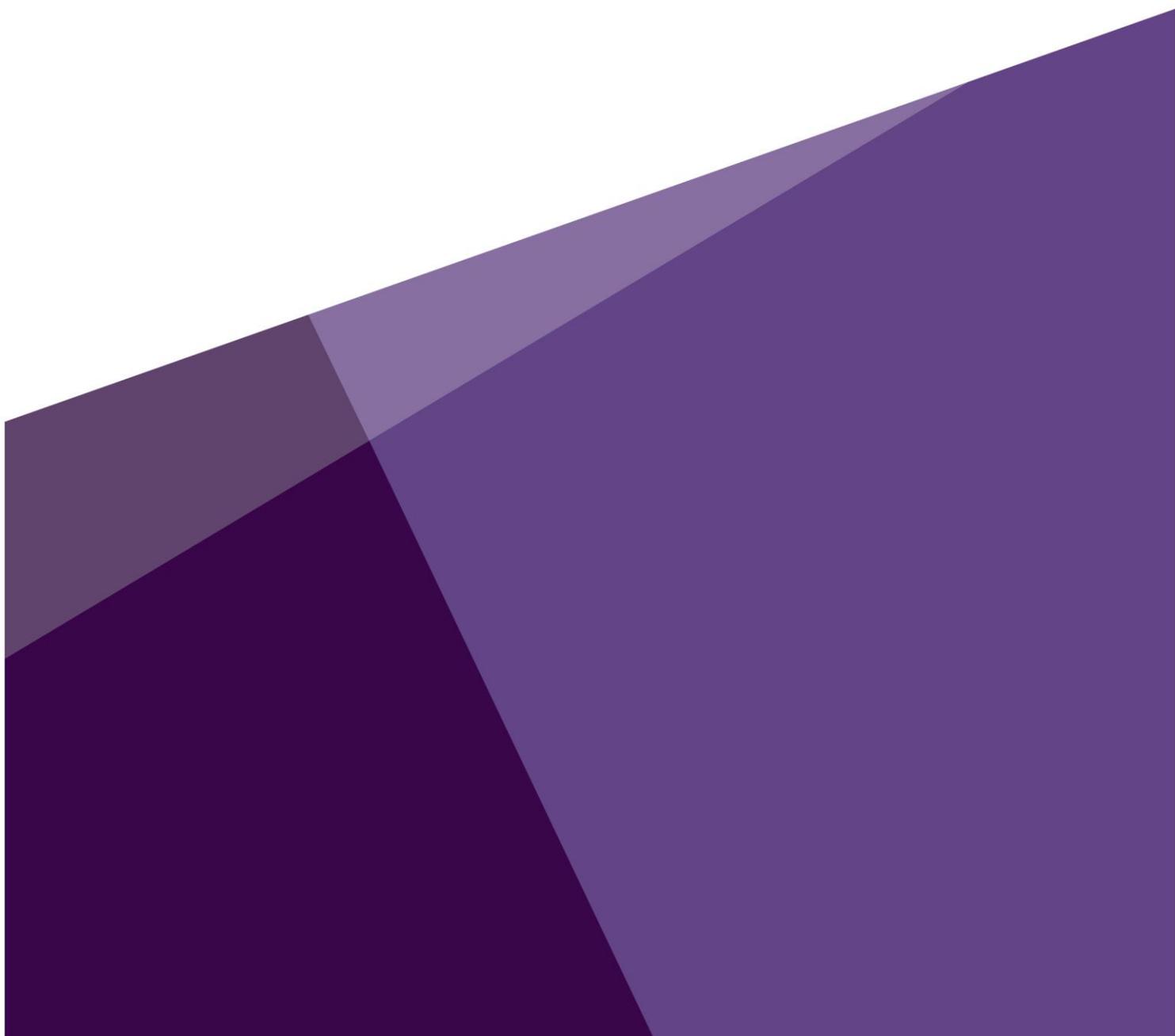


CULTURAL VALUE

Cultural Relations in Societies in Transition: A Literature Review

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CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Executive summary	5
Introduction	7
I. Cultural Relations & related phenomena	8
Mutual Trust & Understanding: Cultural Relations & Cultural Diplomacy	9
From Battles to Bridges: Cultural Relations & Public Diplomacy	11
Lennon Trumped Lenin: Cultural Relations & Soft power	12
Summary	13
II. Cultural Relations in Germany & the UK: Histories & Trajectories	14
Culture & State: the Evolution of German Foreign Cultural Policy	14
Friendship Among People: the Advent of the British Council	17
Conclusions	21

FOREWORD

The Cultural Value Project is a joint research project commissioned by the British Council and the Goethe-Institut. It aims to build a better understanding of the impact and value of cultural relations in terms of their ability to make a difference, in particular to supporting stability and prosperity in societies going through substantial change.

Attempts to assess the value of cultural relations from the perspectives of the countries that practise them (in terms of numbers, or their impact on league tables of those countries' attractiveness), can be instrumentalist and reductive. Such attempts can miss the richness of the ways cultural relations work in practice. They are also of limited use at evaluating which forms of cultural relations work best in which contexts, and at predicting the likely outcomes of different interventions, or suggesting ways that interventions can be improved. A more sophisticated approach to the assessment of cultural value is badly needed – one that combines the strengths of Goethe-Institut's 'Culture Works' concept, and the Cultural Value Model developed for the British Council by the Open University.

Together, the institutions want to examine the ways in which cultural relations work, and understand the conditions, places, and contexts where cultural relations can provide most value and impact (and indeed where they can't). We also want to understand the relative strengths - or different types of value - that come with different types of cultural relations interventions, and which sorts of interventions are most powerful for responding to which sorts of challenges within societies in transition. The two organisations intend to do this by analysing, comparing, and evaluating cultural relations as undertaken by the UK and by Germany: two of the countries with the most comprehensive cultural relations programmes overseas.

For this project the two organisations have therefore formed a collaboration, along with academic partners from both Germany and the UK. These partners, the Hertie School of Governance (in Berlin) and the Open University (in Milton Keynes), have brought to the project two complementary methods of investigating the value of cultural relations in different contexts. The project has its origins in the Open University's Cultural Value Model (a part of the UK-wide, Arts and Humanities Research Council -funded research programme, itself called the Cultural Value Project), and the Hertie School of Governance's Civil Society Model. Both approaches have been suitably adapted and brought into dialogue with each other for the purpose of this project.

