soft power is 'about whose story wins (not whose army wins)' (Nye 2005). For this reason, a top priority has been to improve the attractiveness of China's media. Current leaders have stated that the Chinese media must improve affinity (*xi ying li*), appeal (*qing he li*), impact (*gan ran li*), and credibility (*gong xin li*), as evidenced, again, in Li Changchun's statement:

We must conduct in-depth studies of foreign audiences' mindsets and viewing habits, be attentive to the international needs for Chinese news and information, and understand foreign audiences' ways of thinking. Taking advantage of modern communication technologies and techniques, we must adopt a style and language which is acceptable and intelligible to foreign audiences. (Li 2008)

However, no one has so far come forward to say that external communication is to be completely liberated from the political principles of internal propaganda, and that external communication should adopt global conventions of news reporting. The split in the public discourse on this issue has a number of implications. One of these concerns the ambiguous direction development should take. Another concerns the significant question of how to prioritise areas of funding. While it is difficult to predict if and when the Party will explicitly enunciate its preference one way or another, what is clear is that the split in current thinking owes much to the ongoing debates about the relationship between the media and the party-state in general. What is also clear is that this is a split between ideologues who still hold significant sway in the arena of policy formulation and pragmatically inclined scholars who are more literate in Western practices and theories of communication.

Ironically, the Party itself is in fact a major impediment to China's international communication efforts. Pronouncements about the primary role of the Chinese media made by various generations of top CCP leaders offer some clues to why this is the case. When Mao told Xinhua to 'take control of the earth' and engage in international communication, his premise was clear: that the media were the propaganda tools of the CCP. But even when Mao's era came to an end, his conception of the role of the media dominated and was carried into the reform era. In the 1980s, when China had just opened up to the West, Deng noted with regret that China desperately needed to accelerate its external propaganda in order to change the image of China as a 'poor country which was prone to political movements, social instability, and chaos' (Wang 1998, p. 2). At the same time, however, Deng

Xiaoping ignored agitation from scholarly circles to revisit the agenda to reform the Chinese media in political terms. In reiterating Mao's view of the media, Deng said repeatedly in the 1980s that the media, including external propaganda, must first and foremost be the instrument of the Party. While each generation of leadership is eager to leave its own historical legacy – from Deng's theory of development, to Jiang Zemin's 'three represents' (Shambaugh 2008, p. 111), to Xi Jinping's China Dream – it seems that the question of the role of the media vis-a-vis the Party remains a forbidden zone. In the 1990s, Jiang Zemin's numerous external propaganda policy directives again re-affirmed the official line that Xinhua was the 'mouth and throat of the Party, charged with the dual responsibility of both internal and external propaganda, the mission of both being to promote the CCP and Chinese government's policies' (Qu 1998, p. 204). More recently, addressing a meeting of the Ministry of Propaganda, Xi Jinping reiterated that absolute consistency with the CCP's position is the fundamental principle of journalism and propaganda (*People's Daily*, 9 October, 2013).

While this firm adherence to the Party line may be feasible as far as domestic propaganda is concerned, it represents a major stumbling block for external communication. Scholarly challenge of this dogma ranges from veiled and mild observations to explicit criticism. One scholar comments that 'compared with key international media organizations, Chinese external media organizations lack credibility, timeliness and suffer from an inappropriate ratio between good news and bad news' (Tang 2013b, p. 7). In contrast, Yu Guomin, a prominent communication scholar in the Faculty of Journalism at the Chinese People's University, is much more scathing of the dogma of the Party line:

Some people among us know nothing about the conventional practices of communication in the mainstream West; nor do they bother to find out ... Some may say that we must be consistent with the Party line. While it may sound politically correct, it is in fact ludicrous. Let me ask you, do we want our international news to be read by foreigners? If so, you must respect their reading habits and expectations (Yu 2011, p. 84).

Yu's paper is provocatively entitled 'What stops China's voice from being heard in the world?' and it is not hard to see that it comes closest to touching the raw nerve of the Party's media policy. Sensing this, Yu prefaces his paper by stating that the question he raises is both 'gravely serious' and 'extremely difficult'. He suggests that this question both challenges existing theories and compels policy makers to 'be honest, open their eyes and face the reality of the world' (Yu 2011, p. 82). In Yu's view, although some urge China to look to Al-Jazeera's English news service as a possible model to emulate, such a suggestion will remain wishful thinking unless the fundamental conception of the media as the instrument of the Party is officially abandoned. This may be the reason behind Yuezhi Zhao's suggestion that the biggest impediment to China's soft power is its inability to separate its global ambitions from domestic politics. Zhou Minwei, the director of China's Foreign Language Press, a key organization in the 'external propaganda' system, summarizes this conundrum as a fundamental mismatch between the discursive systems of China and the world. Representing a more hard-line, China-centred approach to communication, he voices China's dilemma in polemic terms, asking 'Should we adopt the West's discursive traditions wholesale, and in doing so, voluntarily give up our own discursive autonomy?' (Zhou 2013, p. 5).

Interestingly, confronting and outspoken as some critical voices such as that of Professor Yu may be, they often appear in the same volumes which also include conservative perspectives, including those of government officials such as Zhou Minwei who play key roles in policy-making.

Borrowing a boat to go to sea: major strategies

Acutely aware of this fundamental conundrum, China has embarked in earnest on a search for alternative ways for its state media to go global. It is widely understood that China's globalizing mission cannot be achieved through the single strategy of pushing China's state media abroad, and that China needs to identify vehicles that can effectively carry China's messages on behalf of China. In policy discussions in the Chinese-language literature, the most consistently and frequently used expression to describe China's public diplomacy strategy is *jian chuan chu hai* – literally translated as 'to borrow a boat to go to sea'. But whose boat is available for loan? And where is the boat heading?

Whose boat?

Answers to these questions have begun to emerge in research papers and books published in China. In recent years, communication scholars have given much thought to how to effectively facilitate what has come to be called 'two-stage communication' (*liangji chuanbo*). The first stage, called 'direct communication', occurs when the Chinese media covers China. The second stage of 'indirect communication' occurs when foreign media make use of material from the Chinese media. Three assumptions widely held by Chinese scholars and media practitioners underscore this theoretical position. First, as Liu Changle, the director of Phoenix TV points out, Chinese state media suffer from a serious deficit of credibility and face enormous – if not insurmountable – barriers in communicating with the West (Liu 2013, p. 8). Second, using a foreign media outlet to carry China's voice – including using foreign correspondents' reports about China – could more often than not be much more effective than communicating directly with the West (Chen 2011a, p. 165). Third, if Chinese media can become the main source for the international coverage of China, it would be in a much better position to set the news agenda and shape the coverage and framing of situations (Tang 2013b).

Taken as a whole, Chinese scholars appear to have identified four vehicles that could carry the content of China's international communication. The first two vehicles are what Chinese scholars call vehicles of 'direct communication' (*zhijie chuanbo*) (Chen 2011b). The first is the international arm of China's state media organizations which are explicitly charged with the task of 'external propaganda'. These include the People's Daily, China Daily, China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International, Xinhua News Agency, China News, and the Foreign Language Press. Some writers comment that these organizations should consider strategies to expand their influence. In order of declining feasibility these strategies include buying out foreign entities, controlling the majority of shares, maintaining certain percentage of shares, and forming partnerships through content sharing. Given that China faces many obstacles – some insurmountable – to implementing the first three of these strategies, some scholars suggest these state organizations should actively explore ways of forging partnerships overseas (Li 2013). In terms

of actual reporting, scholars like Tang (2013b, p. 69) argue that these organizations should aim to be the first ones to cover China and should aspire to become the most authoritative sources on China-related content for foreign media.

The second vehicle refers to Chinese media that lie outside the purview of the state media's external propaganda agenda. Given the de-territorialised nature of communication technology and its diverse pathways of communication, these media may nevertheless be crucial in shaping the world's perception of China. This category includes the Chinese internet, social media, and the commercial sector of the Chinese media. Together with tourists, students and business individuals, this media sector contributes to the 'expanded domain of external propaganda' (*da wai xuan* – literally meaning 'bigger circle of external propaganda'). If harnessed properly, it is suggested that this media sector could 'do effective external propaganda on our own doorsteps without leaving home' (Chen 2011a, p. 80). Guided by this thinking, the development of China's internet for the purpose of assisting external propaganda has been given top priority. The rationale for this policy is summed up by one Chinese internet scholar:

Given the comparative disadvantage we face in competing with the West in terms of capacity and scale of influence, we urgently need to develop a new form of media which puts us on a level-playing field. This form of communication should be able to traverse national borders, and is relatively comparable to the West in terms of its communication capacity, impact and popularity among users. (Wang 2010, p. 32)

Indeed, building and enhancing the online presence of major state media organizations has been given priority (Wang 2011). Also, as part of the 'government going online' project, all central ministries and the external propaganda departments of many provincial governments have adopted what is now referred to as the 'online news spokesperson system' in order to increase the visibility of their governance process (Hou 2013). But, as many have observed, the internet is a two-edged sword. The party-state routinely censors content on the Chinese internet and blocks foreign media, so it seems that the internet's capacity to cross borders can also work to its disadvantage (Sun 2014c).

The third and fourth vehicles that scholars identify are useful for purposes of 'indirect communication'. They are much harder to harness but are considered to be crucial. One vehicle is foreign correspondents in China who produce their own reporting on China based on their interviews and investigations in China. So far, Chinese assessments of the role of foreign correspondents in China's public diplomacy are uniformly that of helpless disapproval. For example, Tang (2013b, p. 66) writes that 'Foreign correspondents in China are increasingly a force to contend with. They are fast becoming the biggest opponent and competitor of China's external communication'. Descriptions of coverage of China by foreign correspondents – especially Western correspondents – range from 'inaccurate', 'selective', 'biased', 'partial', 'one-dimensional' (Hu and Ji 2012, p. 32), to downright condemnation, accusing correspondents of distortion, demonization, and malicious attack (Li *et al.* 1996, Wang 2011, p. xvi).

While foreign correspondents are the 'wolves' the Chinese government has to let into the country, views differ on how to live harmoniously with them. In the opinion of Chinese scholars, the Chinese government is to blame for this unfortunate situation. Chen Manli, a prominent communication scholar in China and

Associate Dean of the Faculty of Media and Communication at Beijing University, observes that these correspondents and their media are the most direct source of information for the public in the West, yet China's external propaganda departments and organizations see them as 'demons and unruly beasts, to be avoided at all costs' (Chen 2011a, p. 101). Chen comments elsewhere that the extent to which these foreign correspondents are effectively managed has a direct bearing on how China is covered in foreign media. According to Chen, the key to the problem lies in getting rid of the current arrangement whereby foreign correspondents are controlled by administration bureaucrats, who often know little about the professional imperatives of journalism (Chen 2011b). Predictably, the propaganda bureaucrats do not share this view. Most bureaucrats tend to take a hard-line approach with correspondents, resorting to 'inviting them to have a chat, issuing them with a warning, and cancelling their visas and sending them home if they break the rules' (Zhang 1998, p. 190). Judging by the perennial news stories about foreign journalists failing to renew their visas or being expelled from China, it seems that this hard-line approach still prevails.

Despite the Chinese government's numerous policies to relax its restrictions on foreign journalists in China, the relationship between the Chinese government and foreign media is often described as one of 'continuous conflict' between 'cooperative antagonists', where neither side trusts one another yet each has to live with the other (Zhang 2008). Foreign journalists' distrust of the Chinese government's spokesperson system is indeed ironic. Designed to counteract the foreign media's distrust of the government and to project an image of openness and cooperation, the spokesperson system sometimes has the effect of reinforcing the view of a suspicious and controlling Chinese government. In other words, although the Chinese government has come up with a series of initiatives to project a more cooperative and friendly persona to foreign correspondents (Sun 2014a), there is no clear evidence to suggest that this has worked. Instead of constituting a willing 'boat' that China can safely use to carry its message abroad, foreign correspondents still represent a significant liability. It remains to be seen if the recent strategy of employing foreign reporters to work for Chinese state media may bring about the desired effect (Sun 2014b).

The fourth vehicle identified to promote China globally is the international media per se, which can potentially generate media content about China based on information they gather from the Chinese media. In the view of Professor Chen Manli, the third and fourth vehicles are potential rather than actual carriers. Foreign correspondents today operate according to a different news agenda – one which results in China being portrayed mostly negatively – and Chinese media are only infrequently used as the source of international reporting (Chen 2011a, 2011b). However, the international media are the vehicles that China wishes to 'borrow' for the purpose of 'indirect communication'. The objective of the second stage of the two-stage communication is to enter the symbolic space of the mainstream West in a 'roundabout' way.

Complementing this fourth vehicle, or as a way of further nuancing it, some have also pointed out that the Chinese-language media, operated by and targeting diasporic Chinese communities outside China, are regarded as a crucial intermediary and a key node in global communication serving to relay China's external propaganda content. In comparison with Western media, Chinese-language media in the diaspora have been much more willing and compliant partners in China's

'going global' project (Liang 2009, Jin 2009, Sun 2013, 2014b). Chinese-literate migrants outside China constitute the largest demographic component of the international audience for Chinese media content (Guo 2003). While this may be a statistic that testifies to China's success in harnessing diasporic Chinese communities, at the same time it also implies the government's failure to reach the real target audience: the mainstream public in the global West.

Increasing the frequency and extent of the foreign media's use of Chinese media is a clearly stated goal. However, there is little consideration of how to achieve it. This brings us back to the question raised earlier: whether the appeal and impact of the Chinese media can be significantly improved without abandoning the command of the Party. Are Chinese government officials and policy makers coming close to allowing CCTV's international channel to be staffed by Western journalists and to adopt Western news values and media practices, as Al-Jazeera's English channel does? Despite expressions of admiration for Al-Jazeera from some quarters in China, so far there is little evidence to suggest that this is possible, at least in the short term.

Moral and intellectual arguments in policy-making

One phrase that appears in policy discussions so often that it has taken on the appearance of a self-evident truth is *xi qiang wo ruo* (meaning: the West is strong and we are weak). This term describes China's perception of the current dynamics of the global media and communication sector and China's place within it. Another frequently used phrase states that China is *bei dong ai da* (translated as 'being in the passive position and often gets beaten up'). This deep-seated sense of injustice is evidenced in many scholarly and official statements. In fact, a review of Chinese-language literature on this issue in the field of media and communication makes clear the prevalence of this trope of grievance, imbued with the feeling of being 'hard done by' the West. It may even be accurate to say that much scholarly endeavour is motivated to prove China's weakness and the dominance of the West. For example, Zheng Yongnian, a China-born scholar now living outside China, expresses deep concern about China being defined and narrated by its national Other – the West. He describes China as being 'epistemologically and ideologically colonized' (Zheng 2012, p. 12).

The claims of these Chinese researchers are unlikely to surprise left-thinking media studies scholars in the West, who have devoted their careers to critiquing the dominance of the Western media. However, these claims also provide important moral justification for the policies currently being promoted and implemented in China. For instance, in justifying the need to produce first-hand news coverage of the world from the Chinese point of view, Zhao Qizheng, the former head of China's State Council Information Office, is able to quote a research finding that says that, as of 2004, 80% of CCTV's international news coverage came from US sources (Wang 2010). In general support of the government's decision to go global and contest the West's dominance, one finding tells us that four Western news agencies – AP, UPI, Reuters and AF – produce 80% of the news in the world (Wen 2010). The Research Centre for International Public Opinion based at the Shanghai International Studies University also finds that of all the international reporting on the Beijing Olympic Games, only up to 30% was neutral or 'objective', and 70% was negative (Zhongguo guoji yuqing yanjiu zhongxing 2008).

Another research project surveyed coverage of China-related issues by four major US newspapers' (the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*) and found the reporting to be predominantly framed within the Cold War dichotomy, and mostly related to the issues surrounding China's position on Tibet and Taiwan (Zhou 2007). These are but a few examples from a plethora of research papers that drive home the overriding message that China has been robbed of its rightful discursive sovereignty and has no voice in a world dominated by the imperialistic media power of the West. Similar to the policy discussions in the domain of China's foreign policies, these research findings in the field of media and communication are often 'emotionally charged reactions to the seemingly endless provocations and bullying of the West' (Deng 2009, p. 65). They are motivated by a deep commitment to 'overcome humiliation, secure redress of past grievances, and achieve a position of equality with all other major powers' (Zhao 2009, p. 255).

It is somewhat ironic that much of this research is informed by communication studies perspectives and analytic frameworks that originate in the West. The anti-imperialistic thesis prominently advocated in the work of Western scholars such as Galtung and Ruge (1973) and Mattelart (1994) provide both intellectual inspiration and statistical evidence for China scholars (e.g. He 2013). Some draw on Marxist critical media scholars such as Vincent Mosco and on Noam Chomsky's critiques of the US media's 'manufacture of truth' in the service of the ideological and economic interests of major corporations (e.g. Yao 2007, Wang 2011). Many Chinese scholars have been trained in or have studied the discipline of media and communication in the US or at other Western universities. When it suits them, they are adept at applying communication theories, particularly with post-colonial perspectives, all of which were acquired in the West. These Western insights have not only provided intellectual ammunition for Chinese critiques of the West; they have also become sources of inspiration to the Chinese scholars in their wish to beat the West at its own game.

Of particular interest to Chinese scholars and policy makers is frame analysis, developed by Goffman (1974), and agenda-setting theory, initially articulated by the public opinion scholar Lippmann (1922). An example of how these analytic frameworks are applied can be found in the numerous scholarly analyses of the Western media's coverage of Tibet. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods and deploying a wide range of research techniques common to media and communication scholars, including textual analysis, critical discourse analysis and content analysis, researchers have presented ample statistics testifying to the 'biased', 'one-sided', and 'distorted' nature of Western reporting. These researchers (e.g. Zhao 2004, Wang 2011) have pointed to three reasons why China finds itself in a 'passive' position. First, the Dalai Lama and his supporters have extensively and actively promoted their side of the story in the West, successfully setting the agenda on this topic. Second, China has already been demonised by the West as a country with a problematic human rights record, and the West continues to gather and interpret human rights information against this unfavourable background. Third, Tibet may provide a convenient tool for nations and governments who may wish to promote a separatist movement in China.

Chinese policy makers and scholars alike believe that if the Chinese media become more proactive in framing and defining China's actions, and if they can attain a stronger position to set their own agenda, China will then be able to claim

what has been taken away: the right to speak in its own terms, to ‘talk back’, in its own voice, and tell its own story. A national-level research team funded by the central government writes:

In most cases, negative reporting on China comes from Western media. Our own media still does not know how to be pro-active in times of major events and unexpected happenings. More often than not, our propaganda does not kick in until the international media has pretty much put their own slant on the matter. Consequently, we find ourselves in a passive situation, having lost our discursive autonomy to speak on our own terms (National Image Research Team 2012, p. 215).

Although the Research Team may sound determined, the discursive position they adopt is in fact that of the weak one who has been wrongly treated. The quotation employs the discourse of grievance, not power. In other words, rather than aiming to become an imperialistic power, the discourse seeks to engage China in a struggle for decolonization. In pushing for this agenda, Chinese political and intellectual elites are drawing moral and intellectual strength from a number of sources. These range from the collective memory of the humiliation and subjugation China suffered at the hands of Western powers in the 19th and 20th centuries, to the anti-Western populist sentiment entertained by ‘nativists’ – a cohort of writers who are ‘populists, nationalists, and Marxists’ – the twin of the ‘new left’ (Shambaugh 2013, p. 27). The sources extend to the post-colonial critique of the West’s domination, especially its Orientalist framework, and finally, to the theoretical insights and research tools and methods from the field of critical media and communication studies in the West.

Conclusion

One can be tempted to dismiss Chinese literature in media and communication studies as lacking in critical insight, fuelled by nationalist sentiments and toeing the party line. There may be truth in all these perceptions. Yuezhi Zhao, a Canadian chair of political economy and a prominent communication scholar now based in Canada, points out that China’s pursuit of soft power and global communication is deeply ‘elitist, technocratic, and culturally essentialist’ (Zhao 2013, p. 17). In addition, it also becomes clear from this discussion that the public discourses behind the ‘going global’ policy are often contradictory and inconsistent, and are to be read as public dialogues and debates among intellectuals and policy-makers. While overtly critical and dismissive assessments of government initiatives are unlikely to be published in China, the government appears to welcome criticisms, as long as they are constructive comments intending to support the government’s initiatives.

As this discussion makes clear, the Chinese party-state is determined to contest the West’s dominance in the global mediasphere. While this may not surprise many in the West, and some have indeed felt threatened by it, its motivations may indeed surprise. Public diplomacy in China is driven less by an imperialistic desire to build ‘media empires’ (Barboza 2009) and ‘rule the world’s airwaves’ (Farrer 2011) as Western journalists suggest, and more by a feeling of grievance at being weakened by the imperialistic West. To put it another way, contrary to the West’s popular imagining, China’s current ‘going global’ mission is motivated by a desire to free itself from the West’s discursive hegemony, not a desire to dominate it. As correctly pointed out by Li Mingjiang, a Singapore-based expert on China’s soft power and

international relations, China's soft power is deployed for 'defensive purposes', aimed at building a better image of China (Li 2009b, p. 22).

Although China's public diplomacy and soft power language is relatively new, we can trace the historical genealogy of its evolution and recognise an intricate picture of shifts and continuity. Although all the public discourses reviewed here support the government's 'going global' project, at the same time they represent a cacophony of policy positions that point to unsettled historical debates, unresolved ideological tensions and ongoing contestation between various political and social forces. What is revealed is a constellation of moral and intellectual resources, diverse in intellectual origins and ideological principles. It is a cocktail of new and old, left and right, Chinese and Western.

It is also obvious from this account that the thinking behind China's 'going global' media policy is far from internally cohesive and well orchestrated. Guo Ke, a key researcher on international public opinion about China, remarks sharply that China still has 'no clue' (*wu tu* – literally meaning 'muddle-headed') about how effective its 'going global' strategy has been so far, despite having spent a substantial amount of money (Guo 2011, p. 37). This discussion drives home the fact that China's media globalization project is far from being a well oiled and monolithic propaganda machine acting in a well co-ordinated manner according to a clear blueprint that is masterminded by the top CCP leadership. In fact, Deng Xiaoping's famous advice for China's economic reforms – 'crossing the river by feeling the stones' – may be a more apt assessment. As Yuezhi Zhao observes, while the Chinese state is 'forged in the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist social revolution, with a historically grounded popular base of legitimacy' (Zhao 2008, p. 177), it is at the same time also a 'contradictory entity and a site of struggle between competing bureaucratic interests, divergent social forces, and different visions of Chinese modernity' (Zhao 2008, p. 11).

Of course, these policy discourses and positions may not resonate with those current in the West. And not all the strategies and techniques recommended end up being adopted by the Chinese government. Nevertheless, they present alternative points of reference from which we can assess, if not interrogate, the dominant popular imagining of China. What top leaders, propaganda bureaucrats, and intellectual elites in China say on this topic constitutes important public discourses. They tell us much about the cultural and philosophical beliefs, moral vision, and intellectual motivations that underscore China's 'going global' project. In other words, by suggesting that we take the statements of Chinese intellectuals seriously, we are not suggesting naively that the discrepancies outlined above will dissolve if each side – China and the West – is prepared and able to find out what the other is thinking and saying. Rather, it is to make the important point that knowing where the other side 'is coming from' constitutes the first step in engagement, and may lead to a more nuanced and less ethnocentric understanding of the other's hopes, ambitions, fears, and anxieties.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. There is a large and still growing literature in English on the topic of China's rise and the implications of its going global strategy. While it is not the focus of this paper, readers wishing to acquaint themselves with this body of work can refer to the extensive list of references compiled by Shambaugh (2013) in his Introduction chapter.
2. Again, see note 1. Also see Li (2009a).
3. Although not as significant as the literature produced by international relations specialists and political scientists, there is now a sizable body of English-language literature commenting on China's 'going global' strategies in the specific context of media and communication. See Sun (2014a) for an extensive list of these works.

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Pop-culture diplomacy in Japan: soft power, nation branding and the question of ‘international cultural exchange’

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This paper critically examines the development of what is known as ‘pop-culture diplomacy’ in Japan. In the postwar era, the country’s cultural diplomacy was propelled by the necessity to soften anti-Japan perceptions, notably in Southeast Asia. In the late 1980s, the popularity of Japanese media culture in Asia began to attract the attention of policy makers, while subsequent globalized practices of soft power and nation branding gave greater emphasis to the use of media culture to internationally enhance the image of the nation, which has meant the promotion of ‘pop-culture diplomacy’ and, more broadly, ‘Cool Japan’. It is argued that pop-culture diplomacy goes no further than a one-way projection and does not seriously engage with cross-border dialogue. The Japanese case also shows that pop-culture diplomacy hinders meaningful engagement with internal cultural diversity and suggests the necessity of taking domestic implications of cultural diplomacy seriously.

Keywords: pop-culture diplomacy; soft power; nation branding; Cool Japan; international cultural exchange; cultural diversity

Introduction

As argued in the introductory chapter of this special issue, cultural diplomacy *stricto sensu* should refer principally to governmental strategies for the attainment of ‘soft power’ through cultural means. While the scope of cultural diplomacy has been expanded, influenced by certain recent trends in ‘public diplomacy’, to place greater emphasis on the fostering of mutuality and cultural exchange (Holden 2013), strategies that focus upon projecting a selected national image by exporting appealing cultural products such as animation, TV programs, popular music, films and fashion, still occupy a central place in the efforts of Japan as well as other East Asian countries. The webpage of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), for example, states that MOFA engages in the development of cultural diplomacy in relation to the increasing significance of two diplomatic strategies, which are public diplomacy and soft power. Public diplomacy is defined as a diplomatic strategy to enhance international understanding of Japan’s position on various issues by acting directly on the people of foreign countries via effective publicity. The purpose of soft power, following the argument of Nye (2004), is to make people in other countries more receptive to Japan’s positions through the dissemination of the

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country's cultures and values. Traditional culture, language education, intellectual exchange and people-to-people exchange programs have been the key tools employed. However, the use of media culture has attracted even more attention among Japanese foreign policy makers since the late 1980s. In 2006, MOFA officially launched 'pop-culture diplomacy', declaring that it, in 'aiming to further the understanding and trust of Japan, is using pop-culture, in addition to traditional culture and art, as its primary tools for cultural diplomacy'.¹

This paper critically interrogates the progress of this more recent strand of Japanese cultural diplomacy by situating it in a wider context of the rise of policy concern with the uses of media culture that has been driven by the globalized exercise of soft power and nation branding. It will be argued that despite its emphasis on the promotion of international cultural exchange and dialogue, Japan's pop-culture diplomacy goes no further than a one-way projection of Japanese culture. While the introduction of Japanese media culture facilitates some understanding of Japan and intercultural exchange, pop-culture diplomacy does not seriously engage with the promotion of cross-border dialogue over historically constituted issues in East Asia. It also highlights crucial problems for the advancement of international projections of a unitary national image at the expense of engagement with cultural diversity within national borders. This also reminds us how important it is to take seriously the *domestic* implications of cultural diplomacy, particularly if the goal is to promote cultural exchange in a more cosmopolitan way and beyond the uncritical reinforcement of a homogenized and exclusive understanding of national culture.

The rise of pop-culture diplomacy

Although the notion of soft power has gained currency only in the last two decades, serious discussion regarding the uses of culture and media communication to enhance Japan's image in the international arena began as early as in the 1920s and 1930s, when Japan aspired to become an imperial and colonial power equivalent to Euro-American counterparts (Sato 2012). The country's defeat during the Second World War and the subsequent American occupation interrupted this discussion. In the 1960s, Japan's economic development brought these questions back dramatically to the international stage. A renewed cultural diplomacy policy began to be implemented in the 1970s when Japanese economic clout induced friction with the US and aroused anti-Japanese sentiments and movements in Southeast Asia. The Japanese government was urged to take action to soften the anti-Japan mood and emphasized the significance of promoting the international understanding of Japan through cultural exchange. As part of the so-called Fukuda Doctrine, the Japan Foundation was established in 1972 as an extra-departmental organization of MOFA and the improvement of the international image of Japan was pursued through the presentation of Japanese culture overseas.

While traditional cultural forms such as the tea ceremony and Kabuki as well as language education and human exchange programs such as The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), which started in 1987, were the main staples of cultural exchange, the potential of media culture for cultural diplomacy began to draw attention in the late 1980s. The growing popularity of Japanese TV programs in Asian countries demonstrated that Japan's colonial past did not prevent Japanese TV programs and pop idols from being accepted in East and Southeast Asia. Accordingly, a strong interest emerged in the capability of Japanese media culture

to improve Japan's reputation. In 1988, the Takeshita government for the first time established a discussion panel on international cultural exchange with a focus on the promotion of exporting TV programs to Asian countries. In 1991, the then MOFA and the then Ministry of Post and Telecommunications jointly established the Japan Media Communication Center (JAMCO) to provide subsidies to developing countries import Japanese TV programs.

