Towards a strategy for international cultural relations –
The development of the role of culture within the European Union’s external relations and construction of its international actorness

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Vienna, 31 July 2017
I, Magdalena Schedl hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “Towards a strategy for international cultural relations – The development of the role of culture within the European Union’s external relations and construction of its international actorness”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

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31 July 2017
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1. Introduction

Scholars’ but also politicians’ opinions on the role and power of the European Union in global politics has since its foundation been divided and divers. While some emphasise an “decline of the West and the rise of the rest”, others are more positive about the EU’s future as an international actor. André Gerrits, Professor of International Studies and Global Politics at the University of Leiden argues that the large variety of opinions on the EU are partly based on the unique character of the Union which has no predecessor or equivalent on the international stage, resulting in no agreement on the EU’s global role or relevance.¹ Gerrits continues that many academics who ascribe the EU some form of international power, tend to understand:

the EU as a relevant actor in global politics, whose power and influence are not so much based on military might and other coercive […] as on the attractiveness of its example, reflecting such diverse practices, norms and values as shared sovereignty, welfare-state arrangements, multilateralism, democracy, human rights and environmental policies.²

As the number and form of actors have multiplied and global interdependence seems stronger than ever, new tactics emerged to balance and manoeuvre international power and influence. John Holden, an associate at Demos, one of the leading contemporary think tanks in Great Britain, and visiting professor at the University of Leeds specialised on the value of culture for politics and society, goes as far as to argue that in the twenty-first century a “race for soft power” has begun as more and more governments become aware of the positive effects of soft power and make it one of their key objectives in their foreign policies.³ Within this context, Culture and ideology have developed into important elements in current debates and practices of international relations. Not only the question of the soft power potential of culture, ideology and cultural diplomacy have long caught the attention of academics and researchers but also the question how other, new actors such as the European Union try to tap into the power struggle on the international stage and challenge the nation-states’ supremacy on this issue.

This was necessary as in today’s increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, people, products, money, media, images but also ideas flow ever so easily. As the often-cited anthropologists and theorist on globalisation Arjun Appadurai has argued, these flows are not a new phenomenon but have occurred at all times of human history, it is simply their scale and volume that drastically increased in the past century.⁴ The development of, especially,

² Ibidem.
information, communication and transportation technologies resulted in global socio-political and economical changes and transformations that have also altered the global stage of international relations and politics. Such developments resulted in “the global stage [becoming] ever more dense with actors” as former George Washington University Professor James Rosenau described it.\(^5\) No longer are nation-states the sole actors in global politics but other actors, ranging from international organisations and NGOs to private organisations and individuals, have emerged who increasingly influence the international stage.\(^6\)

Reacting to these developments in international relations and politics which increasingly emphasise the potential of soft power, reflections on the role of culture emerged also within the EU\(^7\). Culture and cultural affairs were originally not within the competence of the Union but retained by the member states. In its striving to legitimise the integration process and find meaning for itself by trying to create European awareness among its citizens the Union eventually grew more interest in implementing cultural policies within its border. For a long time, the EU’s interest in culture remained focused inwards, neglecting any benefits of including a cultural dimension in its external relations. Only prompted by international developments such as the adoption of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005 did the call for and internal discourse on the role of culture in the EU’s external relations grow louder. Ten years after the adoption of a “European Agenda for Culture in a globalising World” in May 2007, which formally declared a cultural dimension in the EU’s external relations one of its main objectives, the EU has yet to officially adopt a common strategy on the issue.\(^8\) In June 2016, the High Representative and Vice President of the Commission Federica Mogherini addressed the European Parliament (EP) and Council with a Joint Communication “Towards an EU Strategy for international cultural relations” which signifies and important step towards a more strategic approach and concrete policy formulation.\(^9\) Considering these recent developments, it seems necessary to put them in a clearer context by retracing how the role and narrative(s) of culture within and outside the EU evolved over the decades and to critically reflect on the current communications and strategy proposals.

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To achieve this, the following chapter will go into more detail about the research question and sub-questions that underline this research. Chapter 2 will provide the theoretical and conceptual framework, clarifying relevant concepts and issues ranging from culture, soft power, public and cultural diplomacy and cultural relations to the implementation and relevance of them within external relations, with a specific focus on the EU. This will also include a discussion of the Union’s international actoriness and how it tries to construct and influence it through different political narratives such as those ranging around the concept of culture and soft power. Then the research design and methodology will be described in more detail. In short, this study is based on the constructivist paradigm of international relations theory and will address the proposed research question through a discourse analytical approach, providing the critical lens through which the analysis will be conducted. Chapter 4 contains the main body of analysis which will first follow the discourse of the role of culture within the EU chronologically, with a special emphasis on international cultural relations, before going more into depths on the most recent developments in 2016 and 2017.

1.1. Research Question

This research strives to analyse and deconstruct the values, images and narratives contained in the role the EU ascribes to culture in its external relations and how they developed historically since the beginning of the European project, more concretely with the founding treaties of the European Economic Community. The analysis is based on the hypothesis that the EU constructs and uses concept(s) of “culture” in its external relations which is embedded in its other, contemporary narratives of normative values and principles such as human rights, democracy and rule of law. The EU’s cultural narrative(s), aims and tools developed and changed over the years, eventually resulting in the adoption of documents toward more strategic approaches to international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy initiatives. The basis of the hypothesis and research question is a discourse theoretical framework and social constructivist approach, which allows for the conceptualisation of the EU’s international cultural relation and cultural diplomacy efforts to be not only aimed at influencing audiences abroad and their perception of the EU, but also at constructing a narrative and identity of the EU as an international actor.

Due to the limited scope of this study, the focus will not be on how these messages, initiatives and narratives are perceived by their audience and shape their perceptions or if they are successful in doing so. Instead, the attention is given to the EU institutions’ and officials’ intentions of sending a message and through which tools and methods they strive to do so. Thus, this study is focused on how the EU tries to use “culture” as a tool in its external relations to
communicate to a – especially foreign – audience a European identity to strengthen its soft power abroad.

The overarching research question to answer is: How does the EU use the narrative(s) on the role of culture and international cultural relations to construct itself as a relevant international actor? And, why did these narratives develop in this way?

Sub-questions will deal with issues such as how and why the internal EU discussion developed and changed over time, and are aimed at critically analysing the role the EU ascribed to the idea of one or more “European culture(s)”:

- What kind of international actorness does the EU construct for itself within this discussion and why did these narratives eventually change over time? – Scholars have long been interested in the sort of international actor the EU is and imagines itself to be on the international stage and the importance strategic narratives can play within these self-imaginations and constructions. Chapter 2.3. will thus deal in more detail with the theoretical and academic debate on this issue to provide a basis for the analysis.

- How is “culture” defined and “European culture(s)” constructed within the EU documents and discussion? Did the use of the term “culture” and its definitions and implications change and if yes, why? – As will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 2.2.1., “culture” is one of the most vague and complicated concepts to define. It is thus interesting to question how the EU defines and makes use of this term and if and for what reasons this might have changed.

- Why does the EU nowadays ascribe increased importance to the role of culture in its external relations to third-countries and what does it hope to achieve through this? And, how does the EU intend to achieve the strengthening of its international image and actorness through the promotion and emphasis of (European) culture(s) and cultural relations? – Chapter 4 will chronologically provide the development of the role of culture within the EU and, among others, will address the question why in the founding treaties and the early years of the European Community “culture” was largely neglected and why the Union’s interest in this topic eventually grew stronger.
2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

The first problem that must be addressed when talking about the role of culture in the EU’s external relations is the problem of the blurred and intersecting definitions of terms such as soft power, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy or cultural relations. These terms have become standard jargon in foreign and international relations but their definitions or differences are often unclear and different institutions, organisations, practitioners, academics and politicians often simply use whichever term they prefer best. Many scholars such as Ien Ang, Yudhishtir Raj Isar and Phillip Mar, who specialise in cultural studies and policies, have extensively tried to entangle these definitions and concluded that they all are in one way or another tool for the self-promotion of an image on the international stage.

The term “soft power” was first coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, describing the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce to influence the behaviour and perception of others to get one’s preferred outcome, but can also be understood as a power of attraction and seduction. The concept was first described in his book *Bound to lead. The changing nature of American power* in 1990, in the face of the presumable end of the “American century” as the US international power and influence was perceived to be on the decline. Nye himself points out that the concept of soft power is not restricted to or uniquely American. He writes that “[t]he concept may be new, but the behaviour is not”, as every individual or international actor uses his or her soft power in some way or another in daily life. Recently the term has been focused on the ability to change social and public opinion on the international stage. In the case of international actors, which traditionally were nation-states, Nye identifies three main sources of soft power: “its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), 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).”