The Open University and Hertie School of Government have undertaken a literature review of cultural relations and conceptualisation of value in this field. The academic partners are also adapting existing models to enable more meaningful assessment of value in cultural relations, using the Open University's Cultural Value Model and Hertie School of Government's Civil

Society Model. Primary research is underway in Egypt and Ukraine using these two models in dialogue.

This Literature Review draws on a detailed investigation of the existing academic literature on cultural relations in German and English. It forms the introduction to on-going work deploying a new mixed-methodology approach to investigating the value of cultural relations, with a focus on their impact in societies in transition.

The literature review is the first output of the project. It is the independent work of the Open University and the Hertie School of Governance, and does not necessarily represent the views of the Goethe-Institut or the British Council. The final results of the project (completed in summer 2018), and of the close collaboration between the Goethe-Institut and the British Council, will be of particular importance as Germany and the UK strengthen their ties with their neighbours - and also with each other.

Goethe-Institut and British Council,

Munich & London, January 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The term cultural relations refers to interventions in foreign cultural arenas with the aim of enhancing intercultural dialogue and bringing about mutual benefits connected to security, stability and prosperity.
2. There is no universally agreed definition of cultural relations. The conceptual confusion can lead to contradictions in practice, though it can also enable flexibility.
3. Just as there is no common definition of cultural relations, there is no one correct approach to good cultural relations, or simple method of evaluating cultural relations.
4. Practitioners face very different cultural and geopolitical contexts. Good cultural relations necessarily involve flexibly adapting programmes in ways that resonate with these contexts.
5. 'Cultural relations' is primarily a practitioners' term and often regarded as synonymous with cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and - for some - as contributing to their country's soft power. These terms belong within the same broad semantic field and share many common features, but it is important to distinguish them.
6. Cultural relations practitioners aspire to genuine reciprocity and mutual understanding, while cultural and public diplomacy, and soft power, sometimes bear connotations of instrumentalism and self-interest.
7. The emphasis on the intrinsic versus instrumental value of culture varies between different institutions. Some tend to eschew overt instrumentalist ambitions and instead stress intrinsic value (e.g. the Goethe-Institut), while others are more comfortable with a balancing act between intrinsic and instrumental goals (e.g. the British Council).
8. The intrinsic value of cultural projects should remain paramount. But instrumental goals, when defined in ways that express mutual benefit, can and should be included for pragmatic purposes, and in response to changing funding regimes and requirements.
9. Assessing the value of cultural relations in different countries and for different actors requires a range of methodologies that take diverse perspectives into account.

10. It is important to situate the strategies and practices of organisations like the Goethe-Institut and British Council within the wider histories of their countries to understand their distinctive approaches.
11. German cultural relations are founded on a 'strong' conception of culture (where culture is closely tied to national history, language and identity).
12. In contrast, British cultural relations are based on a 'weak' conception of culture, emerging from a tradition of liberal individualism and British empiricism.
13. Germany and the UK have very similar goals in deploying cultural relations to assist societies in transition. But they have different *modi operandi*.
14. This literature review seeks to create mutual awareness of convergences between German and British cultural relations as a foundation for closer dialogue, pragmatism and cooperation.
15. The complex and nuanced nature of cultural relations that this review has revealed suggests that attempts to evaluate them will themselves have to be sophisticated, nuanced, and sensitive to the different contexts in which they are taking place and different actors involved.
16. The Cultural Value Project, of which this review is the first product, aims to build and use just such a method of evaluation. It also seeks to create mutual awareness of convergences between German and British cultural relations as a foundation for closer dialogue, pragmatism, and cooperation in the future.

Introduction

“No commodity is quite so strange as this thing called cultural exchange. Say that our prestige needs a tonic: Export the Philharmonic. That’s what we call cultural exchange!... And when our neighbours call us vermin. We sent out Woody Herman..”. (Combs, 2015, 238).

Cultural relations take place in a context of instability and risks which are beyond the control of any nation-state to address and which make cooperation in international relations more important than ever. Rather than employing unilateral approaches, it is hoped that - through cultural relations - increased trust and mutual understanding can be built which will contribute to solving these problems.

There is no general agreement on what cultural relations are. Different national cultural relations organisations understand cultural relations through different lenses. The British Council, for example, has an expansive definition of cultural relations that encompasses soft power, and senior staff working in policy see this project as consistent with their goal to become thought leaders in the field of soft power (reflecting debates in London and to some extent Washington and Beijing). In contrast, the Goethe-Institut eschews notions of soft power and instead focuses on managing good cultural relations in line with the traditionally more multilateralist German foreign policy. Each may view cultural relations, and therefore culture, as an end in itself, but also as a means to specific further ends – of most importance for the purposes of this project being: promoting civil society and improving stability in ‘societies in transition.’¹

The purpose of this literature review is to explain differences of understanding and how they inform differences of approach to cultural relations, by examining the relevant literature in English and German. This will aid organisations like the Goethe-Institut and British Council in devising different but complementary strategies, and harmonizing their approaches when required. The current context of greater competition in the cultural field means that, especially when budgets are constrained, working with a range of different partners and strategies becomes more desirable.

For the purposes of this study, the British Council and Goethe-Institut define cultural relations as follows:

Cultural relations are understood as reciprocal transnational interactions between two or more cultures, encompassing a range of activities conducted by state and/or non-state actors within the space of culture and civil society. The overall outcomes of cultural relations are greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction rather than coercion.

This review starts by exploring cultural relations and differentiating the term from related concepts –

¹ The term ‘societies in transition’ also has no precise definition, but usually refers to societies undergoing major structural and institutional reform. See *Transitions from authoritarian rule*; O’Donnell, G. A., & Schmitter P. C. (1986), Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and soft power. In the process, we examine the complexity of discourses of culture that inform cultural relations.

The second section provides a brief history of cultural relations undertaken by Germany and the UK, to demonstrate how any country's approach to cultural relations is determined by the challenges and prevailing concepts of different historical periods. These different trajectories demonstrate how we arrive at a set of differing terms for often similar practices. Indeed, there are different terms for similar practices conducted with slightly different motivations, which often leads to terminological confusion in international debates about influence.