An especially influential factor in this development was the far-reaching popularity of *Oshin*, the Japanese soap opera about the eventful life of Japanese women in the early twentieth-century, which was broadcast from April 1983 to March 1984 in Japan. The drama was distributed free of charge to many Asian countries as well as the Middle East and South America under the cultural exchange program of the Japan Foundation. Shown first in Singapore in 1984, *Oshin* was subsequently well-received in forty-six countries throughout the world.² The international popularity of *Oshin* prompted the distributor of the program, NHK International, to organize an international conference on *Oshin* and subsequently publish its proceedings in 1991. The Japan Foundation's monthly journal, *Kokusai Kōryū* (International Exchange) (volume 64, 1994), also explored the possibility of Japan's cultural interchange with Asia through media culture. It was argued that the popularity of *Oshin* in other Asian countries needed to be taken seriously, because those people who had so far known Japan only through 'culturally odorless' products (Iwabuchi 2002) such as cars, consumer technologies and animation had come to see the 'actual' faces and lives of Japanese people through TV drama (NHK International 1991). Apart from the questions of what is the 'real' Japan and how images of Japan are (in contradictory ways) consumed and received by audiences, the drama was praised as it testified to the capacity of media culture to enhance the international understanding of Japan in ways that were thought to overcome negative historical memories of Japanese colonialism as well as hostility regarding the country's economic exploitation of the region. Particularly significant in this respect was that *Oshin* cultivated among Asian viewers a sense of commonality between Japan and other Asian nations through the representation of common values such as perseverance, diligence, attachment to family and the common harsh experience of non-Western modernization. These factors were held responsible for the popularity of *Oshin* in other Asian countries and were seen to have engendered a positive change in the image of Japan in Asian countries.³

With rapid economic growth and the accompanied expansion of a middle-class youth culture in other Asian countries in the 1990s, increasing attention began to be paid to the great potential of Japanese TV programs and popular music in representing the contemporary urban life style of young people, and in enhancing Japan's image in Asia, particularly among younger people who had not experienced earlier Japanese imperialism. *Gaiko Forum*, a monthly journal of MOFA, featured articles that discussed the possibilities for advancement of international cultural exchange with the spread of Japanese media culture among young people in Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong (September 1994, November 1994). Honda (1994) stressed the cosmopolitan appeal embodied in Japanese media culture beyond hitherto prevailing traditional and oppressive images of Japan. With the rise of middle classes across Asia, Honda (1994, p. 77) argued that, '[t]he link that Japanese media culture now provides for ordinary young people from Tokyo to Singapore could foster dialogue on a scale and closeness never before achieved'.

The 1990s was the high point of the reception of Japanese TV dramas, popular music, animation and comic books, particularly in East and Southeast Asian countries. The favourable reception of Japanese media culture in Asia was something unexpected, as the local media industries and audiences in the different countries, not the Japanese media industries, had taken the initiative (Iwabuchi 2002). The locally driven spread of Japanese media culture further heightened the expectations among Japanese policy makers that hitherto unfavorable images of Japan would be improved and that unresolved historical issues would be smoothed over.

Soft power, nation branding and Cool Japan

Around the beginning of the present century, Japan's pop-culture diplomacy was firmly institutionalized with the 'Cool Japan' policy discourse, which sought to capitalize on the popularity of Japanese media culture in global markets (notably Euro-American markets). Among the coverage by Euro-American journalists of the increasing popularity of Japanese media culture, the most influential report coined the term 'Gross National Cool' or GNC and portrayed the rise of Japan as a global cultural superpower (McGray 2002). The article was swiftly translated into Japanese and prompted considerable excitement about Japan's strong cultural presence in the world in the context of the long Japanese economic slump since the mid-1990s. This had been accompanied by active policy discussion and increased export promotion of Japanese media culture in a more institutionally organized manner than before, leading to the adoption of pop-culture diplomacy by MOFA.

It should be noted that the development of pop-culture diplomacy, and more broadly 'Cool Japan', was propelled by the increasingly ubiquitous discourses of soft power and nation branding in the exercise of cultural policy. While first coined by Joseph Nye (1990) in the early 1990s post-cold-war context, the term 'soft power' became much more widely discussed in the new millennium in the wake of the Bush Administration's hardline policies especially after 9/11. Soft power was revisited in search for a more diplomatic approach to world security within the US (e.g. Nye 2004). More importantly, however, its revival coincided with the growing concern with nation branding, which has made the notion of soft power internationally appealing, albeit with some significant modifications. In Nye's argument (2004), media culture is simply one of three resources for heightening the soft power of the nation-state: the other two resources, namely respectful foreign policy and attractive democratic values, are considered even more crucial. However, the international appeal of media cultures has become the focal point for the notion of soft power in many cultural policy discussions. Many governments including Japan are interested in more expedient ways to use media culture to establish appealing images of the nation, smooth international political negotiations and boost the economy: in effect the soft power paradigm has actually been superseded by the imperatives of nation branding (Fan 2008). As international relations scholar van Ham (2001, pp. 3–4) argues, regarding the state's role in branding the nation in support of international political and economic objectives: 'Smart states are building their brands around reputations and attitudes in the same way smart companies do'. It is argued that since the late 1990s the management of the nation's image in the world has been developing to 'a strategically planned, holistic and coherent activity' by incorporating marketing techniques (Szondi 2008, p. 4). Following Fan (2010, p. 101), nation branding can be defined as 'a process by which a nation's images

can be created or altered, monitored, evaluated and proactively managed in order to enhance the country's reputation among a target international audience'. Emphasized here is a more pragmatic kind of manoeuvre for the administration of culture than Nye's soft power, which relies on and legitimizes the marketization of culture and sponsors the production and international projection of attractive media culture for the purpose of enhancing national reputation and economic profits. The globalization of the soft power discourse, combined with the techniques of nation branding, displaces a differentiation between public/cultural diplomacy and creative/content industries and puts the focus further on the projection of appealing images of a nation.

It is in this context that many Asian countries also became keen to promote their own cultural products and industries to internationally enhance the image of the nation. For instance, the South Korean government has sought to build on the sweeping popularity of South Korean media cultures known as the 'Korean Wave'. The Korean success stirred neighbouring countries including Japan to extend their cultural diplomacy activities, thereby contributing to the soft power competition that has been intensifying across the whole of East Asia in the twenty-first century (Chua 2012).

It was under the Koizumi government (2001–2006) that policy concern with the uses of media culture for enhancing national interests was firmly instituted. Koizumi was the first prime minister to refer to the advancement of cultural policy that aimed to promote media culture export and nation branding, stating in an address to the Diet that the government would strengthen the international projection of Japan's attractive brand images by advancing the content industries such as film, animation and fashion.⁴ Many committees focusing on the promotion of Japanese media culture were established, such as the Head Office for Intellectual Property Strategy (2002), the Committee for Tourism Nation (2003), the Committee for Info-communication Software (2003), the Research Committee for Content Business (2005), the J-Brand Initiative (2003), and the Council for the Promotion of International Exchange (2006). In the course of these developments, influenced by Euro-American rhetoric and practice, the expression 'Cool Japan' gained currency as an umbrella policy term to cover various areas of interest.⁵ The potential of media culture to generate an appealing international image was widely discussed by various ministries and government departments, leading to the implementation of policy. While there is still no single ministry that plans and implements a coherent cultural policy, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) took the lead in this domain by establishing the Cool Japan promotion office in June 2010. The Cabinet Secretariat set up 'the Council for the Promotion of Cool Japan' in 2013 and 50 billion yen was allocated in the national budget for infrastructure promoting Japanese content overseas to spread the charm of Japanese culture internationally (not only media contents but also aspects such as food, fashion, traditional craft and Japanese ways of life). This development suggests that a policy concern with the economic benefit of exporting media culture under the name of creative industries is growing. METI adopted the term 'creative industries' for the English translation of the Cool Japan promotion office.

While METI has been increasingly taking up the policy initiative of Cool Japan, MOFA has also been actively incorporating the idea into its public diplomacy program. Under the Koizumi government, MOFA integrated two distinct ministry sections devoted respectively to cultural diplomacy and international cultural

exchange and international publicity into a single Public Diplomacy Department in 2004. Public diplomacy was also for the first time officially adopted in the 2004 *Diplomatic Bluebook* and in 2006, MOFA officially adopted a policy of pop-culture diplomacy, which puts a clear emphasis on nation branding through the dissemination of Japanese media culture.

In 2006, the then Foreign Minister Aso (who became prime minister in 2008) gave a speech entitled 'A New Look at Cultural Diplomacy', addressing would-be creators learning creative skills related to the production of digital cultures at a creator training school, Digital Hollywood, near Akihabara. In this speech the Foreign Minister stressed the mounting significance of establishing the image of Cool Japan by disseminating media culture for the policy of cultural diplomacy: 'I think we can safely say that any kind of cultural diplomacy that fails to take advantage of pop culture is not really worthy of being called cultural diplomacy'.⁶ As Aso continued:

We want pop culture, which is so effective in penetrating throughout the general public, to be our ally in diplomacy ... one part of diplomacy lies in having a competitive brand image, so to speak. Now more than ever, it is impossible for this to stay entirely within the realm of the work of diplomats ... what we need to do now is to build on this foundation [the fact that Japan already has achieved a good image] and attract people of the world to Japanese culture, whether modern or that handed down from antiquity.⁷

2006 was also the year when the BBC World Service Poll included Japan for the first time in an international survey of countries' positive and negative influence in the world. Referring to that poll as well as to other UK surveys, Aso then boasted that Japan was among the most favourably perceived nations in the world,⁸ and went on to propose promote Japan's brand image further by exporting attractive Japanese media forms (especially manga and anime). Towards this goal, MOFA appointed the popular animation character, *Doraemon* as Anime Ambassador in 2008 and three young female fashion leaders as 'Ambassadors of Cute' to travel the world promoting Japanese culture. MOFA also began sponsoring the World Cosplay Summit in 2006, which is annually held in Japan. MOFA distinguishes itself from METI in its engagement with Cool Japan by emphasizing that the purpose of the promotion of Japanese media culture should not be reduced to market promotion only and that the enhancement of Japan's cultural standing in the world should take precedence. However, its pop-culture diplomacy is not fundamentally different from METI's economy-driven policies in that they both share the aspiration of boosting the nation's brand image though the promotion of Japanese media culture.

Cross-border dialogue: beyond one-way projection?

Soft power strategies have been critically examined through case studies of their actual operation (see Watanabe and McConnell 2008 for their examination of the Japan–US relationship). Whether and how nations can be successfully branded is open to question: judgments about how successfully nation brands are conveyed by internationally disseminating media culture are very difficult to make (Fan 2010, Anholt 2013). Also, officials in diverse state ministries, public relations advisory organizations, and media and cultural industries involved in branding programs

bring diverse intentions and approaches to it, with all the resultant potential for incoherent and contradictory policy actions (Aronczyk 2013). The effectiveness of pop-culture diplomacy and the Cool Japan policy in selling more Japanese cultural products and enhancing certain national images, as policy-makers contend, is even more dubious. Japan's pop-culture diplomacy policy has been criticized for the fact that it does not clearly articulate specific goals (e.g. Watanabe 2011, p. 191).

This line of critique is concerned with the ambiguity of the objective of pop-culture diplomacy to enhance the nation's brand images as well as its lack of effectiveness. Even more significant is the question of whether it can achieve a crucial objective of cultural diplomacy, that is, the promotion of genuine international cultural exchange. As Fan points, 'The world is increasingly like a gigantic stage on which nations are competing against each other for attention and affection. Nation branding holds the key to win this global "beauty contest"' (2008, p. 16). Japan's pop-culture diplomacy is not free from this trend. Driven by the globalization of soft power policy in tandem with the exercise of nation branding, a one-way projection of appealing Japanese culture has become the main operation of pop-culture diplomacy. This is not to underestimate the potential of media culture to enhance mutual understanding and cross-border dialogue. The spread of Japanese media culture in East and Southeast Asia, and multilateral intra-Asian media culture flows in the last two decades have engendered unprecedented cross-border connections among people in the region. Many studies show how increased media connection in Asia has encouraged people to critically and self-reflexively reconsider their own life, society and culture as well as socio-historically constituted relations and perceptions with others (e.g. Iwabuchi 2002, 2004). Exposure to the media culture of Japan can enhance the understanding of culture and society in Japan, even if in a one-way manner. However, there is no guarantee that this understanding will evolve beyond the individualized pleasure of media consumption. Indifference, othering and antagonism might also be generated by the spread of Japanese media culture. Extra efforts and tactics are needed to direct cross-border connections into pathways of mutuality and exchange, as recent discussions of cultural diplomacy underscore (Holden 2013).

It is claimed in a Japanese policy statement assessing cultural diplomacy that the advancement of international cultural exchange, rather than the uses of hard military power, will be key to the creation of a peaceful world where cultural diversity is mutually respected, and celebrated and multilateral understanding and dialogue promoted.⁹ While international exchange and dialogue is emphasized, pop-culture diplomacy does not necessarily entail a sincere commitment to these values. A case in point is the stance toward the unresolved historical issues of Japanese colonialism and imperialism in other East Asian countries, especially China and South Korea. In the above-mentioned speech hailing Japan's status as the second most favorably perceived country in the 2006 BBC survey, Aso did not mention the fact that the survey also reported that two countries – China and South Korea – showed very negative perceptions of Japan. This reaction was driven by the contradictory practices of the Koizumi government: while on the one hand emphasizing the importance of widely disseminating Japanese media cultures for the purpose of establishing harmonious relations with other countries, Prime Minister Koizumi's relentless official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine added fuel to the flames of anti-Japanese sentiment in China and South Korea over issues such as history textbooks and long-standing territorial disputes. Even Nye (2005) criticized Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine

for their damaging effect on Japan's soft power. The Japanese government has thus dealt with historical and territorial issues in East Asia in a manner that is at odds with the advancement of international dialogue, diminishing the possibilities for warmer relations with neighboring countries.

As pointed out, the standard Japanese idea of pop-culture diplomacy tends to rely on naïve assumptions about media culture's capacity to improve Japan's reputation abroad, and to transcend the problematic and historically constituted relations between Japan and other Asian countries. With the intensification of anti-Japanese demonstrations in China and South Korea, the spread of Japanese media culture has been expected to efface lingering antagonistic sentiments. When Aso was appointed Foreign Minister in 2005, he said to reporters that Japan's relationship with China should be unproblematic inasmuch as Japanese pop culture such as animation was advancing cultural exchange between the two countries.¹⁰ The 2005 White Paper produced by Japan's Economic and Trade Ministry clearly stated that 'without the spread of Japanese pop culture, anti-Japanese sentiment would have been stronger in South Korea'. The assumption is that South Korean young people who like to consume Japanese media culture will feel more tolerant towards the history of Japan's colonial rule, and thus increased exports of media culture to Asian markets automatically facilitate Japan's public diplomacy outcomes. However, the reality is far more complex than such reasoning suggests. In South Korea and China, many of those who are happy to consume Japanese media culture actually consider historical issues separately and critically. In field research conducted in Beijing in October 2005, I observed that young people in China could simultaneously maintain that 'I really like Japanese animation, it is my favourite', and 'I am very concerned with what happened between Japan and my country in the past'. A sympathetic reception of Japanese media cultures might positively change images of contemporary Japan, but it neither erases the past nor people's memories of it. Historical issues need to be tackled sensibly, continuously and on their own terms. Let me reiterate that this is not to deny a widely observed fact that transnational circulation of media culture in East Asia has facilitated mutual understandings and mediated exchange in an unmatched manner (Iwabuchi 2002). If we take this potential seriously, however, cultural policy should aim to further facilitate already occurring cross-border connections including citizens' possibly conflict-laden dialogues, without opportunistically assuming that media culture has the dreamlike capacity to transcend historical issues. Such a cultural diplomacy strategy would seek to advance international cultural exchange through a sincere engagement with what Morris-Suzuki (2005) calls 'historical truthfulness', cultivated by encouraging people to self-reflexively revisit their views of the past and to exchange them with others.

The historically constituted antagonisms with the two countries over territorial disputes and 'comfort women' have actually been worsening in recent years. We have observed the growing vicious circle of (cyber) nationalism and jingoism in East Asia (see e.g. Sakamoto 2011, Kim 2014). However there is no prospect of policy interventions to promote cross-border dialogue with China and South Korea and to effectively tackle the inter-Asian jingoism. Instead, there has been more increased public diplomacy activity with the aim of publicizing Japan's positions on matters such as territorial disputes, and more strongly asserting Japan's international presence.¹¹ With the growing currency of METI-driven Cool Japan policy, MOFA has also officially announced support for the Cool Japan policy, emphasizing its diplomatic significance beyond economic interests. While

pop-culture diplomacy is still one of the main policy actions of cultural exchange, however, MOFA puts more emphasis on public diplomacy, having established a Public Diplomacy Strategy Division in 2012, which integrates three sections dedicated to press responses, publicity and cultural exchange. Japan's changing relationship with China and South Korea reflects its concern with the substantial rise of their political, economic and cultural powers. Their rising soft power profile in terms of media culture circulation, overseas language education and tourism has accompanied the relative decline of Japan's presence in the international arena. China and South Korea are now not so much the main targets of pop-culture diplomacy as they are tough rivals in the soft power and public diplomacy competition.

International cultural exchange and cultural diversity within Japan

In addition to the absence of sincere commitment to the advancement of cross-border dialogue over historical issues in East Asia, we also need to critically consider the domestic implications of pop-culture diplomacy. The policy initiative of projecting the nation's brand images in the world has a drawback in terms of the engagement with cultural diversity within national borders. Mutual respect for cultural diversity and international cultural exchange is claimed as an objective of cultural diplomacy in Japan. However, what it promotes is a nation-based cultural exchange and projection of cultural diversity in a totalizing form. It makes the question of who is excluded and whose voices are suppressed in society irrelevant and further hinders paying due attention to marginalized voices and multicultural questions within Japan.

A notable case in point is NHK World, recognized as one of the most important international platforms to publicize the perspectives of the Japanese government, as well as to introduce the attractions of Japanese culture. In early 2006, the expansion of international broadcasting services had begun to be discussed in Japan, and the services commenced in February 2009 with the purpose of enhancing Japan's national image in the world for the promotion of political and economic interests as a key strategy of public diplomacy. However, discussion of the service first started when foreign nationals residing in Japan requested then Prime Minister Koizumi to diversify the Japanese broadcasting service to include people of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds who were residing in Japan. But, in a Cabinet meeting a few days later, the question of the broadcasting system's public responsibility to provide due service to citizens of diverse backgrounds was shifted towards the development of an English-language international broadcasting service for the purpose of the enhancing national images and conveying the opinions of the Japanese government to the world. This case clearly shows how the growing concern with cultural diplomacy and nation branding suppressed a vital cultural policy engagement with cultural diversity within Japan.

It should also be noted that cultural diplomacy maneuvered in conjunction with nation branding is not only directed externally, but also internally, as a tool for inculcating a narrative of the nation and a sense of national belonging. Nation branding domestically mobilizes citizens, who are encouraged to join in it as 'representatives, stakeholders and customers' of the brand: 'Citizens are called upon to "live the brand" and hence to act and think in ways that are well suited to the general contours of the national brand' (Varga 2014, p. 836). People are thus invited to perform as ambassadors for the nation branding campaign. This was apparent with

the appointment of the ‘Ambassador of Cute’, and with Aso’s call for the help of ‘would-be-creators’ and for active participants in further enhancing the ‘Japan brand’ to successfully push forward cultural diplomacy. Whether such an invitation is really embraced is questionable, but the internal projection of nation’s brand images is very much related to the exclusionary reconstruction of national identity. The growing interest in nation branding pushes the re-articulation of selective narratives, symbolic meanings and widely recognized stereotypical images of the nation in search of the distinctive cultural assets of the nation and the re-demarkation of ‘core’ national culture to be appealingly projected. And these representations of the nation are also internally projected towards domestic public (Kaneva 2011, Volcic and Andrejevic 2011, Aronczyk 2013, Varga 2014). As Jansen (2008, p. 122) argued, ‘Branding not only explains nations to the world but also reinterprets national identity in market terms and provides new narratives for domestic consumption’.

The Japan country report of the EU’s recent *Preparatory Action ‘Culture in the EU’s external relations* points out that Japan’s public/cultural diplomacy and the Cool Japan policy aims to ‘enhance awareness of the “uniqueness” of Japan’ (Fisher 2014, p. 3) by taking ‘an approach which is based on Japan’s portrayal of itself as ethnically and linguistically homogeneous and culturally unique’ (p. 4). In explicating the global popularity of animation and otaku culture of Japan, it is often claimed that the Japanese inherited a certain national cultural essence from pre-modern Japan and the necessity of re-evaluating Japanese traditional cultural sensitivities and aesthetics is proposed in order to further promote Cool Japan and enhance Japan’s soft power (e.g. Okuno 2007). A growing interest in promoting Japanese products in the world also instigates racialized discourses of national culture and its ownership that confirm the nation’s distinctive cultural aesthetics, styles and tastes, using the metaphor of ‘cultural gene’ or ‘cultural DNA’.¹² One policy-maker of the ‘Japan Brand project’ states that it is necessary to revisit ‘Japan’ and consider how to properly discern Japanese cultural DNA and strategically standardize it so as to successfully input it into Japanese products and services.¹³ It can be argued that such a representation of the nation is superficial and ahistorical, lacking substantial depth and coherence. And there is no guarantee that it succeeds in people’s identification with that particular national narrative. Nevertheless, its role in the dissemination of an exclusive conception of the nation as cultural entity should not be discounted, particularly when it occludes socio-cultural differences and disavows their existence as constitutive of the nation (Kaneva 2011, Aronczyk 2013). Indigenous groups’ traditional culture or promotion of tokenized multicultural commodities might be occasionally included insofar as it is considered useful for the international projection of the nation’s image, but there is not much space for non-useful kinds of socially and culturally marginalized voices within the nation.

This exclusionary re-demarkation of ‘Japan’ is also driven by the promotion of a particular kind of international cultural exchange and an accompanying conception of cultural diversity. The globalization of soft power and nation branding has given rise to the institutionalization of international arenas in which a one-way projection of national cultures and brand images is *mutually* exhibited, consumed, evaluated and competed, with the substantial expansion of international mediated spectacles and cultural events (see Roche 2000, Urry 2003). The growth of the pervasive ‘global beauty contest’ of nations works to confirm that the nation is the

most meaningful form of collective identification and the primary unit of international cultural exchange. (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 176) argues that ‘the mundane practices of nation branding do serve to perpetuate the nation form ... Because they perpetuate a conversation about what the nation is *for* in a global context’. This development has not just propagated the idea among the populace that the promotion of nation branding should be taken seriously as it is of grave importance for the national interest,¹⁴ but has also reinforced a national outlook, which prompts people take for granted the idea of ‘the global as the maximum intensification of the national’ (Beck 2006, p. 29), whereby cultural diversity is understood and promoted as a value that applies only among nation-states, or between the Japanese and others.

This kind of conception of international cultural exchange and cultural diversity that is embraced in pop-culture diplomacy overshadows the engagement with the growing multicultural situation in Japan. Japanese policy makers belatedly began discussing this topic in 2005 when the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications established the Committee for the Promotion of Multicultural Co-living (*tabunka kyousei*). Yet multiculturalism policy is still seriously underdeveloped, in sharp contrast to the rapid development of pop-culture diplomacy and Cool Japan. A primary problem is that the Multicultural Co-living policy discussion aims to principally deal with foreign nationals living in Japan (most of whom are recent immigrants) by keeping intact the rigid boundary between ‘Japanese’ and ‘foreigners’ and disregarding long-time citizens with diverse cultural backgrounds (such as those of Korean descent). Through a bi-polarized conception of ‘Japanese’ and ‘foreigners’, the engagement with cultural diversity within Japan tends to be sidestepped by the advancement of international cultural exchange between ‘Japanese’ and ‘foreigners’.¹⁵ In this regard, the challenge of living together is co-opted by pop-culture diplomacy aspirations. The dissemination of attractive Japanese cultures is supposed to promote international cultural exchange, but it generally extends only to the one-way encouragement of foreigners to deepen their appreciation of Japan. It is also expected that the introduction of Japan’s cool culture will incite their interest in visiting, travelling and staying in Japan. And this is occasionally regarded as a type of international cultural exchange to be facilitated by multicultural co-living programs promoted by local governments and universities.¹⁶ This conception of international cultural exchange and cultural diversity that the pop-culture diplomacy and the Cool Japan policy underscore works to discount the attention given to existing cultural diversity within Japan. It calls to mind Said’s seminal argument (1978) about how the dichotomized construction of culturally coherent entities exerts symbolic violence on the dynamic and culturally diverse reality of human society.

Conclusion

I have argued that the rise of Japanese pop-culture diplomacy does not fulfill its stated objective to bring about the deepening of cultural exchange. There have been promising signs that trans-Asian media and culture flows facilitate mutual understanding and mediated interaction at the grassroots level. Yet, if their full potential is to be exploited, pop-culture diplomacy should broaden its aspirations. It should develop, for example, a pedagogical design that makes better use of media culture towards the advancement of transnational connections in ways that promote

self-reflexive international conversation on the growing antagonism over historical issues and enhance intercultural understanding of cultural diversity within each society. The issue is not limited to Japan of course, given that the international projection of appealing media culture has become prevalent elsewhere, with the intensification of soft power rivalry driven by the globalized exercise of nation branding. Recent trends at the forefront of cultural diplomacy place more emphasis on the fostering of reciprocal and collaborative engagement (Holden 2013), highlighting the need to interact with internal publics as well as external audiences. To advance cross-border dialogue, cultural diplomacy should not just engage with the promotion of people-to-people exchange and mutual understanding but also the development of ‘domestic cultural diplomacy’ that encourages the national populace to learn about and listen to others rather than merely project an idea of itself (Holden 2013, p. 11). Learning about others, however, should not be based on the dichotomized conception of ‘us’ and ‘them’. It should go beyond a pre-defined framework of knowing about ‘us’ and ‘them’ to reflexively rethink why and how ‘us’ has been perceived in a particular way that does not embrace ‘them’ as being with and part of ‘us’. Cross-border dialogue elucidates what remains unknown about ‘us’ as well as about ‘them’ in terms of historical narratives and the diverse composition of the nation. Paying critical attention to domestic cultural diplomacy problematizes exclusive constructions of the nation. This is not to reject the relevance of cultural diplomacy in serving the national interest. But the the scope of the national interest needs to be expanded, however, beyond the pursuit of narrowly focused economic and political goals, advancing cultural exchange in a more open, dialogic and cosmopolitan way to tackle various issues of a globalized world such as complex cultural flows and connections, historically constituted international relations, and the growing cultural diversity within national borders.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. MOFA’s official webpage: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/pop/>.
2. Its ratings in many non-Western countries were much better than those of American TV dramas such as *Dallas* or *Dynasty* (Lull 1991, Singhal and Udornpim 1997).
3. *Oshin* narrates modern Japanese history from a woman’s perspective. Japan’s past is represented mostly in terms of a pacifist woman’s experience of overcoming suffering caused by the war (Morris-Suzuki 1998, pp. 134–135). The representation of Japan’s gendered past proves to be useful for the purpose of rendering the more troublesome aspects of Japanese modern history irrelevant.
4. Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s Policy Address at the National Diet, 20 January 2005.
5. A TV program titled ‘Cool Japan’ (NHK BS2) also started in 2006.
6. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fin/aso/speech0604-2.html>.
7. Aso Taro, ‘A New Look at Cultural Diplomacy: A Call to Japan’s Cultural Practitioners’. Speech made at Digital Hollywood University, Tokyo, 28 April, 2006.
8. Country Rating Poll 2006: http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc06-3/index.html.
9. *Bunka gaiko no suishin ni kasuru kondankai houkokusho* (A report by the Discussion Group on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy), July 2005.

10. http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/kaiken/gaisho/g_0510.html#13-B.
11. http://www.kokusai-senryaku.ynu.ac.jp/sympo/pdf/20130125/09_saiki.pdf.
12. For the South Korean case, Cho (2011); for the Japanese case, see, for example, [www.kanto.meti.go.jp/seisaku/uec ... /lec01_kouen_22fy.pdf](http://www.kanto.meti.go.jp/seisaku/uec.../lec01_kouen_22fy.pdf).
13. E.g., http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/hiromi_ito2002jp/57705983.html; www.kanto.meti.go.jp/seisaku/uec.../lec01_kouen_22fy.pdf.
14. A 2010 survey on what aspects of Japan people are proud of showed that 90% of respondents in their 20s and 80% of those in their 30s stated that they were proud of Japanese animation and computer games. See 'Poll: 95% Fear for Japan's Future' (12 June 2010, <http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201006110455.html>). This result suggests a widely infused perception that they are key Japanese culture for the enhancement of soft power.
15. This point is closely related to the fact that multicultural co-living has been developed as an extension of 'local internationalization' policy in the 1990s, by which the national government aimed to support local governments in accommodating the increasing number of foreigners staying and living in their constituency with a stated aim of smoothing international cultural exchange within Japan (see Iwabuchi 2015).
16. For example, see Kanazawa municipal government's project of revitalization of the city: <http://www4.city.kanazawa.lg.jp/11001/shiminkikou/shiminnkikou9/bosyuu.html>. As for a university curriculum: <http://info.bgu.ac.jp/faculty/foreign/english-education/>.

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Contemporary cultural diplomacy in South Korea: explicit and implicit approaches

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This paper argues that in the case of Korea, cultural diplomacy (CD) has been explicitly implemented in a top-down and unilateral approach by government to enhance national prestige abroad, underpinned by the institutional legacy of a 'developmental state' model of governance. Yet, an implicit approach has also emerged, associated with capacity building of the domestic cultural industries through promoting 'international cultural exchange'. Whilst the top-down unilateral approach has persisted, a disarray of policy rhetoric and institutional fragmentation surrounding CD, as well as the blurring of cultural industries development policy with the CD agenda has led to gradual convergence of both explicit and implicit approaches.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; cultural policy; implicit cultural policy; Korean Wave

Introduction

As pointed out in the introductory article of this special issue, cultural diplomacy (CD) is inevitably underpinned by an instrumental application of culture by governmental actors for the advancement of various national interests. In other words, culture here is being used as a resource (Yúdice 2003): as a source of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984) and soft power (Nye 2004). In this sense, Isar provided an apt starting point to approaching CD as a process of 'state actors engaging in accrual of symbolic capital in the international economy of cultural prestige through exercising cultural policy as display' (Isar 2010). As such, CD as a form of contemporary diplomacy involving the process of construction and representation of national identity (Pigman 2010), requires a more nuanced examination of its instrumentality (Nisbett 2013).