Even though the term soft power became increasingly popular in the professional and academic field, Nye points out that it is not meant to fully replace traditional “hard power” of coercion, rather than they should complement each other. In fact, finding the right balance between hard and soft power, which Nye described as “smart power”, has become an

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10 Rivera, *Distinguishing Cultural Relations from Cultural Diplomacy*, 2015, 5.
increasingly important and relevant challenge for international actors. The problem of soft power and the difficulty of utilising it lies within its vague conceivability and measurability – in the sense that completely shaping one’s soft power lies beyond the capability of the actor as its image and perception can be influenced by a manifold of aspect which the actor sometimes cannot control or even identify. As Mai’a Davis Cross, an expert on European Union, foreign affairs and diplomacy points out:

In this information age of constant media and social media attention, nearly every action a state or society takes is potentially visible to foreign publics. Even without any purposeful explanation or promotion of a given policy, foreign publics can observe it with little effort.¹⁵

Nonetheless, in recent decades, governments and other international actors have invested great amounts of financial means and time into trying to effectively use soft power in their foreign policies and shape perception abroad through practices such as agenda-setting, framing of international issues and events and public diplomacy.¹⁶

Even though the term soft power only emerged at the end of the twenty-first century, many scholars, including Nye, have pointed out that the resources for soft power such as the practice of image cultivation through official communications by governments or nation-states are not new phenomena.¹⁷ As “traditional” diplomacy refers to the general “practice of interaction among different actors to gain strategic advantage […] [through] practices of negotiations conducted between representatives of nations or organisations on matters such as making peace, trade, war, economics, culture, the environment, and human rights” and therefore refers more generally to relations between international actors.¹⁸ The term “public diplomacy” on the other hand is focused on the “influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies” which reaches beyond the scope of traditional diplomacy. This also encompasses the attempt to shape public opinion by governments through global communications aimed at specific audiences.¹⁹ Many scholars and publications such as the edited work *The New Public Diplomacy. Soft Power in International Relations* by Jan Melissen have analysed the evolution of diplomacy and public diplomacy in more detail. The professor and expert on diplomacy Melissen argues that “image cultivation, propaganda and activities which are now labelled public diplomacy” are nearly as old as diplomacy itself. Although, the

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¹⁷ Ibidem, 96-99.


development of communication and transportation technologies, such as the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, have fundamentally changed and influenced international public relations. Throughout history, nation-states and countries have invested greatly in their image on the international stage but only towards the end of the twentieth century did those practices come into the focus of academics and scholars in the wake of the increased awareness of soft power. Since the term “public diplomacy” was allegedly first used in the mid-1960s by Edmund Gullion, a former American diplomat and Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, it is today considered one of the key soft power instruments as it is “[t]he process by which direct relations are pursued with a country’s people to advance the interest and extend the values of those being represented”.

Melissen argues that public diplomacy is not a static practice but has evolved over time due to the changing environment of international and foreign relations into a “new public diplomacy”. No longer are the targets of public diplomacy other governments but it is instead aimed at a broader national and global public. Public diplomacy is thus nowadays defined as how nation-states and civil society actors engage with audiences abroad aiming at improving these foreign audiences’ perception of the nation represented. Classic public diplomacy strategies range from educational and informational to cultural programmes focused on promoting mutual understanding. As pointed out above, traditionally, governments were the main actors and initiators of public diplomacy but within the framework of the “new public diplomacy” the variety of actors has dramatically increased, and nowadays also includes civil society, quasi- and nongovernmental, as well as other international actors, making the conceptualisation of public diplomacy ever so complicated and vague.

There is a clear connection between the terms soft power and public diplomacy, especially as the latter is often explicitly defined in soft power terms. To sum up the difference but also connectedness of these two terms, Steffen Bay Rasmussen, a scholar of international theory and diplomacy, has rightfully pointed out that values and ideas do not transfer themselves but require some sort of contact between two actors. He continues that:

The soft power notion of attraction seems to imply that it happens automatically, whereas public diplomacy is seen as the efforts by which an actor seeks to transfer ideas and beliefs by influencing foreign political discourses through direct and participation in political debates.

22 Davis Cross, ‘Conceptualising European Public Diplomacy’, 2013, 4f.
Public diplomacy is aimed at the structural environment in which actors define themselves, their interests and their truths about the world.\textsuperscript{23}

Public diplomacy is thus understood as a strategic soft power tool aimed at shaping images and perceptions, even though other, uncontrollable aspects will also affect an actors’ soft power. Therefore, public diplomacy is at its core a communicative practice of projecting a self-image but also of influencing how specific issues and values, for instance human rights or particular events, are being perceived abroad. This communication is not only done through speech but also through practice, demanding consistency between spoken words and actions for them to be successful. The major problem of communicating public diplomacy is therefore to ensure the transmitted message is interpreted as intended, and even though careful planning can lower the potential risk of miscommunication this is impossible to control completely.\textsuperscript{24}

2.2. Making Meaning: Culture, Identity and Diplomacy

2.2.1. Culture and Public Diplomacy = Cultural Diplomacy?

The term culture is probably one of the most contested concepts in social and human sciences, but it seems necessary to address the notion and its many-fold and diverse meanings if someone is to talk about the role it can play in external relations and foreign policy.\textsuperscript{25}

Nowadays, the term culture carries many meanings. Narrower definitions of the term focus on more physically tangible cultural products of high but also popular or mass culture. The former refers to sets of artistic and technological works, ranging from art works such as literature, the opera, or theatre to architecture and scientific and technological innovations, while the latter refers to the dimension of everyday life products and objects.\textsuperscript{26}

More broader meanings of the term see culture as a social and relational phenomenon. Two very influential definitions of “culture” in a broader sense are those by anthropologists Edward Tylor and Clifford Geertz. Tylor defined culture already in 1871 as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities


and habits acquired by man as a member of society.\textsuperscript{27} While Geertz emphasised culture as a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.”\textsuperscript{28} But even though these two definitions are often considered “influential”\textsuperscript{29}, they remain only two of many, as pictured by anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s collection of over 162 definitions of the term in their book \textit{Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions}.\textsuperscript{30} As the number of different definitions and conceptualisations of culture keep increasing, the possibility of a consensus within academia seems less and less likely. Also, as more and more academic disciplines and scholars eventually (re-)discovered the importance of culture within their own fields of study, the concept is no longer monopolised by anthropology or ethnology which traditionally placed culture at the focus of their research. As not only people in their everyday usage of the term but also different disciplines tend to vary in their understanding of culture, finding a universal conceptualisation became an ultimately unsolvable problem.

It might be tempting to simply dismiss the term culture as an empty signifier, which holds no inherent, agreed upon meaning and varies in its definition and construction from person to person. Even though there is no universal consensus on the definition of the term, some trends in academia can be identified. Traditionally, the symbolic dimension of culture was emphasised, which understood culture as the symbolic expression of an underlying subjectivity or logic of specific societies, which was often considered as pre-defined, closed-up and static.\textsuperscript{31} After the postmodern turn in human and social sciences many scholars emphasised the fluid, contested and plural nature of the concept. In recent decades, social constructivism became the main theoretical approach through which culture is conceptualised with more emphasis given to the cognitive dimension in its definitions. Culture is increasingly understood as a social and relational construct and form of knowledge, which is formed through interactions of individuals and social groups.\textsuperscript{32} In regards to this, the Sociologist and Professor at University of Sussex Gerard Delanty points out that “culture is less a whole way of life or an objective framework that determines social action than a set of ‘tool’, frames, schemata, modes of categorisation,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Clifford Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays} (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 89.
\item Reeves-Ellington, \textit{What is Culture?}, 2010, 15.
\item Delanty, ‘Cultural Diversity, Democracy and the Prospects of Cosmopolitanism’, 2011, 637.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and repertoires by which social actors make sense of the world.” And linguists Wodak et al. compare culture as a system of rules for “proper” behaviour, to the grammar of languages which sets standards for “proper” speaking.

Given the diverse and sometimes contradicting conceptualisations of culture, the question arises why try to universally define culture at all. Bátora and Mokre, coming from a political science and cultural and media studies background, argue in the introduction to their edited book *Culture and External Relations: Europe and beyond* that culture became increasingly important in world politics in recent decades as international actors seek to use culture as a soft power resource on the international stage. Similar to the problem of finding a consensus within academia, international actors also use the term in multiple ways and its definition and meaning remain vague and ambiguous as the understanding of culture and its function for international politics remain unspecified and context based. Therefore, Bátora and Mokre continue, it is less important how scholars who analyse the role of culture in international relations and in world politics define the term than what meaning is given to it by the international actors within specific discourses. Or how they describe it:

> What is meant by 'culture' in various situations is determined by the context of the use of the term, but also by established meanings attached to the concept. Thus, the meaning of culture shifts through various institutional logics contextualising its use.

In the field of political science and organisational politics, the concept of institutional logics was defined by Patricia Thornton and William Ocasio as “the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences”. Institutional logics can thus be understood as patterns of meaning-making which are embedded in societies and organisations through institutionalisation and socialisation.

The already mentioned “race for soft power”, as Holden called it, led to more and more national governments to elevate soft power to a main objective of their foreign policy strategy which they intend to achieve through the promotion of the attractiveness of their “national culture” especially. Ang et al. point out that this often resulted in a misreading of Nye’s

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36 Ibidem, 4.
conception of soft power, as some countries such as Japan and Korea heavily refer to soft power in their cultural diplomacy policies but focus on strictly one-sided, nation-centric and top-down initiatives, especially on promoting the export of their respective popular culture products.\textsuperscript{40} Ang et al. argue that this misconception is based on two wrong assumptions: firstly, that culture is a concrete entity with precise content such as ideas and values and secondly, that those ideas, values and images contained in a culture can easily be bundled up in cultural products and through this precisely communicated to and interpreted by the final consumer.\textsuperscript{41}

As mentioned before, Nye did identify “culture” as one of the main sources of soft power, but he understood it as “the set of practices that create meaning for a society, [in its] many manifestations.”\textsuperscript{42} This does also include cultural products such as high and popular culture but the solely economic promotion of culture and cultural products abroad has in previous studies shown to be counterproductive in terms of promoting understanding and communicating a self-image externally. More in line with how Nye perceived that culture can function as a soft power resource, culture in external relations has proven more promising and successful when focused on long-term relationship building and aimed at diffuse influence abroad.\textsuperscript{43}

Another term that has been mentioned and needs to be addressed in more detail is “cultural diplomacy” (CD), which is often regarded as a dimension or specific form of public diplomacy which has only contributed to the confusion and blurriness of those terms. Similar to public diplomacy, the meaning of cultural diplomacy has broadened in the last decades from its original definition of a governmental-driven practice of “national or local representation” and attempt to enhance the nation’s image through the use of national culture.\textsuperscript{44} Today, political scientist Milton C. Cummings’ description of CD as “the exchange of ideas, information, art, lifestyles, value systems, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding”, is widely cited and in line with the potential long-term relationship building character of culture in external relations.\textsuperscript{45} Nevertheless the popularity of


\textsuperscript{41} Ang, Isar and Mar, ‘Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?’, 2015, 373f.