A word at the outset. There are no universal definitions of culture or cultural relations or its sibling concepts, and any attempt to find any are doomed. 'Cultural relations' is a concept embedded in practices. Policymakers and scholars offer definitions and guidelines, while cultural relations institutes' staff, funders, audiences and others make cultural relations happen in particular contexts, often aware of those definitions but seeking to solve the problems in front of them.

I. Cultural relations & related phenomena

For scholars of International Cultural Studies, International Relations, and Media and Communication Studies, as well as for policymakers, the concept 'cultural relations' has been mostly discussed in the Anglosphere context in relation to its sibling concepts of cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and soft power. Cultural relations are not a distinctive phenomenon, but a set of activities that take place within those broader fields. In Germany, for example, the translation of cultural relations, *Kulturbeziehungen* or *kulturelle Beziehungen*, is barely used at all, as policymakers and practitioners work under the umbrella term 'foreign cultural and education policy' (*Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik* (AKBP)). Efforts to define cultural relations largely stem from cultural relations practitioners, particularly ex-staff of the British Council (e.g. Mitchell 1986; Rivera 2015). Besides this lack of theorisation as a concept, there is also a lack of empirical research to define cultural relations and how they work (Nisbett 2016: online).

Wittgenstein (1958) used the term 'family resemblances' to refer to the manner in which humans use the same word for many different things. In the broad semantic field of cultural relations, in contrast, diverse terms are used to refer often to the same phenomenon. The term 'semantic constellation' is more useful (Ang et al. 2015). Cultural relations, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and soft power form a constellation of terms used to denote cross-border cultural activities that, whether intentionally or not, bear upon a country's reputation, influence and attractiveness. Cultural relations, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy all invoke cultural encounters as a way to bridge understanding between peoples. The terms overlap, while each also refers to distinctive sets of practices. How then do they differ?

What is Culture?

*Raymond Williams, in his ground-breaking 'Keywords' (1976) established a now classic definition of culture as 1) civilisation, 2) signifying or symbolic system, and 3) way of life, in the anthropological sense (1976: 87-93). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the nation-state became the dominant form of political community, an overlap of nation, language and culture was often assumed, where culture referred to the forms of communication (including languages) defining your community and the way of life those represented, including the practical routines through which that way of life was enacted (Hall 1997). The emergence of supranational regimes and diaspora and digital communication make the location and enactment of culture more complex in the twenty-first century. However, these complexities have existed throughout history. Cultural historians have favoured concepts such as cultural transfer and *histoire croisée* or 'entangled histories' (Ther 2011: 204; Werner and Zimmermann 2006; Seigel 2005).*

Mutual Trust & Understanding: Cultural Relations & Cultural Diplomacy

To distinguish cultural relations and cultural diplomacy, the literature discusses differences in the objectives, means, and actors involved. In this regard, one distinction made is between the presence and absence of government. Most scholars understand cultural relations as a 'naturally-occurring' phenomenon (Arndt 2005; Melissen 2005; Rose and Wadham-Smith 2004) that has long-term effects (Pamment 2016) and involves some kind of reciprocal transaction. But immediately one has to question this definition, especially where large sums of money are invested by state actors to create specific cultural interventions designed to deliver particular outcomes. Former German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said the 'pre-political space of culture, communication and education' can prepare the ground for political reconciliation of parties in conflict (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014a: 6). But is there any truly pre-policy space for culture? Certainly, cultural relations are generally embedded in socio-political relations across borders.

Consider the former British Council officer Tim Rivera's (2015: 35) statement about cultural diplomacy and cultural relations:

Cultural diplomacy takes a promotion and advocacy approach, using cultural content for the specific purpose of supporting foreign policy objectives and the national interest. Cultural relations take place outside the sway of government, building mutual trust and understanding, and generating amity and influence in the process.

Rivera uses the term cultural relations in a benign way – cultural activities are happening anyway and should not be instrumentalised; cultural diplomacy instrumentalises relations when governments try to support, harness or direct those relations. But is this definition consistent with cultural relations as practised by organisations like the Goethe-Institut or the British Council?

The tension between various forms of idealism and instrumentalism (i.e. using culture to effect or influence social change) has long been present in British and German foreign cultural and education

policy. Practitioners perceived their work in the cultural field as pre-political. Yet practitioners also accept that public funds should be directed towards politically legitimated long-term goals (Adam 2016). How is this tension between idealism and instrumentalism managed in different contexts – and where along the scale do particular interventions fall?

A second distinction in the literature is between cultural relations as neutral - resulting in mutually-beneficial relationships - and cultural diplomacy as designed to achieve a self-interested benefit, whether or not any benefit accrues to the partner (Aoki-Okabe et al. 2010). Cultural diplomacy is seen as a deliberate policy to achieve a gain; cultural relations are seen as just happening, because both sides feel the value. For example, Mitchells (1986: 5) argues:

Cultural relations on the other hand [as opposed to cultural diplomacy], are more neutral and comprehensive.... The difference is, in practice, one of mode. The purpose of cultural relations is not necessarily to seek one-sided advantage. At their most effective, their purpose is to achieve understanding and co-operation between national societies for their mutual benefit.

Here we see a certain altruism underpinning the definition of cultural relations but also some confusions. If cultural relations can use the methods of cultural diplomacy as well as the same funds, where lies the difference? Mitchells argues that it is in the motive.

A third distinction concerns the direction of the relationship between cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. One view is that cultural relations underpin cultural diplomacy - helping governments understand each other through cultural exchange between publics. The alternative view is that cultural diplomacy fosters cultural relations by supporting cultural actors. This tension was evident the first time that the term cultural diplomacy entered the US political lexicon in 1959. Robert H. Thayer, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for the Coordination of International Educational and Cultural Relations, said:

[F]oreign relationships are no longer relationships between government, or heads of state—foreign relationships are the relationship between people of all countries—and relationships between peoples are governed by the way people think and live, and eat, and feel and this represents the culture of a people; and so today we have in the forefront of the implementation of our foreign policy, cultural diplomacy, and to my mind the most important means of bringing complete mutual understanding between peoples, which in turns compels mutual understanding between governments. [...]. The objective of American cultural diplomacy is to create in the peoples of the world a perfect understanding of the life and culture of America. (Thayer 1959: 740-744 as cited in J.H. Brown 2016: online)

The recognition of citizens as key actors in international relations is welcome, but there are some contradictions in the above statement. For, while espousing mutuality, the final sentence reveals somewhat confused goals – the aim is to achieve a ‘perfect understanding of the life and culture of America’. Does that truly involve mutuality? In this view, cultural relations once harnessed to the goals of cultural diplomacy can compel an understanding between governments. Governments in turn can use that knowledge to cultivate better cultural relations between peoples (see e.g. Ninkovich 1996). But it has to be asked, who are ‘the people’? Is it the aim of cultural relations to target elites and influencers, or to have broad appeal across socio-economic classes – or both?