While the field has attracted a great deal of attention in the recent decade, particularly in North America and Western Europe, critical inquiry into the role of regional and governmental contexts in shaping contemporary CD is lacking, particularly in Asia. The dominant post-industrial countries have been at the forefront of deploying their national culture and values in support of their economic and foreign policy objectives, a practice which has intensified as a result of proliferation of 'soft power' discourses, and of the development of information and communication technology (Feigenbaum 2001, Schneider 2003, Nye 2010). However, the

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rising economic might of East Asia and the transition to value-added production have made CD increasingly important for Asian countries in expanding their spheres of geopolitical and global influence. This paper examines the development of contemporary CD in South Korea (hereafter Korea). The ways in which this has occurred may well indicate relevant pathways for other 'emerging' nations.

Over the past thirty years, Korea has traversed a steep ascent to its current position as one of the world's largest economies through rapid export-oriented industrialization, coupled with a peaceful transition to a liberal democracy. Yet, while undoubtedly having become a global player in the international economy, Korea's standing in the global economy of prestige has remained vague and overlooked. Foreign publics in the West, generally indifferent, continue to associate Korea with images of poverty, instability, and the nuclear provocations of North Korea (Kim 2011b, Kinsey and Chung 2013). At the same time, since the late 1990s, neighbouring countries began to recognize Korea with the success of its pop-culture, known as the 'Korean Wave' (*Hallyu*) (Korea Culture and Information Service [KOCIS] 2011). These opposing perceptions have posed both a challenge and opportunity for the Korean government, and have reinforced the notion that CD is integral to narrowing the 'gap between reality and image' (Kinsey and Chung 2013).

The recent salience of CD in Korea is reflected in a report titled *Cultural Diplomacy Manual*, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) in 2010. Despite the view of CD as a peripheral activity of government even until 10 years ago, Foreign Affairs Minister Yoo Myung-hwan stated in the report that, 'along with diplomatic efforts focused on national defense in the 1980s and the economy and trade in the 1990s, culture will be the third pillar of diplomatic power in the twenty-first century' (MOFAT 2010, p. 3). Although CD has garnered significant attention in Korea over the past decade, both in terms of policy rhetoric and the allocation of resources directly and indirectly, the conceptual and pragmatic framework continues to be fragmented and ambiguous (Korea Culture and Tourism Institute [KCTI] 2004, Arts Council Korea [ARKO] 2007, 2010, Hong 2011, Kim 2012).

The evolution of CD in Korea can also be captured in the light of Ahearne's distinction between explicit, or nominal cultural policies, and implicit, or effective cultural policies, that 'work to prescribe or shape cultural attitudes and habits over given territories' (Ahearne 2009, p. 141). Ahearne notes that his distinction is not intended to simply stand in for existing oppositions such as governmental/commercial, private/public etc. but should be more dynamic in its use. In this case the explicit/implicit distinction is suggestive in examining a complicated layering of discontinuous policy strands associated with CD in Korea. These strands will be taken up below.

CD may also be framed as 'cultural policy as display' (Williams 1984 cited in Isar 2010), but this is not without some ambiguity regarding its location along the explicit-implicit spectrum. McGuigan (2004) aligns the understanding of 'display' functions with the 'implicit' pole of cultural policy, as it does not always pertain to cultural policy explicitly. On the other hand, Throsby (2009) notes that CD can be viewed as an explicit cultural policy that is administered through the ministry of foreign affairs, while Singh (2010, p. 12) has viewed it as 'an explicit cultural policy instrument'. This paper argues that in the case of Korea, CD as an explicit practice has been implemented as a top-down and unilateral approach by government to

enhance national prestige abroad, underpinned by the institutional legacy of a 'developmental state' model of governance. Yet, in conjunction, an implicit approach has also emerged, associated with the capacity building of domestic cultural industries. Whilst a top-down unilateral approach has persisted, a disarray of policy rhetoric surrounding CD, and the blurring of cultural industries development policy with CD has reflected the gradual convergence of explicit and implicit approaches.

Institutionalization of CD: from state-led modernization to globalization

Broadly speaking, CD has been institutionalized by the government as a top-down, unilateral approach at enhancing national prestige. This was rooted in the institutional legacy of Korea's adoption of the 'developmental state model' to drive rapid industrialization. Following the Korean War (1950–1953), Korea went through a period of authoritarian military dictatorship under President Park Chung-hee (1961–1979). Park prioritized economic development through state-led, export-oriented industrialization under the banner of 'Modernization of the Motherland' (Minns 2001, Chu 2009, Lee and Han 2000). The developmental state model, based on strong state intervention led by extensive regulation and macroeconomic planning, affected all policy fields, including the arts and culture, as the 'state became its biggest resource provider, planner and coordinator' (Chu 2009, Lee 2013).

The adoption of culture as an object of strict government control within an explicit cultural policy framework meant that CD became a form of public relations and propaganda both domestically and abroad. It served the broad political agenda of 'national modernization', legitimizing the regime and redressing the impact on the national sense of self after the Japanese colonial occupation (1910–1945), fostering domestic cultural nationalism, and pursuing ideological warfare against North Korea (Oh 1998, Chun 2000). Explicit cultural policy under Park adopted a deliberate strategy of aligning national culture with traditional culture and fostering ethnic and cultural nationalism as means to enhance national cohesion and unity (Oh 1998, Chun 2000, Yim 2002, Lee 2013). This dual agenda was reflected in two prominent overseas manifestations sponsored by the government during this period: '5000 Years of Korean Art' (1976, 1978) showcasing traditional cultural artifacts from the collections of the National Museum of Korea, and robust promotion of Korea *Gugak* Center (Traditional Performing Arts Group) tours across Asia, US and Europe (totaling 20 tours from 1964 to 1979) (Cho 2008).

The state-led construction of national cultural identity domestically and its representation abroad through unilateral PR initiatives were mutually reinforced through institutional restructuring as well. In 1968, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Public Information were officially merged to establish the Ministry of Culture and Public Information (MCPI), combining external public information and domestic cultural development functions. This dual institutional framework provided a basis for the government's interventionist approach throughout the subsequent period. Through MCPI, Park's government exercised tight control over the construction of national culture domestically and abroad through a unilateral public information (*gongbo*) policy; it also exercised heavy regulation of information and media flows through censorship. The scope of this censorship and regulation included culture, arts, public opinion, media and broadcasting. In this context, the term CD was first explicitly introduced in the Executive White Paper (*Hangjeongbaekseo*) in 1964 as a subset of foreign propaganda (MOFAT 2009).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, Korea went through a historic democratic transition, with the election of President Roh Tae-woo in 1987 and the first civilian President Kim Young-sam in 1993. This transition signified a critical juncture for cultural policy discourses as well; notably neo-liberalization of public policies and deregulation of the cultural sector. The government's conception of culture shifted from an object of state control underpinned by ideological and political propaganda to an autonomous sector in dire need of capacity development. In turn, the MCPI was separated into two agencies, the Ministry of Culture and the Bureau of Public Information in 1990.

Furthermore, following on from the previous imperative of 'Modernizing the Motherland', the government responded to the new challenge of increasing national competitiveness in a rapidly interconnected and global market economy under the banner of globalization (*seggyehwa*). Gi-wook Shin (2003) aptly contextualizes the emergence of the official *seggyehwa* agenda under President Kim Young-sam (1993–1998) as a 'product of policy makers' growing recognition of globalization as a major source of external pressure in the post-Cold War era, and as means to obtaining a competitive edge for the nation' (Shin 2003, p. 10). The term *seggyehwa* came to be loosely deployed over the following two decades to identify broader governmental efforts in enhancing Korea's global competitiveness in general, ranging from the promotion of cities to traditional Korean food.¹

Despite this rapidly evolving domestic and external context, the government's institutional approach to CD generally retained some consistency. CD as an explicit practice persisted throughout the subsequent period as a state-led means of raising the profile of cultural representations of Korea abroad and enhancing Korea's status as a 'cultural state'²: the explicit yet broad objectives framed under the *seggyehwa* agenda served as a general paradigm for Korean CD. But eventually the proliferation of new cultural policy initiatives would lead to CD becoming increasingly elusive.

Explicit CD and the globalization agenda

The advancement of the *seggyehwa* agenda was coupled with an increasing emphasis on the evolving implications of foreign perceptions of Korea. Thus CD as an explicit practice has continued as a means to enhance the national image (Chung 1994). In 1997, the Ministry of Culture and Sports (MCS) established the 'Top Ten Symbols of Korean Culture', based on a report commissioned in 1996 entitled the 'Korean Cultural Identity Selection and Utilization Strategy' (MCS 1996). The report was based on a survey targeting foreigners residing in Korea in order to identify prominent cultural representations of Korea's national image based on the following criteria: 'Representable and Distinguishable'; 'Simplicity and Visibility'; 'Popularity and Recognition'; 'Friendliness'; 'Usability for Public Relation'; 'Familiarity' (MCS 1996). The top ten symbols of Korean national culture proposed by the MCS were the following:

- Hanbok* (traditional Korean outfit);
- Hangul* (Korean characters);
- Kimchi* and *Bulgogi* (traditional food);
- Bulguksa* and *Sukgulam* (Buddhist temples);
- Taekwondo;

Koryeo Insam (Ginseng);
Tal Choom (Traditional Mask Dance);
Jongmyo (Royal Ancestral Shrine);
Seollak Mountain;
Korean Artists of international calibre.

These ‘Top 10 National Cultural Symbols’ were then robustly promoted through unilateral PR activities through official overseas governmental channels: Korean Culture and Information Service, Government Information Agency, and embassies. Thousands of pictorial image books, publications, audio visual CDs, DVDs, and postcards were distributed abroad through these channels to raise the profile of Korea through these cultural symbols (MCT 2005a). Evidently, this unilateral approach did not deviate in messaging or outcome from the previous era.

The early 2000s marked another critical juncture in explicit CD, shifting the language surrounding self-perceptions of national cultural identity and its associated foreign perceptions amongst policy makers. By 2001, Korea had successfully recovered from the 1997 Asian financial crisis by paying off its debt to the International Monetary Fund ahead of schedule. Moreover, Korea successfully co-hosted the 2002 World Cup, and demonstrated perhaps the highest degree of national cohesion in its modern history. In turn, policy makers determined yet again that Korea’s national image would require a substantial update to better reflect the recent achievements, specifically identifying the 2002 World Cup as an opportunity to ‘upgrade the national image’ (Yoo 2008, p. 162).

In turn, a wide array of governmental agencies was established for ‘enhancing the national image’. Most notably, a centralized agency called the National Image Committee was established in 2002 with the Prime Minister as the chair. While private sector advisory members were included, they were appointed by the governmental members: the initiative was clearly driven by government. However, there was no marked improvement of Korea’s inadequate national image abroad despite robust institutional rhetoric.

Rather than abandoning the unilateral approach altogether, the blame was instead placed on the ‘Top ten cultural symbols’: these were said to be outdated and ineffective in enhancing the national image (Ministry of Culture and Tourism [MCT] 2005a). In turn, during President Roh Moo-hyun’s administration (2003–2008), the ministry attempted to remedy the situation by broadening the national culture symbols. As a result, a total of 100 national (*minjok*) culture symbols encompassing both traditional and modern culture were established to represent the ‘national cultural DNA’ (KCTI 2006). The aim was to ‘drive modern succession of traditional culture and establish a foundation for it to produce added value’ (MCT 2005b).

This expansion of the spectrum of representations of national culture persisted through President Lee Myung-bak’s administration (2008–2013), largely through recourse to the notion of ‘nation brand’. In 2008, Korea ranked 33rd in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index, despite having become the 15th largest economy in the world: government officials were concerned that such a low ranking could diminish not only the value of Korean products abroad, but the national competitiveness of Korea in general (Joo 2011, Kinsey and Chung 2013). In response to the persisting problem of South Korea’s image, Lee disbanded the National Image Committee and established the Presidential Council on Nation

Branding in 2008, reflecting a deeper appreciation for the economic implications of foreign perceptions. While the explicit practice of CD continued as a unilateral, top-down government initiative with a questionable track record of success, an implicit approach to CD emerged through capacity building initiatives of the Korean cultural sector.

Cultural industries development as implicit CD

In conjunction with top-down explicit approaches, an implicit approach to CD has also emerged over the last two decades. Accrual of symbolic capital in the international economy of cultural prestige has been implicitly sought through capacity building of the domestic cultural sector and through promoting ‘international cultural exchange’. Various institutional actors appropriated and reframed the policy space of international cultural exchange. This occurred both within and outside of governmental remit, and resulted in CD becoming more implicit.

This development was initially shaped in conjunction with the promotion of international exchange through Korean artists and cultural organizations abroad as an aspect of domestic cultural sector capacity building noted in the first *Arts and Culture Development Five Year Plan* (1974–1978). Subsequently, in major cultural policy plans and documents published by the government the term ‘international cultural exchange’ has consistently appeared as an integral aspect of domestic cultural capacity building. Annual *Cultural Policy White Papers* published by the Ministry of Culture between 1993 and 2012 all contained a chapter on ‘international exchange’. Yet the implementation and scope of ‘international exchange’ were left open to flexible interpretation by subsequent administrations. Also, in its initial institutionalization process, the distinction between ‘international cultural exchange’ and ‘CD’ was minimal, as both were situated under the domain of MCPI under the Park regime. However, a divergence between ‘international cultural exchange’ and ‘CD’ agendas began to gradually take shape through significant shifts in cultural policy discourses underpinned by the transition to liberal democracy in the early 1990s.

The neo-liberal turn in cultural policy in particular has shaped increasingly instrumental framing of CD’s economic purposes. The increasing recognition of the economic gain realized by private actors in the cultural sector led to a shift from the government’s view on culture as a vehicle for legitimization towards culture as a source of untapped economic potential (Cho 2005, KCTI 2005, Shim 2008, Kim 2011a, Lee 2013). As Hong (2014) suggests, the ‘cultural’ and ‘market’ agendas have been continuously reconciled and fused within the cultural policy framework to shape the notion of CD.

Since the mid-1990s, a ‘cultural industries’ discourse has been robustly adopted within the cultural policy agenda (Shim 2006, 2008, Kim 2011a, Lee 2013). Korean usage of the term ‘cultural industries’ emerged with a recommendation of the 1994 report by the Presidential Advisory board on Science and Technology under president Kim Young-sam (1993–1998), noting that the Hollywood movie *Jurassic Park* had generated an income equivalent to exporting 1.5 million Hyundai cars (Shim 2006, p. 32). Such a drastic comparison highlighted the importance of developing the nascent domestic cultural sector. In turn, beginning with the immediate establishment of the Bureau of Cultural Industries under the Ministry of Culture in 1994, the economic potential of the cultural industries began to gain

attention and capture the imagination of policy makers. They have tended to read Korea's global cultural prestige through a quantitative lens, namely by means of cultural export figures and shares in the global cultural contents market. Understandably, for looking at market penetration figures, Korean films had only 15.9% of the domestic film market in the mid-1990s and the combined export figure of three major terrestrial broadcasters KBS, MBC and SBS was only US\$19.7 million. In comparison, the country imported foreign cultural contents worth approximately US\$99.5 million (Joo 2011).

An updated cultural policy plan called the *New Cultural Policy* was published by President Kim Dae-jung's administration (1998–2003) in 1997, proposing to take an 'industrial and scientific' approach to culture, and its importance in 'internationalizing' the national cultural image by expanding exports of cultural products (MCS 1997). Yet early on, the notion of 'internationalization of national culture' was deemed vague, while the foundation for implicit CD was reflected in the newly passed *Basic Law for the Cultural Industry Promotion* (1999). The law stipulated the government's responsibility to support and promote cultural industries development. Furthermore, the interventionist approach was reinforced through combining *seguehwa* and cultural industries development rhetoric. 'International cultural exchange' was applied as *seguehwa* in practice, and was adopted as an aspect of the strategic development of the sector to be facilitated and catalyzed by the government. Article 20 (International exchange and foreign market entrance support section) of the above legislation contained the following clause: '1 Government may support co-production with foreign entities, marketing and public relations abroad through broadcast and internet, foreign investment, international film market participation, etc. to promote export competitiveness and increase share in the international market of cultural industries.' Furthermore, Article 31 noted that the government would support 'entering overseas market, distribution vitality and marketing for the development of cultural industries'. 'International Exchange' became a term that implicitly sought support for fostering cultural industries' economic interests abroad, as an inherent capacity building mechanism.

Subsequently, further legislation and institutions were established for developing specific segments of the cultural sector, including film, music, publishing, broadcasting, and more, all including 'international exchange' to be promoted by the government. The KCTI's 2007 Report, *Research for Institutional Establishment for International Cultural Exchange Promotion*, noted 22 different laws under the remit of the MCT that were passed by the government up to the mid-2000s. These all supported sector and content specific development, incorporating articles or clauses broadly promoting 'international exchange' and 'international cooperation' as part of the sector development strategy (KCTI 2007).

The governmental approach shifted to more decentralized CD activity in recognition of the increasingly private sector driven exchange of cultural contents (MCT 2001). During the administration of President Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008), whose campaign platform emphasized principles of 'participation', 'autonomy' and 'decentralization', an attempt was made to move towards the democratization of culture (Lee 2012). Roh's administration proposed a revised and updated cultural policy framework titled *Creative Korea* (2004), emphasizing the need for a long-term plan to foster the creative capacity of the *entire* society (MCT 2004b). The 'new cultural policy vision' proposed by the Ministry of Culture under Roh noted that while the governmental budget for culture had reached 1% of the total

expenditure during the previous administration, the overt focus had been on the 'cultural industries' rather than on the welfare of citizens (MCT 2004a). Despite the rhetoric however, this did not diminish the role of the cultural contents industries development agenda.

Roh noted in his inaugural speech in 2003 that the contents industry would become one of the core driving engines of Korea's economy (MCT 2004a). In 2005, MCT published *Culture Strong Nation (C-Korea) 2010* (MCT 2005a), proposing the goal of becoming a 'top 5 cultural content nation' by 2010 along with US, Japan, UK and France by developing a domestic cultural market size of 90 trillion KRW (approximately 85 billion USD), and reaching six billion USD in cultural export revenue (MCT 2005a, p. 19). The means included 'fostering global cultural industries market; innovating cultural contents distribution structure; copyright industry establishment; and internationalization of Korean Wave to enhance the national brand' (MCT 2005a). By this point, not only had the term cultural industries shifted to contents industries, the framework of international exchange had also shifted to broader capacity building of the domestic environment to provide robust support of production, distribution and marketing of creative contents abroad.

The adoption of cultural industries development as a national agenda blurred the line between economically oriented international exchange capacity building of the domestic cultural sector and more explicit modes of CD. The government's explicit agenda to establish Korea as a 'Contents Strong Nation' reflected a robust neo-liberal adaptation of a 'cultural state'. However, this delineation was not clear, since the government took an ambivalent position towards the Korean Wave.

The Korean Wave and the convergence of explicit and implicit CD

Since the mid-2000s, the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*) has been explicitly adopted by the government as a national success story, reinforcing both the government's neoliberal economic agenda and domestic cultural nationalism (Shim 2006, Chua and Iwabuchi 2008, Kim 2011a, Lee 2013). As a fortuitous extension of the *seggyehwa* and cultural industries development agendas, the Korean Wave has become a point of convergence for explicit and implicit CD. While economic returns and the unprecedented exposure of Korean cultural contents abroad were robustly propagated by the government,³ the symbolic underpinnings of the cultural 'texts' (Hesmondhalgh 2013) that proliferated were not critically examined. This is unsurprising, as the government has consistently perpetuated a one-dimensional enhancement of the national image through mere exposure abroad, yet has relied on cultural export figures as a tangible indicator of national prestige. The proliferation of popular cultural contents under the remit of *Hallyu* fulfilled both of these objectives, although the position of the government became increasingly more ambiguous.

Despite the government's robust strategic intervention in the development of domestic cultural industries, it is difficult to draw a linear correlation between the overseas success of the Korean Wave phenomenon and domestic cultural industries policy. There are other internal and external contextual factors underpinning the Korean Wave, such as the globalizing forces influencing Korea's deregulation of cultural production throughout the 1990s, the hybridization of Korean popular culture, and the trans-nationalization of the media industries in Asia (Jin 2006, Shim

2006, Chua and Iwabuchi 2008, Kim 2011a, Lee 2013). The bulk of the governmental budget for cultural industries development was allocated for infrastructural establishment in areas such as ‘culture technology’ and associated human resources, rather than on the promotion of the Korean Wave abroad (Hong 2014). Moreover, the Korean Wave was adopted as an explicit cultural policy paradigm only in response to the massive success of dramas such as *Winter Sonata* in Japan and *Daejangeum* in the Middle East in the early 2000s (KOCIS 2011, Lee 2013), despite the earlier popularity of the drama *What is Love*, that actually launched the term (KOCIS 2011).

Given the increasing recognition of private sector driven transnational flows of cultural contents, the governmental approach shifted to more decentralized CD activity. Since the early 2000s, many non-governmental cultural organizations have been established in order to decentralize the cultural sector, in spite of attempts to achieve comprehensive capacity building of the cultural contents sector through an existing centralized body, the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA). In 2003, an agency primarily focused on explicit promotion of the Korean Wave was established, the Korea Foundation for Cultural Industries Exchange (KOFICE). Unlike KOCCA, a centralized governmental agency directly under the remit of the Ministry of Culture, KOFICE is an autonomous non-governmental, non-profit foundation registered under the Ministry of Culture.⁴ Its aim as expressed in its mission statement is to foster ‘mutual understanding between Korea and other countries through various international exchange programs of cultural industries, and establishing cooperative foundation through acting as a channel for private sector cooperation’ (kofice.or.kr). Along with this broader agenda, it has also adopted as an explicit objective the sustainable expansion of internationalization of the Korean Wave. In recognition of the two most popular formats of pop culture content, the two most high profile initiatives of KOFICE were hosting the annual ‘Asia Song Festival’, an Asian pop music festival held in Korea since 2004 featuring artists from Asian countries,⁵ and the ‘Asian Drama Conference’, a forum for writers and producers of TV dramas in Asia.

The emergence of agencies such as KOFICE reflected the gradual shift to decentralized approaches to international cultural exchange. There has been a proliferation of governmental and private cultural organizations over the past two decades, underpinned by the increasing dynamism of the cultural sector.⁶ Many of them directly and indirectly, as well as explicitly and implicitly, follow interests that overlap with the government’s articulated agenda. Yet, as much of the financial resources remained under governmental control, and the distinction between national, governmental and private interests remained vague, the term ‘International cultural exchange’ begun to be appropriated profusely by the non-governmental sector. Most organizations have adopted the term ‘international exchange’ or *segye-hwa* to articulate their organizational agenda, reinforcing their legitimacy. *Hallyu* discourses became integral to the non-governmental sector in the decentralizing process, mutually reinforcing both organizational interests and the national agenda.

This decentralized effort was also a response to adverse reactions to the government’s explicit promotion of Korean Wave abroad (Jang and Paik 2012). As the Korean Wave was adopted increasingly to support a nationalist agenda within popular media and policy discourses, it began to also be perceived in some of the neighbouring countries as Korean ‘cultural imperialism’. This was especially evidenced through a backlash against the Korean Wave in Japan, as anti-Korean

sentiments – termed *yuk-hallyu* – began to grow. An anti-Korean comic book entitled ‘Hating the Korean Wave’ (*Kenkanryu*) released in 2005 became the number one bestseller on Amazon Japan (Liscutin 2009). The overt success of Korean popular culture in Japan was seen as threatening to Japanese culture, as well as eroding the domestic cultural market share. In response, the MCT began to explore a non-economic framing for the continued proliferation of the Korean Wave externally. In turn, initiatives such as the ‘Cultural Partnership Initiative’ of the MCT aimed at providing opportunities for fellows from Asia, Latin American and African countries were established, with significantly less emphasis on a nationalist agenda.⁷

However, explicit promotion of the Korean Wave began to be also adopted in the non-cultural realm as well. The previous section argued that from a cultural policy perspective, CD was an implicit practice within the broader international cultural exchange policy that sought more holistic capacity building of the domestic cultural sector. As efforts to depoliticize culture persisted during the transition to liberal democracy, the term CD was not used within the cultural policy framework. Up until the mid-2000s, CD was an implicit function of international cultural exchange promoted by the Ministry of Culture, even though the Ministry of Culture deliberately avoided using the term CD because of its perceived political undertone. In contrast, the term had been widely used within the foreign policy framework, albeit loosely associated with other terms such as cultural public relations or cultural cooperation. Foreign Policy White Papers from 1992 to 2008 have used the term CD and cultural public relations interchangeably, but their combined scope was narrowly limited to bilateral cultural treaties or to activities of the non-governmental Korea Foundation, (funded however through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Thus there was no clear institutional differentiation between CD and international cultural exchange, although the two would begin to diverge in the mid-2000s with Korea’s adoption of the soft power discourse.

Rise of the soft power discourse

In the mid-2000s, the concept of soft power emerged as a keyword within foreign policy circles, leading to a reconfiguration of the scope of CD. The Foreign Policy White Paper of 2010 noted that ‘with the increasing importance of soft power, and culture as a key element of national competitiveness, CD has become a new pillar of diplomatic power’ (MOFAT 2011, p. 204). This explicit adoption of the soft power discourse was reinforced in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ first designated CD document in 2010, entitled *Cultural Diplomacy Manual*, as already mentioned, which noted that in the twenty-first century, soft power has become equally important, and ‘culture’ has become a third pillar of diplomatic power (MOFAT 2010). Yet the practical framework adopted by MOFAT did not become any clearer.

This was partly because Korea had to reimagine the applications and pursuit of soft power relevant to its own context. As Lee (2009) argues, Nye’s concept of soft power was more relevant to the hegemonic leadership oriented approach of the US, but did not give practical insights to lesser powers like Korea. Lee further explains that

the enthusiasm for Korea’s popular culture produced by the Korean Wave naturally led to a mass consumption of symbols and ideas relating to Korea, thereby leading to

the formation of specific images, perceptions, and opinions about Korea; thus Korean wave can be a crucial soft resource that can potentially develop Korea's soft power. (Lee 2009, p. 130)

Jang and Paik (2012) argued that 'Korean wave has positive impact and potential that would promote Korea's CD as a part of soft power approach'. An anecdotal illustration further suggested that negative impressions of South Korea by Taiwan after the break-up of diplomatic relations in 1992 have been transformed positively through increased cross-cultural ties created by the Korean Wave (Jang and Paik 2012).

Furthermore, the perceived effectiveness of the Korean Wave as a soft power resource has reinforced the role of the MOFAT. A fundamental shift of the conceptual framework within the MOFAT began to take shape under Lee Myung-bak's administration. In 2010, MOFAT and its arm's length agency, the Korea Foundation, co-hosted the 'Korean Public Diplomacy Forum'. 'Public Diplomacy' was proposed as the 'third pillar of diplomacy along with the political and economic'. This shift in terminology occurred in the context of transferring much of the public relations and international cultural exchange capacity to the Ministry of Culture. Moreover, public relations rhetoric was minimized and 'two-way communication', 'soft power', and 'nation brand' became the dominant terms.

Since the *Korean Public Diplomacy Forum* in 2010, there have been significant conceptual shifts regarding CD within the foreign policy framework. CD has become a sub-category of public diplomacy. The notion of 'culture' based public diplomacy has been framed as (1) bilateral diplomatic relations celebration and cultural event promotion, (2) two-way cultural exchange support, (3) conferences hosted by the Culture Ministry, (4) NE Asia Cultural Cooperation (Korea-China-Japan Culture Shuttle Initiative), and (5) the expansion of *Hallyu*. MOFAT indicated that they would continually make efforts in developing new discourses of public diplomacy, meaning that the term is constantly evolving (or left flexible for interpretation and appropriation by the government). Moreover, this forum announced that the Korea Foundation had become the official organization in charge of public diplomacy (MOFAT 2011), perpetuating an explicit CD policy.

The relationship between pop culture success and national image is not necessarily rooted in empirical evidence. However, with the increasing recognition of soft power as a key foreign policy paradigm, with culture perceived as its fundamental resource, the Korean Wave has gone from being an economic to a diplomatic resource linked explicitly to CD. This had led to tensions between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, with both attempting to bring CD under its domain. In 2011, the congressional Culture Sports and Tourism committee submitted a newly revised 'International Cultural Exchange Promotion Law', and the Foreign Affairs and Trade committee submitted the 'Cultural Diplomacy Promotion Special Law' (Kim 2012, p. 228). This inter-ministry tension shows the extent to which the institutional fragmentation and conceptual ambiguity surrounding CD in its explicit and implicit approaches have reached a tipping point. It is necessary to renegotiate a coherent policy paradigm.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that since South Korea's transition to liberal democracy in the early 1990s, the deregulation and liberalization of the cultural sector and its

growing transnational dynamism throughout the following two decades have shaped the institutional development surrounding CD in both explicit and implicit ways. CD as an explicit practice has persisted largely as a top-down and unilateral approach by governmental actors to enhancing national prestige abroad, underpinned by the institutional legacy of a 'developmental state' model of governance. CD has also been shaped implicitly, associated with capacity building of the domestic cultural industries through promoting 'international cultural exchange'. Economically oriented cultural industries development policy that measured national prestige through a quantitative approach of market figures was absorbed into the broader CD paradigm. Thus while a top-down unilateral approach has persisted in general, a disarray of policy rhetoric surrounding CD has also led to greater institutional fragmentation and has highlighted the government's ambivalent role. There has thus been a gradual convergence of both explicit and implicit approaches.

The Korean Wave has been appropriated domestically to boost cultural nationalism as well as legitimize governmental efforts in developing the domestic cultural industries. Yet in response to some of the negative ramifications of the dominance of the Korean Wave in neighbouring countries, less emphasis has been placed on an explicit cultural export agenda, leading to a depoliticized and decentralized approach to facilitating international cultural exchange. The Korean Wave's domestic appropriation as a national success story has allowed CD to come into its own as an explicit foreign policy orientation. In particular, as the Korean Wave has been folded into the soft power foreign policy agenda, a further gap between foreign policy and cultural policy has been perpetuated.