\textsuperscript{44} Ang, Isar and Mar, ‘Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?’, 2015, 365-368.

Cummings’ definition, it remains vague and does not satisfactorily draw the distinctive line between other concepts such as cultural relations, public or cultural diplomacy. 46

Another term which became popular is “cultural relations”, especially since the EU tends to prefer it over the rhetoric of “cultural diplomacy”. Richard Arndt, a former State Department CD practitioner, provides an often cited differentiation between cultural relations and cultural diplomacy: while the former “grow naturally and organically, without government intervention”, the latter relies on formal diplomats “serving national governments, try[ing] to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests”. 47 Arndt’s emphasis of the role of national governments as the defining difference between cultural relations and cultural diplomacy has been taken up by other scholars such as Tim Rivera in his paper from 2015, in which he defines cultural relations as “the mutual exchange of culture between two peoples to develop long-term relationships, trust, and understanding for the purpose of generating genuine goodwill and influence abroad”. 48 Rod Fisher and Carla Figueira argue that the term “cultural relations” implies the use of culture “as an instrument to foster understanding and good relations” which explains why many EU governments and cultural institutes prefer this term over the more accurate “cultural diplomacy”. 49 Another reason, as brought forward by Rasmussen, is that “cultural relations” suggest to be decoupled from formal diplomatic interaction and emphasise the fact that EU external cultural relations are often managed by quasi-independent actors such as national cultural institutes. 50

Regardless the confusing differentiation between the terms cultural relations and cultural diplomacy, this present research does not focus on the diplomatic process of the signature of formal cultural agreements and their management between the EU and third countries, as rather on the constructive quality of the usage of culture in the EU’s external relations. This means that, in the given case of the EU scholars such as Rasmussen have argued that culture is often understood as a diplomatic and communicative tool which is linked to the idea of European identity and how the EU attempts to communicate to the world who they as “Europeans” are and what constitutes them. 51 In this sense, this research is less focused on culture understood as cultural products and commodities which are exported to third countries and, for instance, how this might change perceptions abroad nor on the (European) cultural industries in general.

48 Tim Rivera, Distinguishing Cultural Relations from Cultural Diplomacy, 2015, 11.
49 Fisher and Figueira, Revisiting EU Member States’ International Cultural Relations, 2011, 11f.
51 Ibidem, 58-61.
Neither will specific agreements on cultural issues and relations with third nations be analysed in detail. Instead, the focus lies on the EU’s understanding of culture as an instrument in external relations to communicate and construct a self-image and identity for themselves. As culture in the given case seems to be closely linked to (European) identity and its role in external relations, it is necessary to look at this concept next.

2.2.2. Constructed Identities and External Relations

Similar to the term culture, identity remains a well-studied but controversial and ambiguous term to define. As opposed to essentialists or primordialists who assume identity to be fixed, static and pre-defined, social constructivists define human identities as socially constructed and fluid. The later also argue that people hold more than one identity but construct multiple ones which are highlighted or downplayed given the specific context and situation of human interaction. Since identity is relational and is constructed through and emphasised in interpersonal relations, most social constructivist agree that identity can be understood as or at least involves a classification process or “othering”. The process of othering implies that imagined or real differences between the “self/us” and the “other/them” are being emphasised. Therefore, identity can be understood as the perception of the self in relation to others.  

The relational character of both culture and identity make those concepts all the harder to define, as they are often defined not of what they consist of but rather on what they do not consist of. Within academia, there is the trend to distinguish between social and collective identity, respectively emphasising the subjective meaning of belonging to a group for the individual and the degree of identification with a social group.

In the case of the EU or European context the term “European identity” is often used to describe the feeling of a transnational – and sometimes collective – belonging in Europe. The academic study of this European identity took great inspiration from scholars of nationalism and national identity construction. Since the 1980s constructivist approaches to identity have gained more and more followers within academia. One of the most influential and often cited


scholars remains political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson, who coined the term “imagined communities” and analysed the “imagined” and constructed nature of communities or social groups in general, and of nations specifically. Anderson set out to understand through which processes nations imagine themselves and their “nation-ness” and are imagined by their in- and out-group population. In this process, culture is one component through which nation formations and the spread of feelings of identification with this imagined community could be understood. 55 Other authors such as sociologist Gerard Delanty in his book Inventing Europe, have shown though that even before the emerging of the nation-states, people within and outside the European continent imagined a broader idea of Europe, even though this might not have constituted a European identity yet.56

The sense of community or belonging to a specific cultural group, for instance “Europeans”, is based on a feeling of distinctiveness of the in-group, which again only emerged and accentuates itself in regards to other out-groups.57 In the case of a European cultural identity or community, some key ideas and innovations as well as imaginations of “Europe” in the past centuries can be identified which appear, at the first glance, to justify the assumption of a shared historical legacy within Europe, as exemplified but also critically analysed by Delanty in Inventing Europe. These common legacies range from Greek civilisation and Hellenic rationality and aesthetics, the innovations of law and the legal system of the Roman Empire, the idea of Europe as the bulwark of Christendom against the perceived threat of Islam, the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the material and industrial progress of Capitalism and Modernism, to Europe as the cradle of human rights, democracy, civilisation and reason.58 As argued by political scientist Thomas Pedersen the idea of Europe as a cultural community has its limitations as the diversity within Europe makes the identification of a distinct European culture difficult. Questions such as where “Europe” ends and where the “Others” begin only complicate the issue further, especially in the context of the EU’s enlargement and the influx of immigrants from non-European countries in the last decades. Thus, to what extent can one talk about a common European history, legacy and even common way of life, let alone of a distinct and coherent European culture which could serve as the basis of a European cultural

identity and community? Also, as national and transnational cultural or collective identity would theoretically be based on the same aspects such as symbolism, historical experience and cultural codes, the question remains if a European cultural identity can ever be more than the sum of the European national identities and cultures it encompasses.

It is important though to point out that within the EU a common cultural identity or European culture has not been at the heart of the endeavour to unify and integrate Europe, at least not in the EU’s and its predecessors’ beginnings. In recent years, the need to redefine European identity has grown louder within academia but also the EU itself, partly due to the increasing need of legitimising the Union and its understanding of European cultural identity as ground for European citizenship and as a unifying principle. And partly since stressing the political and civic dimension of European identity has failed to achieve the envisaged goal of constructing a shared, common sense of “European” belonging. Apart from the question of the substance of a European identity, another challenge remains in the form of the perceived rivalry between national and a transnational, European identity. Previous studies have shown that usually ethnic or national identities take precedence in scope and power over more abstract identities like in the case of the EU. Apart from this difference of prioritisation between national and transnational identities, the assumption that individuals construct not one sole identity but multiple ones, invalidates the argument of a possible danger to national identities as both identities could exist alongside each other. Nevertheless, European identity is often perceived by people and presented by some politicians as a threat to their national solidarity. Apart from people who perceive a European identity as a threat, there are also people who construct one alongside their national identity without them being necessarily in conflict.

But what effect does the lack or existence of a or multiple European (cultural) identity(s) have on the focus of this study, namely the EU’s external relations and its cultural diplomacy endeavours? In the sense of a constructivist approach identity is not only constructed through social practice of individuals but also through official, institutional and political discourses and circumstances. It is thus not surprising that not only nation-states but also EU bodies and institutions try to get involved in the construction of European identities and “Europeanness”. Checkel and Katzenstein, both professors of international relations, have argued that European identities have become increasingly politicized in recent decades, meaning that the question

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and construction of such collective identities have become an issue of national and EU politics. There is in fact a growing number of studies devoted to how European identity is constructed in different EU policies and discourses. Thus, “European identity” within this research is understood not in terms of how it is constructed within individuals on the ground level but as a form of EU self-image which it constructs for itself in various circumstances, with a special focus given to the use of “culture in its external relations. This research is thus in line with how Rasmussen linked the construction of identity to how an actor on the institutional level envisages and imagines himself through narratives but also practice.

Identity, and how this identity relates to past experiences, current action and external events, constitutes a social structure constructed by the actor itself. This structure is the result of efforts to construct narratives that link being and doing, meaning the self-perception with past experiences, current actions and expectations of the future.

If we understand European identity as not only being constructed within individuals on the lowest level but also as a political construction project which is conducted by various national and supranational elite groups then, from an international relations perspective and with the given focus on the institutional or more specifically the EU level, there seems to be an interrelatedness between identity, image, rhetoric and policies of an international actor. This holds true as “[t]he way we conceive our international role is functional to the way in which we conceive ourselves; at the same time, the way we ‘perform’ our role feeds back into our political identity’. Davis Cross called this an “identity-image loop” as there is a continuous feedback between the envisaged image and constructed identity, in the sense that external communications should reflect the identities of the people it represents but at the same time the image which is presented externally might impact how Europeans or the EU conceive themselves. “They begin to image themselves in the eyes of the others and craft narratives of how they want to be perceived.” Thus, in general, narratives of identity contained in external relations and policies and PD do not only shape the perception of foreign audiences but also indicate how society, and in this case the EU, envisages itself.