A fourth problem concerns what counts as ‘genuine reciprocity’. Cultural relations, we are advised, entail encounters between cultures that generate awareness and understanding. But so do tourism, business

travel and television. Genuine reciprocity goes further to foster a willingness to shift one's own opinions or behaviour, as well as expect shifts from the other. Berger et al. (2008: 5) suggest that, in order to engage in a reciprocal relationship on equal terms, partners need to work on a 'culture of dialogue' instead of a 'dialogue of cultures'.

A fifth and final distinction is an ethical one. Some scholars and practitioners draw a line between cultural relations and cultural diplomacy from a normative standpoint. They argue that cultural relations *should* be independent of the state (Mitchells 1986; Rivera 2015). Certainly, money matters. Offering subsidies to foreign cultural institutions can create relations of dependency in the same way as any unilaterally delivered funding – 'who pays the piper calls the tune.' Moreover, cultural relations interventions may operate in partnership with established systems of cultural patronage and in so doing reinforce inequalities in 'societies in transition.' Maintaining artistic independence in such contexts assumes political and ethical as well as economic dimensions.

We have now highlighted some of the unavoidable ambiguities that arise from the lack of clear definitions of cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. So how to think about these and what to do about them? Clearly culture can be instrumentalised *without* government involvement (Mark 2010). In an age of citizen diplomacy (Fletcher 2016), city diplomacy, gastro-diplomacy, and innumerable other forms of mutual cultural representation, it may be possible for cultural relations to contribute to foreign policy goals without formal steering from national governments. Arguably, some of the most powerful forms of influence via culture arise from commercially funded films, advertising, and marketing.

Equally, government may try to instrumentalise existing cultural relations, but find their efforts falling on deaf ears. Milton C. Cummings (2009: 1) writes, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy 'can ... be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or "telling its story" to the rest of the world'. Furthermore, harnessing existing cultural relations can backfire if executed badly. As the dictum goes, it can take decades to win the trust of an audience and minutes to lose it.

Finally, there is now a 'global cultural arena ... inhabited by ever denser flows of ideas, perceptions and messages' (Ang et al. 2015: 372). It is ever harder to disentangle cultural relations between foreign and domestic audiences from these global cultural flows. From a government perspective, exploiting existing cultural relations for good international relations is only to be welcomed. Culture has always been a pillar of foreign policy across nations. But, with globalisation, the dilemmas facing legacy cultural relations organisations are ever more intense. And when we bring public diplomacy into the semantic field the problems only get worse.

From Battles to Bridges: Cultural Relations & Public Diplomacy

At least in Anglo-American theory and practice, cultural relations and cultural diplomacy are often seen as a subset of public diplomacy. The term 'public diplomacy' was coined in the US in the mid-1960s in order to refer to its broadcasting activities to foreign publics during the Cold War, as well as to some of its cultural and exchange programmes (Pamment 2014: 52). Public diplomacy broadly refers to strategic communication by governments aimed at influencing foreign publics and hence their governments. It is government-to-people, but with aspirations of government-to-people-to-government.

The study of public diplomacy is more theoretically established as a discipline than cultural relations or cultural diplomacy (Pamment 2014: 53). Since 9/11 it has gone through several shifts, often guided by the lens of the 'war on terror' (Melissen 2013: 440). First, following the Cold War notion that 'they' wish to be liberated by 'us', public diplomacy scholarship, policy and practice focused on information-dissemination to reach 'moderate Muslims'. It quickly became clear 'they' did not simply want 'our' information, and calls were made to shift modes from 'competition to collaboration' (Hocking 2008); 'from monologue to dialogue to collaboration' (Cowan and Arsenault 2008); or from 'battles to bridges' (Zaharna 2009); (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Still, the notion of messaging and the use of marketing and public relations strategies are prevalent, despite decades of research stressing that the message sent is not always the message received. So, while cultural relations and cultural diplomacy place culture at the core, public diplomacy places emphasis on strategic communication.

Cultural relations and cultural diplomacy have been subsumed within the field of public diplomacy. In his well-known typology, for example, Nicholas Cull (2008) described public diplomacy as consisting of 'listening', 'advocacy', 'cultural diplomacy', 'exchange diplomacy' and 'international broadcasting'. While these may be distinct, they blur, as they are all part of the same toolkit for international influence within the context of a war on terror and broader 'marketplace of loyalties' in the early twenty-first century as power shifts and diffuses (Price 2015).

Similar commonalities and distinctions arise in debates about public diplomacy as we saw with debates on cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. Again cultural relations shares characteristics with cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy: its communicative character, long-term goals, people-to-people relations, and involvement of state and/or non-state actors. But distinctions and tensions remain too. Debates focus on whether cultural relations are *led* by governments - or mobilised, harnessed, or gently nudged. Are they independent of the desire for states to exert influence? Is the global cultural arena a good thing? Have we witnessed a democratisation of diplomacy? Or are naturally-occurring cultural relations being instrumentalised in non-transparent or even duplicitous ways in pursuit of the 'national interest'? (Melissen 2013: 436-40)

“Lennon Trumps Lenin”: Cultural Relations & Soft Power

The instrumentalisation of culture is unashamedly advocated in soft power theory. Soft power means getting what you want by the force of attraction rather than coercion. Soft power allows for the exercise of influence by encouraging others to cooperate with you (Nye 2004). Culture is an essential part of soft power. After all, as Nye argues, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, 'Lennon trumped Lenin' (Nye 2004: 50). However, the mechanisms through which soft power works are subtle, indirect, and can be difficult to discern. And if soft power works best when it goes unperceived then how should one research soft power effects empirically? As Bially Mattern points out, some seem to assume it works via a process of 'cultural osmosis' (2007: 118). But is it possible to identify the mechanisms of soft power from Nye's theory?