Despite this fragmented institutional approach to explicit CD, the government policy will most likely remain primarily unilateral, aimed at the enhancement of national prestige underpinned by the institutional legacy of the 'developmental state' model. However, the rapidly evolving geopolitical and economic implications of this unilateral approach, as exemplified by the success of the Korean Wave, will most likely lead to a further proliferation of decentralised initiatives carried out by a multitude of actors, drawing on expanding government and private sector resources.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. See 'Hansik Segyehwa' campaign (www.hansik.org).
2. Kim (1994) suggests Korea's constitutional adoption of 'culture state' is adopted from the German notion of *Kulturstaat* doctrine, but appropriated as an instrumental rhetoric of cultural policy in Korea.
3. The Korean Economic Research Center noted 3 billion US dollars as the profit generated from the value-added businesses deriving from Yon-sama (the male actor in *Winter Sonata*), and tourism revenue alone reaching 84 million KRW resulting from popularity of locations that appeared in the drama, such as *Nami-seom* Island and *Yongpyeong* Ski resort, 3 trillion KRW in DVD sales in Japan, and running royalties for KBS reaching more than 100 million dollars (Cho 2005, KOCIS 2011).

4. While it received part of its funding for its programs from the Ministry of Culture as it sought public interests in the cultural realm, it was not under direct control of the Ministry.
5. Asia Song Festival have featured pop artists from Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Phillipines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Singapore to date (www.asiasongfestival.com).
6. A list of non-governmental organizations registered under MCST can be found at http://www.mcst.go.kr/web/s_data/corporation/corpList.jsp.
7. Cultural Partnership Initiative (www.culturefriends.or.kr).

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Australia's Colombo Plans, old and new: international students as foreign relations

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This article draws on recent research and policy developments to make a case for considering international students as an important component of Australian foreign relations. It links historical and contemporary Australian experiences of international students, especially in the Colombo Plan and *New Colombo Plan*, to the field of public diplomacy, and sets an agenda for further research in this direction. It highlights the need to recover student voices and to be sensitive to the emergence of everyday or 'vernacular' internationalism, as a phenomenon of international students visiting, traveling and otherwise encountering different groups of Australians. It suggests a need to take up anew this form of inquiry for both earlier postwar student experiences and the post-1980s period, in which international students' voices are frequently silenced by debates over commodification, funding needs, and neo-liberal economics.

Keywords: international students; public diplomacy; Australian foreign relations; Colombo Plan

In November 1969, in a message of thanks to his Australian hosts, the leader of a group of Thai private business executives sponsored under the Colombo Plan offered a parable. He spoke of a time thousands of years ago when only primitive implements were in use, when a man named Uk invented a spear enabling him to hunt more effectively, and also scaring other competitors away. Then came a man named Us who invented bows and arrows who was even more effective as a hunter. Us was also a generous man who would give away some of his kill to neighbours, but he was also prone to mood swings and laziness, and during these times his neighbours would go hungry. Then arrived Oz, a man with a boomerang, who could hunt all sorts of animals, including those on Uk and Us's lands, because the boomerang would come back. Oz was not strong enough to feed all of his friends, but instead he gave them boomerangs, too, and taught them how to use them, so that they could hunt for themselves. 'Everybody was better off, and none suffered' (Anon 1969).¹

In the Australian External Affairs Departmental notes of the evening there was a little mirth and satisfaction about the parable, and one officer forwarded it to the *Canberra Times*, in case they wanted to use it (it does not seem that they did) (Hutton 1969). The nearly-funny parable goes to the heart of what is an under-appreciated area in need of further research; namely the nexus between Australia's experience of international students and Australia's foreign relations, including,

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within that broad concept, Australia's international reputation. While this field is not ignored entirely (Brown 2011), it lacks in a substantive way the element of student experience and student voice that the Thai businessman was able to convey in 1969. To incorporate students as a dimension of foreign relations is not a terrain of neat paths and well-trodden methodologies, but it seems to have dawned as a field of study. In his 2009 Stuart Bernath Memorial Lecture, reprinted in the major US journal, *Diplomatic History*, historian Paul Kramer argued that historians of US foreign relations would profit from studying international students as part of US international history, 'as related to the question of US power in its transnational and global extensions' (Kramer 2009).

This paper considers international students in the context of both Australian government policy and research being undertaken. It proceeds according to three related propositions. The first is that, such is the growth in international students movements and surge in higher education policies relating to internationalization and alumni, there is a strong invitation for those interested in the movement of students, both incoming and outgoing to view them as manifestations of public diplomacy. Australia, as a major exporter of education – international students in higher education generating \$18.5 billion in the last five years – is a particularly apt case-study (Group of Eight 2014). Secondly, as a historian, I am conscious of threads being sown publicly between the past and present in relation to student mobility as it has been experienced in Australia; and I suggest that the historical dimension is important, both for policy-makers and for those analyzing the international work of higher education in a number of ways. And flowing from these two propositions, I am outlining something of a research agenda that might extend current work in ways valuable to both policy-making and to the Academy.

In this approach, I am also keen to highlight two important aspects of Australia's experience of international students that are insufficiently studied. One is what I am calling 'vernacular internationalism', by which I mean the local efforts of community-minded Australians involved in assisting with the welcomes, accommodation, excursions and general welfare of international students; and the other, as illustrated by our Thai visitor, is the voices of the students themselves. Good listening is often held up as one of the most essential requirements of public diplomacy, the interpretive prism through which international students enter the realm of foreign relations (Cull 2010). Without human feedback on public diplomacy initiatives their impact cannot be judged effectively; and if we do not allow students their voices, by virtue of finding it too hard in earlier times, or by surrendering the task in the face of massive numbers and their commodification in more recent times, we do not listen effectively. Given that the Australian Government acknowledges the power of human stories to help build broader understanding of our relations with Asian countries, and given the acknowledged need for further qualitative research to match the measuring of relationships in quantitative terms (e.g. the amount of iron ore exported to China), further research on the experiences of international students is important in both policy and academic contexts.

Spotlight on scholarships

There is, in 2013–15, something of a spotlight shining on the role of tertiary students as internationally mobile, coming to Australia from the Indo-Pacific region in particular, and also Australians venturing out for study. In particular, the *New*

Colombo Plan (NCP) is a high profile, high stakes initiative, upon which the government pins considerable hopes on enhancing people-to-people connections between Australia and the Indo-Pacific, providing ballast to relationships and strategic pockets of engagement beyond officialdom in relation to policy objectives. The plan to send more young Australians overseas to study is unfolding in the context of an overarching government priority of economic diplomacy aimed at developing greater prosperity in Australia, its region and the world; and in the context of goals to deepen Australian engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, promote a rules-based approach to international co-operation, and highlight Australia's commitment to development and Australia's international reputation as a democratic, open and diverse nation (DFAT 2014).

The Australian government has thrust the NCP to the fore in its diplomacy around engagement with Asia or its preferred term, the Indo-Pacific – a shift that explicitly includes the Indian subcontinent, and is more attuned to the thinking of both Departmental Secretary Peter Varghese and West-Australian-based Minister Julie Bishop. As well as being a focal point it serves more symbolically to mark transitions: it borrows from the momentum that built up around the 2012 White Paper on *Australia in the Asian Century* under the previous government (Australian Government 2012a). It is worth recalling that when the many submissions to that process in 2012 were categorized into groups, it was the heading of 'people-to-people connections' that attracted over 160 submissions, the biggest number of the four headings used (Australian Government 2012b). The NCP draws somewhat on that manifest energy and interest in the human face of connections with Asia while leaving the policy language of the previous government behind. It also reflects, to some extent, the changes within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) as former employees from the disbanded Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) are integrated into this newly configured Department. It was AusAID officials that did the heavy lifting in relation to scholarships. They oversaw the award of scholarships under the Australia Awards program and its antecedents, and they crafted the messages around them and around alumni activities. Some of this expertise has now transferred to DFAT where such programs continue alongside the *New Colombo Plan*. AusAID culture was different from DFAT and the process of integration continues, but in one important way the transfer of scholarships activity makes for a neater fit. It was always hard to demonstrate that tertiary scholarships were linked to the reduction of poverty. It was reasonable to hope that economic and human development would result from educational opportunities, but the nexus between scholarship-assisted educational outcomes and poverty reduction was very indirect. Folding the Australia Awards now into a public diplomacy setting within DFAT, and linking them to aims around influence, reputation and relationships seems a more direct fit than the former link to poverty alleviation aim in AusAID.

The term public diplomacy is now used widely by practitioners and academics, in Australia and elsewhere. It describes departments within foreign ministries; it is invoked as a need resulting from international crises or interventions; and, in recent usage, it encourages us to shift our gaze from state-centric diplomacy to a more fluid set of information flows, involving non-state actors exercising influence in international politics. Jan Melissen, in the *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, considers the flurry of books, journal articles and new advisory boards dealing with public diplomacy and wonders 'how far this market of ideas on public diplomacy

can be stretched' (Melissen 2013, p. 436). Thus, public diplomacy is more generously deployed than it is well-defined. In fact, there is no agreed definition but its meaning draws on both an older concept of a sovereign state communicating with publics in other countries in order to influence public audiences in ways that promote the national interest, and on the newer shift towards non-state actors as important agents in communication (Centre on Public Diplomacy 2014). Melissen reminds us that, at its most fundamental, 'public diplomacy is about diplomatic engagement with people' or governments 'reaching out to transnational civil society' (Melissen 2013, pp. 436–437).

To some extent, this shift in focus towards non-state actors reflects a shift by social scientists to 'de-centre' the state in their analyses of international change. But the interests of the state in public diplomacy remain strong. When considering the role of particular non-state groups, questions emerge about the relatedness of their achievements to the interests of the state. Two sets of norms or expectations need to run in ways that are mutually reinforcing. Any group's communications with foreign publics need to be open and credible, so sector standards become important norms. If a program of student exchange, for example, is to create a positive two-way relationship between Australia and another country, then it must be seen as worthy according to prevailing standards within the education sector. The national interest (and public diplomacy) test is passed if this activity also builds mutual understanding, intellectual capital and fosters mobility between Australia and the chosen country (Gregory 2008).

The conceptual landscape in which the term 'public diplomacy' is deployed has been dominated by the concept of 'soft power', 'the ability to get others to want the outcome you want because of your cultural or ideological appeal' (Nye 2004, p. 11). Soft power has generated an even bigger literature and range of activities but it has its roots in US foreign policy and re-thinking diplomatic strategies in the post 9/11 world. A number of scholars have suggested that a *relational* quality lies at the heart of public diplomacy rather than just the delivery of messages (Fitzpatrick 2010, 99–127). I attach importance to this quality in what follows here. The 'people-to-people' language, sometimes near-mantra, of Australian public diplomacy discussions goes to mutuality, to relationships growing healthily because of the mutual benefits defined in like manner. Such a view was a distinguishing feature of an Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Public Diplomacy in 2007 (Australian Parliament 2007). Since then, it has been hard for the Australian Government to meet the expectations of academics and other observers in relation to its public diplomacy activities.

The key features of the NCP can be sketched briefly. The plan was articulated in the lead up to the 2013 Australian Federal Election with reference to soft power. The NCP would reverse the flow of the original Colombo Plan for aid to South and Southeast Asia, an umbrella 'plan' providing for bilateral aid agreements between developed nations and developing, post-colonial nations in the region (that later extended to central Asia and the Pacific) that began in 1951 and was a prominent feature of development work and thought up to the 1970s, when it was largely overtaken by other measures. In Australia's case, and also in the case of several other donor nations, the technical assistance side of the Colombo Plan, providing for sponsored scholarships and traineeships in particular, assumed greatest public prominence. Today, older Australian residents show strong recognition of the Colombo Plan, such was its public projection as a means by which Australia was

tentatively engaging with a decolonizing Asia in the 1950s and 1960s. More than 20,000 Asian students benefited from Australian government support to study in Australia during this period (Lowe 2013). The ‘lessons’ of the original Colombo Plan are discussed further below. As outlined in 2013–14, the NCP would reverse the former flow, sending young Australians, ‘our best brightest and young people’, who would be sponsored to study and undertake internships in the region. The official pitch aimed at students has them seizing the future. The banner attaching to the official DFAT branding of the NCP invites young Australians to ‘connect to Australia’s future’ by studying ‘in the region’ (DFAT 2014).

The first tranche of funding under the NCP started in February 2014, and 24 Australian universities sent more than 300 students to Asia for study, language training and internships and mentorships. Australia’s Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has said that she hopes an Australian student experience of Asia in the course of higher education would become a ‘rite of passage’ and ‘the norm rather than the exception’ (Bishop 2013). The number studying overseas in 2014 under the NCP was 1300 (Bishop 2014). The 2014 pilot program involves Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. In 2015 the NCP involves a broader range of partner countries in the Indo-Pacific, including India, China and South Korea and all ten members of ASEAN and many others, including in the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In policy language, there is a sense of Australian students being generational pioneers for our destiny in Asia. This is almost an inversion of the older development paradigm through which Asians were encouraged to seek educational opportunities in Australia. But the NCP is also meant to inject renewed vigor into the flow of international students to Australia, too. According to government statements, the new initiative brings history seamlessly into the present; it joins up the old Colombo Plan with the new outward-bound ventures and couches the initiative as foreign policy (Bishop 2013).

Historical threads

As mentioned above, Australians have developed a strong sense of pride in their country’s prominent role in the Colombo Plan for aid to South and Southeast Asia. In particular, they recall and celebrate the higher education and training opportunities provided to students from developing Asian countries. The recollections and ‘lessons’ drawn from Australia’s sponsorship of Asian students tend to draw two positive conclusions: first, that a significant number of Asian students who studied in Australia during the 1950s–1970s returned home and rose to positions of prominence in public life, including some politicians, while sustaining warm memories of their indebtedness to Australian educators; and secondly, that a more general ‘people-to-people’ connectedness was forged, with lasting friendships and increases in mutual interest and awareness between Australians and citizens of Asian countries. In other words, Australians grew more aware of and interested in Asia from the 1950s through 1970s by dint of the 20,000 sponsored and many more private Asian students studying in Australia during this period; and it was the many personal encounters and ties that underpinned this more broadly-based interest where previously there had been mostly ignorance and fear. The corollary was that Asian students experiencing Australia returned knowing that, despite Australia’s

racially-determined immigration policy that prevailed for most of this period, the so-called White Australia policy, most Australians were far from bigoted and made for good friends.

These are the ‘lessons’ of the Colombo Plan. They are over-simple and sometimes problematic when matched against the details of policies and practices, but, as with most lessons that take hold and endure, there is a good deal of evidence that supports them. And they have proven popular in the hands of Australian politicians and opinion-leaders, who have drawn on the Colombo Plan in rhetorical sweeps that conjure up its pioneering status, its catalytic qualities prompting more general change, and its value for money (Bishop 2013).

Recalling the ‘old’ Colombo Plan when launching the ‘new’ one involved an act of historical sketching and drawing on memories. In the lead up to the 2013 Federal election, the original Colombo Plan was described as a ‘remarkable’ phenomenon; and voters were reminded that many of the positive changes in Australia’s region had been partly brought about by leaders who had spent time in Australia under the Colombo Plan, including Vice President Boediono of Indonesia and National Development Minister of Singapore, Khaw Boon Wan. The original Colombo Plan was, according to the then Opposition policy statement, ‘Australia’s most successful soft-power initiative in our region.’ At the same time, new people-to-people connections fostered by outward bound Australians should, it was and is hoped, continue to foster regional interest in Australian education opportunities – a two-way flow of students replacing what has been largely a one-way flow of Asian students to Australia (Coalition 2013).

At one level, this deliberate anchoring of the new policy in a historical episode might be seen as another contribution to the establishment of a tradition – the original Colombo Plan owed much to Liberal Party Ministers for External Affairs, Percy Spender and Richard Casey in the 1950s, and to recall it with such policy prominence erodes Labor Party claims to have pioneered positive relations with Asia under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in the early 1970s and/or economic alignment with booming northeast Asian economies under Prime Minister Bob Hawke in the 1980s. But, in the context of the 2012 White Paper on *Australia and the Asian Century*, and the strong but often inchoate Australian concern for ‘people-to-people’ connections, the NCP carried more intent and more portent than mere tussles over history.

The simplified story of Australia’s Colombo Plan as a means of gradually growing to know Asia logically goes up to the late 1970s, when changes to Australia’s aid organization meant that scholarships were offered primarily under other umbrella titles. Since then, of course, Australian-Asian connections have increased in breadth and depth, but there remains a sensitivity to distinguishing between relations of contracted mutual interest and what tend to be called people-to-people relationships, between important Australian transactions with Asia and relationships that go beyond the transactional and suggest exchanges of the kind that imply friendship, partnership, or shared purpose (Australian Government 2012a). One of the most enduring sources of narrative, and one that taps directly into memories of the original Colombo Plan, is that of shared learning and life experiences – the personal narratives that continue to feature in AusAID (now Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) stories about student experiences. In new forms, with logical connections to older stories of Colombo Plan students, similar life-story material has significant potential to carry forward at least some of the current hopes of the

Australian government for the *New Colombo Plan*. When Australian students arrived in Singapore in 2014, to commence study under the NCP, they joined historical threads as they were hosted by Singaporeans who had studied in Australia under the original Colombo Plan (Bishop 2014).

This focus on international students is a field of research that has struggled to grow in Australia, excepting notable works such as the current history of the Fulbright Foundation in Australia (Garner and Kirkby 2013), and some consideration of the Colombo Plan by historians (Oakman 2002, Lowe 2013). The reasons for the lack of full historical exploration are several, and for reasons of space can only be sketched briefly here. Among the most significant are: first, the lack of neat archival lines of inquiry – as international students coming to Australia grew in number, the policy-making around them struggled to keep up. In broad terms, the Colombo Plan, the vehicle for sponsoring international students from the region, tended to set the standards around provision of care, expectations re progress etc.; and as the authorities were compelled to address the needs of burgeoning private international students in the 1960s other agents came to the fore, including state-based branches of the Commonwealth Office of Education and Department of External Affairs, and the universities themselves. The resulting paper trail is messy and incomplete, including the state of most university alumni databases earlier than the 1990s (Megarrity 2007).

And secondly, there is the historiographical marginalization of the topic as something not warranting more sustained attention. One manifestation of this is the over-stretched narrative that most of the fundamental changes in Australia's relations with its region in the twenty years after the Second War should be seen in the context of relations with Britain, and Britain's withdrawal from East of Suez and turn towards the European Economic Community in the 1960s, in particular. In other words, Australia's eventual engagement with Asia should be seen largely as derivative of the end of a British embrace that had enabled Australians to defer hard thinking about their relationships with Asia (Goldsworthy 2002). Even Lyndon Megarrity's thoughtful account of government policy towards the Colombo Plan and private students is framed thus. Only as the UK flagged its diminishing commitment to the region, and to relations with Australia, were the Australians forced to shift their regard for Asia. Conceptually, they moved from seeing relations with unstable, decolonizing Asia as exercises in management rather than relationships aiming at closeness. This was a position they had maintained for as long as they could. Britain was something of a buffer between them and their northern neighbors, mentally as well as in defence commitments. Only when Britain receded in influence in Asia, runs this argument, could Australians approach their Asian neighbours in a manner that we call engagement (Megarrity 2007).

A more strongly-based argument, in which international students play a bigger role in a profound transformation, is the conclusion that their swelling numbers in Australia, and the volume of Australian activity and messaging around 'helping neighbours' and 'mutual understanding' as part of their Colombo Plan efforts, has constituted a quiet revolution in Australian public attitudes towards Asia. The experience of Asians in Australian universities, colleges and homes paved the way for a popular 'bottom up' dismantling of the White Australia policy when government and administration proved able to start this process from the mid-1960s. There is a fair degree of extrapolation involved, as correlations between changing public opinion polls on the one hand and newspaper editorials and letters, and

glimpses of life stories on the other, seem suggestive rather than conclusive, but the hypothesis seems a reasonable one to put. One of the chief proponents of this view, Daniel Oakman, reminds us that James Jupp sketched the argument in broader terms in 1991 when he wrote that, in addition to the collapse of Nazi ideology, the presence of Asian students in Australian universities undermined locally, generalized racist claims of genetic inferiority (Oakman 2002).

And finally, the other prevailing line of Australian analysis might be described not as marginalization of international students but 'Marginsonisation'. There is a strong, well-argued analysis of the evolution of international students in the context of the growth of Australia's higher education sector, locating international students in a framework of governmentality and/or political economy – with Simon Marginson's work often to the fore (Marginson 2000, Marginson and Considine 2000). This is attuned to profound change in Australian policy towards international students. It reflects, in particular, the decision in the mid-1980s to cap the overseas student charge, underpinned by a subsidy, and encourage full fees in an expanding sector, thereby creating a new export industry that grew spectacularly. The complementary frameworks of governmentality and political economy are well-deployed, although the students become necessarily disembodied in the face of neo-liberal economic logic. Their voices are lost, and they become part of a story of transactions.

Nicholas Brown's study of students, experts and peacekeepers is one of the more investigative and ameliorative alternatives to this. Brown views the three groups as figurative prisms through which we can understand points of intersection between Australian civil values and understandings of international change, and he thus provides one of the best bridges thus far between human actors and symbols of changing overseas engagements. 'The international student', he writes, 'embodies the belief that post-Second World War instability can be overcome at the level of inter-personal contact and 'good-will', at least until education itself becomes a commodity, an industry offering credentials that do not necessarily expunge identities of ideology, faith and ethnicity, but instead expose enduring thresholds of inequality and prejudice.' (Brown 2011, p. 37) Thus, the commodification of higher education enters Brown's analysis from the 1980s to curtail the prism-like interpretive possibilities offered by students. This is after Brown has established some important connections between students and Australian-generated internationalist humanism, as a means of both affirming and controlling change in the external environment. The students generated contradictions in humanism and hospitality associated with the bargain they made in coming to Australia for a short, fixed period before their necessary return home (Brown 2011).

Given the limited purchase international students have had with commentators on Australia in world affairs, what pointers might come from research stirrings in the United States and elsewhere? When urging his colleagues to take up the challenge of researching international students in the United States as an important dimension of US foreign relations, Paul Kramer imagined multiple pay-offs in this line of inquiry, including the ways in which personalized experiences of students would add to substantial literatures on such themes as 'modernisation', 'Americanisation' and 'development'; intersections with Cold War and racial politics; and the broader and burgeoning scholarly field of cultural diplomacy. Further, in doing some of these things, he argued that such work would also lay the basis for comparative work on the geopolitics of international students in different educational

metropolises. Kramer suggested that, from an American perspective, there were already strong foundations from which to work, pointing to three bodies of literature: histories of US educational and governmental institutions driving international student migration; histories of specific programs, such as the Fulbright; and histories of particular encounters and experiences of foreign students, often organized by region or nationality of the students (Kramer 2009). Some of these bodies of evidence have been examined by other scholars of the cultural dimensions of US foreign relations, including Liping Bu (Bu 2003) and those who have focused on US connections with particular countries (Garlitz and Jarvinen 2012); and also those who have considered relationships between universities and the state (O'Mara 2012). In Britain, not surprisingly, the role of empire in fostering student movements and generating empire-minded elites has attracted historians (Stockwell 2008, Pietsch 2013).

Australian case studies on international students

The Australian experience shows signs of building up some of Kramer's foundations of inquiry. In addition to the history of International House (built for housing international students together with Australian students) at the University of Melbourne, there is an edited history of International House at the University of Sydney, and shorter histories of International Houses elsewhere, including the University of New South Wales, Sydney, and a current project producing one for the University of Queensland (Shaw 1995, Humphreys 2004, Gascoigne 2007). It is worth noting some outstanding features of the ways in which international students have lived, worked and interacted in Australia. One very prominent theme is the distinctive role of community organisations in the building of international houses in Australian universities. In all cases, the central role of Rotary Clubs stands out in ways suggestive for researchers in this field. The first one built, The University of Melbourne's, was fortunate to have a direct injection from central Colombo Plan funds and a sympathetic External Affairs Minister, Richard Casey, but still required a gigantic fund-raising effort for its completion. The subsequent houses were planned in the wake of the Australian Treasury's determination to see that this never happen again (Fadden 1954), and in the wake of the formation of the Australian Universities Commission, to which the Treasury deflected all subsequent attempts to repeat the raid on Colombo Plan appropriations.

Even before the Universities Commission came into being, it was the Rotary Club of Brisbane in April 1955 that launched the campaign to build Brisbane's International House, recruiting some Chambers of Commerce and other groups to the cause. Bert Martin, then District Governor of Rotary, became first President of International House to be built at UQ, and launched a major public appeal in 1956 (Martin 1956a). Similarly, Sydney President of Rotary Ron Moran began discussions about an International House with the University of Sydney in this same year, and the fund-raising campaign to build two houses (one at the University of Sydney and one at the University of New South Wales) began in 1961. The two houses were opened in 1967 (Sydney) and 1968 (UNSW). In the context of the crucial work undertaken, it is important to note the first and fourth of Rotary's aims, attaching to its overarching one of elevating the idea of service. The first aim is 'the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service'; and the fourth is 'The advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through a

world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service' (Rotary 2014).

Australian histories of specific programs under which students traveled are underway, as Alice Garner and Diane Kirkby are demonstrating through their history of the Fulbright Scheme (Garner and Kirkby 2013). And Kramer's third field, the histories of particular encounters by Asian students, has produced some fascinating glimpses and slices of history, while leaving plenty of room for further work. Among the glimpses are many news reports of Asian students succeeding in their programs, and often traveling to tour Australian sources of industry and enterprise as part of their programs – or touring during holidays, again often with hospitality being provided by Rotary Clubs, and/or Apex Clubs. Such trips were alluded to in Commonwealth Office of Education reports on sponsored students, and described in brief in regional and sometimes metropolitan newspapers. Here, the progressive digitisation of regional newspapers being added to the National Library of Australia's Trove database collection is a boon for researchers, as regional papers were more likely to give more column inches to exotic visitors such as international students. They were sometimes reported more fully in student association of university magazines, and of course they live on in the memories of students who can still be contacted and interviewed (Link 1959). So, for example, twelve Colombo Plan students were the guests of the Camden Rotary Club (NSW) in April 1954, during which they were treated to the Campbelltown Agricultural Show, some of their hosts working with cattle and poultry, an experience of an Anzac Day service, and a big, informal barbeque (Camden News 1954). Regional newspapers, eager for copy, gave the students their voices. In 1956, the *Nepean Times* reported the contents of a talk given by Indonesian student Oedejo to the Apex Club at Penrith. Oedejo provided information on Indonesian politics, geography and demography but also reflected on the need for the Australian press to inquire more and criticize Indonesia less, and his hopes for a form of security in world affairs borne of friendship with neighbours rather than military preparedness (Nepean Times 1956).

Interestingly, similar fine-grained research into international students' experiences is emerging in New Zealand, too. Some of the students there were struck by the experience of class trumping race. In her study of Colombo Plan students in New Zealand, Jenny Collins highlights the recollection of one student at the University of Otago: "We had this English lady who came every morning not only to tidy the house but also to make our beds [...] it was never in our dream, it was beyond our dreams to actually have a white lady or white person to come in and clear the mess in our room, fix our bed and call us 'ducky'" (Collins 2012, p. 140).

Sponsored students on vacation is a rich vein in the history of international students awaiting further exploration. We know, for example, of some amazing car journeys, such as the group of intrepid Malay men in Perth who piled into a Ford Consul in the late 1950s and drove to Adelaide, then through New South Wales to Toowoomba, then to Sydney and the Blue Mountains before continuing southwards to Melbourne and home again, re-crossing the dirt road that spanned the Nullabor Plain (Australian Education International 2008, p. 18). By the start of the 1960s, the State-based offices of the Commonwealth Office of Education were reporting regularly on student's holiday activities. And, increasingly, as they were entertained and hosted, students sang for their supper – sometimes literally, the musicality and singing of Asian students being a common refrain – and sometimes in the form of

invited addresses. For example, a typical government report, this one on holidays undertaken in South Australia in May 1961, includes this information:

Two Vietnamese boys were invited by the Apex Club of Port Pirie to attend its annual meeting and international relations dinner and one of them gave an address on aspects of education in his own country. Another four travelled to Port Lincoln where they met members of the Rotary Club and were entertained by them in their homes as well as being shown about the district and taken on inspections of the local industries ... In May guest speakers were found for an international relations meeting given by the Apex Club of Blackwood – one Indonesian and two Malaysians, and for the Murray Bridge Teachers' Association which was anxious to hear from two Indonesians known to be interested in the progress of education in their homeland... (Fitzgerald 1961)

The same report also referred to the integration of the Colombo Plan Students' Association into the Adelaide Students' Representative Council, a coming Asia Festival and a new 'Travel to Asia' scheme, enabling Australian students to visit countries from which students had come (Fitzgerald 1961). Only 20 years old when the Colombo Plan began, Apex turned it into a cause by which they demonstrated their community and citizenship credentials, and Apex members threw themselves into hospitality for visiting students (Rowland 1952). At local levels, together with Rotary and other civic-minded groups, they cultivated what I am calling a vernacular form of internationalism.

Generally, the overseas student rose in prominence within the Australian community. A separate desk devoted to them was set up at the Australian News and Information Bureau (ANIB) and this generated a voluminous stream of images and short stories showing how integrated they were with Australians. Some of these pictorial and written accounts found their way into newspapers, and a bigger store lies in wait for researchers in the National Archives of Australia. By the mid-1950s, university campus events such as 'Asia-Week' were also well-publicised, and variations of these that reached to a broader community were part of campaigns to raise funds for International Houses (Brown 2011, p. 41). Queensland's Festival of Australian Neighbours held in June 1961 was one such week-long event linked to fund-raising (Rotary 1961). Otherwise, overseas student magazines sprang up, many of them with short life-span, at universities, and the government-underwritten *Hemisphere* journal persisted for a longer run. The government also produced booklets focusing on the experiences of Asian students in Australia. By the end of the 1950s the ANIB had produced three such booklets: *My Life in Australia* (1955); *We Look at Australia* (1956); and *Thai Students in Australia* (1957).