In this context, the concept and analysis of political narratives has become increasingly important in the field of international relations as they are understood as key elements in the

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construction of political and international actors’ identities and how they perceive their own role on the global stage. But narratives also hold great importance in strategies of actors to influence others and reinforce a specific image as part of their political communication.\textsuperscript{69} Thus, narratives as a form of communication encompass key norms, values, ideas and images of a society or an actor and can be communicated through different channels, including CD.\textsuperscript{70}

Professor for International Relations and European Politics Miskimmon et al. established the term “strategic narratives” which they define “as a means to construct a shared meaning of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors” and thus more specifically link the concept of political narratives to the idea of soft power as the narrative an actor establishes about its own role in the world can be a key aspect of its soft power.\textsuperscript{71} The following chapter will deal in more detail with issues that were raised here, namely how and what kind of narratives the EU uses to constructs self-image(s) and define its international actorness. And further, how this is connected to the EU’s own soft power.

2.3. The EU on the Global Stage: Narratives, Actorness and Soft Power

The analysis of strategic, political narratives is central to the understanding of how the world is shaped today by international actors. These various actors construct and deploy such narratives with the clear goal of influencing and shaping the international but also their internal systems in their favours. The EU is by no means an exception to this, as it uses narratives to raise support within its own borders for issues such as integration and its policies, as well as seeking influence abroad.\textsuperscript{72}

Political actors attempt to create a shared understanding of the world, of other political actors, and of policy through the use of strategic narratives. The hope for these political actors is that strong narratives will triumph over counternarratives, that legitimacy will be strengthened, that power will be heightened.\textsuperscript{73}

Due to the EU’s hybrid nature of intergovernmental and supranational elements the Union faces certain difficulties and problems in the construction and deployment of such narratives, especially abroad. One of the main issues the EU faces is the fact that it is unable to communicate messages and thus also images with one voice internally as well as externally. The involvement of multiple, decentralised actors in the communication processes of the EU


\textsuperscript{70} Davis Cross, ‘Conceptualising European Public Diplomacy’, 2013, 5.

\textsuperscript{71} Miskimmon et al., Forging the World, 2017, 102.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibidem, 85.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibidem, 1.
make the deployment of coherent narratives and messages very difficult. Even more so as it is the case for other international actors such as nation-states or international organisations. Not only the deployment but also identification of coherent and concrete narratives is often complicated by the EU’s reluctance to clearly define its own purpose or to speak on certain international issues and events. In addition to this, there is not only one overarching strategic narratives but many different ones which potentially could stand in conflict with each other.  

The question of what sort of international actor the EU is or imagines itself to be as well as how its role and image within the international system is perceived externally has been of interest to scholars and academics basically since the beginning of the Union.  

Thus, the following section gives an overview of some of these narratives of and by the EU, while keeping in mind that the control over such narratives lies sometimes outside of the actors’ control. As those narratives are not static but can be constructed, reinforced, transformed or discarded over time, it is important to point out that this overview does not attempt to give a complete account of the academic works on this issue but only exemplifies a few of them.  

Scholars dealing with the question of what kind of international actor the EU wants to be and is usually agree on the assumption that the Union is a sui generis actor, a novel kind of power that in many aspects does not fit into traditional conceptualisations and definitions within the international relations and political studies disciplines. In this context, different approaches to the conceptualisations of the EU’s international actorness, or its roles and identity on the global stage have emerged in recent decades, including the EU as a civilian, normative or global power.  

The academic debate on the EU’s international actorness started with the very beginnings of the EU’s predecessors. For instance, in the 1970s journalist and political analyst François Duchêne described the European Community (EC) as a “civilian power” positioning the EC not only as a normative exemplar but also a catalyst for complex, transnational interdependence also due to the lack of any significant military power. This concept emphasises the economic

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76 Ibidem.
dimension and its use of economic instruments over military power through legal norms and contractual politics in the EC’s relations with third states.\textsuperscript{78}

Probably one of the oldest narratives the Union communicated to strategically influence and promote certain self-image(s) is the idea of the EU as a project of peace and peaceful integration which political science professors Manners and Murray called the “noble narrative”. Since the beginning of the EU’s predecessors in the 1940s, the idea of the Union and its model of integration ensuring peace in the region was strongly emphasised and was eventually backed up by actual achievements such as the Single Market and the Schengen area.\textsuperscript{79} Within this narrative and identity construction the member states who had fared war against each other for centuries stopped to identify each other as the Other, and instead, their own past of warfare became the constructive Other. As Rasmussen points out, the EU started to imagine itself and communicate itself as a universal model for structural peace as its model of integration seemed to ensure peace on the European continent. This model was thought to be universal in the sense that if other countries of the world would integrate along the line of the European experience they could also live together peacefully. Added to the peaceful coexistence of nation-states were achievements such as economic prosperity and physical security that accompany the integration process.\textsuperscript{80}

By the end of the 1980s though, the EC had started to increasingly use conditionality in their foreign relations, through which it sought to diffuse and promote its norms and values in exchange for trade agreements and development assistance for third countries. The increased use of conditionality resulted in Ian Manners introducing the idea of “normative power” Europe which rejects “the assumption that normative power requires a willingness to use force in an instrumental way”.\textsuperscript{81} Similar to soft power, “normative power” impacts norms and values as it tries to diffuse them once it comes into contact with external entities and audiences and aims to influences the perception of what is considered “normal” in world politics.\textsuperscript{82} This narrative of normative power Europe is based on normative principles and values which it communicates again as universal in character. Thus, the EU also bases its identity on universal values such as democracy, human rights, multilateralism, cultural diversity or good governance and the rule


of law which it communicates in its foreign policies and which it strives to promote internationally alongside its own model of integration “to do good in the world”. Therefore, the EU aims to export and diffuse its values and norms abroad. Contrary to national identities which are based on demos and the sense of a cultural identity which is separable from the nation-state’s foreign affairs, European identity construction cannot be separate from the content of its foreign policy. The communication of narratives in the case of the EU is thus not only aimed at promoting an image but at the same time and more importantly constructive of a European identity based on these values and norms.

While the concepts of civilian and normative power possess some similarities regarding the instrumentality of their power which aims at promoting peace through primarily non-military and coercive ways, they differ in the range of their orientation. While the former is described as more inward or regional oriented, the latter contains a broader, global orientation. This shift towards a more internationally oriented EC also exemplifies its gradual increasing importance and reflection of its own actorness and role on the global stage. By the end of the Cold War the Union had become a major focal point for the newly formed countries in Central and Eastern Europe. But the general expectations and self-imagination in the 1990s of a more internationally involved and active role for the EU especially as a peace project apparently came to an abrupt halt. This was also due to the civil war in former Yugoslavia exposing the EU’s and its member states inability to intervene in conflicts. After this the call for a greater emphasis on and investment in a more active and capable foreign policy became louder and eventually resulted in the signature of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 and the Lisbon treaty in 2007, which both aimed at developing a more traditional foreign policy presence for the EU.

The Union’s long-standing narrative of being the peace keeper within Europe gradually began to lose its attractiveness and effectiveness for the next generations of Europeans who grew up during the European integration process. Also, more recent events such as the financial Eurozone crisis compromised the EU’s standing as an economic power by what was often perceived by the public and abroad as bad economic management on part of the EU. Thus, one of the biggest challenges of the EU nowadays is to find meaning for itself and to find a way to communicate this meaning and image to the world. The recent decades have shown that the EU’s original “constructive ambiguity” within international affairs no longer holds much value and success and thus resulted in the EU adopting more concrete actions to actively shape its

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perception and global role, not only to the world but also to its own citizens. But how an actor wishes to be and then actually is perceived by third parties often differ from each other due to how narratives are re-contextualised and finally interpreted by the audience. Recent crises and global issues have increasingly challenged the EU and stressed its need to live up to its reputation and attract and inspire actors and stakeholders to emotionally and economically invest in its projects and goals.86

International relations scholar and professor Christopher Hill describes already in 1993 the EU’s “capability-expectations gap” as the discrepancy between third parties’ expectations of the EU’s international role and its actual capability to pursue and meet these imaginations through policies.87 As the EU became increasingly aware of this discrepancy it became more globally oriented as described above, and hoped to improve its capacity for action through institutional innovations such as the establishment of the EEAS that was aimed at enhancing cohesion and collective action.88 The EU increasingly sought to communicate certain narratives and messages through its foreign policies and actions, as EU officials also became more aware and fond of concepts such as soft power and the general need to actively shape the Union’s external perceptions. This also led to many scholars taking up the question if the concept of soft power and the EU is even compatible or if and how the EU can shape and make use of it.89

James Rogers, working in the fields of European studies, international relations and strategic studies, has argued that innovations of the European foreign policy symbolise a major shift towards a more outward oriented, “global power” approach by the Union since about 1999. For this, the older ideas of the EU as a civilian or normative were not completely discarded but for the Union to assume a truly “global role” the mixture of ideological, civilian and military components are required to reshape the EU’s self-imagination and construction as a “global power” actor. This new narrative of the EU as a global power is no longer constructed against the fear of a potential revival of Europe’s past of warfare, as was the case in the beginning of the EC, but against geopolitical competitors and security threats.90

What we have been witnessing since the 1990s with the Maastricht Treaty and the end of the Cold War is a move from the construction of a European identity through the temporal othering,

which is not tied to fixed geographical borders and does not thematise territory explicitly, to the increasingly wide-spread construction of ‘Europe’ through practices of othering, in which identity, politics and geography are intimately linked with each other, and which can therefore be called ‘geopolitical’ otherings.  