Nye would say yes. He argues that, first, soft power is a resource, and you know it when you see it. It is a function of the attractiveness and the positive feelings evoked. Second, the resource can grow organically or be helped to grow more quickly or in a particular direction through governmental support. Spontaneity is considered by Nye to enhance soft power in a more authentic and lasting way because the hidden hand of government direction is not suspected. Third, there is a *first return on soft power*, or the immediate return on influence (which is one key indicator for the UK FCO's 'GREAT Britain'

campaign): relations are created or solidified, based on trust, mutual interest and shared cultural knowledge. Finally, this first return solidifies as a basis for future relations, including business transactions. This leads to the *second return on soft power*, or the return on investment. Trusting partners, choosing to cooperate, building good trade relations and managing shared global problems, are all part of the mutual benefits of soft power.

The race to accrue soft power has prompted a huge investment in attempts at the projection of 'national cultures' (Ang et al. 2015: 373). The popularity of the term for policy-makers means that some, mainly Anglo-Saxon scholars, subsume cultural relations, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy within Nye's rubric and see them as resources of soft power, servicing the national interest (Wyzomisky 2003: 2; Pamment 2016; Nisbett 2016).

A further complication with culture as conceived in soft power theory is a political one. Deploying cultural relations is often seen as an ethical approach to diplomacy (Mark 2010; Goff 2013), harnessing pre-existing fellow-feeling. However, the *power* in soft power is very problematic. For many practitioners and theorists, soft power implies state power *over* citizens, rather than the empowerment *of* citizens, which, arguably, is the ultimate goal of CR. Soft power carries a connotation of domination or imposition (Gillespie 2006; Berenskoetter 2007: 3; Lebow 2007; Lukes 2007; Ringmar 2007; Fisher 2010: 271). Yet even cultural relations devoid of any signs of the hand of government can carry 'connotations of colonialism, imperialism and propaganda' since '[d]ominant states have always used culture to transmit political, social and economic values' (Nisbett 2013: 558).

Summary

We have introduced and explained that cultural relations are part of a semantic field with cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and soft power. All these terms can refer to the same set of cultural activities within a broader foreign policy framework within a global cultural arena. All are associated with managing relations or communication across cultures, achieving long-term goals, accentuating people-to-people relations, cultivating feelings of mutuality, and the participation of state and non-state actors. But distinctions and tensions remain too. These concern the actual and desirable role of the state, the degree to which engagement is seen as an instrument while neglecting the intrinsic value of international exchange, and the difficulty of juggling the pursuit of the national interest with win-win, positive-sum relations.

We began this section by noting that cultural relations practitioners have often taken the lead defining the field. From the 'chain of influence' passing from government to funders to institutions to practitioners to publics (Brown 2014), cultural relations will mean different things to different actors and will be practised differently. Given the seemingly unavoidable tensions intrinsic to these concepts and practices, it is sensible to work with the diversity of notions of cultural relations emerging in different countries at different times and through different institutions.

We have shown that uniform definitions of culture and cultural relations and its related concepts are ultimately neither possible nor desirable. Rather, it is best to work with the creative tensions between these concepts which can only be managed, never finally resolved. Uniform definitions are also impossible because, as we explore in the next section, cultural relations policymakers and practitioners arrive at their own conceptions as they *do* cultural relations.

Instead of spending further time on the ultimately irresolvable matter of what cultural relations *are*, let us therefore explore what cultural relations can *do*.

II. Cultural relations in Germany & the UK: histories & trajectories

We can explain the evolution of different conceptions of cultural relations by tracing the national histories of cultural relations that have caused the creation of different diplomatic orientations and infrastructures in Germany and the UK. Once we understand the different historical trajectories and conceptual legacies of each nation-state, it becomes easier to appreciate how cooperation can be crafted between national cultural relations institutions.

The complexity of defining concepts such as cultural relations is partly due to the ways in which their meanings are ingrained in practices and tied to geopolitical contexts (Pamment 2016). After working at the British Council, Tim Rivera wrote:

I don't think anybody [in the academic field] really fills that gap of understanding what non-governmental diplomacy...or cultural relations, is really about...[T]he whole frame of thinking about this subject is governmental (Rivera 2015: 20).

This is due to fundamental differences in understandings of nation formation, the significance of language, and definitions of culture, that have emerged historically in different countries. A country's cultural relations practices are often shaped by the priorities set by the ministry of foreign affairs at the time – and these depend on how the country understands its national interests and what it is trying to achieve - be it extricating itself from its imperial past, waging a Cold War, trying to boost trade through diaspora links, etc (Brown (2014)).

Culture & State: the Evolution of German Foreign Cultural Policy

By the end of the nineteenth century, a convergence between nation, culture and language had solidified in German thought, leading to the imperative to promote German national culture on the world stage. International cultural relations became an important tool for this. The newly unified Germany had a large diaspora overseas and authorities felt that continued German language tuition and cultural exchange with Germany would ensure no dilution of their German-ness (Brown 2016). This was also a matter of prestige. In January 1914, the German ambassador to the US said, 'Our cultural efforts do not aim at doing a favour to the Americans, instead we wish to elevate German *Kultur* to its due right – a right which it claims unconditionally as the first culture of the world' (cited in Brown 2014: 5).

The German historian Karl Lamprecht then offered a vision of a state looking to expand its elevation through science, culture and commerce, writing to the Chancellor in 1912 that Germany needed an *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik* (AKP) (foreign cultural policy) to extend its influence using civil society connectivity rather than military force. The Chancellor penned a circular decree in which he stressed the need to support and encourage German cultural activity abroad. His idea was that foreign cultural policy could strengthen the bond between Germans abroad and in the Reich, and at the same time, promote "German cultural life" abroad, which was thought to have positive economic side-effects (Kloosterhuis 1981).

In the climate of imperialist expansion, the German government aligned the "imperialism of ideas" with economic and colonial policy (Witte 1981). In contrast, liberal politicians perceived foreign cultural policy

as a way of overcoming the power-focused *Realpolitik* of the Reich and arriving at a foreign policy driven by economic concerns (*Wirtschaftspolitik*). The most ambitious ones took to forming private associations in order to heighten the German public's understanding of foreign cultures and promote the need for a formal foreign cultural policy (Witte 1981).