As the facilitation of travel and holiday experiences suggest, the student experience and its connection with Australians sense of their place in the world is also glimpsed in connection with provisions, official and unofficial, for their welfare. Student welfare prompted a degree of co-ordination between the Commonwealth Office of Education at central level and its State-based offices which provided constant reports on problems and progress. It took some time for authorities to apply to private students the set of standards that was carefully watched for the much smaller group of Colombo Plan students (recalling that that ratio was roughly 1:5 by 1960). Until 1966, when changes to immigration rules forced a consolidation of thinking about students, the Department of Immigration was left to keep an eye on primarily the entry and exit of private students. Before 1966, however, as the numbers of private students rose, it was hard for External Affairs not to assume a level

of concern for student welfare and progress comparable to that shown to sponsored students. While the Colombo Plan was becoming a big enterprise in Australian public diplomacy, the potential fall-out from private students returning home miserable was not overlooked (Dexter 1958). In picking up the slack during this period up to 1966 Rotary, Apex and the International House movements were again prominent. Bert Martin in Queensland, for example, wearing his Rotarian and International House hats, appealed to potential donors by pointing to the inadequacy of current accommodation to meet current and projected needs. Urging donors to dig deep, he wrote, 'Many of these students are living under unsatisfactory conditions in lonely and uncongenial boarding houses' (Martin 1956b).

A research agenda

This historical excursion invites more research, drawing on the greater availability of regional newspapers and other archives, and the plentiful alumni who might be interviewed. Recent Australian policy developments, including *The New Colombo Plan*, assist in building a stronger base emerging from which to inquire about student experiences by encouraging renewed focus on the alumni of more recent Australian experiences and planning for the alumni of Australians now venturing to Asia to study. There is, in short, a developing set of data around incoming students— especially of course incoming international students (which still outnumber outgoing by around 20 to 1) – as a component of Australia's foreign relations.

In analyzing the public diplomacy of international students, there remains a tension between the great case study and the systematic review. For researchers, surveys of past and present students suffer from methodological problems. Given the big numbers involved, it is hard to be representative in sample and size, and there will always be a strong element of self-selection among the students who are most forthcoming (Gosling 2008–9). At a policy-making level, tracer studies and evaluations are likely to remain important for DFAT, but there is a longer view emerging, too, a departmental sensibility more akin to scholarly research in which stronger qualitative analysis with a sense of longitude might better emerge. DFAT has signaled, in 2014, a stronger commitment to a more programmatic approach to public diplomacy initiatives – inviting posts to submit proposals for three years of activities; and at the same time working hard to build a stronger capability to assess results, and developing methodologies commensurate with the task of reviewing effectiveness (DFAT 2014).

This is a tension that might best be managed rather than attempting resolution. If managed well, it will maintain space for the humanities as well as the social sciences in Australian research on engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. Australians have become good at measuring the *amount* of exchanges between Australia and Asia but the *quality* of these exchanges is not easily captured. Since 2009 the Price Waterhouse Coopers Melbourne Institute Asialink Index on Australian Engagement with Asia has been measuring the amount of exchange activity under seven headings: trade, investment, education, tourism, research and business development, migration, humanitarian assistance –with equal weighting for each of the seven (PwC Melbourne Institute Asialink 2014). The index takes 1990 as base line, and enables us to see trends, rises and falls, changes in particular activities etc. Engagement is the 'key' word behind the index. In essence the concept of engagement involves two intertwined components, involvement plus commitment and it is hard to measure these two. The chief authors/architects of the

Asian Engagement Index, Paul Jensen and Anne Leahy, acknowledged this when they wrote, soon after its launch, ‘Wherever possible, we rely on rigorous analysis of time-series data, but we are cognisant of the fact that to truly get an understanding of engagement, such analyses should be augmented with qualitative analysis’ (Leahy and Jensen 2011, p. 419).

Much is being asked of the *New Colombo Plan*. Its prominence is fascinating to watch but, without sufficient recognition of the massive Australian efforts in scholarship provision in recent decades (and of course many more private international students), can also contribute to what I have been describing as an occlusion of the period from the 1980s up to recent times. The old Colombo Plan, while never wound up, was effectively by-passed by the sweeping reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, and mostly faded from official usage. The exaggerated ‘newness’ in which the NCP is unfolding still runs the risk of disembodiment of international students in this later period, missing an opportunity to think about the 2.5 million overseas international student alumni in ways beyond the star-performers, and rendering mute a group that is vitally important when thinking about soft power and Australia’s public diplomacy. The *New Colombo Plan’s* aim of fostering interest in the region and replacing the largely one-way flow of Asian students to Australia with a two-way flow is widely welcomed. It is encouraging more research into the foreign relations significance of international student movements (Wesley 2009, Byrne and Hall 2014) and encouraging us to think harder about the human qualities of much-vaunted aspects of relationships in the region.

The NCP is bearing some of the weight of a more general need by Australians to press on with their incomplete and fitful engagements with historical renderings of Australia and Australia’s Asian encounters. In particular, they need to do this in ways that make discussions of identity and difference meet with contemporary conversations about ‘big’ topics such as China’s power, the Asian Century, the idea of the Indo-Pacific and Australia in the region (Pan 2012). Within this longer-term assignment, the experiences of international students are instructive for their human voices and the richness of their stories. They effectively help pick up an important thread of ‘people-to-people’ connections and the relational quality of public diplomacy flagged in the Standing Committee report on public diplomacy in 2007. Joined with further discussion of vernacular internationalism, the hosting, caring and everyday encounters of Australians with international students, student-centred stories can profitably form part of the qualitative lens we need to keep extending to Australia’s foreign relations and national interests.

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Note

1. The character of ‘Us’ is recorded in the speech notes as ‘Uz’, but the intended link to the United States is clear, and would have been clear in the verbal delivery.

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The case of Asialink's arts residency program: towards a critical cosmopolitan approach to cultural diplomacy

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This paper explores the ways in which one of Australia's cultural diplomacy initiatives aimed at bringing Australia closer to Asia – the Asialink Arts Residency Program – may provide valuable insights for reimagining cultural diplomacy with a revised understanding of the national interest that reflects the increasingly transnational realities of the contemporary world. Drawing on extensive data gained from interviews and an online survey, the author found that program participants are engaging in exceptionally complex and at times unintended activities, and that policy concerns, such as positive image projection abroad, are rarely high on the residents' list of priorities. However, these experiences are of particular value for the national interest, in ways not yet formulated by or included in existing cultural diplomacy discourses. With the findings in mind, the author takes a critical cosmopolitan approach to reconceptualising cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; Asialink; cultural exchange; Australia–Asia relations

Introduction

In 2011 more than forty Australian writers, arts administrators, performance and visual artists embarked on a journey to Asia. Lucky to have been awarded a prestigious Asialink Arts Residency grant, most recipients spent between two and five months with their chosen host organisation in various locations across Asia. The program is funded under the broader umbrella of the Australian government's cultural diplomacy efforts, aimed at establishing closer relationships with and improving Australia's image in Asia. As part of my PhD research I was able to follow seven Asialink residents to investigate their experience abroad: What is the relationship between their art practice and cultural diplomacy? What is their understanding of their role in the cultural diplomacy realm? What happens in practice and how does it match up with official policy agendas? My findings suggest that existing definitions of cultural diplomacy rarely capture the multiplicity of processes involved in an arts residency program such as Asialink's.

I also identified a number of outcomes unique to this particular form of engagement, which have gained significance in multicultural societies such as Australia. The program's participants are not only creating layered networks across various sectors, they are also partaking in multiple dialogues with a variety of actors abroad

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and in Australia. Moreover, most residents' changed perspectives are fundamental to actively reimagining their world, often enhancing work practices and increasing the acceptance of diversity. I argue that current cultural diplomacy discourses can limit the depth of cultural exchanges and that a more expansive model of cultural diplomacy is needed, one that encompasses what are now called 'critical cosmopolitan' perspectives that extend one's concerns beyond the nation alone – to the region or world – and towards a sense of global responsibility. According to Gerard Delanty such a new kind of cosmopolitan imagination is necessary to recognise the 'normative significance of globalization [which] consists of a different kind of reality beyond the condition of globalization as such'. Changing social reality on a global scale includes increasing cultural pluralisation, growing interaction between global and local contexts such as diasporic cultures, and the ethical sense of a shared reality of issues that extend beyond individual nations. For Delanty, cosmopolitan principles are fundamental to establishing new forms of political community: he emphasises the importance of balancing various kinds of interests, including but also moving beyond national agendas. A more cosmopolitan stance would then allow cultural diplomacy efforts to engage more adequately with the culturally diverse realities of modern nations which increasingly extend beyond territorial borders (2009, pp. 2–7).

Background

Since 1990 over 650 Australian arts practitioners, writers and arts administrators have undertaken an arts residency in a great number of Asian countries with a variety of host organisations, ranging from performance spaces and art galleries to universities and publishing houses. Through an ethnographic investigation of the experiences of participants and a multi-methodological approach including interviews, an online survey, archival research and textual analysis, I investigated the complex cultural entanglements generated by Australian cultural diplomacy. The online survey was completed by 135 former Asialink residents responding to questions about the residency location, arts practice, other experiences and engagements and the significance of the residencies, personally and in terms of wider political relations. Based on these responses I developed the themes I wanted to explore further in the interviews. Thirteen former residents were interviewed in greater depth. Furthermore, conducting three interviews with seven of the 2011 residents allowed a closer investigation of the multiplicity of activities, events and processes that emerge in relation to the residency – in the planning, execution and aftercare stages. I scheduled three interviews per participant – one before departure, one during the stay abroad and the last one upon return to Australia. This method allowed closer examination of temporal processes and provided the opportunity to explore changes in the participants' perspectives on their residency, their art practice and cultural engagements. Besides interviewing the participants during their residency, I was able to visit a number of host organisations in various parts of Asia and talk to selected people involved with or in charge of these sites. Access to this range of people and places allowed me to identify the various dimensions of residency practices as cultural diplomacy.

In order to explore the tensions between policy and practice I also needed to investigate Asialink's position as an institutional mediator. Asialink is Australia's

leading centre for the promotion of public understanding of the countries of Asia and of Australia's role in the region. Asialink Arts is part of six fields of activity – the others are Events, Research and Analysis, Education, Leadership, and Community Health – designed to strengthen Australia-Asia engagement. Asialink has worked on establishing connections with Asian art worlds for more than two decades. For its arts residency program, Asialink Arts pools funds from different government bodies and redistributes it to the grant recipients. Asialink has worked closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and there is clear alignment of its work with Australia's cultural diplomacy agenda.

While the first national cultural policy document *Creative Nation* (1994) addressed Australia-Asia engagement only briefly, the recent *Creative Australia* policy (2013) draws greatly on the Asia focus of the *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper (Australian Government 2012), both released by the then Labor Government. In these documents, the significance of cultural relations with Asia is strongly emphasised. As of early 2015, the current, conservative government had not yet established its own cultural policy. The nature of regional engagement has differed over the years and has changed with governing political parties (see Manton 2003). Although cosmopolitanism is evoked in some national or state policy documents, I am interested in exploring what it means in the context of arts exchanges and how cosmopolitanism can be used in discussions on value – understood as 'an ability to effect change [...] and the difference it makes to individuals and society' (Crossick and Kaszynska 2014, p. 124).

In the Australian foreign policy sphere, cultural diplomacy has long been valued for its perceived capacity to shape international perceptions of Australia (see Australian Government 2006, 2008, 2010). According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's 2003 White Paper *Advancing the national interest*, 'the promotion of Australian art and culture is a practical policy to advance our national interests by fostering respect for Australia and its accomplishments' (Australian Government 2003, p. 129). While governments are gradually becoming more aware of the field of cultural engagement and an interest in cultural exchange is often articulated, cultural diplomacy is generally valued for its capacity to manage international relations to further the national interest (Cull 2009, p. 33).

I argue that notions of the 'national interest' need to be critically examined and refined in the context of cultural diplomacy. Of course, government policies are broadly aimed at advancing the national interest. But what exactly is this national interest? In my view, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between the interest of the nation and interests beyond the nation. Many interests beyond the nation are, or perhaps should be, equally in the interest of the nation. These include collective action on climate change, the sustainable use of resources, the eradication of poverty, and harmonious relations between peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds. Can cultural diplomacy expand beyond outdated nation-state centric motives, which are focussed predominantly on the strategic growth of national economies and geopolitical power plays? Global interconnectedness has led to an increasing relevance of global dynamics for local contexts. While there used to be a clear distinction between domestic and foreign affairs, the two are now more interwoven than ever, as recognised in *Australia in the Asian Century*: 'Today, almost every domestic policy issue has an international dimension, and most international issues have significant domestic repercussions' (Australian Government 2012, p. 256).

How are governments taking the global into consideration? With the national interest in mind, foreign policy-making is likely to focus on what the global can do for the local. However, one of the big questions should also be what can the local do for the global, or more precisely: How can governments advance the global interest? How can global issues be addressed and included in policy discourses that already struggle to negotiate various interest groups on the domestic level? What Delanty calls ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ is concerned with ‘the internal transformation of social and cultural phenomena through self-problematization, pluralization and developmental change arising out of competing cultural models in the context of a third culture’ (Delanty 2009, p. 13). He stresses that this new conception of cosmopolitanism is not only post-Western but also post-universal, as shown in particular postcolonial critiques, paving the way for alternative approaches to modernity.

If modernity is conceived of in multiple and intercivilizational terms, cosmopolitanism loses its connection with simple notions of universalism. This means that the only acceptable kind of cosmopolitanism today can be post-universal, that is a universalism that has been shaped by numerous particularism [*sic*] as opposed to an underlying set of values (Delanty 2009, p. 9).

Drawing on Anthony Appiah’s principle of imaginative engagement and an interest in the ‘experience and the ideas of others’ (2007, p. 85), Marsha Meskimmon believes cosmopolitanism has the capacity to transform people’s relationship with/in the world (2011, p. 7). Meskimmon adds that this notion of cosmopolitanism ‘asks how we might connect, through dialogue rather than monologue, our response-ability to our responsibilities within a world community.’

Cultural policies are increasingly significant in terms of their capacity to further mutual understanding and create social cohesion at the international as well as the national level. How can cultural policy-making reflect the responsibilities of governments on a global scale? While these issues may have found their way into policy documents and official political discourses, it is unclear whether there are adequate mechanisms and processes in place to follow through with such ambitions in practice. In the Australian case, the recent White Paper and Australia’s national cultural policy paper *Creative Australia* illustrate the increased focus on the cultural sphere:

Importantly, our links with Asia are social and cultural as much as they are political and economic. The arts, culture and creativity play an important role in strengthening Australia’s relationships with people in Asia (Australian Government 2012, p. 252).

The explicit foregrounding of the role of art and culture for international diplomacy illustrates the increasing enmeshment of international and national activity: previous arts policy focussed only on the national arts field.

The government’s intent to promote Australian art and culture as ‘a practical policy to advance [its] national interests by fostering respect for Australia and its accomplishments’ (Australian Government 2003, p. 129) does not extend beyond an understanding of cultural diplomacy as a tool for image-projection. This focus is particularly problematic as it limits the scope of cultural diplomacy to specific countries deemed to have economic or strategic value. It also tends to limit exchanges to art forms and venues designed to showcase a particular conception of

Australian culture. By contrast, Asialink arts residencies, with their diversity of participating residents, art practices and professional backgrounds, engaging with a broad network of host organisations in many Asian countries results in a far more complex range of outcomes and experiences, exceeding cultural diplomacy practices based on outward image projection.

One resident's interpretation of her residency as 'the planting of seeds' offers a good metaphor for the potential of the connections created by art residencies. The idea of seeds that need to be nourished to grow into something bigger, to then potentially become a beautiful garden with other well-nourished seeds is a wonderful image for the processes around cultural diplomacy activities as well as the requirements for them to prosper. The seeds are small and may not be seen at the beginning. The scattering of various types of seeds is important as not every seed may be compatible with the soil it falls on – some may not survive while others thrive. Constant attention to their well-being is necessary to make a rich garden. In the same way cultural exchanges may not provide immediately visible outcomes, and some outcomes will emerge over a longer time. In addition, to deepen engagement it is necessary to make further contacts of various types and in many places, which have the potential to access numerous networks and connect with multiple layers of another culture.

Network creation

Most residencies provide the foundation for the creation of manifold networks through basic people-to-people links. Asialink facilitates access to a variety of networks and institutions, ranging from local community organisations to high-level government involvement. Hence, the established contacts are not limited to particular elite or 'expat' circles. In accepting applicants at different stages of their career the residency program is open to various generations and thus a range of networks and institutions can be connected, potentially attracting a wider range of audiences. This is particularly significant when considering the reach of the program, as the potential for changing perceptions has multiple entry points and platforms of engagement, and is not limited to a small elite group of Australians. Moreover, the vast majority of participants already have professional and work contacts in the region, often overlapping with friends and acquaintances. In this way the residency program facilitates the deepening of existing connections and the creation of new links, which grow out of organically expanding networks, rather than attempting to implement wholly new structures in places prescribed by policy. Visual arts grant recipient Laura Wills expressed this as follows in one of the interviews I undertook with former Asialink residents in 2011:

I haven't been back to visit, what happened when I was there was that connections were made, but they take a long time, and there were opportunities in things that arose that could have been followed up, and they're all sort of potential paths that could be followed. It's like you think you have your finger in many pies and that connections is one pie that could be potentially followed one year.

Only a few weeks into his residency, visual and performing artist Nathan Gray was already planning future creative endeavours in Indonesia when I visited him in Yogyakarta:

I am already planning to go back. I can see that Indonesia would be a really good place to split my time between, because if I can make work here it's very very easy, cheap to make work and I have already got a level of expertise to draw on in Australia. And yes ... I've also been learning Indonesian and I don't want that to go to waste.

These more organically established bonds and connections are more likely to succeed on an ongoing basis as they have grown out of genuine interest and engagement. By supporting this variety of art exchanges Asialink enables very different levels of engagement.

When abroad there is more expectation of reaching out and making new connections – more so than when back at home. Besides, a residency is one of the best moments to reach out, as it is part of a mission. Moreover, this ties into existing connections and thus strengthens networks for future engagements. Such people-to-people links are fundamental in establishing a cultural exchange infrastructure that can be utilised for further exchange with various Australian institutions – high school students could be sent on an exchange, in the same way that universities could build on existing connections. Arguably this is just as valuable to the Australian people as improved trade relations – the primary motivation for cultural diplomacy activities from a government perspective – as it has the potential to advance people's cosmopolitan capacities for a more functional multicultural society. An accessible and well-developed network within the Asia-Pacific region has the potential to play a fundamental part in creating a healthy climate for Asia-literate and interculturally aware Australians.

The extensive creation of networks by many artists, writers and arts managers through residencies represents a valuable resource for foreign policy objectives aimed at integrating Australia more within the region. The 2012 White Paper argued that: 'The mindset should be that Australian organisations should become fully part of the region through two-way collaboration and partnership arrangements' (Australian Government 2012, p. 271). The various networks the residents gain access to expand and deepen every year. The emergence of extensive and manifold networks enables the opening of new spaces of discourse (Delanty 2006, p. 42), imaginative engagement (Appiah 2007, p. 85) and dialogue (Meskimmon 2011, p. 7). While these forms of conversation may not 'lead to consensus about anything, especially not values, it's enough that it helps people get used to one another' (Appiah 2007, p. 85). Residencies create connections, networks and knowledge exchange. In this way artists-in-residence are actively engaging in processes of intercultural dialogue (see UNESCO 2009, p. 9): 'the arts and creativity in particular testify to the depths and plasticity of intercultural relations and the forms of mutual enrichment they embody' (10). Arts can help us in 'understanding ourselves as wholly embedded within the world, we can imagine people and things beyond our immediate experience and develop our ability to respond to very different spaces, meanings and others' (Meskimmon 2011, p. 8). Hito Steyerl and Boris Buden state that this 'type of production is very contemporary in the sense that its results are not primarily products or objects but in fact relations between people' (2006, para. 5). I suggest that it is not the connections between people alone that are of significance, but the enhanced connectivity between many institutions, organisations, practices, ideas and social spheres.

Intercultural dialogue

If culture and the arts really are ‘the shortcut to understanding who we are’ (Australian Government 2013, p. 37), their social value must be significant. Shifting the emphasis to intercultural dialogue could significantly increase the perceived social value of cultural diplomacy activities. Intercultural dialogue here is not understood as a concept aimed at the development of strategies and skills that enable people to deal with *one* (or a set of selected other) particular unknown culture(s). Rather the individual who is trained in intercultural relations develops capacities that allow them to deal with *any* other culture. Since the early 1990s Asialink Arts has sent more than 650 residents to over 16 countries on the Asian continent. While there have been greater numbers of residencies available in India, Japan, China and Indonesia, likely due to bigger budgets of the respective bilateral funding organisations, the destinations are widespread and the artists’ interest in a very broad range of locations can be catered for. Hence there is no one typical type of engagement: every exchange will be different, with unique opportunities and moments which cannot be foreseen. The multiplicity and scope of these experiences is significant and the sum of all these variegated points of engagement and moments of exchange offer a unique platform for intercultural dialogue.

The importance of the residencies is not due to the cultural particularities of certain politically or economically relevant nations, for example, knowing how to engage with Chinese business people or how to do a bow properly in Japan. ‘Rather than knowledge of others, what determines the success of intercultural dialogue is the basic ability to listen, cognitive flexibility, empathy, humility and hospitality’ (UNESCO 2009, p. 10). In this understanding, cultural diplomacy is primarily aimed at providing people with ‘intercultural goggles’ which will help them to communicate with and interpret diverse cultural practices, rather than improving or shaping the image of one particular nation-state to another.

The first query from the policy corner would probably be: Why should any government fund artist residencies; is it in our nation’s interest? I would argue that in the context of cultural diplomacy, intercultural or mutual understanding is in the national interest, as expressed by UNESCO: ‘Affirming that respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security’ (2001, p. 12). Equipping more people around the world with cosmopolitan perspectives including intercultural capacities is beneficial for peaceful international engagement and ultimately better economic relations. In essence, intercultural dialogue is characterised by the awareness of the existence of alternate cultural norms paired with the capacity to interact sensitively.

The concept of translation is very helpful in the creation of intercultural understanding and dialogue, and significant for cultural exchange, for cosmopolitan interactions resemble translation processes (Delanty 2006). In their preparedness to face the unknown artists become significant in their role as intercultural translators – as they have tested and found alternative ways of digesting and negotiating cultural difference. Similarly to many residents, performing artist Lisa Griffiths describes the engagement with unfamiliar contexts as the ultimate way to extend the own artistic practice:

You know you reach that point in your performance career and you think you've done every company, you've done everything you can so far. How do I get better at my class? Sometimes the only way to do that is to go overseas ... you are in a different country and you don't speak the language and you're really forced to articulate what is your craft or whatever. You don't have to speak, you can dance ... exciting experience.

A residency is not solely about improving the image of your practice, but also helps to refine and explore aspects of your work and life that you have started to take for granted. While most artists I interviewed agree that it is not an absolute necessity to have worked abroad in order to succeed, they certainly see it as a reliable way to raise one's profile and reputation in wider creative circles. Social psychologists William Maddux and Adam Galinsky have researched the significance of living abroad for creativity:

[Experiences] in foreign cultures can increase the psychological readiness to accept and recruit ideas from unfamiliar sources, [...] which are important for the creative process. Thus, an individual who has lived abroad may be better able to generate and integrate ideas in novel ways. (2009, pp. 1048–1049)

Not only are artists able to 'converse' in a language that transcends economic development and strategic interests, they are also willing to reach out. In this increasingly interconnected and complex world new ways to approach and solve problems, and new methods of negotiating various cultural differences are needed. There is no one way of dealing with these manifold issues – no formula that can be applied to all contexts and environments.

Papastergiadis highlights the significance of cultural translation for cosmopolitan processes, drawing on Delanty's identification of two fundamental shifts that arise from cultural translation: 'First, the encounter exposes the diversity of seeing the world – the relativization of values. Second, the re-evaluation of prior standpoints then provokes the search for a new normative framework' (Papastergiadis 2012, pp. 144, 145). Ien Ang describes cultural translation as the 'process by which subjects coming from different cultures and backgrounds *can and cannot* reach understandings of shared situations and events' (2003, p. 32; emphasis in original). It is the process of relativising and re-evaluating existing values that makes cosmopolitanism particularly constructive in regard to negotiating between conflicting approaches to value. Cosmopolitanism understood as living-in-translation can be valued for its capacity to create awareness towards other cultural modes and help dissolve existing hierarchies. This was expressed by poet Andy Jackson when I visited him in Chennai in 2011:

I think being in India, it makes me question things ... about your own culture and about the world but also about India. I have always had preconceptions here and having been here already I thought I knew things about it. When you arrive there is a lot still to understand. So, it's like it's moving away from you the closer you get to it. And I always sort of like the uncertainty of this poetry. [...] When I don't know and I want to know that's when poetry comes, trying to explore something, trying to work it out.

Changing perspectives

The overturning of already assumed perspectives is particularly relevant for the development of intercultural competencies and is a fundamental characteristic of a

cosmopolitan imagination. UNESCO highlights the significance of these abilities, which involve the reconfiguration of 'our perspectives and understandings of the world; for it is not so much cultures as people – individuals and groups, with their complexities and multiple allegiances – who are engaged in the process of dialogue' (2009, p. 9).

Indeed, changing perspectives and the impact on their art practice are considered the most significant outcomes of the residency process by most residency participants. The various ways in which this filters back to Australian audiences must be acknowledged, as these reconfigured perspectives and re-imaginings of the social world can play a significant role in sensitising people to cultural diversity and the development of cosmopolitan attitudes. This process closely relates to 'the role of arts and cultural engagement in shaping *the reflective individual and the engaged citizen*' (Crossick and Kaszynska 2014, p. 125, emphasis in original). As Delanty puts it, 'cosmopolitanism concerns processes of self-transformation in which new cultural forms take shape and where new spaces of discourse open up leading to a transformation in the social world' (2006, p. 44). Even the slightest change in perception and work practice can be significant for the further development of former residents. It may add an additional layer to the way they approach otherness or alternative cultural values. Sharing their work with Australian audiences is likely to introduce these enriched perceptions to Australians. A major dimension of cultural learning is reflexivity, as one not only becomes more familiar with other cultural values but at the same time gains valuable insights about oneself. Part of this process of self-discovery is finding out about personal limitations. The new and unknown is the perfect testing ground for it, while at home there are rarely the challenges needed to explore one's own boundaries, nor the time to experiment.

The moments and experiences described by most participants are more aligned with intercultural or cosmopolitan conceptions of 'learning' focussed on the exploration of unknown processes rather than on the transmission of contextual knowledge. Moreover, the idea of sharing is prominent in many of the artists' accounts, as a means of avoiding familiar hierarchies within learning/teaching scenarios. This point was well made in an anonymous response to my online survey:

I believe strongly, that we, as art practitioners have much more to learn from our host cultures and that it is this knowledge and experience that we should be contributing back to Australia. We should be making a greater effort to 'learn.'

Of the 135 former residents who responded to my survey, almost two thirds disagreed or disagreed strongly with the idea that they had more to teach than to learn in their stay abroad. The considerable interest in learning, as well as the moments and processes that comprise it, is one of the major sources for social value in the cultural exchange processes of the residencies. The exploration of various 'Asias' and the subsequent circulation of new knowledge across Australia must have some impact on Australians' understanding of 'Asia', increase their 'Asia literacy' and ultimately affect their understanding of otherness. Asia-literacy can be a problematic concept, especially when asking the question 'who defines the 'Asia' of Asia literacy and who is excluded from this process?' (Hughes 2012b, p. 4). According to Kirrilee Hughes, Asia-literacy from an Australian perspective entails language

and geographical knowledge of Asia; usually assumed to be acquired through official educational institutions such as schools (2012a, 2012b). The importance of intercultural dialogue and Asia-literacy has been recognised in the Australian school curriculum and intercultural understanding is believed to enable ‘students to respect and appreciate their own and others’ cultures and to work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds’ (Fisher 2010, p. 2). However, the way that Asia-literacy is predominantly measured is through numbers of students taking Asian language courses, which neglects existing forms of Asia knowledge and ultimately fails to recognise other forms of ‘latent Asia literacy’ (Hughes 2012a). I argue that the idea of latent Asia-literacy, referring to Asian languages learned beyond school or university classrooms, could be expanded even further to include a wider range of capacities. Asialink’s arts residencies play a significant role in enhancing Asia-literacy by developing familiarity with various Asian cultures. What is more, meaningful connections between the education sector and cultural diplomacy activities could be considered with the aim of deepening and/or extending the networks created by the various program participants, and generating further engagement.

Art-based exchanges have the tendency to focus on the process of exchange itself – the intended outcomes generally relate to cross-cultural engagement, the exchange of ideas and work practices as well as the creation or maintenance of artist networks (Khademi 1999). Consequently, they are not as instrumentalised as would be the case in the business exchange, where the outcome of the transaction is deemed to be what matters. Not only can exposure to Asian art worlds expand the understandings of the multiplicities and complexities of Asia, but this form of contact also has the capacity to involve participants in various types of creative engagement. However minute they may be, connection or entry points can be formed by reading a book, watching a play or visiting an exhibition. The indirect impacts of the residency program and the dispersion of experiences can lead to the creation of a less homogenous image of Asia, less likely to produce strong sets of stereotypes and clichéd perspectives. While this insight is drawn from the experiences of Australian program participants, it is certainly of global relevance, given that populations everywhere are increasingly diverse and the world has become multi-polar.