Another narrative which was already mentioned is the EU’s normative principles and values which it communicates again as universal in character. Thus, the EU also bases its identity on universal values such as democracy, human rights, multilateralism, cultural diversity or good governance and the rule of law which it communicates in its foreign policies and which it strives to promote internationally alongside its own model of integration “to do good in the world”. Therefore, the EU aims to export and diffuse its values and norms abroad. Contrary to national identities which are based on demos and the sense of a cultural identity which is separable from the nation-state’s foreign affairs, European identity construction cannot be separate from the content of its foreign policy. The communication of narratives in the case of the EU is thus not only aimed at promoting an image but at the same time and more importantly constructive of a European identity based on these values and norms.  

Rasmussen called this narrative “Euronationalism” which as it aims to construct the EU as an effective international actor. This narrative is based on the assumption that even though the Union is internally diverse, cooperation towards the promotion of a common good is still possible and thus constructs the EU as an efficient and “normal” actor on the international stage. Therefore, the focuses of this narrative lies on the defence of actors’ material and geopolitical interests. This approach of the EU to its internal diversity manifests itself in its motto “united in diversity” which is being communicated abroad, for instance through public diplomacy. The establishment of the EEAS exemplifies the EU’s stronger outward orientation and results in a more Westphalian state-like actorness as the Union aims to more actively shape its international image. While the former “noble narrative” constructs a peace-project based on renouncing the European past of warfare as the constitutive Other, the “euronationalist” narrative constructs a more traditional, effective actorness in competition with other international actors. Thus, creating a stronger “us vs them” dynamic between the EU and those geopolitical Others. It also requires the EU to increasingly have an opinion on controversial issues on which it formerly could afford to have none. With this the EU runs the risk of losing one of its main sources of soft power, namely being a normative example. Nevertheless, at the same time, the EU

continues to also communicate an identity as a model for structural peace among states which can overcome internal differences based on universal values and norms.\textsuperscript{93}

[The euronationalist] narrative is thus based on a very different causal idea [than the noble narrative], namely one that seems to reject the EU’s own historical experience of how peace and prosperity is achieved, being based on world view dominated by Realpolitik and where the common good is achieved through each actor defending its own interests as rationally and peacefully as possible.\textsuperscript{94}

As scholars continue to argue that the EU has no, or at the very best a very weak, cultural identity of its own contrary to its member states’, narratives based on a European cultural identity seem less successful. It is questionable if a European cultural identity could provide the basis for a coherent narrative as “the EU would need to associate itself actively with European culture(s) and to a certain extent redefine Member State culture as EU culture, that is, promote Goethe as an EU-ropen [sic!] writer and Picasso as an EU-ropen [sic!] painter.”\textsuperscript{95}

Disregarding the critique that the EU’s cultural identity is weak at best did not stop the Union to adopt a more open approach and promote such an identity in its internal integration process but also its external relations in the last two decades. As Davis Cross and Melissen pointed out, the EU’s increased interest in “culture in its external relations” apart from trying to positively promote its own image also functions as a “project of social construction”. In the sense that EU officials, non-official stakeholders and other actors who are involved in the current, ongoing discussion on the role of culture in the Union’s foreign strategy increasingly become “fabricators of European consciousness”.\textsuperscript{96} This project of social construction became necessary in the last decades as the EU institutions and officials eventually realised that economic and legal integration alone did not create the sense of belongingness in a united Europe as envisaged. The emphasis of Europe as a cultural unit based on shared traditions and history of the European nation-states was thus promoted by the Union’s search for legitimisation. The introduction of European cultural policy as well as symbolic initiatives such as the introduction of the European flag and anthem, European Capital of Culture or “Europe Day” aimed at creating such a sense of belonging. Thus, “[t]he Europe referred to by the EU can be envisaged as an ‘imagined community’ in the making.”\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{93} Rasmussen, ‘The New Narrative for Europe and the Culture-Identity Nexus in European Union Public Diplomacy’, 2015, 64f.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibidem, 64.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibidem, 73.
This constructive and constructed European cultural identity by the EU stresses both unity and diversity as its key features. “Europeanness is seen to be characterised by the plurality of different cultural units and features, but these cultures are also believed to be connected with some underlying common elements.”\textsuperscript{98} Thus, the EU tries to make use of its undeniable internal diversity and aims to celebrate it without homogenising it. These attempts at promoting a European consciousness through symbolic initiatives while respecting national and local cultures, were often dismissed by critics as “mere wrapping ‘to sell the Community’”, without any real content or substance. According to these critics: there is not one European culture but multiple cultures and identities thus culture cannot serve as the basis for European integration. On the contrary, 	extit{cultural} integration based on the idea of shared traditions and history might even endanger Europe’s cultural diversity as it would run the risk of homogenising them.\textsuperscript{99}

In line with this argument, Monica Sassatelli, current senior lecturer at Goldsmith University of London focused on the sociology of culture and Europe, concludes that both ideas of Europe as diversity and Europe as unity respectively lead to impasses such as promoting the re-emergence of nationalist or ethnic conflicts or the risk of homogenisation. Sassatelli continues though that instead of understanding European cultural identity along the line of Europe as diversity or Europe as unity, it should be understood as “united in diversity”. In this sense, difference and heterogeneity is understood as a value, a cultural feature in itself, and not only the basis for cooperation. “Unity” and “diversity” thus “are no longer seen as opposite phenomena, but as the expression of the complexity of the modern world, in which different layers of allegiance constitute what is often called the multiple identity of the contemporary subject.”\textsuperscript{100}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{98} Lähdesmäki, ‘Rhetoric of Unity and Cultural Diversity’, 2012, 63.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Ibidem; Sassatelli, ‘Imagined Europe’, 2002, 435f.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Ibidem, 438-40.
\end{itemize}
3. Research Design and Methodology
The research questions of how the EU uses the discussion on the role of culture as a tool to construct a European identity as a relevant international actor will be approached through the constructivist paradigm of international relations theory and a discourse analytical approach. Social constructivism has gained significant importance within international relations in the last decades, challenging the traditionally dominant approaches of realism and liberalism. Realism focuses on sovereign nation-states as unitary actors on the international stage which primarily seek to pursue their own interests in competition with other nation-states, including security and geopolitical power. As the focus of this study are not nation-states but the EU, this approach is simply not fitting. The liberal approach allows for multiple other actors next to nation-states in international affairs and the interactions between those actors are no longer limited to competition over security and political power but also cover opportunities for cooperation. Nevertheless, constructivism more strongly emphasises the importance of intersubjective meaning making and how ideas define and influence the international system, interests and identities of the actors involved. This study is thus based on the assumption that international relations and reality are socially constructed.\textsuperscript{101}

For this study two key considerations must be addressed: First, in the sense of a constructivist approach, identity is regarded as discursive and thus constructed in different official but also unofficial environments and circumstances. Identities can thus be revealed in political and public attitudes and discussions but also in social practices. Second, for the sake of this research the focus will not be on the “ unofficial” discourse and social practices but on the official EU level. This limitation is due to the given scope and resources of this study. The focus will thus not be on if and how European cultural identities are constructed on the ground level but how the EU envisages and constructs an identity for itself and how it uses “culture” to do so. At the heart of the analysis will be the internal EU discourse, official documents and speeches, which shape its foreign policies and strategies.

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the use of “culture” in the EU’s external relations will help shed light on identities, ideas and narratives which are constructed within this discourse as well as on which meanings are intended to be conveyed through communication acts. Contrary to a widely-held misunderstanding, critical discourse analysis is not a method per se but instead “[b]eing critical, first of all, is a state of mind, an attitude, a way of dissenting, and many more things, but not explicit method for description of the structures or strategies of

\textsuperscript{101} Mai’a Davis Cross, ‘Conceptualising European Public Diplomacy’, 2013, 4; Thiel and Friedman, ‘Introduction’, 2012, 3.
CDA relies heavily on the ideas and theories of social constructivism as language is seen not simply as a tool for communication but as constructing, changing and justifying social practice and reality. CDA aims at reflecting the use of language critically in its wider context as it is particularly focused on the relationship between power and language. Within this framework, the concepts of power, history and ideology are especially important as discourses are understood to be structured by power relations, but also positioned in a specific time and space and therefore need to be analysed within their wider context. Within these historically produced discourses the dominant groups use ideologies to justify and legitimate the internal structures of dominance with them on top.103

As there exists no single CDA method per se, further specifications of how this study was conducted seem necessary. An important aspect of CDA is not only the inclusion of the context of the discourse under scrutiny but also the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. The former refers to the incorporation of more than one genre of text in the analysis, as texts can explicitly or implicitly drawn from each other, while interdiscursivity takes into consideration that this does not only hold true for texts but also larger discourses in general.104 “Texts” in this sense are understood to include not only written but also spoken accounts, as language in both forms constitutes and is constituted by these social practices. Thus, the texts for the analysis will be chosen from a variety of genres, ranging from official declarations or foreign policy documents, to political speeches by EU officials such as the High Representative of the EU. The incorporation of different genres of texts by various actors enhances the final analysis as it can show that certain images or narratives are not only emphasised by single actors within the EU but are part of a larger aspiration and pattern.105 When focusing on official EU discourses, documents and speeches it is important to consider that they not necessarily reflect social reality but are often composed in administrative language and include various abstract expressions and concepts. “Instead, of concrete suggestions, the documents bring to the fore idealistic and political rhetoric, which is in many cases created as a compromise to include various contradictory views.”106

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This study will trace the historical development of the role of “culture” within the EU since the beginning of the European project. The analysis will follow this progress chronologically and investigate key aims, recommended tools, narratives and identities within relevant documents and speeches by EU officials. Eventually, the most recent developments, especially the Joint Communication “Towards an EU Strategy for international cultural relations”, will be the main analytical focus. The attention to this document is partly due to its contemporariness, as it is one of the most recent documents adopted on the issue of culture in the EU’s external relations, as well as due to its more strategic nature. EU officials and internal rhetoric has been favourable of a European approach to international cultural relations for the past few years, and the Joint Communication of 2016 embodies this wish and voices concrete aims for the first time in a strategic and official form. This document is not the final EU strategy for cultural diplomacy or international cultural relations but an important step towards its development. Also, the Joint Communication is not the sole material for this study, instead its analysis will be enhanced by taking other texts and discourses into consideration, in the sense of an intertextual and interdiscursive approach.
4. Analysis: The Development of Culture within the European Union

4.1. The Beginnings

To trace the historical development of the role of culture in the EU’s external relations one needs to look many decades back. Schuman in his Declaration from May 1950 distantly envisioned a community of states that would go beyond the cooperation in the production of coal and steel “with the aim of contributing to raising living standards and to promoting peaceful achievements. [...] It may be the leaven from which may grow a wider and deeper community.”