Faced with the new concept of foreign cultural policy, the *Auswärtiges Amt* (AA) decided to carry out such policy through these private associations, but did not create a special department for the purpose. The reasoning was twofold: (1) the imperial budget was strained and few funds available, so reliance on private funding from interested individuals was prudent. Moreover, (2) given the mounting international tension and German isolation, the ministry opted to work as unofficially and inconspicuously as possible. During World War I, some of the private actors in AKP remained active, but were overshadowed by official propaganda, although the centrist parties in the parliament urged a return to "culture and civilization" as early as 1917 (Düwell, 2015: 65).

After 1918, faced with military defeat and the sanctions of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany's political elite needed to find new ways of conducting foreign policy. Like the French after 1871, they looked towards cultural foreign policy as a surrogate for traditional foreign policy (Düwell 2015). The lack of alternatives is often illustrated with a quote by a German general, who posited in 1919 that 'Foreign policy requires power, an army and money. All these we do not have anymore' (paraphrased from German, cited in Düwell (1981, 46). The AA decided to take action and open a department for cultural foreign policy, which was supposed to coordinate the plethora of private organisations already engaging in cultural foreign relations.

The intra-war period was marked by a strong rejection of imperialistic tendencies and chauvinistic exaltation of German cultural achievements. In line with the desire to let cultural relations grow outside the aegis of the state executive, the next decade saw the proliferation of the German '*Mittlerorganisation*' ('*Mittler*') – cultural organisations between state and civil society that would bid for *Auswärtige Amt* (AA) funding, such as the *Deutsche Akademie* in 1923 and in 1925 both the *Akademischer Austauschdienst* (later the DAAD) and the *Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung* (see Bauersachs, H.: *Wandlungsprozesse in der Auswärtigen Kulturpolitik. Eine mehrdimensionale Analyse am Beispiel der Deutschlandjahre* (as yet unpublished, University of Cologne, 2018)).

In Germany, cultural relations experienced their biggest setback during the Nazi period. Even though the cultural department of the AA managed to conduct independent cultural foreign policy for some time after the Nazis had assumed power in 1933, it was only a matter of time until the ministry's leadership was replaced with Nazi officials and the AKP department integrated into the propaganda apparatus of the Third Reich (Düwell, 2015). Likewise, the *Mittler* were forcibly coordinated to follow the Reich's line, which conducted blatant cultural imperialism based on the idea of German racial superiority (Düwell 2015).

In the post-1945 period, in common with the UK, France and other Western European states, the Federal Republic of Germany supported the expansion of Foreign Cultural Institutes around the world as part of Cold War cultural competition. There was also a fresh emphasis on development - through both language and technical skills. After the cultural foreign policy in the Nazi-era, Germany's AKP after the war was in line with her general foreign policy goal of integration with the West and rehabilitating Germany on the international stage by showing the 'better Germany of Kant, Goethe or Dürer' (Witte, 1981: 375).

German international broadcasting grew later than in the UK, with the launch in 1953 of Deutsche Welle and Deutschlandfunk. In the early 1970s West German policymakers and academics defined a new AKP as the third pillar of foreign policy, alongside traditional diplomacy and economic foreign policy (Maaß 2011). Under strategic policy guidance from the AA, *Mittler* such as the Goethe-Institut (founded 1951 as successor to the German Academy (Deutsche Akademie) would put this policy into practice. Conferring AKP status to a multitude of *Mittlers* was a conscious choice to prevent the state as much as possible from instrumentalising culture for diplomatic purposes (Witte, 1981).

In 1970, the AKP strategy of the AA was revamped. Most notably, culture activities were redefined to expand beyond traditional genres of 'high culture' (e.g. Goethe and Beethoven) to embrace modern popular culture. The policy focus then shifted from national cultural representation to international cooperation (Auswärtiges Amt 1970). This change in strategy was largely approved by the Bundestag in 1975, but with a marked emphasis on strengthening German language teaching abroad (Deutscher Bundestag 2012). In this way, cultural relations were designated an autonomous role but within a foreign policy framework that sought to project a strong nation-culture-language connection.

German foreign policy after reunification framed Germany's role as a 'civilian power' or *Zivilmacht*. German foreign policy could, post-Cold War, help civilise international relations through efforts 'to replace the military enforcement of rules (politics based on power) with the internationalization of socially accepted norms (politics based on legitimacy)' (Mauß 1990). This role conception was reinforced by scholarship about the EU's role as a 'normative power' (Manner 2002).

Despite this conceptual shift, which underscores the importance of foreign cultural policy, the AKP budget was cut in the mid-90s. This produced barbed criticism in the press (Enzensberger 1995; Greiner 1996). The criticism intensified when then-foreign minister Klaus Kinkel published his vision on the AKP, which called for an intertwining of economic and cultural foreign policy. A revision of the fundamentals of AKP was realised with the *Konzeption 2000*, which committed Germany to the ideals of the 1970s, but asked for closer linkage between cultural foreign policy and other branches of foreign policy, whilst also acknowledging challenges posed by the Internet (Auswärtiges Amt 2000).

The EU exercised influence by setting European and global norms. Mechanisms to achieve this included defining legal frameworks in multilateral organisations and assisting NGOs cultivating human rights, free speech and the rule of law. However, cultural relations as a mechanism was absent in both scholarship on German civilian power and EU normative power.

Efforts were made to find ways to evaluate what difference culture could make in unstable societies, for instance the Goethe-Institut's 2012 *Cultural Innovators Network* in the Middle East (Goethe-Institut 2016: 17-18). In the latest update of the principles of the AKBP; published in 2011, foreign cultural policy saw another shift away from independence to stronger demands to actively flank the government's foreign policy (Auswärtiges Amt, 2011).

The AA's usage of the term 'cultural diplomacy' as synonymous with AKP espoused strong criticism from the opposition parties (Dehm, Feist, Roth, & Schmidt 2014; Schmidt et al. 2012). In 2014, the AA initiated a process they called 'Review 2014' leading to a report stressing the use of foreign cultural policy in forming bonds with civil society actors, and in the promotion of core values of the German Federal Republic, such as democracy, political pluralism, rule of law and the protection of minorities (Auswärtiges Amt 2014b).