Generally, artists in residence gain access to local communities through working with them, in a similar way that many expats do. However, resident artists often distance themselves from expat circles, as they are perceived to prefer socialising with other expats they meet working for international companies or aid programmes (Beaverstock 2002, Leonard 2010). That many artists I have spoken to intensely experience and struggle with the separation from home can be seen as a sign that they are rubbing against the boundaries between themselves and locals, more so than tourists and other expats do. This friction enables them to recognise what they have tended to take for granted and to question familiar assumptions (Høffding 2009, pp. 5–6), resulting in greater insights and understanding about the social world and their position in it. The German notion of *Horizontenerweiterung* (Glauser 2009, pp. 159–164), the expanding of one’s horizon, as a form of reflexivity is a basic condition of critical cosmopolitanism, which is characterised by the ongoing formation of new perspectives when exposed to culturally diverse realities (Delanty 2009, p. 13).

Enriched work practices

According to my online survey results, around half of the artists were already negotiating cross-cultural themes in their work before they embarked on the residency. As this is not a requirement in Asialink's selection processes, for many participants this aspect is not fundamental to their work. Consequently, cross-cultural issues are likely to develop organically and unintentionally, without a prescribed direction and detached from imposed agendas. Interestingly, almost a third of survey participants state that they started to engage with cross-cultural themes after completing their residency. Writers most actively negotiate the tensions and dynamics between cultures, and in many cases this becomes the essence of their writing, more so than for artists working in other art forms. Their insights and thought processes are filtered back to Australian audiences, adding valuable knowledge to the canon of Asia-literate Australian literature. Their readers gain access to reconfigured perspectives on the social world and thus are given an impetus to expanding their own horizons.

In order to ensure a successful project the resident has to adapt to the challenges and unfamiliar circumstances faced on location. It is impossible to follow known work routines or accustomed processes; flexibility and room to manoeuvre are essential. This inevitably leads to experimentation with new forms of expression, interaction and negotiation, resulting in unique projects that have the particular potential to become sites for constructive tension, collaboration and reconciliation. A close investigation of interview data, online survey results and residency reports has revealed that the majority of participants adapt in response to tension or opportunity, as reflected in these two statements:

Well, I think you gain *so* much more when you get out of your comfort zone and get another environment. [Be]cause when you're working in another environment there's experiences that you're going to gain from that that are going to be inspiring you within your own practice (Tanja Beer, performing arts resident).

This residency was equal parts challenge and satisfaction. It was the longest I had travelled overseas and the longest I had travelled alone, and my first extended writing residency. I had to venture beyond a language barrier and into an unknown country, and I had placed high expectations of myself in terms of meeting certain writing objectives. It was not so much about 'achieving', however, as it was about absorbing, observing and responding to the places I had chosen to work in and within (Bonny Cassidy, writing resident).

Usually, this is the sort of challenge that is welcome – invited as the much sought-after source for inspiration. Getting out of your normal routine, leaving behind your usual ways and leaving your comfort zone are seen to be particularly crucial, as people can become complacent when they are too comfortable. Complacency is not beneficial for working creatively and tends to limit creative processes. The search for stimulation is a constant challenge and thus an essential ingredient in reaffirming an artist's creativity. Again, venturing into the unknown and facing unforeseen challenges activates thought processes, demands alternative approaches and triggers innovative responses, which then get explored and digested creatively. The ability to work with new situations can be considered valuable training for future endeavours.

Again, it helps to use the process of learning a new language as an example. Having mastered one foreign language provides fundamental experience for learning additional ones. As situations will always be different, it is not necessarily about gaining contextual knowledge of a particular situation, but rather the capacity to imagine and recognise alternative settings. Many residents describe the various ways in which their work practices have been advanced by the experience:

I think when I first got there it was all quite dislocated and ‘What’s going on?’ and ‘How do I understand this?’ And at the end I felt like I was just seeing more of the detail that I didn’t see before because I wasn’t settled. And I think the writing is more calm and the early poems are more unresolved and tense and confused, which is fair enough (Andy Jackson, writing resident).

The residency did not only challenge my own work patterns and ideals but allowed my practice to extend and grow into performance, collaboration and site-specific outdoor installation work which was well beyond any of my expectations (online survey response).

Moving away from regular work patterns does not come naturally and for some this becomes one of the overarching realisations of the residency. The idea of developing a project along the way and not having a specific goal in mind is crucial, yet this is not always straightforward to those used to strict project proposals and guidelines. Proven patterns are easier and more reliable and to some extent so is the reproduction of the known with a difference. Of course, depending on personality traits and work style, residencies can push participants completely out of their comfort zone and thus facilitate unique engagements and interpretation of ideas. Scenographer and performing arts resident Tanja Beer shares her insights on teaching at the Center for the Study of World Civilizations at Tokyo Institute of Technology:

I think I gained something unique out of not being at an art school, about being at a technical school and actually the first time that I actually taught non-art students something creative. So, that is a very unique experience in itself. So they, the students not being art students, brought something different to the experience. [...] So it was a very different way to teach, which I enjoyed far more ... much more organic, much more in the moment ... I discovered so many teaching techniques or methodologies just through this process of being in the present moment.

This space grown out of tension and necessity then becomes a space of opportunity – and this is how the majority of artist residents perceive it. *Experimentierfreude* (German for the love of experimentation) of residents grows out of having the time and space to focus on their work without the common distractions at home – jobs, friends, family. Freed from the usual constraints, the resident can put her mind entirely to her creative practice. In this condensed period most residents soak up any inspiration available to store for later usage. The new setting is not the only source for inspiration, the time to engage with that place is also a necessary condition for the creation of relevant moments for critical cosmopolitanism to unfold. Time is needed to be relaxed enough about trying something completely unknown – without sufficient time people tend to resort to tried-and-tested practices, as there is none to waste if the experiment is unsuccessful.

Generally, the idea of failure is flawed and can cripple many attempts at experimentation. Failure becomes particularly problematic if it is defined against tight outcome descriptions, as anything not listed as an outcome could be considered a failure by default. There are two ways of confronting this predicament – outcomes have to be defined more broadly and a greater variety of relevant outcomes and/or impacts have to be acknowledged. But more importantly, there needs to be a shift away from a dichotomy that pits failure against successful outcomes, as this imposes one set of values as a universal set of norms (Frow 1995, p. 135). Rather it needs to be recognised that there may be many alternative roads to ‘success’. Many residents become more experimental in expanding their usual practice into fields they would not normally access, or had little interest in previously.

Accepting diversity

A cosmopolitan approach, characterised by acceptance of and focus on imagining multiple alternatives, would have to be accepted or applied within the cultural diplomacy canon for such an understanding to be established more broadly. Asialink can be seen as a mediator between government-driven understandings of cultural diplomacy and the practical cosmopolitanism of the art world. However, translating between these two spheres is complex. There are many ways in which official cultural diplomacy discourses limit the depth and potential of cultural exchanges. For example, there is often still a strong focus on selecting countries of economic or strategic relevance to Australia. Moreover, many cultural diplomacy efforts are not aimed at long-term support, enabling only brief encounters. Finally, opportunities are missed for extending connections and networks created by arts residencies into other areas. The education sector for example could benefit greatly from the additional opportunities for exchange, with their potential to increase Asia literacy and intercultural capacities.

Many residents have lived in Australia for most of their lives, having been socialised to a particular set of cultural values and norms. It takes an extended stay in another country to recognise some of the underlying structures that are taken for granted. For many of the residents this initiates reflexive thinking about their home country and what it means to be Australian. This self-reflexivity is needed to create cosmopolitan spaces. Many people are still too reliant on singular approaches and solutions to problems, trained to believe that there is one way of doing things – or at least one ‘best’ way of doing things, when there are potentially many more. The acceptance of plurality is one of the main characteristics of critical cosmopolitanism.

In an increasingly multicultural Australia, developing approaches and structures that support these multiple value systems is necessary. As previously stated, writers-in-residence, in particular, negotiate these issues most actively in their writing. For many, the act of writing is the very process of making sense of the social world. Art and literature that engage effectively with the diversity inherent in the peoples of Asia aids the cultivation of cosmopolitan attitudes and intercultural openness. Both residents and audiences gain the potential to activate new modes of perception and expand existing understandings of the world. The manifold narratives and various types of accounts (different narrators, media, experiences, art forms) add to knowledge about and understanding of culturally diverse peoples, ultimately furthering the acceptance of diversity, which is very valuable in a

multicultural society such as Australia. Cosmopolitanism as described by Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande ‘combines the tolerance of otherness with indispensable universal norms; it combines unity and diversity’ (2007, p. 71).

Conclusion

I have outlined aspects of Asialink’s arts residency programs that contribute to Australian cultural diplomacy, based on detailed research into the practices and experiences of residents. From this research I find that residencies frequently result in the establishment of ongoing intercultural dialogues, which at their best have the potential to change perspectives and ways of working across cultures and art form practices. This is in line with the ideal of developing a spirit of critical cosmopolitanism through ‘self-problematization, pluralization and developmental change’ (Delanty 2009, p. 13). The residents’ re-imagining of the social world, initially triggered by the experience abroad and an exposure to alternative modes of engagement and work practices, results in a more nuanced production of art works and projects which have the potential to familiarise Australians with Asia and more generally with ways of engaging with other cultural values. It is this aspect in particular that is neglected by official policy agendas. While the creation of networks by artists, writers and arts managers in residence should represent a valuable resource for foreign policy objectives aimed at broadly integrating Australia within the region, cultural diplomacy discourses tend to have a much more restrictive definition of networks considered to be of relevance. Policy discourses such as the Asian Century white paper (Australian Government 2012) have focused largely on select trading and strategic partners rather than an engagement with multiple actors in the region. At the same time, the motives for engagement are not inclusive of a wide variety of actors throughout all levels of society. Only a revised notion of the ‘national interest’ would allow a greater acknowledgment of cultural diplomacy activities as outlined in this article, taking into consideration and extending cultural diplomacy’s relevance for the current global developments most nations are facing. And while these lessons learnt are based on the experience of Australian arts professionals, they are of much wider significance. To compete on the same playing field participants in the cultural diplomacy game need to adopt this more cosmopolitan version of ‘the national interest’.

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Living with instrumentalism: the academic commitment to cultural diplomacy

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Despite the influence of cultural policy studies and other theoretical approaches ‘after critique’, the dominant paradigm across much of the humanities remains anti-governmental especially when ‘culture’ is the other term in the equation. This paper argues instead for a positive relationship between humanities academics/intellectuals and the governmental agendas of cultural diplomacy, and for ways of accommodating critical perspectives on both the concept of ‘the national interest’ and the instrumentalisation of culture. It examines the policy objectives of the Australian government’s main cultural diplomacy agencies together with practical examples from its bilateral bodies, in particular the Australia–China Council and its program of support for Australian Studies in China.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; public diplomacy; Australian government; China; Australian Studies

Australia’s reputational deficit

Given the importance of education as an export industry and of international students in sustaining the domestic university system – in Australia, certainly, but across many developed economies as well – almost all of those working in the higher education sector are to some degree involved in the business of public diplomacy. Clearly our universities are so engaged, not only promoting themselves in a competitive marketplace but also promoting the virtues of the national system and its social settings in a *competition between nations*. Yet despite the long history of academic involvement both theoretical and applied in the institutions of policy-making, and despite the influence of cultural policy studies closer to home, an anti-government rhetoric with an equally long history is still a common default position for many in the humanities. Trained to be sceptical of governmental and institutional logics, to think of themselves not merely as scholars but as critical intellectuals, and certainly not as cadres of the state, their *raison d’être* is critique and their habitus the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’.¹ Being suspicious of governments is almost second nature, especially when *culture* is the other item in the equation. Elements of this view were present in the 1980s–1990s debates over the ‘institutionalisation’ of intellectuals (Jacoby 1987, Said 1994) and, differently, in the more recent controversies surrounding the establishment of China’s Confucius Institutes on university campuses (Flew and Hartig 2014, p. 2). In the United States

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of America and beyond, cultural diplomacy has perhaps never quite overcome the bad reputation it accrued through its deployment during the Cold War (Saunders 1999, Gienow-Hecht 2000; but see Schneider 2004).

Of course there are good reasons to keep our critical apparatus as finely tuned and corrosion-proof as possible. Governments will always be interested players in the games to which they commit, however remote from directly instrumental ends their projects might appear. Like the marketplace, government diplomacy agencies will routinely repurpose and instrumentalise culture or education in such a way that the gaucheries of national promotional campaigns might appear relatively innocent by comparison. Nonetheless, I want to make a case for the engagement of critical intellectuals in cultural diplomacy projects, for the intermeshing of 'our' politics with the politics of government, and for the ways in which scholars might *own* aspects of state-driven cultural diplomacy agendas – not in the sense of taking them over, for those based in the university rarely have that kind of power, but of learning to live with them, to work with and within them, to repurpose them, or indeed to find many of them congenial and productive in the first place. These arguments will be based on my own experience of working for the best part of two decades with and within Australian government bilateral bodies, especially the Australia-China Council (ACC) and the Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF), promoting Australian Studies internationally.²

Support for the development of Australian Studies outside Australia is one dimension of the Australian government's broader public diplomacy strategy, although it must be said not the highest priority within that strategy. Indeed, part of the present argument is the argument that those of us engaged in this work have repeatedly to make to government, in this case most immediately to the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT): that of arguing for the long-term significance of such programs as a form of public diplomacy, and more specifically a form of *cultural* diplomacy, no less so than their more obvious, more prominent investments in such areas as media relations, tourist and business promotions or major cultural events with potentially greater short-term impacts. The promotion of Australian Studies overseas as a state-sponsored program can be understood as cultural diplomacy in so far as it is focused on promoting a better informed and more up-to-date – and therefore, the assumption is, a more *positive* – understanding of Australia's culture in the broadest sense of the term. Given that its primary focus overseas will be on schools, universities and research institutes, this end of cultural diplomacy overlaps with what is now sometimes called 'educational diplomacy', although the latter is often focused more narrowly on student or staff exchange. And while such programs are often more about educational dollars than educational diplomacy, they are harnessed to the public diplomacy agenda, quite explicitly in Australia's case (DFAT 2014).

For present purposes I want to restrict the meanings of 'cultural diplomacy', to draw back from some recent definitions that emphasise extra-governmental dimensions and hence embrace all sorts of formal and informal exchange across national borders. My focus is more directly on state-sponsored deployments of culture and education for foreign audiences, deployments aimed expressly at producing publics more knowledgeable about and better disposed towards our nation. This, as it were, is the 'national interest' test that such programs have to pass. Alongside cultural diplomacy, Australia's current Public Diplomacy Strategy highlights 'sports diplomacy', 'economic diplomacy', and perhaps most interesting, 'diaspora diplomacy',

encompassing both diasporic communities in Australia and Australian diasporic networks (DFAT 2014).

The significance of cultural diplomacy for Australia and in particular of the task of building an informed, current and positive understanding of Australian culture and society overseas arises in large part from what we might call the nation's 'reputational deficit'. Australia has a positive image internationally but of a very limited kind, largely a tourist image of leisure and landscape. This might be supplemented by a knowledge of Australia as resource-rich or as a reliable source of coal and other primary products; or as the birthplace of a few global celebrities. Otherwise knowledge about Australia overseas is with very few exceptions very low, very out-of-date, or very wrong. Further, the positive images which have accrued to Australia cannot easily be converted into other forms of prestige, capital or power – cultural prestige, the prestige of tradition *or* hypermodernity, the power of influence or exemplarity. Allied to the reputational deficit is a kind of 'distinctiveness deficit'. Apart from its Indigenous culture it is difficult for Australia to promote an *Australian* culture in the way that the French, Chinese, Japanese or, slightly differently, American governments can – and it is no accident that Indigenous cultures play a very large part in Australia's cultural diplomacy programs. There is no language distinctiveness either, of the kind that can support overseas, state-subsidised institutions such as the Alliance française or Dante Alighieri Society.

The reputational stakes for Australia, then, are very different from what's involved for other more 'visible' and reputation-rich nations, and this fact shapes the meaning, goals and scale of its cultural diplomacy. It can scarcely be understood as soft power in the traditional sense, as 'softening' the effects of hard power or creating a positive national image in a situation where global competition or conflict runs the risk of producing negative images of the nation and its ambitions. Australia's reputational deficit explains the (sometimes embarrassing) emphasis in all the official statements of goals and objectives which frame its public diplomacy strategies on the need to promote the image of Australia as sophisticated, creative, technologically advanced, innovative and entrepreneurial: 'to project a positive and contemporary image of Australia and Australia's capabilities internationally' (AICC 2014). Further, Australian agencies are attempting to do this primarily in a region, the Asia-Pacific region, where there is no deep history of interconnectedness between Australia and its key partners and no shared public sphere between their civil societies, although there is a 'hidden history' of such links that we are just beginning to understand.³

As for many nations, Australia's public diplomacy takes a wide range of forms, both old and new as defined in the recent literature on the 'new public diplomacy' (Melissen 2007, Zaharna 2010, Lee and Melissen 2011). Although, arguably, this distinction is a matter of alternative strategies rather than a paradigm shift (the 'new' might not be as new as sometimes imagined), traditional approaches are characterised as being hierarchical, 'centred on intergovernmental relations and top-down communication', and primarily concerned with image projection or 'messaging'. The new public diplomacy, by contrast, is based on a network or *networked* model, on dialogue rather than messaging, and on 'horizontal communication as well as multidirectional flows and exchange of information' (Hocking 2007, p. 35, Flew and Hartig 2014, p. 5). If the theory struggles to get beyond banal generalisations, the networked model does offer a good account of the kinds of cultural diplomacy that

happens as it were 'beneath' the high-profile nation-branding exercises or major arts events.

It also helps us to understand how the limitations imposed by Australia's status as a middle power, at best, might be turned to advantage. Australia has not taken the 'high road' of cultural diplomacy, establishing large-scale institutions such as the British Council, the Japan Foundation, or the Confucius Institutes. Looked at negatively, this can be seen as a policy failure, a failure to take up the opportunities for cultural diplomacy critical to a country of Australia's size and history, and such a critique has its point. As one commentator from the education sector puts it:

Australia does not have any British Council equivalent but rather a confusing array of uncoordinated national councils and institutes that represent Australia internationally and a further complication of having state bodies and offices that represent our education, arts, language and culture. Despite a lack of vision, coordination and strategic thinking we have somehow blundered through it with Australia being perceived as a friendly, tolerant and welcoming destination. (Fay 2010)

The government's 2014 Public Diplomacy Strategy is a response to the lack of vision and coordination registered here, although the criticisms remain valid. But it might also be argued that for a middle power, especially one with a reputational profile such as Australia's, the 'low road' of cultural diplomacy makes good sense: a strategy less (or not simply) about selling or displaying Australian culture than 'networking' it, building relationships through and around it, sustaining local constituencies and promoting local agency. In the most positive view, this is how the programs for promoting Australian Studies internationally function, although the fact is as much a result of their relatively meagre funding and piecemeal policy support as of any conscious design. There is a good deal of turning necessities into virtues. The modest aims of a cultural diplomacy strategy working in this mode are to produce a level of 'Australia literacy' overseas where little or none exists currently while sustaining networks where expertise or interest has already been established. *Asia* literacy has been the key term in recent policy debates in Australia (Australian Government 2012), and while this is an extremely important emphasis to maintain, my own commitment is to persuade government and other agencies that building *Australia* literacy offshore is equally important, indeed more important as a cultural diplomacy strategy.

Cultural diplomacy and culture critique

An engagement with cultural diplomacy as defined above requires us to think of government outside the paradigm of negative critique; to conceive of government in *positive* terms, as 'constitutive', as productive, as a set of institutionally dense and dispersed assemblages. To state the obvious, governments invest in programs and projects designed to make things happen. In democratic societies, that means a very wide range of programs with diverse ends and often competing priorities, but programs which are just as likely as not to be disposed towards ends such as those stated in the Public Diplomacy Strategy: 'democracy, rule of law, human rights and freedom of speech, cultural diversity, gender equality, respect for people with disabilities and respect for indigenous cultures and values' (DFAT 2014). Governments, in the narrow sense of the elected political party of the day, can always ignore, violate or distort such 'core values' as the Strategy optimistically and

somewhat implausibly calls them. But few readers of this essay, I suspect, would object to supporting programs fashioned in pursuit of these goals, however much we reserve the right to retain our scepticism as to motivations or short-term objectives.

On one level the key commitment of government to cultural diplomacy programs, as we have seen, will always be to promoting a ‘positive and contemporary image’ of the nation, and typically this will be for *other* ends, economic or political rather than the cultural for its own sake. The point is not that government agencies will intervene directly to demand one-dimensional celebratory accounts of the nation from those engaged, say, in delivering Australian Studies programs offshore. In the Australian case, certainly, such intervention is highly unlikely outside purpose-built nation-branding campaigns; and more broadly, presenting the nation as complex, diverse, democratic and reforming is a major part of the exercise. Yet the governing rhetoric *is*, inevitably, still that of conveying positive images of the nation or promoting culture ‘in the national interest’.

The core values quoted above are governed in the Public Diplomacy Strategy by the overall objective of advancing ‘targeted public diplomacy initiatives which promote our economic, cultural, sporting, scientific and education assets in order to underline Australia’s credentials as a destination for business, investment, tourism and study’ (DFAT 2014). Cultural diplomacy is not undertaken by governments altruistically, but overtly in the national interest, and learning to live with this commitment to the nation might, at least theoretically, be one of the major challenges for those trained in the hermeneutics of suspicion or more simply those used to teaching the nation critically. For if we wish to own parts of the cultural diplomacy agenda, the first thing we will need to own is the *nation* itself, a deeply unfashionable kind of commitment in the humanities academy given the transnational, post-colonial or cosmopolitan turn in almost every discipline. Nations and nationalism are prime targets for suspicion, a suspicion manifested in the very title of this special issue (‘beyond the national interest?’). Sophisticated critiques of the homogenising, ethnicising, mythologising and otherwise oppressive practices of nations and nationalisms – practices that appear to be fundamental to their operation, not merely incidental – have appeared from political science, sociology, media studies, literary studies and beyond (Bhabha 1990, Billig 1995, Hage 1998, Boehmer 2002, Curthoys and Lake 2005). Australian Studies itself was launched in the academy through the critique of ‘actually existing’ nationalisms, even where the movement was itself neo-nationalist in certain respects, in its anti-imperialism for example (Walter 1989).

But considered as a policy horizon and terrain for action, as a set of institutions for mobilising resources and forms of expertise, the nation remains a powerful, productive and useful machine. Although never the only determining factor, the nation massively shapes the institutions in which we work, the cultures we consume and at what cost, the social and political identities we forge for ourselves. It’s not just that the nation won’t go away. If we want to mobilise certain notions of citizenship or ‘national responsibility’, for example, of a democratic media, of cultural diversity, gender equality or indigenous rights, or if we want to protect aspects of our cultural institutions, cultural heritage or cultural industries, the nation will be a critical, motivating frame in which to do so – again never the only one but crucial if we want some policy and institutional weight behind these values. A commitment to cultural diplomacy ‘in the national interest’ can be articulated in much the same

way; that is, as a positive commitment to the institutions, practices and policies of the nation that we want to explain, contextualise, advocate, defend, even celebrate – none of which, of course, implies uncritical nationalism. The ‘positive’ story about Australian multiculturalism or Indigenous Australia, for example, can scarcely be told without its other dimensions, the failures of policy, the limits to equality, the histories of racism, and so forth.

The other common critique of cultural diplomacy is of its instrumentalisation of culture, its redeployment of culture as an instrument designed to serve other ends: for example, for city, state or nation branding or simply in the interests of commerce and trade or political influence, rather than for cultural exchange ‘in and for itself’. But, to begin with, it’s not clear what cultural exchange in and for itself might look like or for that matter why governments should establish programs with that end in mind if it could be defined. More to the point, culture is always-already ‘purposed’, and continually repurposed, for specific ends, in education, in tourism, or indeed in the field of art itself, in art markets and exhibitions, in performance or display; in the public sphere, in forms of national self-criticism and national self-congratulation; and also, of course, in academic research. Indeed, the notion of cultural exchange in and for itself is probably best thought of as just another way of purposing culture. Culture can be deployed well or badly, subtly or crassly, but it makes no sense to oppose instrumentalisation *tout court*. And if state-sponsored cultural diplomacy can open up new export markets for our cultural products or professional networks for our practitioners – or for that matter for agriculture, resources or manufacturing – all power to its (cultural) arm.

As these arguments should indicate, what we can see as an emerging ‘cultural diplomacy moment’, characterised by increased academic interest in the field from beyond the usual suspects, from the cultural disciplines in addition to political science or international relations, has very strong parallels with the cultural policy moment of the 1980s and 1990s. It is to some extent a direct outgrowth of the redefinition of culture within cultural studies that the policy emphasis initiated. Like cultural policy studies, the new positive interest in cultural diplomacy assumes the ‘constitutionally governmental’ nature of culture; it eschews totalising or ‘avant-garde’ critique for reforms within liberal and social democratic paradigms; and it reinvests in the concept of citizenship and ‘the trainings necessary to activate and motivate it’ (Cunningham 1992, p. 10). Further, like the engagements of cultural policy studies, cultural diplomacy engagements require a disaggregated understanding of government, and of audiences and markets, a more Foucauldian sense of ‘governmentality’ as an enabling – of course not necessarily benign – set of institutions, agents and processes. Such institutions will almost always be impure, compromised and messy, trying to manage different imperatives and priorities, but it is precisely in such a context, rather than one of absolute policy directives that are then simply implemented, that much cultural diplomacy work will find its opportunities for making a difference. The effects of ‘culture’ in such institutional settings will always exceed, escape or fall short of the national policy imperatives placed upon it. The effects will largely be unpredictable, a tactical process of doing good work ‘in the national interest’ by working beyond or below its narrower instrumentalisation. A little experience of working with large ministries or other state offices is enough to prove that government is anything but monolithic, ideologically consistent or, for that matter, narrowly instrumental.

To put this in more positive terms and to underscore a point suggested earlier: many of our governmental and public institutions engaged with culture and education will be pre-disposed towards precisely the kind of ends we might desire of culture (as socially-reforming liberals). They are likely to support principles of diversity or access and equity for example, even if these might also compete with other goals such as artistic excellence or diplomatic influence. The other – non-trivial – thing we discover once we begin to work with government agencies is that the agents are almost always *our students*: graduates from Arts, Humanities or Social Science programs. On one level this is perfectly well known: a large number of our students will work in public administration, whatever their undergraduate disciplines. On another level, though, where the opposition between culture and government remains intact, this deep imbrication between universities and government is ‘forgotten’. But for this reason as well, the opposition between a training in ‘critical culture’ and the practice of government makes little sense.

Australia’s cultural diplomacy agencies

In the Australian context, the field of cultural diplomacy has seldom been defined in a singular, merely boosterish or narrowly tactical fashion. While the Australian government *has* invested in a ‘Brand Australia’ campaign, this is but one small part of a much wider raft of differently-purposed and differently-targeted programs comprising its Public Diplomacy Strategy (2014). Whether Australia’s attempts at national branding have ever had much positive effect outside the tourist market is doubtful, but at least they’ve generally had the virtue of not taking themselves too seriously. *Brand Australia* aims to show that Australia ‘is as clever as it is beautiful’! Rather nicely, if we can forgive the adman’s alliteration, it also seeks ‘to create a new Australian narrative based on collaboration, capability, confidence and creativity’ (Australia Unlimited 2014).

For the national government, the primary focus of *cultural* diplomacy within the public diplomacy strategy is on major cultural events, tours and festivals overseas. In this area, Australia’s ‘key cultural diplomacy body’ has been the Australia International Cultural Council (AICC) established ‘to engage overseas audiences through the delivery of high-quality and innovative arts and cultural promotions to increase their understanding of Australia’s contemporary identity, values, interests and policies’ (AICC).⁴ Although expressed in the upbeat language of the genre and with the assumption that such activity is ‘in the national interest’, such an aim leaves plenty of scope for complex representations of ‘Australia’s contemporary identity, values or interests’; indeed, this is exactly what our high quality and most innovative arts and cultural productions are likely to convey. In short, the aim seems unexceptionable, something that can be taken seriously or subscribed to without compromise.

The Objectives and Goals of the AICC are defined again in predictable terms. One might be tempted to shrug or smirk, but my implication is not just that these are goals that can be accommodated ‘despite everything’, but that they are *good things* and deserve our engagement, that they define important terrains for culture’s deployment, even when the talk turns to markets and business connections. The fact that the agencies responsible might sometimes implement them badly or in embarrassing ways is not in itself a persuasive argument against them.

Objectives

- To promote Australia overseas through the arts and culture and strengthen people-to-people linkages through cultural exchanges and creative collaboration;
- To reinforce Australia's standing as a stable, sophisticated, multicultural and creative nation with a rich and diverse culture; and
- To promote Australia's Indigenous art and culture.

Goals

- To coordinate programs to project a positive and contemporary image of Australia and Australia's capabilities internationally through the delivery of high quality and innovative arts and cultural promotions;
- To strengthen long-term cultural relationships with our key regional partners, particularly in Asia;
- To enhance market access and lead market development strategies for Australian cultural exports;
- To strengthen business engagement and connections.

The priority regions are, in order, Asia, the South Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, and, last, the Americas and Western Europe. The Asian bias is explicit and appropriate. The AICC's programs emphasise one-off projects such as the international tour of a theatre or dance company, an art show or a festival, although in practice its programs have been much more varied, much less stuffy or elitist, than this focus might suggest.⁵ As with many of the activities of cultural diplomacy, their return on investment is hard to gauge. They have been often short-term and at the level of display, but at best they have contributed to a long-term cumulative process of dialogue, engaging overseas publics, cultural practitioners and institutions. Nonetheless, their one-off nature has been a limitation.