But the founding treaties of the European Economic Community lack any specific reference to culture in particular. Only Article 36 of the Treaty of Rome 1957 slightly mentions a few justifiable restrictions to “imports, exports or goods in transit justified on grounds of [among others] the protection of national treasures possessing artistic historic or archaeological value”, thus hinting at a definition of culture as tangible cultural products.

Political anthropologist Cris Shore points out that this omission of culture and also identity in the founding treaties might “reflect the lack of status political scientists and EU analysts have traditionally accorded to culture and the narrow definitions of culture they have traditionally employed”, as, for a long time, culture and cultural policy remained a competence of the member states and not the Union. Other scholars attribute this to the problematic task of reconciling Europe, especially France and West Germany, after their long violent history. The idea of emphasising a common culture seemed impossible and endangering the peace on the continent as national values of the involved parties seemed too different.

The 1970s brought a significant shift in the Communities attitude towards a more active involvement in cultural affairs. During the two decades after the founding of the Union’s predecessor, the European Economic Community, opposition to Community involvement remained strong on part of the individual member states, as they wished to retain their competence and monopoly over one of their last truly “national” policy areas. Nevertheless, this and the general lack of legal competence relating to culture and a European cultural policy did not stop the Community to organise ad hoc cultural actions and activities based on Parliament Resolutions or the Commission and Parliament to establish specialised...

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110 Tagiuri, ‘Forging Identity’, 166.

111 One example is the Parliament Resolution adopted in May 1974 stressing the “wealth” of and need to protect European cultural heritage and aims at “eliminat[ing] the administrative obstacles which still hamper the exchange
committees linked to culture such as the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Media and Sports. Even though the Community did not possess the legal authority to adopt cultural policies they justified these actions via economic arguments and claimed the need to promote European cultural industries and liberalise the markets of cultural goods and services, thus de facto implementing European cultural policy without a legal basis. In December 1973, prompted by the oil crisis and the collapse of the dollar the same year, the Community held a summit in Copenhagen and adopted the Declaration on European identity determined to revive the stagnant integration process and claimed that the member states “share values and aspirations based on a common heritage” which must be preserved. While a few years back, at the foundation of the European Economic Community, the inclusion of the notion of “identity” was unimaginable due to the differing national values of the MS, the notion of a “European Identity” was now emphasised on the grounds of shared principles such as democracy, rule of law, social justice, “the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the construction of a united Europe”. The declaration does not further define concepts such as “European identity” or go into detail on the issue of culture but it hints briefly at a connectivity of the European “diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilisation.” Historian Bo Stråth specialised, among other issues, in European integration argues that this shift towards “identity” marks an important change within the discourse of European integration, elevating vague and undefined concepts such as European “heritage”, “identity” and “civilisation” in the rhetoric of European construction.

The political decision to establish a European identity, taken by the EC summit […], must be seen as an attempt to re-establish an international order with a central place for Europe. […] The concept of a European identity emerged in a situation of experienced crisis for national economic governance. The launching of the idea of a European identity meant, of course, that such a phenomenon had not existed previously.

This shift towards identity and culture that started during the 1970s and since then became part of the leading rhetoric can be best exemplified by one often cited quote which was wrongfully attributed to Jean Monnet during this era. Dedicated to unite Europe, Monett supposedly said at an old age that ‘if we were to start all over again, we would start with culture’. The popularity of cultural works and […] the legal, administrative and social obstacles to the providing of services by cultural workers”.

112 Tagiuri, ‘Forging Identity, 166f; Shore, Building Europe, 2000, 12f.
114 Bo Stråth, ‘Introduction. Europe as a Discourse,’ In Europe and the other and Europe as the Other, ed. ibidem, (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2011), 19.
of this quote, especially among EU officials and institutions, show the new-found significance of culture to European integration and identity construction as a tool to promote a sense of “Europeanness” among the public.  

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 European Union policy elites to support the argument for increased European-level intervention in the field of culture.

By the 1980s the potential and importance of European cultural policy and identity featured heavily in the internal discussions of the Community. In the Solemn Declaration on European Union the European Council committed to, among other issues, “closer cooperation on cultural matters, in order to affirm the awareness of a common cultural heritage as an element in the European identity” and to improve “the level of knowledge […] on Europe’s history and culture so as to promote a European awareness”, as well as undertake “joint action to protect, promote and safeguard the cultural heritage”. Again, the declaration remained vague on the issue and missed to define important terms such as “culture”, or to give clear strategies and priorities how these goals were to be achieved. Nevertheless, culture and a common European cultural heritage was now linked to the idea of constructing a wider European union and common identity, but what exactly either of those terms meant or entailed remained unclear.

After the low turnout at the European Parliament elections in 1984 the Communities democratic and legitimacy deficit increasingly became an issue within public debate. In the spirit of creating a common European awareness and in search for public support, the Council soon after established an ad hoc committee for “A People’s Europe”, also known as the Adonnino Committee, “to strengthen and promote its identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world” and to bring the Community closer to its people. Building upon the Declaration on European identity, the Committee, chaired by Italian MEP Pietro Adonnino, produced two reports which he presented to the Council in 1985. While the first report dealt with the free movement of goods, people and mutual recognition of academic and vocational diplomas between the member states, the second focused on a symbolic intervention in the promotion of the “European idea”. The recommendations reached from cultural strategies and events such as multilingual European television channels, a European Academy of Science,

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115 Tagiuri, ‘Forging Identity, 166f; Shore, Building Europe, 2000, 12f & 167.
116 Ibidem, 8.
118 Sassatelli, Becoming Europeans, 2009, 51.
Technology and the Arts, a Euro-Lottery scheme, and European sporting events to language and school exchanges and voluntary youth work camps. The Committee also emphasised the introduction of new, European symbols to communicate and strengthen Community identity. These symbols included a European flag, emblem and anthem as well as standardised European driving licences, number plates and passports, but also the official endorsement of 9th May as “Europe Day”. The Community soon after adopted and implemented some or related recommendations, for instance, the same year as the Adonnino Report also saw the beginning of the European Capital of Culture Programme which developed into one of the longest-lasting and most visible cultural initiatives of the Union. As has been pointed out before by other scholars, such initiatives aimed at forging a collective European identity by “Europeanising” symbols and the cultural sector in a similar fashion to identity building efforts of nation-states.

Some of these interventions were merely for show, while others were not even implemented. Nonetheless, even where their achievements were negligible, their aims deserve attention. Despite Europe’s purportedly unique nature, which was portrayed as transcending the nation-state, all of these interventions on were modelled on national identity-building efforts. As such they were often accused of concealing an unrealistic federalist agenda or dismissed as clumsy imitations of national cultural policies.

The new Commission led by Jacques Delors beginning in 1985 strongly supported and prompted those new initiatives and even established a Commission and Directorate General for Culture, but it was only in 1992 that these developments were ratified within a legal framework. Even though culture had officially remained sole competence of the member states, the Community, especially the Council, used loopholes within the regulations to virtually conduct European cultural policy under the pretence of economic arguments and the fostering of European awareness. The Community had also endorsed the importance of cultural initiatives in different documents before, but without any legal competence those projects required Council resolutions and were often restricted by small budgets. The Maastricht Treaty or later Treaty on European Union (TEU) was a milestone for the role of culture in the EU, and apart from the introduction of European citizenship it is often considered one of the major innovations of the treaty and retrospectively provides a legal basis for any earlier actions in this field. Article 167 of the TEU states that “the Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversities and at

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122 Ibidem, 168.
123 Sassatelli, Becoming Europeans, 2009, 51f.
the same time bring the common cultural heritage to the fore” thus already hinting at the soon-to-be motto of the EU, “united in diversity”. It is important to point out the change of rhetoric on culture within this document: While in previous documents, such as in the Solemn Declaration on the EU, a single “Europe’s history and culture” was envisioned, Article 128 emphasises the diversity of “cultures” in the plural, as it confirms the EU’s position to “respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures”. The EU does also not hold sole competence over culture but only a facilitator role as its actions “shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their[s]”. Thus, European cultural policy does not replace the member states’ but is intended to support and coordinate them.

Dispositions on culture are fairly limited and reveal an approach wherein the nation-state remains by far the principal actor. [...] whilst these countries tend to be in favour of more EU funds in the field, they are cautious when it comes to decision-making. [...] With this mixed support, it is no surprise that the new article on culture in the TEU reveals the difficult debate from which it emerged, substantially only ratifying what was already being done, rather than introducing new domains.