Practitioners stress that the relative independence of the work of organisations like the Goethe-Institut from politics is a key feature which differentiates it from traditional diplomacy and international economic policy (Adam 2016; Grätz 2012). However, practitioners' work implicitly aligns with German foreign policy goals of social transformation and stabilisation, and a *Mittler* such as the Goethe-Institut must manage this tension.

Some German scholarly attention was captured by the post-9/11 US focus on public diplomacy, but the field is embryonic. The terms cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy were also introduced to policy documents at this time, but practitioners contested any signal that culture was being instrumentalised for political goals (Dehm et al. 2014; Grätz 2012; Schmidt et al., 2012). Little changed conceptually and impact evaluation remains something that must be explicitly defended; the real business concerns long-term relationship building with local partners at 'eye-level' (German: *Augenhöhe*). Cultural relations remain a practice that creates relationships of trust within which governments *may* seek to influence outcomes; benefits are a happy by-product, but the sharing of art and culture remains an intrinsic good (e.g. Goethe-Institut 2016). Finally the equation of nation, language and culture present over a century ago in German cultural relations remains present today.

Friendship Among People: The Advent of the British Council

While Germany had gained some experience in foreign cultural policy work, and France was pursuing cultural relations with vigour, it was only in the 1930s that Britain added two international organisations to its diplomatic infrastructure that were to engage overseas public via culture and media. The British Council was created in 1934 while the BBC Empire Service (later World Service – 'WS') was set up in 1932 to serve the 'imperial family.' The important point here to note is that these two institutions were designed to work in complementary fashion, and in tandem with British embassies (Gillespie and Webb 2012).

Brown considers whether the UK's relative tardiness compared to Germany in setting up foreign cultural/media institutions was because the equation of nation, culture and language was less intuitive for the UK - a state based on liberal individualism in which the national collective of citizens was not seen as a distinct culture but as an aggregation of the behaviours of individuals, and as an Empire in which 'culture follows trade and the flag' (Brown 2014: 5).

While commercial and missionary agencies reinforced these networks, Brown argues, in the British case these institutions did not see themselves as part of an expansion of British national culture as such. That had already been achieved with the British Empire. The early British Council did not attempt to theorise or define cultural relations activity very precisely, but one dominant trope was the friendship among peoples via direct personal contact (Ellwood 1982: 53).

The fact that the terms cultural relations and cultural diplomacy were and are (hardly) used in official documents in the British context is perhaps due to what Arndt (2005) argues is the Anglo-Saxon mistrust of the word 'culture'. This may be due to difficulties of defining the term for administrators deeply imbued with a sense of British empiricism and pragmatism which sought to avoid any reification of culture. As Coombs notes, 'The London Times in 1934 congratulated the founders of the British Council for avoiding

'culture' in its title. It was a word, the Times observed, which 'comes clumsily and shyly off the Englishman's tongue' (1964: 18; cited in J.H. Brown 2016: online).

In 1944, Archibald MacLeish was named the first Assistant Secretary of State for Public and Cultural Relations in the US. In 1947 he said that 'cultural relations are not a bad name in itself; on the contrary, it has all the attributes of gentility and virtue. It is also... a boring phrase' (J.H. Brown 2016: online).

Nevertheless, for the British Council itself the emphasis was and still is on 'sharing the UK's 'cultural assets' (British Council 2013: 7). This has been the basis of its work since its inception, when its declared aims included:

To promote abroad a wider appreciation of British culture and civilisation, by encouraging the study and use of the English language, and thereby, to extend knowledge of British literature and of the British contributions to music and the fine arts, the sciences, philosophic thought and political practice.

To encourage both cultural and educational interchanges between the United Kingdom and other countries and, as regards the latter, to assist the free flow of students from overseas to British seats of learning, technical institutions and factories, and of United Kingdom students in the reverse direction... (Donaldson 1984: 1)

As a Non-Departmental Public Body with core funding provided by government Grant-in-Aid, the British Council's relational work in cultural, scientific, and educational fields has historically articulated British political, economic and social sensibilities. This process of 'cultural wraparound' has enabled the Council to support British interests with 'the velvet glove of high culture' in contexts not normally amenable to conventional diplomatic overtures (Tickner 2012: 418 n.125).

The ability of the arts, sciences, training and education to cross borders has underwritten government funding of the British Council. For their part, representing the British 'national interest' has been the implicit (and at times, uncomfortably explicit) quid pro quo of their fiscal support. The historic proximity of the British Council to the UK government (and the FCO in particular), through their funding and strategic orientation, has always loomed as a potential weakness for both. It is the relative autonomy of British Council from government direction, especially in the conduct of day-to-day activities, which is so critical to their cultural credibility - and consequently to their ability to act as mediators on the world stage.

This governing dilemma: the balance between the security and protection afforded by Grant-in-Aid, and the need to be at one remove from British government policy and action (Gillespie et al. 2014), we argue, has been a persistent theme throughout the history of both institutions. One way of managing this has been to consider the British Council and BBC World Service as independent but complementary elements of a wider 'package' of UK overseas information and representational services that also include the diplomatic service. This approach to the 'stacking' of services to enhance their joint reach and value has also been a motivating force in the evolution of strategic communications within Whitehall, and the attempt to manage the polyvalent nature of relations between cultural relations, public diplomacy, and - more recently- soft power.

British overseas cultural and media work throughout the post war period was framed more as 'information work' and conducted as part of the Cold War efforts. According to Brown (2016) there was no strong concept of culture or cultural relations guiding their activities. The reputation and reach achieved by British Council and BBC World Service was of huge importance to the British government as it considered the shape and purpose of its information services after the Second World War. This it did primarily in terms of the instrumental value to be extracted from continued funding of overseas

activities. As the Report of the Drogheda Committee put it in 1954, 'the aim of the Information Services must always be to achieve in the long run some definite political or commercial result' (WAC R20/53 1953: 3). This outlook has been reflected in subsequent government reviews of UK cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy efforts.

Accordingly, the British Council has been obliged, over the years, to account for their services in instrumental terms. For the British Council, whose remit is closely aligned with the 'projection of Britain', this quickly became a core part of its reporting requirements. As the Council's Executive Committee put it in 1968, representations should be made to the FCO to stress:

the contribution the Council can make to direct British interests and influence. In particular, [...] its main purpose in developed and developing countries is to be a long-term means to dispose politicians, consumers, etc., to think and buy British, and to resist the blandishments of our competitors (Everett 1968).