Outside these major events, much of the state-sponsored work in cultural diplomacy happens at a lower or less visible level through an array of bilateral bodies established for cultural, educational and 'people-to-people' links. The bilateral bodies do support one-off projects, often in collaboration with other cultural diplomacy agencies such as Asialink. But the most active and better-funded bodies are committed to *ongoing* programs aimed precisely at longer-term influence and network building rather than short-term impact. Education is central to this form of cultural diplomacy. The key bilateral bodies are the Australia-China Council; Australia-India Council; Australia Indonesia Institute; Australia-Japan Foundation; Australia Korea Foundation; Australia Malaysia Institute; Australia Thailand Institute; Council for Australia-Arab Relations; and Council on Australia Latin America Relations. Again, the regional bias is explicit.

These Foundations, Councils and Institutes are established within DFAT and unsurprisingly their priorities and budgets are approved by the Department and the Minister. But like Australia's other major public cultural institutions, they run more as 'arm's-length' bodies, through Boards comprised of individuals drawn largely from business, arts organisations, and academia, usually recommended by the Chair but appointed by the Minister. While government sets the broad framework for

their operation, and while there is often a degree of tension between the protocols of the department or minister and the priorities of those planning and implementing programs, in practice there is a good deal of independence in terms of how programs are managed and budgets apportioned. The tension is inherent in the institutional structures and, indeed, in public diplomacy programs more generally, a tension between directive, top-down policy-making and practitioner-led implementation (Flew and Hartig 2014). But as such, as inherent in the field of operation, it is less a fatal flaw than a condition of being for such programs as competing priorities are brought to bear on each other.

Australian Studies abroad

Programs for the promotion of Australian Studies abroad have largely been the business of DFAT rather than of Education, thus indicating their place within a public diplomacy strategy. However, except for a brief moment towards the end of the Keating government in the early-mid 1990s, there has never been a coordinated national program for Australian Studies overseas, with governments preferring the ‘announcables’, big items such as the one-off investments in the Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies in London (established in 1982 and with a new endowment in 1999), the Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Chair in Australian Studies at Harvard University (first established in 1976, renamed in 2010), or the BHP Billiton Chair in Australian Studies at Peking University (announced by Prime Minister Gillard in 2011 and funded largely by BHP Billiton). As indicated, however, the ongoing, longer-term work is undertaken through the bilateral bodies established within DFAT.

The most active and, again, the better-funded among the bilateral bodies are the Australia-China Council and the Australia-Japan Foundation, followed by the Australia-India Council. Probably the largest single commitment of the AJF for over a decade now has been in producing materials for primary and secondary schools in Japan and promoting activities for students and teachers to support them. The resources include the Experience Australia Educational Kit, the Discover Australia online study reference, and the Discover Eco Australia multimedia teaching aid designed ‘to introduce Australian environmental studies for schools’ (AJF 2014). There is also a small grants scheme for Japanese scholars and graduate students researching Australian or comparative topics, plus funding of special reports by Australian and Japanese academics. The AJF also supports a network of Australian Studies scholars in Japan that has a national Association, annual conferences and other events, a number of Australian Studies Centres, and a Chair in Australian Studies at Tokyo University (largely funded by the university not the AJF; a second chair is in the process of being established with sponsorship from Rio Tinto). What is notable about the program is not only its focus on primary and secondary schools, unusual among such initiatives, but the degree to which the overall program gives agency to local, Japanese actors – teachers, students, scholars and researchers.

My own most extensive engagements have been with China through the ACC. The Council does not have access to the Chinese primary or secondary school system in the way the AJF has for Japan, and its focus has been on the tertiary sector. This also reflects a key founding moment, when nine young Chinese professors were sent to the University of Sydney in 1979 and enrolled in a program in

Linguistics and Australian Literature organised by Leonie Kramer and Michael Halliday (the latter's work remains a strong influence in China).⁶ Most of these young academics maintained an interest in Australian studies when they returned to China and were the basis of the network of Australian Studies Centres and scholars that now exists on the mainland (DIISRTE 2013, pp. 36–39, 76–79).

The ACC supports a wide range of activities through its general grants program for Australian applicants.⁷ The program is organised under three headings: *Economic Diplomacy* (including recently, for example, a project about private mental health care managed by Australian and Chinese partners, another about professional development regarding the health, social and environmental impacts of mining, one on investment, one on wool, another on dairy, and my favourite, a project on the 'emerging Australia-China surfing industry'); *Education* (for example, a program of Media Fellows and a national parliamentary fellowship program, an Australia-China Youth Dialogue, a polar law symposium, and a project about the application of new spatial surveying technologies for preserving China's cultural heritage); and *Arts and Culture* (a series of projects involving Chinese as well as Australian arts from organisations including the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Australia-China Fashion Alliance, Darwin city, Circus Oz and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra). In addition, the *Australian Studies in China* program is designed for scholars based in China, including Taiwan. Obviously this range of projects and programs cannot be synthesised into a single ideological or institutional logic except in the broadest terms – the terms of the Council's Strategic Goals and Guiding Principles perhaps.

The official function of the ACC is expressed in what could appear to be a rather forbidding and narrow formulation: 'to make recommendations to the Australian Government through the Minister for Foreign Affairs on strengthening the Australia-China relationship in ways that support Australia's foreign and trade policy interests' (ACC 2014). But the relationship between this official function and the actual programs of the Council is about as 'arm's-length', as deferred and diffuse, as it's possible to be. The outline of the Council's Strategic Goals, by contrast, is much closer to the actual practice, more user-friendly, and rather sophisticated in its own way, although again of course expressed in the language of the genre. The Guiding Principles capture rather well those of the recent academic literature on the new public diplomacy with their emphasis on longer-term outcomes, participation, networks and partnerships, equality and diversity (Melissen 2007):

Strategic goals

- (1) To strengthen the foundations of engagement – China literacy, business and cultural capabilities of Australian institutions and people.
- (2) To seek and foster new areas of engagement between Australia and China across business, knowledge and creative sectors.
- (3) To enhance understanding in China of Australian society, economy, politics and culture through the Australian Studies in China program.
- (4) To showcase Australian creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation in China.

- (5) To generate, disseminate and make accessible high-quality, relevant and up-to-date information about Australia-China relations.
- (6) To facilitate dialogue, develop professional and institutional networks between Australia and China and harness the leadership of Australian communities in strengthening bilateral connectivity.

Guiding principles

The Australia-China Council programs and grant-making activities are informed by the following principles:

- *Creativity and innovation*: The Council-funded projects generate new ideas and identify new areas of contact.
- *Sustainability*: Projects deliver medium to longer-term outcomes, strengthen networks and linkages and, over time, become self-sustaining.
- *Partnerships*: Projects are developed and delivered in partnership with Australian and Chinese organisations, promote complementarities and avoid duplication with similar programs.
- *Equality and diversity*: Projects promote and encourage gender equality, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, and facilitate engagement between Australian and Chinese regions and areas outside major capital cities and business hubs.
- *Accountability*: Projects have clear key performance indicators and comply with the Australian government's financial and other reporting requirements. (Australia-China Council 2014)

Once again, there will be tensions between the narrower aims as suggested by the definition of the Council's official function and the broader goals and principles outlined here, but these structural tensions will be experienced not just by outsiders working with the agency but also for those working inside the agency itself. Nonetheless, the goals as articulated above are smart, diverse, flexible, generous – *and* in the national interest. Unsurprisingly they are wholly positive; there's no room for critique here. But if the language is not quite that of the humanities academy, neither is it a wholly foreign language. Certainly, the goal of 'enhancing understanding in China of Australian society, economy, politics and culture' is immediately translatable; that of 'showcasing Australian creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation in China' perhaps less so, but it too can be made over, especially in a context where Australia's capacity in these areas is almost always underestimated. It does not involve any political or intellectual bad faith. On the contrary, and unlike the stance of pure negativity, thinking through the ways in which such aims and claims can be supported involves a kind of political and intellectual 'moment of truth', a coming-to-terms with what we value and seek to defend in our institutions, our legal structures, our social relations, even 'our' economy (and in a sense taking on that collective pronoun).

The Australian Studies in China program

The Australian Studies in China program has a modest budget, under \$250,000 annually (outside the Peking University position).⁸ Nonetheless, the Chair of the

Australia-China Council recently described the Australian Studies program as 'Australia's major public diplomacy asset' (Hinze 2014). It represents the single largest federal allocation of funds for Australian Studies overseas from the bilateral bodies or any other agency in the absence of a 'whole of government' strategy. The Australian Studies in China program has been running for more than twenty years and now supports a steadily expanding network of Australian Studies Centres, around thirty at last count, together with individual scholars in other universities and academies. An annual grants scheme, the program's single largest investment, awards between twenty and twenty-five small grants annually, primarily for research projects involving travel to Australia, but also for curriculum development, public events, and publishing subsidies (without which few academic books on Australian topics would be published in China). A complementary awards scheme rewards Centres for their research, teaching and outreach activities, providing annual discretionary funding for their ongoing work. A biennial national conference attracts around two hundred participants, with smaller conferences and symposia between times. Other funding supports a biennial Book Prize for original scholarly works and translations; the purchase of books and other resources for the Centres and in particular for two large resource collections in Beijing and Shanghai; the maintenance of an Australian Studies in China website; and a range of other activities as they arise.⁹ Since 2012, the program has been complemented by the Chair at Peking University which has a cultural diplomacy mission written into the job description alongside its academic dimension.

This array of programs and activities has been in place for more than a decade with progressive fine-tuning over that time. It replaced an earlier, more *ad hoc* practice that typified an earlier understanding of cultural/public diplomacy – a top-down 'parachute' model of dropping in such things as book gifts or ready-made curriculum materials with little consultation with Chinese colleagues about their own needs and interests. The current model works rather through a kind of negotiation or dialogue, where the research projects, curriculum offerings, public activities, conference organisation and so forth are generated from the Chinese side; the 'negotiation' takes the form of the assessment process for grants and other awards. While there is no strict priority in terms, say, of preferred disciplines – everything from literature and media studies to economics, diplomatic relations, urban studies and ecology has been supported – judgements are made about the strength, feasibility and likely impact of particular projects and their likely contribution to 'enhancing understanding in China of Australian society, economy, politics and culture'.¹⁰

Although the network of Centres is the largest in any nation globally, it remains small and vulnerable in the rapidly-expanding and highly-competitive Chinese university system. It functions in an academic context undergoing rapid transition towards the kind of research culture we are familiar with in European or Anglo-American academia which was not widespread in Chinese universities. This transition can be extremely challenging for those trained largely in English-language teaching, which is often the first step towards an interest in Australia (Australian Studies in China depends to a very large extent on this connection, although increasingly researchers from other fields are becoming involved). Helping develop this research culture and hence the range and quality of the research about Australia is one of the program's key aims.

The point for the present is that *as cultural diplomacy* the objectives are long-term and often indirect. While the program will, wherever possible, support the

development of ‘Australianists’ or dedicated Australia specialists among Chinese scholars, this is certainly not the only objective. Given the context in which we are working, the possibilities for this are limited in any case. In most institutions and in the Chinese university system in general a commitment to Australian Studies would be a bold career choice. In many instances, the program’s objectives can be reformulated more generously in terms of producing a broader base of knowledge and a well-informed constituency among scholars and researchers across a wide range of fields and disciplines, such that, for example, Australia will present itself as a potential case study or model alongside the more familiar reference points from Europe or North America, whatever the topic or research question: ethnic relations, resource economics, language policy, welfare systems, women’s sport, cyber-security, sustainability, or media regulation – all topics proposed for research projects in recent years. As much as anything else, the goal will be to modestly ‘Australianise’ some Americanists, Europeanists and indeed Sinologists. Similarly, while an ultimate objective is Chinese-based research that will make a significant impact on *Australian* Australian Studies, the more immediate aim is to support and enhance the conversation among Chinese researchers and teachers.

Teaching, of course, is as important as research. Few of those taking Australian Studies courses will have the chance or even the desire to become Australia specialists. But with more than a thousand undergraduates and over five hundred graduate students being exposed to Australian Studies courses annually, the longer term objective is to produce an informed constituency, knowledgeable and ‘well-disposed’ towards Australia, who will carry this forward into a wide range of careers in public and private institutions. For example, the first Chinese PhD in Australian Studies – a literature PhD on Australian Nobel Prize laureate Patrick White – pursued a career in public administration, in the Ministry of Finance. Others will complete their MA on an Australian topic, then follow the bulk of their peers to a PhD in the United States; not a failure of our program so much as a sign of the conditions within which the program operates. The underfunding of the Australian university system imposes its own limits.

At the same time, one of the attractions of Australia is precisely that it is *not* the United States – that is, its role as a middle power with a relatively low ‘threat profile’ and a relatively high ‘moral standing’ internationally, despite issues such as its asylum-seeker policies, its record on Indigenous questions, and indeed its close security relation to the USA. Australia’s modest profile is an advantage as well as a disadvantage, an opportunity as much as an obstacle. Australia has an accessibility or ‘approachability’ that larger powers sometimes forfeit in their conviction as to their own global importance.

No doubt the Australian government will continue to invest in forms of nation branding and in high-profile arts and cultural events delivered overseas as part of its public diplomacy strategy. We have the right to be sceptical both of the rhetoric that accompanies such investments and of the long-term impacts they achieve. Even so, the objectives and principles that underwrite or frame them, I have argued, will not in themselves be offensive or risible however much ‘promotion’ or marketing are involved. On the contrary, they will often be linked to liberal reforming and social democratic paradigms and to developing not simply a positive but rather a more sophisticated and complex image of contemporary Australia.

At the same time, a rather different kind of cultural diplomacy strategy is being pursued, lower key but longer term, in large part through the bilateral bodies as

evidenced by the Australian Studies programs of both the AJF and the ACC. These programs have been in place for more than two decades now, and those working with and within them have come to understand their work as work in cultural or, more broadly, public diplomacy, very much along the lines of the ‘new public diplomacy’ as defined by Jan Melissen:

Public diplomacy builds on trust and credibility, and it often works best with a long horizon. [Its] strength ... lies in the recognition and acceptance of its limitations. Many public diplomacy campaigns are based on the common-sense assumption that they are by no means the decisive factor in determining foreign perceptions ...

In cultural relations as much as in the new public diplomacy, the accent is increasingly on engaging with foreign audiences rather than selling messages, on mutuality and the establishment of stable relationships instead of mere policy-driven campaigns, on the ‘long haul’ rather than the short-term needs, and on winning ‘hearts and minds’ and building trust.

The new public diplomacy is indeed no longer confined to messaging, promotion campaigns, or even direct governmental contacts with foreign publics serving foreign policy purposes. It is also about building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad (2007, pp. 15, 20–22).

And, we might add, while state-sponsored public diplomacy pursues these ends primarily *in* the national interest, for cultural diplomacy in particular the longer term impacts will reach *beyond* national interest alone.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. I’m using the term very broadly here. For a discussion of the term and the practice or assumptions it describes especially in the literary/cultural studies disciplines, see Felski 2011.
2. I served on the Board of the AJF for two terms, 1998–2004. I wrote a number of reports on Australian Studies in China for the ACC in the 1990s and early 2000s, and since 2002 have been Manager of the Australian Studies in China program for the Council. I have also been involved with government-funded Australian Studies programs in India, Indonesia, Taiwan and Thailand.
3. Although Walker (1999) is largely an account of Australia’s anxieties about its Asian neighbours it reveals a history of business, political and cultural connections. There is also an increasing body of literature on the history of the Chinese in Australia including Reynolds (2003), Fitzgerald (2007), and Kuo (2013).
4. In December 2014, however, the government announced the abolition of the AICC as part of its Smaller Government reforms. Its functions reportedly will be carried out by ‘a new streamlined advisory body within the Arts portfolio’ See <http://www.theman.darin.com.au/14,353-myefo-axed-agency-hit-list/>. [Accessed 23 December 2014].
5. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aicc/grants.html>
6. Professor Dame Leonie Kramer taught Australian Literature and Professor Michael Halliday is an internationally renowned linguist.
7. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/acc/grants/> [Accessed 2 November 2014].

8. The Chair is supported by the Foundation for Australian Studies in China (FASIC), a non-profit foundation established to manage the contributions of BHP Billiton and Universities Australia to the Chair at Peking University.
9. There is also a small program in Taiwan.
10. A list of successful projects over previous years can be accessed at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/acc/australian-studies-in-china/>

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‘Culture in EU external relations’: an idea whose time has come?

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This chapter analyses the emergent cultural diplomacy discourse and practice of the European Union (EU) institutions, which has differed from that of nation-states. In semantics to begin with, since a far broader notion of ‘culture in EU external relations’ is EU usage. Yet Bhabha’s theoretical distinction between the ‘pedagogical’ and the ‘performative’ functions of nation-state narrative strategies holds at the supra-national scale as well: the author will explore the ways in which these functions have been appropriated by non-state actors. In EU cultural diplomacy as a ‘cultural policy of display’ in Raymond Williams’ sense, the agenda setting process has thus been marked by a polyvocal process of appropriation by different stakeholders. They have recently taken the discourse ‘beyond cultural diplomacy’ and expedient ‘soft power’ considerations, in a spirit of global cultural citizenship that privileges intercultural dialogue, mutuality and reciprocity. How this vision will be applied, however, is yet to be seen.

Keywords: European Union; international cultural relations; cultural diplomacy; pedagogical and performative narrative strategies

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy as both discourse and practice has recently acquired salience among the policy priorities of the European Union (EU), i.e. the supra-national organization. Yet quite unlike most of its Member States, that deploy the term – and its associated tropes, in particular ‘soft power’ – in the various ways reviewed in the introductory article of this special issue, the EU institutions themselves use the term sparingly, if at all; instead, EU official language uses the term ‘culture in external relations’. There is more to this than mere semantic avoidance, for the ambitions and aspirations now invested in this domain target more than just the attainment of ‘soft power’, which is necessarily always expedient in Yúdice’s sense (2003). To be sure, soft power goals are present, together with other instrumental objectives, notably with regard to exports of cultural goods and services. In spite of this, however, ‘culture in external relations’ has acquired broader connotations for EU actors; it responds in fact to a variety of idealistic if not altruistic motives, over and above the expedient ones. Paradoxically, then, more so than would be the case for individual nation-states, the EU’s cultural diplomacy already operates ‘beyond’ its interests, whether it is envisioned and practiced by EU officials and politicians,

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civil society bodies (foundations, associations of artists and cultural operators), or individual cultural activists and public intellectuals who work closely with the EU institutions.

The domain has become a central element of the current European ‘narrative’, a term officials and others now deploy as a buzzword, three decades after it was introduced in cultural theory. Homi Bhabha’s distinction between the ‘pedagogical’ and the ‘performative’ functions of nation-state narrative strategies applies at the EU scale as well, since European ideology mimics the processes that have played out in the historical processes of cultural nationalism (Bhabha 1990). It is worth elaborating this point briefly, as an example of the kind of theoretical framing that can enrich the study of cultural diplomacy as cultural practice. Taking off from Anderson’s concept of the nation as an imagined community, Bhabha underlined two contradictory meanings, which generate an ambivalence. On the one hand the existence of a community originating in an immemorial past and moving into a timeless future; on the other an entity that is in the here and now of the contemporary. The ambivalence comes through also in the narrative strategies that come into play: first the ‘pedagogical’ as inculcated by social institutions and practices that represent the nation and teach us about it (as immemorial and timeless) and second the ‘performative’, as the nation lives out daily existence today. At EU level, the institutions have deployed both strategies. They have co-opted other players to both represent and ‘European-ness’ – if not immemorial and timeless as in the case of the nation, then at least fixed and reified – as well as to perform ‘European-ness’ in the present and self-consciously vis à vis the rest of the world.

This article will trace the emergence of ‘culture in EU external relations’ as a narrative or ‘mobilizing metaphor’ (Shore and Wright 1997) as well as in its pedagogical and performative dimensions. This emergence has been a distinctly ‘multi-stakeholder’ process, to use the current jargon. So while the other contributions in this issue have analysed manifestations of nation-state driven cultural diplomacy, the EU discourse and practice addressed here encompass the entire range of activities included in a much-favoured definition of cultural diplomacy: ‘the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding’ (Cummings 2003, p. 1). Elsewhere, the author has critiqued this definition for being a rather angelic reading of the principally interest-driven practice that is the heart of cultural diplomacy (Isar 2010). But it actually applies to what has unfolded in the EU, as will be argued below.

The evidence base for this account has been provided by a critical reading of the content of EU and related policy documents and enunciations. The author has also drawn upon prolonged ethnographic observation among the actors who have been generating as well as receiving the discourse. Since 2012, as a participant observer, he has been very closely involved in the ‘culture in EU external relations’ agenda, in the context of a major study commissioned by the European Commission.¹ This involvement both heightens and hampers his critical distance from the subject matter, yet it is to be hoped that the handicap is outweighed in this instance by at least some of the insights of ‘insider’ knowledge.

Key analytical questions

In addition to textual analysis and ethnographic observation, the tools of political science also need to be applied, in order to address the sorts of empirical questions

posed by Kingdon (1995) as regards agenda setting in political organizations and institutions. His phrase ‘an idea whose time has come’ captures the nature of a movement whose appeal has become irresistible. What sorts of ideas have launched and shaped institutional programmes? How have *agendas* have been set within these bodies and by their authorizing environments? How have policy *problems* been defined, often in the wake of focusing *events*? How have different *participants* or *stakeholders* operated in agenda setting and choice making? Who have been the *policy entrepreneurs* and in what path-dependent ways have policies been imagined and implemented? It is possible to answer some of these questions, to trace the appearance and evolution of the notion of ‘culture in EU external relations’ and to explain the ideological environment in which this trope has been naturalized. As Kingdon noted, ‘ideas come from anywhere, actually, and the critical factor that explains the prominence of an item on the agenda is not its source, but instead the climate in government or the receptivity to ideas of a given type ...’ (1995, p. 72).

That said, the focus here is on the evolution of institutional thinking rather than the factual realities of programmes, projects and budgets.² Nor has it been possible to assess how the meanings associated with these communicational efforts have been received, given that reception theory has never been applied to the impacts of cultural diplomacy (Clarke 2014) and there has been no scope for the author to research this dimension at this time. It has not been easy either to trace with precision the itinerary of the ideas, as those who formulated them were not analytically aware of the processes they were enacting and the author found himself in a privileged ‘insider’ position only in late 2012. Nor was much academic writing available to build upon. Few scholars in the cultural disciplines have taken an interest in the EU’s agenda setting and mobilizing metaphors in the cultural arena. Two who have are Cris Shore (an anthropologist) and Monica Sassatelli (a sociologist): their explorations of the willed efforts on the part of EU elites to create an ‘imagined community’ on the continental scale have provided a solid jumping off point – as well as a foil – for the present reflections.

On the basis of ethnographic fieldwork carried out among EU civil servants and politicians in Brussels in the mid-1990s, Shore’s investigation sought to uncover the impact of the efforts of EU elites to create senses of European belonging, by ‘penetrating and uncovering the perceptions and practices (of EU policy professionals] ... who seek to make their definitions of the world and its problems stick’ (Donnan and McFarlane 1989, cited in Shore 2000, p. 23). He explored the invention of Europe as a geopolitical category in the light of the history of nation-state formation, asking why and how the notions of ‘European identity’ and ‘cultural heritage’ became prominent in the European integration discourse, as it evolved gradually from a mere free trade area into a would-be (for some of if not for all) supra-national entity of self-identification and governance. Clearly, the EU’s ‘Europe’ was an entity that was being constructed in cultural terms, according to certain rather essentializing visions of ‘Europe’ and ‘European identity’ that the European Community (precursor to today’s EU) was actively promoting. Shore reminded us that identity-formation is an ambiguous and dualistic process involving both the manipulation of boundaries and the mobilization of difference that often mask strategies of inclusion and exclusion. He noted that ‘the politicisation of culture in the EU arises from the attempt by European elites to solve the EU’s chronic problem of legitimacy’ and observed that ‘what is often termed the EU’s

'democratic deficit' is symptomatic of a deeper 'cultural deficit'; a deficit vividly reflected in the absence of a European public' (2000, p. 3) – and indeed of a European public sphere. Of particular interest was his unpacking of the strategies by which Europe as a symbolic and political entity was constructed through the use of 'culture', beginning with the European Commission's 'People's Europe' campaign of the 1980s. These strategies included invented Euro-symbols and statistics, notions of European citizenship and the single currency, as well as attempts at the rewriting of history. Shore observed more recently that 'none of the EU's stock metaphors of 'unity in diversity,' 'cultural mosaics,' or 'family of cultures' adequately address [the] fundamental contradiction between the foundational idea of Europe as an 'ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe,' understood as a plurality, and the idea of integration as a process leading to a 'European people' (Shore 2006, p. 7). This contradiction is also one that runs through the 'culture in EU external relations' discourse: when Member States have their own programmes in this domain, some of them with large and powerful national cultural institutes, what could be the relevance – or indeed the added value – of a layer of Union-wide action?

On the other hand, Shore's generalizations regarding the manner in which, since the early 1990s, the European institutions, notably the Commission, have gone beyond the forging of 'peoplehood' to operate as generators of cultural policy at EU level, is not borne out by recent developments. The wish to use culture to forge a European demos identified by Shore is certainly still there as a shaping imperative. But this is much less the case as regards the search for *popular* legitimacy, his second imperative: it is not so much popular legitimacy that is nowadays sought as the approval and engagement of an elite cultural constituency. It is no longer the search for a 'People's Europe' but the unabashed forging of an 'ever closer union' by a technocratic, political and above all cultural elite. Shore's third imperative, an EU 'will to power', in response to which it establishes 'programmes to intervene and order that sector ... and 'enlarges the scope of EU power and authority, extending its competences into new 'occupied fields' of governance' (10), fails to recognize that the extension is largely a response to the demands of European cultural and political actors themselves, rather than a top-down imposition. He takes the Foucaultian notion of 'governmentality' a bit too far.

Monica Sassatelli's *Becoming Europeans. Cultural Identity and Cultural Policies* (2009) corrects the picture. It casts the analytical net wider by examining the discourse and practice of not only the EU (and its institutions) but also that of the intergovernmental Council of Europe, founded in 1949.³ Sassatelli's unpacking of attempts at creating (or 'reawakening') a sense of European belonging or identity was illustrated by two in-depth case studies: of the EU's European City of Culture programme established in 1985 and the Council of Europe's 'European Landscape Convention'. She observed various forms of resistance to these two devices and in the way in which they 'are important elements, or 'repertoires', that become available to different people at different times when articulating the discourse of European identity and informing and legitimating practices that appeal to it ... as it tries to single out what a common European narrative is, not as a mechanical sum of parts defined otherwise, but as it informs and defines a 'new', emerging subjectivity' (2009, p. 2). She also noted that the critique of top-down cultural Europeanization by EU elites 'misses the transformations taking place, as these

contain polyvocal, bottom-up, unofficial processes' (2009, p. 195). Referring in the book's Conclusion to the 'unity in diversity' narrative, Sassatelli observed that

European cultural space would be neither singular, nor plural; neither about a layer of supranational unity above the nations' diversity, nor merely about a 'Europe of the regions', the alternatives suggested by the comparison with the national model. Rather, it is about a combination of concepts of culture and identity (and place) that neither sacrifices nor celebrates diversity per se, struggling (because it has not totally freed itself from the previous model) to redefine those concepts and focusing on the creation of unity as a project of social construction. (2009, p. 194)

Similar tensions are in play as regards the emergent agenda of 'culture in EU external relations', which is also a 'project of social construction', one that is accompanied by its pedagogical as well as performative tropes. In this case, however, the agenda as well as the tropes have been co-created and advanced by non-state actors such as the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), a key 'policy entrepreneur' in Kingdon's sense, whose role may well have had more impact than the decisions of EU officials. Non-official actors have become leading fabricators of 'European consciousness', not only in investing their allegiance to the new 'European centre' (Shore 2000, p. 37) but also in elaborating new narratives for European self-representation to the rest of the world. This is an exception to the rule as it has applied to nation-states where, as the author has previously observed (Isar 2010), self-interested opportunism has often led artists and arts organizations to champion cultural diplomacy for the potential for subsidies and grants it offers. On the European canvas, this calculus is also present, to be sure, yet a far more powerful motivation has appeared to be a genuine commitment to projecting a strong sense of shared European-ness internationally.

'Culture in EU external relations': a gradual emergence

In 2005, an *unofficial* process (pace Kingdon) of reflection and advocacy was initiated by the ECF, the Amsterdam based body that has a long and successful record of advocacy and grant making on a Europe-wide scale. In fact the relationship between the ECF and the European institutions, particularly the Commission, has been so symbiotic since the early days of the European Community that one could say of the ECF's leadership that it has come to resemble 'native speakers' of the EU discourse, i.e. officials and politicians, by fully assimilating the semantics, metaphors and rules of the EU's 'cultural meaning systems', as well as the normative cognitive structures that shape its operations (Shore and Wright 1997).⁴

A strongly focusing event took place in 2005: the 'no' votes of France and The Netherlands on the proposed Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The negative votes were perceived as major setbacks to the integration process and prompted calls at the highest level for 'culture' to be used as a palliative – an obvious echo of the 'People's Europe' campaign of the 1980s. 'Europe is also an eminently cultural invention', declared the EU's then President, José Manuel Barroso, at the launch of the German-led movement, 'A Soul for Europe', in Berlin on 17 November 2006. During that same period there also re-emerged the apocryphal story about Jean Monnet, the French statesman and founding father of the European project, who, when looking back on a lifetime's work dedicated to creating a united Europe, was said to have remarked that 'if we were to start all over

again, we would start with culture.’ Monnet said nothing of the kind; nor did any of the EU founding fathers have a vision of culture as a binding force for European unity. ‘Like most myths, the significance of this story lies less in its historical accuracy than in its telling, and in the fact that it is still frequently cited by EU policy elites to support the argument for increased European-level intervention in the field of culture’ (Shore 2006, p. 8).