The article within the TEU establishing the legal mandate of the EU in culture is kept very brief and does not elaborate how some of its vague references such as “the flowering of cultures” are to be achieved. Also, a strange ambiguity is emphasised within the EU’s cultural actions, which celebrates cultural diversity while at the same time claims cultural unity.

They oscillate between the theme of, on the one hand, putting the Community in charge of fostering cultural unity, and, on the other hand, entrusting it with the preservation of cultural diversity. Indeed, so pervasive is this ambiguity that at times either interpretation could be applied to the same sentence.

Thus forward, the rhetoric of “united in diversity” became the motto of the Union not only in cultural affairs but for the European integration process in general, even though it was only officially adopted in this form in 2000. While this rhetoric has been criticised for its ambiguity or lack of content, the EU institutions and officials embraced it as it central political slogan and repeatedly emphasised it in various official documents, speeches and reports. It suggests the potential of European identity not replacing national ones but coexisting within individuals as another layer.

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126 Ibidem, Article 167.4.
127 Ibidem, Article 128. 2.
129 Theiler cited in ibidem, 53.
The change in rhetoric and official adoption of the slogan “united in diversity” around the turn of the millennium did not come suddenly but was a reaction to the changing environment and developments of European integration and enlargement. During the early years of the European Community “culture” and “identity” remained unimportant and potentially hindering concepts. Only prompted in the 1970s by the oil crises, collapse of the dollar and a general weak economic performance was the Community’s legitimising purpose and goal questioned: its economic success. In the struggle to gain popular support and legitimacy the Community turned to the idea of European identity construction based on the nation-state model. Giacomo Tagiuri, specialised in the cultural dimension of international law and European integration, in his article ‘Forging Identity: The EU and European Culture’ identifies two approaches to “European culture” within the EU discourse. The first approach revolves around the idea of a “common European civilisation consisting of shared ideas, values, artistic conventions and intellectual attitudes”. As this approach artificially tried to define the contents of European culture in the singular, along fixed, historically-developed characteristics and traits mainly based on the Judeo-Christian tradition of the European region, it has been criticised for being exclusionary, Eurocentric and ignorant to negative legacies of Europe’s past, such as colonialism, racism or slavery. This approach to European culture based on a common legacy and history is necessarily based on the construction of Europe in contrast to an “Other”, which in these early years was constituted by Eastern Europe.

The definition of such a homogeneous European culture might have worked when the Community only consisted of a few member states but with the proceeding enlargements and growing number of members this endeavour seemed more and more unrealistic. At the very latest in the ‘90s when the Community prepared, planned and negotiated the admission of Eastern European countries, did the Community lose their constitutive Other. A new narrative and approach to European cultures – this time in the plural – was necessary to meet the new reality of European integration. This approach was officially adopted in 2000 and epitomised by the slogan of “united in diversity” but was already visible during the previous decade, for instance within the rhetoric of the TEU. The new narrative of “united in diversity” does not come without pitfalls though: Through the acknowledgment of and pledge to protect and foster internal diversity which is not based on a common heritage, European cultural identity will remain weak.

The continent’s identity […] cannot be cultural – based on a shared set of traditions, artistic forms and ideas – but only civic, rooted in a social contract. In such a context, a cultural policy could not define the content of one European culture but would have to connect and promote what happens locally.\textsuperscript{135}

Also, Shore has pointed out that this seemingly open and pluralistic rhetoric to cultures and the integration process can be illusive. The problem lies in the Unions continued emphasis on a common cultural heritage which can still be associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus, by claiming to celebrate diversity in general but at the same time linking them to a common past or history at their core, “united in diversity” becomes less open as it excludes differences which are not based on these values or traditions.\textsuperscript{136}

The message conveyed […] is that ‘we’ Europeans are bearers of a common history and shared heritage; together we belong to a unified ‘European culture area’. […] At first […] ‘unity in diversity’ seems to suggest that EU policy-makers have embraced a more pluralistic and less instrumental approach to culture. Closer analysis indicates otherwise. The rationale underlying EU cultural policies appears to be less about celebrating ‘difference’ or embracing multiculturalism than about promoting the idea of Europe’s overarching unity through that diversity. National and sub-national cultural differences are typically represented as the fragmented elements of a shared ‘civilisation’, whose origins are located in ancient Greece, Rome and Christendom.\textsuperscript{137}

\subsection*{4.2. United in Diversity}

Leaving aside external criticism of European “united in diversity”, new cultural initiatives and programmes were launched by the Community in the spirit of the Maastricht Treaty and the developments of the 1990s. These included, Kaleidoscope, supporting cultural cooperation and artistic productions, Raphael, focused on cultural heritage protection and restoration, and Ariane for translations of European literature. In 2000 the EP adopted a resolution establishing the Culture Programme 2000 merging together the objectives of such initiatives and provided “a single financing and programming instrument for cultural cooperation”.\textsuperscript{138} The Culture Programme 2000 aimed at supporting “cooperation between creative artists, cultural operators, private and public promoters, the activities of the cultural networks, and other partners as well as the cultural institutions” of the MS and at promoting cultural dialogue, promoting creativity and the movement of cultural operators.\textsuperscript{139} The following years, Culture 2000 became one of the major funding instruments of cultural activities, with over 1,500 projects receiving grants worth a total of €236.5 million during the period between 2000 and 2006. These activities

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{135} Tagiuri, “Forging Identity”, 163-165.  
\textsuperscript{137} Ibidem.  
\textsuperscript{139} Ibidem.  
\end{footnotesize}
ranged from specific innovative and experimental actions, to integrated actions and special
cultural events with a European or international dimension for instance within the European
Capitals of Culture initiative.\textsuperscript{140}

During the past decades, culture had gradually gained significance and importance in the
eye of Community officials and institutions. Especially in regards to legitimising the integration
process and the attempt to construct a European awareness among its citizens. It is important to
point out that all these initiatives and programmes were focused inwards. Culture began to play
a crucial role in the internal imagination of the Community but a cultural dimension to external
activities was long neglected. A new impetus from the outside, for the reconsideration of this
overlooked potential inside the Community, was the UN Convention on the Protection and
Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (hereafter UNESCO Convention).

In October 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted a convention, which provided a new
framework for the conduction of international cultural relations for nation-states but also
international organisations such as the EU. Some researchers have regarded it as the first step
away from the traditional conduction of cultural diplomacy, namely representing national
culture, towards the development of a new international environment based on the respect for
diversity, in which states conduct cultural relations and CD based on mutual exchange and
benefits.\textsuperscript{141} The 2005 Convention does not explicitly refer to CD but Article 1 calls for the
protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression, the free interaction between
cultures in mutually beneficial manners, the dialogue among cultures to ensure balanced
cultural exchanges and fostering of interculturality “to develop cultural interaction in the spirit
of building bridges among peoples.”\textsuperscript{142} An important innovation of the Convention is the link
between culture and “the endeavour to support cooperation for sustainable development and
poverty reduction, especially in relation to the specific needs of developing countries, in order
to foster the emergence of a dynamic cultural sectors”.\textsuperscript{143} The Convention thus emphasises the
current imbalance of power and interaction between poor and rich or developed and developing

\textsuperscript{140} ECOTEC, \textit{Final External Evaluation of the Culture 2000 Programme}. A Final report for the Directorate
\textsuperscript{142} UNESCO, \textit{The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions}
(2005), Article 1.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibidem, Article 14.
countries, instead calling for a balanced, international partnership aimed not only at protecting one’s own diversity of expression but also enhance others capacities to do so.\textsuperscript{144}

\begin{quote}
[C]ultural diversity forms a common heritage of humanity and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all, […] cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development of communities, peoples and nations.\textsuperscript{145}
\end{quote}

Interestingly the Convention’s aim is to achieve this through the creation and strengthening of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) as means of cultural expression which allow for “diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment”.\textsuperscript{146} Thus, emphasising a definition of culture focused more on cultural products and services than its broader understandings. Nevertheless, “the 2005 Convention is a building block in the achievement of an international environment conductive to the construction of human cultural citizenship”, and, even though this goal might still be far off in the future, some nations as well as the EU have increasingly committed to the Convention and its ideas.\textsuperscript{147}

After the UNESCO Convention, civil society also became increasingly interested in the potential of an open and encompassing role for culture. Starting around 2006, institutes such as the European Cultural Foundation commissioned and published studies on the added value of an EU approach to the issue and new organisations were founded, such as the EU National Institutes for Culture (ENUIC) “to create effective partnerships and networks […], to improve and promote cultural diversity and understanding […], and to strengthen international dialogue and cooperation.”\textsuperscript{148}

At the same time, calls for institutional changes and innovations within the Union grew stronger, especially in relation to its external activities. After France and the Netherlands voted against the proposed Constitution in 2005, the integration process was in danger of slowing down, prompting the Community to rethink its approach towards many issues including culture and a strategic approach to external relations.\textsuperscript{149} In the face of perceived increasing crises and challenges, the lack of favourable international perception of the Union became painfully obvious. In June 2006, then Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner called in a Communication Strategy titled “Europe in the World” to the Commission for a more

\begin{flushright}
145 Ibidem, Article 1.
146 Ibidem, Article 4.1. & 2.4.
147 Figueira, ‘Cultural Diplomacy’, 2015, 180; See for example, European Council, \textit{Council Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations} (2017); (European Council, \textit{Council Conclusions on culture in the EU’s external relations with a focus on a culture in development cooperation} (2015); European Parliament, \textit{Resolution on the cultural dimensions of the EU’s external actions}, 2011; Androulla Vassiliou, Cultural Diversity, Global Politics and the Role of Europe, speech (28 February 2014).
148 Isar ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, 2015, 499f.
149 Ibidem, 498.
\end{flushright}
strategic approach of external relations. This was communicated as a necessary reaction to “challenges” and threats to security such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, a changing globalising world and increasing economic competition. The Commissioner criticised the lack of coherence between EU and national actors and argued for strategic planning, the better use of existing networks of the delegations and member states embassies, as well as a better mobilisation of “public support” through PD and increased visibility in third countries. If the EU was to meet international trends and changes within the global political system, it had to increasingly look and communicate messages externally.