As Britain's role as a 'great power' waned in the decades after the Second World War and its economic significance, in relative terms, declined, 'National status was increasingly defined in cultural terms' (Tickner 2012: 400-401). Not only did this foreground the British Council, but also magnified the perceived dividend to be extracted by government from its support of their activities. The point was made in the FCO that 'effective presentation of information is (becoming) as vital an element of foreign and defence policy as, say, infantry battalions or naval escort vehicles' (Wigg 1967).

The diplomatic value of British Council English Language Teaching should not be under-estimated. For example, its ability to cultivate partnerships in developing nations played an important role in maintaining cultural ties with territories otherwise cut off from conventional diplomatic links, as was the case in Ghana in the mid-1960s. Measuring the success of educational and exchange programmes in these terms could only ever be a narrow and essentially political expression of value.

To a large extent it still does, but the shift in the last decade or so from the 'projection of Britain' to cultivating 'attractiveness' and delivering 'influence' for the UK through 'work aiming to inform and engage individuals overseas' (Carter 2005) has begun to alter the terms of that debate (Wilton 2002; Carter 2005; HoL Soft Power Committee 2014). If realised, this is a welcome change in rhetoric for the British Council, as it embraces the principles of relationship-building that have underpinned the most successful aspects of its work for decades.

In the transition from Empire to Commonwealth, the British Council brokered new relationships of mutuality out of old imperial dependencies. Meanwhile, austerity Britain's post-war appetite to remain at the top table of world politics, without the resources to match, was powerfully served by the British Council's international status and the reflected prestige this has bestowed on the UK (Gillespie et al. 2014: 8).

War, de-colonisation, terrorism, economic crises and technological innovation have all left their mark on the demands successive British governments have made on the British Council. The rationale laid down by Whitehall to guide the British Council overseas has reflected governmental preoccupations just as much as the long-term capacities of the council.

This was already evident in the Drogheda Report (1954) which argued for a shift away from Western European investments, whereas a decade later – after the humiliation of the Suez crisis, relative

economic decline, and with the process of decolonisation well underway – attention turned to what a refocus on Europe (and entry to the European Economic Community) could do for Britain. This remained true for Edward Heath's 1970 Conservative government as they conducted negotiations with their European counterparts. But, within a decade, relations with continental Europe were no longer such a priority. However, while the significance of Europe waned, so that of the developing world gathered pace, with a focus on educational partnerships and cultural exchange (Gillespie et al 2014: 10).

UK foreign policy since the Cold War has been shaped by a series of Reviews, White Papers and Parliamentary Committees which has seen an increasing orientation towards cultural diplomacy and soft power, such that direct impact on external agents is an assumed aim (e.g. Wilston 2002; Carter 2005; House of Lords 2014; DCMS 2016). UK public, policy reports have also emphasised the need to cultivate long term relationships, so that soft power 'resources' can be 'drawn upon', but in ways that cannot easily be strategized and must be done deftly (House of Lords 2014).²

Nonetheless, more recently, the impact of British Council is more likely to be discussed in terms of its ability to demonstrate soft power and to engage with the social and digital communications tools of the 21st Century. The perpetual reframing of strategic priorities in this way is an important factor in understanding the value ascribed to the British Council since the 1930's. What has endured throughout those years, though, are the practices that have kept its work relevant to users and which continues to underscore its importance in communicating the UK's national interests (Gillespie et al 2014: 11)

The diverging trajectories of Britain and Germany have therefore arguably continued into the post-Cold War era. But both countries re-framed their approaches to cultural relations in response to globalization and the transition from Cold War 'national security' thinking to a new era of 'human security' in which the full range of foreign policy tools would be used for crisis prevention and post-conflict recovery. This went with the grain of wider thinking in this period (Chaban et al. 2017; Auswärtiges Amt 2000).

Another possible point of *convergence* concerns flexibility in how German and UK cultural relations institutes conceive culture. Brown argues one consequence of 'the strength of ideas [of culture] is very limited importance attached to ideas of 'public diplomacy' or 'soft power' in ... Germany' (Brown 2016: 19). However, the German hub-and-spoke model between central strategy (AA) and local cultural relations activities (*Mittler*) allows *some* flexibility and localization of conceptualisations of culture. By a different path, neither the FCO nor private funding sources behind the British Council are wedded to strong conceptions of culture; this by default allows flexibility. Therefore it is arguable that some of the apparent differences between the two countries' approaches are a difference of emphasis rather than orientation.

² Unpublished document: 'The British Council's Position on Soft Power', no date.

Conclusion

This review has examined the theoretical and historical complexities of cultural relations, with an in-depth survey of the relevant literature in English and German.

It has shown that 'cultural relations' is primarily a practitioners' term, with no agreed definition. This fluidity in definition has the advantage of enabling a flexible approach in practice – tailoring programmes to suit particular contexts. The disadvantage is that the parameters of the concept in theory and practice are unclear, making systematic and comparative evaluation and therefore learning and development difficult. As a set of practices, cultural relations are often used synonymously with cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and/or (at least in the UK) soft power, despite ongoing academic debates about their differences. Although these terms belong broadly within the same semantic field and share many common features, it is important to distinguish them. But most cultural relations practitioners do not mind which concept they use provided they have funding and their activities are not entirely directed by central authorities (EUNIC 2016; Nisbett 2013).

Indeed, the conceptual confusion can enable useful flexibility. From a user and beneficiary perspective, however, the confusion surrounding terms can mean that cultural relations organisations are not as well understood as they might be. They may be perceived simply as 'Foreign Funders' and users may not have a clear understanding of their ultimate goals. Cultural relations organisations need to communicate openly and clearly both their instrumental as well as their intrinsic goals in promoting cultural activities if mutuality – a key aspiration – is to be achieved.

This review has also examined the historic, conceptual and institutional differences between the German and British approaches to cultural relations, but shown how the way the two countries deploy them may in fact be motivated by very similar goals.

The complex and nuanced nature of cultural relations that this review has revealed suggests that attempts to evaluate them will themselves have to be sophisticated, nuanced, and sensitive to the different contexts in which they are taking place and different actors involved. The Cultural Value Project, of which this review is the first product, aims to build and use just such a method of evaluation. It also seeks to create mutual awareness of convergences between German and British cultural relations as a foundation for closer dialogue, pragmatism and cooperation in the future.

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