Converging stakes

More importantly, however, at the working level, as opposed to that of public rhetoric, a path-dependent convergence of concerns and aspirations took place at this crucial juncture. First, there was the desire on the part of organizations such as the ECF and the advocacy platform *Culture Action Europe*, as well as a few influential European cultural and political figures, to see more and better targeted activity and funding as regards to the arts and culture in general and a cultural strategy as an integral part of EU foreign policy in particular. Second, the desire of Commission officials to become more proactive in the cultural arena, despite resistance from national officials more concerned with the safeguarding of national sovereignty in cultural affairs and the sacrosanct ‘principle of subsidiarity’.⁵ Both the European Parliament and the European Council also took it upon themselves to assert their ownership of the newly salient field. This was particularly the case of the Parliament, increasingly eager to exert greater power and influence in the face of the Council and the Commission. Several observers who shared insights with the author noted that the EU institutions began in fact to vie with each other in showing which one of them could push the agenda forward most effectively.

In 2004, the ECF, at the joint instigation of the Chairman of its Board, Kathinka Dittrich Van Weringh and its Director, Gottfried Wagner, lent its support to a literature review focusing on whether and how the EU, together with European governments and civil society, should develop a cultural component for its foreign policy (Dodd and Dittrich Van Weringh 2006). In 2006, the ECF commissioned the consultant Rod Fisher to carry out a study on the topic. After exploring the positions of six Member State positions on the matter, notably as regards the potential added value of an EU-coordinated approach, Fisher concluded optimistically – no doubt for sensibly tactical reasons – that there were no ‘major conflicts of interests which could infringe or prevent future coordinated actions’ (Fisher 2007). The two sets of findings in turn informed a high-level international conference held in The Hague called ‘Diversity Makes the Difference.’ Fisher adumbrated a ‘framework for action’ for a more integrated cultural component in external relations policies, taking care at the outset to allay national fears by stating that ‘the over-riding principle should be that EU action should provide ‘added value’ that ‘a single European hegemony in culture should be avoided’ or that ‘the EU should see its role as primarily as a facilitator or initiator, calling on the cultural expertise of governments and, especially, the cultural sector itself’ (2007, p. 51). He also recognized, however, that ‘it may still take time before national pride yields to a more pragmatic approach to culture on the part of Member States’. The document set out an ‘Action Agenda’ (*sic*), related to areas in which ‘collective and coordinated cultural action by the EU, Member States and the cultural sector could have beneficial impacts on the global presence of the EU.’ These included sustainable cultural cooperation, intercultural dialogue, trade in cultural industries, promoting European

expertise in heritage elsewhere and embedding culture in development. In the last domain, as a harbinger of thinking beyond the 'soft power' calculus that was to come, the paper affirmed that 'the object of EU action must be to support the cultural activities, goods and services of developing countries themselves rather than supporting those of Europe' (2007, p. 151). 'Joint ownership' of process was also stressed; it should be based on 'an in-depth policy dialogue with the partner country, including government and relevant stakeholders, in particular local authorities, leading cultural actors (whether public or private), and representatives of civil society ...' (157). Yet the document concluded nevertheless on a resolutely 'soft power' note, stating the goal of setting 'the basis for a more powerful European voice on culture at the global level' (2007, p. 162).

Given the already relatively well-established cultural diplomacy efforts of European governments, the question was bound to arise of how an EU initiative could complement rather than duplicate existing programmes, by adding value without eroding national cultural sovereignty: a particularly delicate issue when the external self-representation of nation-states is all about what Raymond Williams once termed the 'cultural policy of display' (Williams 1984). Or, to adapt Bourdieu's term, the deployment of a national stock of cultural capital in the international arena. And what version of the narrative of 'European cultural identity' was to be projected externally? Should there even be such an attempt? Partly in response to this challenge, several national cultural centres/institutes formed, also in 2006, a non-profit association called EU National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) 'to create effective partnerships and networks between the participating organizations, to improve and promote cultural diversity and understanding between European societies, and to strengthen international dialogue and co-operation with countries outside Europe.'⁶ Early on, EUNIC's leadership recognized the need for 'a clear strategy of engagement' with the European Commission, no doubt betraying thereby, as opined by Gottfried Wagner (personal communication), a certain anxiety about the extent to which the EU juggernaut would 'take over' and diminish the importance of the association's own work. Such concerns operated both ways, however, for when the Preparatory Action was launched, Commission officials made it abundantly clear to the team of researchers that their efforts should in no wise be dictated by or related to EUNIC's agenda ...

An emboldened European Commission

The next milestone was the Commission's 2007 *Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world*. This key document has become a canonical reference in EU circles. Rightly so, for it marked the first time the Commission emboldened itself sufficiently to articulate policy principles and to actually propose to Member States 'objectives for a new EU agenda on culture'. This advance was the outcome of a process that unfolded early in the present century, through the determination and persuasiveness of key officials in the Commission's Directorate-General of Education and Culture. As of 1992, Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 had given the EU limited competences for culture. Before this, official EU cultural programming was a limited and unorganized set of small-scale projects for which the Commission could find small amounts of funding. These included audio-visual programmes, book projects, networking of cultural

organizations, cultural exchanges, harmonisation of controls on export of cultural goods, a smattering of heritage conservation projects and the like (Shore 2006).

The proposed new agenda was three-pronged: to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; to promote culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and third, the crux for our purposes here, *to promote culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations*. This third prong was soon renamed 'culture in EU external relations'. The five sub-objectives defined for this objective by the Commission in 2007 reveal a framing distinctly broader than the classic cultural diplomacy paradigm. The first was to 'further develop political dialogue in culture and promote cultural exchanges'; the second had a development focus: 'to promote market access for cultural goods and services from developing countries through targeted actions as well as through agreements that grant preferential treatment or trade-related assistance measures'; the third targeted the cultural industries sector within and beyond Europe: to protect and promote cultural diversity through financial and technical support⁷; the fourth was to 'ensure that all cooperation programmes and projects take full account of local culture and contribute to increase people's access to culture and to the means of cultural expression, including people-to-people contacts' while the fifth was international boilerplate: 'promote the active involvement of the EU in the work of international organisations dealing with culture' (European Commission 2007, pp. 10–11). A new framing of European self-presentation was revealed by language such as the following:

The EU is not just an economic process or a trading power, it is already widely - and accurately - perceived as an unprecedented and successful social and cultural project. The EU is, and must aspire to become even more, an example of a 'soft power' (*sic*)⁸ founded on norms and values such as human dignity, solidarity, tolerance, freedom of expression, respect for diversity and intercultural dialogue, values which, provided they are upheld and promoted, can be of inspiration for the world of tomorrow. (European Commission 2007, p. 3)

The document also alluded to cultural richness as an 'important asset in an immaterial and knowledge-based world' (2007, p. 3), while eschewing earlier iterations of 'European identity' (cf. Shore 2000, Sassatelli 2009) and of precise references to Europe in distinction to any particular 'Other'. Here lies a significant discursive innovation: the affirmation of EU achievements and traits as a form of cultural capital – very much in Bourdieu's sense, although the latter was writing for the more modest domain of social life – that the supranational entity can now deploy in the concert of nations, as if it were a nation-state writ large (Herzfeld 2005). What is more, this collective self-representation came to be taken on board by non-official actors as well, who began to adapt and recast it in their own terms and for their own purposes.

'Culture in external relations' as now endorsed by the EU's apex institutions, has advanced steadily since then. The title of the Conclusions that the European Council of November 2008 adopted on the topic was 'the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States'. The range of issues that were folded into this emerging policy mix included intercultural dialogue for conflict prevention and reconciliation as well as the standard articulation of the value of cultural exchanges and cultural cooperation, including in the audio-visual sphere, etc. The document called for a European

strategy for incorporating culture in external relations, underlining the importance of making efforts undertaken by the Union complementary with those of its Member States (European Council 2008).

The decisive role of the European Parliament

When the issue was appropriated by the European Parliament in 2011, it became a 'ball in their court' in more senses than one, for the enabling legislation and funding were unlikely to emerge from anywhere else. In March 2011, the Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake tabled a report in the Parliament's Culture Committee 'on the cultural dimensions of the EU's external actions'. Echoing concerns high on the Dutch cultural policy agenda (as well as in some other Member States), the report foregrounded the role of cultural industries and tourism in contributing to 'the EU's non-material development and economy, fostering the realisation of a knowledge-based society' (European Parliament 2011, p. 5). In other words, at stake was not diplomacy per se, but exports. The report went on to recognize artists, however, as 'de facto cultural diplomats exchanging and confronting different aesthetic, political, moral and social values' (5). It hailed the new media and communication technologies as instruments for 'freedom of expression, pluralism, the exchange of information, human rights, development, freedom of assembly, democracy and inclusion and for facilitating access to cultural content and education' and saw cultural cooperation and cultural dialogue, 'which are building blocks of cultural diplomacy' (5). In point of fact, this is the first time the term 'cultural diplomacy' appears in any EU official document, in a section entitled 'Cultural diplomacy and cultural cooperation', both evoked as instruments for global peace and stability. Another section entitled 'Culture and European values' upheld 'the value of culture as a force for tolerance and understanding and as a tool for growth and more inclusive societies'; addressed the sub-national level within Europe by calling for cooperation 'with the regions in each Member State in drawing up, implementing and promoting cultural policies'; stressed trade related implications of cultural goods and services and valued 'public-private cooperation with a strong role for civil society, including NGOs and European cultural networks, in addressing the cultural aspects of the EU's external relations.' As for method, Schaake called for 'a coherent, coordinated EU strategy on culture in the EU's external actions ... [as] a necessity to sustain and foster Europe's attractiveness in a globally connected and competitive environment.' The Report also pointed out that countries elsewhere 'explicitly seek to address the EU, not only the different Member States. Fragmentation and diffusion is seen among and between Member States, but also between different departments and institutions within the EU. This fragmentation without a common strategy hampers the full and efficient use of cultural resources and budgets' (European Parliament 2011, p. 5).

The Parliament subsequently adopted a Resolution endorsing these recommendations, notably as regards the fragmentation that hampers the elaboration of a unified strategic approach. As we know, the fragmentation or absence of any kind of 'joined up' approach is in fact a familiar theme in cultural policy work, even at the national level (Isar 2009). Referring to the newly formed European External Action Service (EEAS), the report called on the EEAS and the Commission 'to coordinate the strategic deployment of the cultural aspects of external policy, incorporating culture consistently and systematically into the EU's external relations

and seeking complementarity with the Member States' external cultural policies.' Finally, the Parliament also decided to launch and finance the 'Preparatory Action'.

In the meantime, in 2011 the ECF had launched an initiative called *MORE EUROPE – external cultural relations*. The initiative describes itself as embodying a new approach towards external relations, based on the promotion of fundamental values, two-way dialogue, and the recognition of the role of civil society. It aims to mobilize cultural actors and political decision-makers to recognize and promote the role of culture in the EU's external relations. It advocates for more coordination at the EU level, in addition to the efforts of Member States.⁹

These efforts, on top of the push from the European Parliament, led the European Commission in the summer of 2012 to publish a call for tenders for proposals concerning an analysis of the existing resources, strategies, positions and opinions regarding culture in external relations that would constitute a 'Preparatory Action'.¹⁰ A 'Preparatory Action' is any effort, in the nature of a feasibility study on a given issue or topic, that prepares the ground for a future programming in a particular domain. The call stipulated in its terms of reference that the analysis would have to 'produce definitions on basic concepts (from public diplomacy to cultural cooperation) and draw conclusions and recommendations identifying areas of strong EU added value on a geographical basis which are meaningful from the point of view of EU instruments' (European Commission 2012, p. 3) It also stated that 'culture is more and more perceived as a strategic factor of political, social and economic development and not exclusively in terms of isolated cultural events or showcasing (like in the context of traditional cultural diplomacy)' (p. 1).

Towards 'global cultural citizenship'

Significantly, the consortium of bodies that won the bid for the five hundred thousand Euro contract that was offered was led by arm's length bodies: the Goethe-Institut, the British Council, the *Institut français* and the Danish Cultural Institute, who were joined by the European Cultural Foundation, the influential Brussels-based consulting company KEA European Affairs, the Stuttgart-based *ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)* and Bozar, the organization responsible for running the Palais des Beaux Arts museum space in Brussels (the venue for a closing conference). This mix of players brought different expectations and stakes to the table, embodying Sassatelli's point about the polyvocal nature of such processes within the EU today. By the time the consortium's draft report was presented with much fanfare in April 2014 and then officially launched three months later, the domain had clearly become one of the EU system's 'mobilizing metaphors' (Shore and Wright 1997).

Entitled *Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship*, the report of the Preparatory Action is the latest building block in the discursive edifice that has been analyzed so far. The author was the lead writer of the report, on behalf of the research team and consortium. Although it is difficult for him to adopt a great deal of critical distance from his own work, an attempt will be made to objectively characterize the key elements of the stances that underpinned this particular iteration of the idea of 'culture in EU external relations'.

First, a certain number of theoretical and axiological commitments. These included *inter alia* the stances of critical cosmopolitanism (Delanty 2007; see also Roesler's paper in this issue); a rejection of the simplifying binaries of 'the West'

vs ‘the Rest’ and of essentializing visions of ‘European values’ as a gift to other non-European peoples; and a recognition of the high degree of global interconnectedness in the cultural field today. The drafters saw the strengthening of ‘external cultural relations’ as a responsibility rather than a tool, citing the imperative of sharing these achievements and qualities with the rest of the world, and of doing so in a spirit of mutual learning and reciprocity in a world characterized by an increasingly plural cultural awareness. They underlined the many new pathways and spaces for the circulation of creative ideas, goods and people, that have opened up, those multidirectional webs of interactions that have replaced the purely ‘North-South’ or ‘Europe and the Rest’ trajectories of the past. The challenge for Europe too, in a multi-polar world, as they saw it, is to assert a distinctive voice in the new global concert of cultural subjects, energies and information, notably in the face of the digital revolution, the exponential expansion of the social media as well as major political and social transformations that are unfolding.

In a rhetorical formulation, they also elevated the claims of culture, affirming that *prosperity* through culture, *empowerment* through culture and *dialogue* through culture were three key themes. Inspired *inter alia* by the work of Stevenson (2003) and Delanty (2007) they grouped the three themes together under the metaphor of *global cultural citizenship*, affirming that the paradigm concerns rights as well as responsibilities; it connotes access to and participation in wider communities of commitment and practice. As a process rather than a product, it is both individual and collective; and it is both values-driven and interest-driven. As a goal to be pursued it therefore represents the needs and interests of both Europe and its partners. It must be said, however, that these value positions did not have to be imposed upon recalcitrant officials, for they were already present, if not yet clearly articulated, in the contemporary doxa of international cultural relations. There existed also already a supportive ‘atmosphere’ of both institutional policy positioning and advocacy, notably in the work of the Asia-Europe Foundation and EUNIC, as described above.

In an important caveat, the Report observed that such an engagement requires far more than understanding or tolerance. Instead, it requires mutual recognition and empathy, mutual empowerment and a willingness to combine concern for social and political rights with the promotion of cultural diversity in a spirit of knowledge sharing, professional exchange and capacity building. It requires Europeans to balance a deep and genuine respect for difference with the rediscovery of the art of the common good for all.

Postscript: the ‘new narrative’ initiative

An important cognate development was also fostered by the European Parliament in 2012: an initiative aimed at producing a new ‘narrative’ for Europe. Such a narrative would be a representational tool and, perhaps more importantly, address the considerable perception gap between what the European integration process has achieved and how it is seen, albeit principally within Europe (Davis Cross 2013). The Parliament’s desire was acted upon enthusiastically in early 2013 by EU President José Manuel Barroso, who established a committee of cultural personalities to steer the project in close interaction with EU officials. Unlike the ‘People’s Europe’ campaign of the 1980s and other subsequent efforts, the ‘New Narrative for Europe’ initiative was not a top-down process of persuasion through cultural

symbols and tools, but one in which European artists and intellectuals were ostentatiously identified as key stakeholders and agenda-setters in defining ‘a telos, a renewed sense of purpose to European integration in the age of globalisation’ (Barroso 2014). If the author’s earlier experience serving such a committee in 2002 under the presidency of Romano Prodi is anything to go by though, most of the drafting was probably actually done by EU officials. Be that as it may, the emphasis was not on the forging of a common sense of belonging in line with the abiding ‘unity in diversity’ trope (this was taken for granted as being substantially already rooted in the common tropes of self-representation – yet for that very reason was also in need of being ritually reaffirmed). Instead, the teleology set out would be the positioning of Europe in the world, a goal that converged appropriately with the ‘culture in EU external relations’ discourse as well as the reigning wisdom regarding the soft power paradigm:

Taken all together, we have the critical mass, clout and creativity to promote our values and interests, preserve our lifestyle and be influential in a world of continent-sized nations. In the age of globalisation, pooled sovereignty means power gained for every member of the EU, and not power lost. Globalisation, too, is a driver for a stronger and more united Europe. (Barroso 2014, no page numbers)

The group reflected within this framing paradigm, although several of those involved might have found the idea of adopting a single narrative rather strange. In so doing, they were carrying out the ‘performative’ function in Bhabha’s sense, one that the initiators of the ‘pedagogical’ – EU officials – increasingly call upon non-state actors to fulfill. In its Declaration entitled ‘The Mind and Body of Europe’ of March 2014, the group re-articulated the old trope of European identity in terms such as the following: ‘Europe is a state of mind, formed and fostered by its spiritual, philosophical, artistic and scientific inheritance and driven by the lessons of history ... Europe is an identity, an idea, an ideal...[with] a shared grammar of music and art, a common body of science and philosophy, an astonishingly rich literature and thriving trade networks ...’ (European Union 2014, p. 125). But in adumbrating the vocabulary of the new narrative to ‘tell the story of what it means to be a European in the 21st century’ the group also reshaped the classic soft power calculus in cosmopolitan terms:

Europe as a political body must fully deploy its ‘soft power’ not only across the continent, but also beyond its borders to make it a respectful and respected international partner, promoting a new global model of society based on ethical, aesthetic and sustainable values ... Renaissance and cosmopolitanism are two cultural ideals we look to and consider a vital part of the Europe of today and tomorrow’ (p. 128).

Concluding thoughts

This account has unpacked the polyvocal stakes invested in the ‘culture in external relations’ trope by European Commission officials, members of the European Parliament and civil society actors, both individual and institutional, showing how the discourse has been shaped by each of them and given a decisive push by some of them at certain moments. It has shown that non-state actors have been key policy entrepreneurs of this new agenda, in a pattern rather distinct from the manner in which cultural diplomacy is elaborated by national governments. Yet it has also

argued that the ambivalence between the performative and the pedagogical strategies of nation-states has, *mutatis mutandis*, equally underpinned the ‘culture in EU external relations’ discourse of the collective entity that is the EU.

The most recent iteration of that discourse is the work and report of the Preparatory Action. The key question now is, what narrative authority will the recommendations of the Preparatory Action attain? Will the ideas in the Report catch on at all? Will they add value, snowballing as they pick up adherents? Will any of its recommendations be implemented? Or will they simply gather dust on EU shelves? Since the release of the consortium’s report, a new European Parliament has been elected and a new Commission installed. Key slots have been filled by new actors. It is no doubt too early to make informed judgments, but the signs are positive. In November 2014 the Council of Ministers envisaged analysis and follow up to the Preparatory Action and as a priority the ‘promotion of cultural diversity, culture in EU external relations and mobility’ (Council of the European Union 2014, pp. 16–17). As regards development cooperation, it called for a strengthening of a strategic approach to culture through joint informal meetings of senior officials. There appears to be genuine commitment in the European External Action Service, which has already organized a seminar on culture and conflict (one of the topics foregrounded in the Report) in cooperation with *MORE EUROPE* and the Salzburg Global Seminar. *MORE EUROPE* also organized an informal meeting on the topic in early December 2014, bringing together EU officials, members of the European Parliament and civil society activists. A joint hearing of the Culture Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on the Preparatory Action was held in March 2015, while the Parliament will launch a call for tenders in 2015 for a pilot project on a ‘Network of Creative Young Entrepreneurs’. The Development Cooperation Directorate-General of the European Commission appears committed to carrying out a mapping exercise on its Development and Cooperation instrument that would evaluate how culture is already factored into the activities. In the meantime, EUNIC and other civil society associations and networks appear to have fully appropriated the findings of the PA. Clearly, these are ideas ‘whose time has come’. As to real implementation, the signs are there, but it is too soon to gauge the extent of real forward movement. It is only to be hoped that the right combination of political will, commitment and institutional imagination will enable the diverse European actors concerned to truly ‘engage the world’ in a spirit of global cultural citizenship.

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Notes

1. The author was the Scientific Coordinator/Team Leader for the study. The research team included Rod Fisher (assisted by Dr Carla Figueira), Dr Damien Helly and, on an ad hoc basis, Mr Gottfried Wagner.

2. Such data can be found in the publication *European cultural external relations. Paving new ways* issued in December 2014 by *More Europe* and ifa (*Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen*, Stuttgart).
3. A great deal of confusion exists over EU titles containing the word ‘Council’. Among the EU institutions, the European Council, the key agenda setting body, is made up of heads of state or government (plus the President of the European Commission). The Council of the EU also exists: this body shares legislative powers with the Parliament and the Commission (which does all the drafting and has the monopoly of initiating proposals). All Member State governments are represented. The ‘Council of Europe’, however, is a totally distinct intergovernmental organization founded in 1949! See Sassatelli 2009 and <http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/>.
4. The ECF was behind the launching of the ERASMUS, TEMPUS and many other EU programmes, which it also managed for many years.
5. The principle of subsidiarity defined in Article 5 of the Treaty on EU is meant to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made to verify that action at Union level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. The EU is not supposed to take action (except in the areas that fall within its exclusive competence), unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level. See http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm.
6. See <http://www.eunic-online.eu/?q=content/who-we-are>.
7. The EU (in addition to its individual Member States) is a party to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and in fact championed its negotiation and adoption. Not surprisingly, in all EU discourse since the adoption of the treaty, ‘cultural diversity’ is understood principally as the flourishing of the cultural and creative industries sector of nation-states as well as supra-national entities such as the EU (see Saouma and Isar 2015).
8. This truly strange formulation is based on a misunderstanding of the notion of ‘soft power. A country cannot be ‘a’ soft power. The term was actually picked up, however, by European Commission officials from one of the consultants’ reports ...
9. See <http://moreeurope.org/>.
10. The research would pertain to the 27 EU Member States themselves, together with Croatia as an acceding country in 2013, the 17 countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the 10 countries considered to be ‘strategic partners’ of the EU: Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the United States of America.

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BOOK REVIEW

Still searching for a cultural diplomacy, edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010, 278 pp., US\$120 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-84545-746-4

The latest major publication on cultural diplomacy reveals the richness as well as weaknesses of the research on foreign cultural policy.

The long-time cultural diplomacy researcher Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and the director of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy Mark C. Donfried have put together the first complex publication on cultural diplomacy in years (for publications of similar scope see Haigh (1974); Melissen (2005); Slavik (2004)). Even though many scholars confirm the rising importance of the public dimension of diplomacy (including cultural diplomacy) – e.g. Riordan (2004), only few dare to consecrate comparative research to this topic. The reasons may be various – elusiveness of the term, rapidly changing context, lack of research centers.

Gienow-Hecht's and Donfried's work is valuable, but not only for the stated reason. Besides the courage to dive into an academically not favored field, they have put together a collection of thorough studies in a well-organized manner.

In the introductory chapter, the editors claim that the dominance of the US view of cultural diplomacy¹ limits our understanding of this topic. In order to counter this, the author team embark on seemingly adventurous waters of cultural diplomacy away from the US realm: former European colonies, the Soviet Union, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Each region is subjected to two studies regarding different eras. This allows for capturing the transformations of cultural diplomacy practice not only in space, but also in time. Resulting comparisons reveal several general observations: among others, the greater success (defined aptly as 'sustainability and acceptance') of cultural diplomacies are less dependent on immediate political and economic aims, which judging by many foreign cultural policies guidelines is not self-evident.²

However, the book has its limitations. Both the editors are first and foremost historians, and so is a substantial proportion of the authors. The texts thus sometimes omit the large picture in favor of detailed elaboration on historical facts (such as in Fayet's chapter). Therefore, the book does not go far enough in its attempts to capture the phenomenon of cultural diplomacy in its complexity, including contemporary trends. Four major reservations can be made.

First of all, the selected cases are all from the twentieth century, often its first half. But diplomacy in general (L'Etang 2009), including cultural diplomacy, is impacted by globalization, and therefore is a rapidly evolving field. Cultural diplomacy is especially influenced by an increase of the flow of cultural goods (Staines and Mercer 2013). This influences its practice as well as scholarly explorations. Most notably, with decreased costs of pursuing international cultural actions, many more actors are involved in cross-border cultural exchange. This makes one of the definitions of cultural diplomacy as a foreign cultural initiative of

any subject (Frieberg, Ota in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010) employed in the book under review basically futile.

Secondly, the landscape of cultural diplomacy is being changed with new media. Its actors' communication system 'has been transforming from the modernist information transmission model to a social constructivist model focusing on the experiences of the audiences who are treated as active meaning-makers' (Grincheva 2013). Does this switch the definition of cultural diplomacy from the effort to project a favorable image towards a more interactive concept?³ Does more symmetrical communication make cultural diplomacy more democratic, as other studies (Schneider 2009) suggest? The book under review fails to reflect on these fundamental issues.

The third reservation points to the selection of cases. With the focus on cultural diplomacy practices a few decades old, the newly active areas have escaped attention. But these players bring important topics to the field, such as questions on the legitimizing role of cultural diplomacy in the case of China, or the relevance of external cultural action of international organizations as with the European Union. These issues remain omitted in the book under review.

And finally, the editors' introduction does not draw entirely compelling conclusions. Donfried's and Gienow-Hecht's claim that the collective monograph points to the character of cultural diplomacy as an 'exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, and beliefs ... with the intention of fostering mutual understanding' seems regrettably abstract, or even inaccurate. Does not the volume rather show that mutual understanding is not always the goal and that the character of cultural diplomacy's aims changes over time and region? Also, the editors call for involvement of civil society in cultural diplomacy, using a very idealistic view of civil society institutions as subjects that have 'slowly and organically grown from the bottom up, rooted naturally and with integrity into people they are designed to serve' (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010, p. 23). Yet, even if a civil society institution fits this outline (which is not always the case), it has been well documented that every institution including a civil society one has its agenda which can but does not have to be compliant with the purpose of cultural diplomacy (Nisbett 2012). With the new media, the involvement of civil society into cultural diplomacy is already under way and therefore could have been approached from a more pragmatic and reality-based point of view.

In spite of these, most of the chapters introduce observations (and compelling facts to support them) useful for analysis of today's cultural diplomacies: the role of cultural diplomacy in formulating national identity in communist Hungary (Macher in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010) has a parallel in a similar process in Japan (Daliot-Bul 2009); separation of culture from unfavorably perceived foreign policy in order to have an alternative form of addressing audiences abroad in French Middle-Eastern affairs (Dueck in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010) can be compared to similar efforts of today's Israel (Appel *et al.* 2008). The most accomplished is the last chapter (Aoki-Okabe, Kawamura, Makita in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010), dealing with German and Japanese post-war cultural diplomacies. Theoretically well grounded, the comparison of these two cases reveals several key phenomena of cultural diplomacy such as construction of one's own identity during an encounter with 'the Other' through the formation of 'we-feeling', and importance of regional context to which cultural diplomacy relates through setting apart or assimilation.

To conclude, the volume definitely is a must-read for any scholar dealing with cultural diplomacy. But the field is still waiting for a work reflecting contemporary developments successfully enough so that it could serve as consultation material for cultural diplomacy practitioners.

Notes

1. This could be argued about since for instance French cultural diplomacy has indeed longer tradition and has been seen more as a state matter than the American one.
2. See the case study of Dutch cultural diplomacy by Minnaert (2014).
3. The chapter by Aoki-Okabe, Kawamura, and Machita touches upon the issue, but does not examine it in regard to communication technologies.

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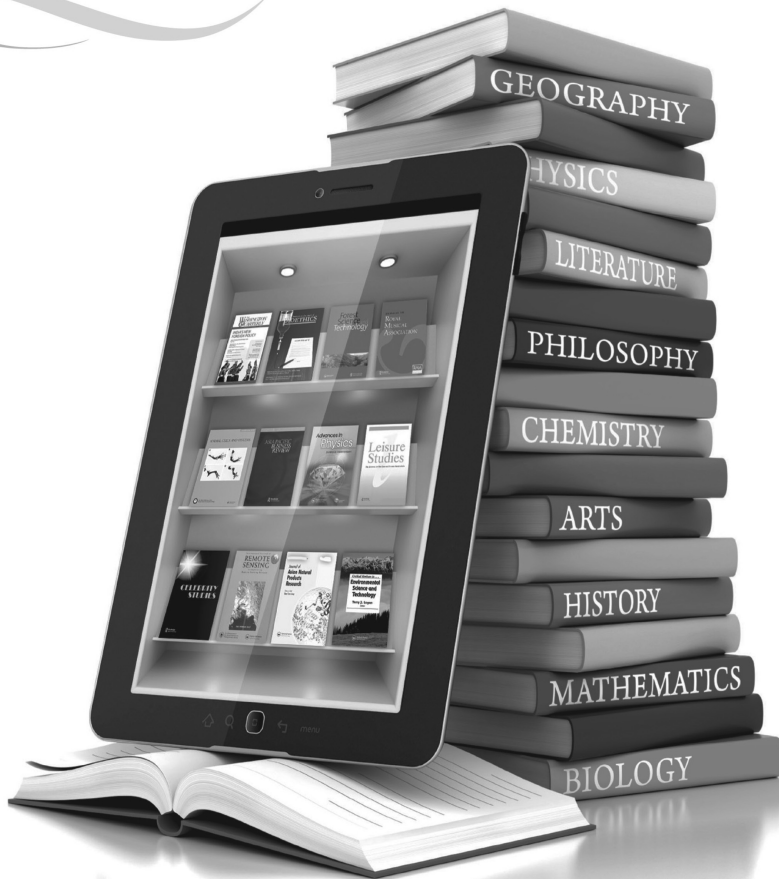


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