Since the beginning of the Community, its system of diplomacy and external actions was complicated by the very nature of the EU as a sui generis and unfinished project and its unclear international actorness. Contrary to the traditional concept of public and cultural diplomacy and to most of its member states’ long history of conducting PD and CD outside their national borders and aimed at foreign publics, the Union’s PD practices were historically focused inwards. This was due to the factor that other than nation-states the Union lacked an obvious unifying identity – be it cultural or political -, thus internal communications of narratives and the conduction of public diplomacy within the EU were part of top-down identity construction and the legitimisation of European integration and policies. The narratives and identity communicated internally by the EU were eventually also employed externally, linking the internal and external dimensions of its public diplomacy in a self-reaffirming circle.

The EU not being a completely supranational entity is another complicating factor for its external actions as it does not replace the MS’s endeavours but coexists parallel to them. Member states continue to project their national identities and messages abroad based on domestic priorities which not necessarily correlate with the preferences and ideas of EU bodies and institutions. This results in a diverse number of actors from the national as well as the EU level communicating sometimes diverging opinions internally and externally, also due to sometimes weak commitment of member states or national actors to the European project.

Also, the complex organisation structure of the Union lead to horizontal inconsistencies, resulting in confusion and loss of visibility on the international stage. In the early decades of the European project its PD was highly fragmented due to the pillarisation of the Union into policy areas, one of which oversaw foreign and security policy. During that time, mainly the Commission and the Council Secretariat conducted PD, often with little communication or

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connectivity between those actions. At the absence of an overarching strategy or institutional tool linking the different actors, the Council Secretariat’s directorate-generals each focused on their own policy areas, while the Commission focused on the provision of general information through its delegations and EU Information Centres (EU-i).\textsuperscript{152} From an outside perspective, the rotating presidency of the Council, which meant that every six months a different MS headed the Council and was among other responsibilities in charge of representing the EU in external affairs, also contribute to the weak perception of the Union abroad. This rotary system had a negative impact not only on the development of long-term objectives and political continuity, but also on the fostering of international and political relationships with third countries as the later grew increasingly confused about who is in charge within the EU and who to contact.\textsuperscript{153}

The general criticism and call for a strategic external action was eventually reinforced in the TEU, TFEU and the Lisbon Treaty, which were signed in 2007, proclaiming a stronger focus on and increased importance of the external dimension of the EU. They promote the idea to “export” the European model and emphasise that its external relations shall be “guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the world”, which include democracy, the rule of law and human rights.\textsuperscript{154}

Especially the Lisbon Treaty brought significant institutional changes to the EU’s diplomatic system and conduction of external relations and sought to strengthen it as a relevant international actor. For the first time, the Lisbon Treaty created a single institutional framework for external relations with the aim of increasing the coherence and coordination of the Union. It did so through several innovations such as the abolishment of the rotary presidency and the creation of a permanent Council President in hopes of greater continuity in its works and strategies. It also created the double position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the EU Commission (HR/VP) responsible for overseeing the Unions external actions and the Common Foreign and Security Policy and representing it abroad together with the Council President. Additionally, it established an official EU diplomatic service in the form of the European External Action Service (EEAS) to support the HR/VP. Furthermore, the Commission’s delegations were transformed into EU delegations representing the Union in all policy areas and striving to communicate its values and policies.\textsuperscript{155}

Even though these changes were important steps in the right direction, the Lisbon Treaty left important issues vague and unanswered, such as the clear distinction between the role and competences of the Council President and the HR/VP in representing the Union, or the concrete functions and objectives of the EEAS. \(^{156}\) The treaty also did not adequately address the potentially problematic nature of the EU’s diplomacy coexisting with the member states’, only calling the MS to ‘support the Union’s external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity’. \(^{157}\) Even though the structural framework of EU’s external relations was reformed through these changes, the question remained of “what” was to be communicated to the wider world. Nevertheless, through these innovations a formal structure for external actions was provided, even though the EU still lacked a concrete communication strategy including central topics and themes to be communicated externally and a tangible plan to implement it. \(^{158}\)

The Lisbon Treaty, TFEU and TEU also emphasised the importance of “culture” – again without giving a clear definition. They promote its role as outlined in the Maastricht Treaty but do not provide any new or great innovations on the issue. Thus, culture remains the competence of the MS with the Union’s activity to “support and supplementing their action”. \(^{159}\) Only the third paragraph of Article 167 now briefly mentions an external dimension of cultural as “[t]he Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture.” \(^{160}\) The amended version of the Lisbon Treaty also adds one paragraph to Article 2.3. stating that the Union “shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safe-guarded and enhanced.” Thus, exemplifying that “European cultural action has […] evolved from a quest for a homogenous European culture to a celebration of plurality.” \(^{161}\)

In the “Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a globalising World” in May 2007, the Commission, for the first time, envisioned and articulated concrete policy principles for and the objectives of an EU agenda for culture. Even though it also emphasises that the competence remains with the MS. \(^{162}\) There is no clear statement on what the Commission understands as “culture” even though it acknowledges the complex nature of it, which can refer to fine arts and cultural products but also to an anthropological understanding

\(^{160}\) Ibidem, Article 167 (3).
\(^{162}\) Isar, ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, 2015, 500; Commission Communication 2007: 4
of culture as the “basis for a symbolic world of meanings, beliefs, [and] values”. The Commission’s understanding remains vague though, instead focusing on “the importance of the various facets of culture in developing strategies both within the EU and with third countries.” The three introduced objectives aim at promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, culture as a catalyst for creativity and culture as an element in the Union’s international relations. Within the last objective, the influence of the UNESCO Convention is clearly visible as the Commission directly references the document. The Commission calls for a “twin-track” approach which will integrate a cultural dimension into all external and development policies and actions, “as a means of strengthening the quality of its diplomatic efforts, and the viability and sustainability of all EU cooperation activities”, but also support specific cultural activities. “Culture is a resource in its own right, and access to culture should be considered as a priority in development policies.” Also, the specific objectives of culture in international relations correspond with the principles of the UNESCO Convention as they call for the development of political dialogue, the promotion of cultural exchange and of the CCIs in developing countries and call for an open market for cultural goods and services and the preservation of cultural heritage. The Commission further commits to the UNESCO Convention by arguing that:

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’ 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.

This paragraph also exemplifies the Union’s self-imagination of its role in the new, globalised world: if cultural richness is now increasingly considered an “important asset in an immaterial and knowledge-based world” then Europe’s cultural diversity and its self-perceived successful unity in diversity affirms Europe’s position and power on the international stage. The Agenda for Culture marked a shift and new vision for culture within the Union and in its international relations especially. The agenda not only provided a more strategic approach and general direction for cultural actions but also established culture as a crucial factor in not only economic but also social and political development.

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164 Ibidem.
165 Ibidem, 10.
166 Ibidem, 3.
The momentum of these developments was soon decelerated by the economic crisis in 2008. With the rise of unemployment and the decrease of public resources, the already small budgets for cultural policies were often further cut. At the same time, economic objectives and benefits of cultural activities were increasingly emphasised during debates on culture. This negatively affected the implementation of the UNESCO Convention, especially in regards to creating a balanced environment for cultural relations and fostering cultural diversity, as nation-states increasingly focused on promoting their local CCIs and the export of their national cultural products.\textsuperscript{168} In 2010 the UN General Assembly tried to counter this trend by adopting a resolution on “Culture and Development”, once again emphasising culture as an “essential component of human development, represents a source of identity, innovation and creativity for the individual and the community and is an important factor in the fight against poverty”.\textsuperscript{169} The resolution further claims that even though culture constitutes an important contribution to sustainable development it is not yet sufficiently included in international development policies and links culture to the economic, social and environmental dimension of sustainable development.\textsuperscript{170}

4.3. Culture in the EU’s External Relations

Even though previous EU documents had emphasised the Union’s commitment to the potential of culture in international relations the EP had long overstayed the creation of legislation on the issue. In 2011 Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake presented a report to the EP’s Culture Committee emphasising economic arguments and the importance of cultural industries for the EU’s development. The Parliament adopted her recommendations in a Resolution on the cultural dimensions of the EU’s external action in May 2011. In this resolution, the EP called upon the Commission and EEAS to coordinate and deploy cultural aspects consistently and systematically in their external actions, while also seeking complementarity with the MS.\textsuperscript{171} In the spirit of fostering “Europe’s attractiveness” the term “cultural diplomacy” was used – for the first time in an official EU documents – as an instrument to communicate the EU’s and its MS’ interests and values to the world. It also stressed the need for the Union to act as a “(world) player with a global perspective and global responsibility”.\textsuperscript{172} As already hinted at in the Agenda for Culture, the Union now linked a successful deployment of culture in external

\textsuperscript{168} Figueira, ‘Cultural Diplomacy’, 2015,169.
\textsuperscript{169} United Nations, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Culture and Development (2010), 1.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibidem, 2.
\textsuperscript{171} Isar, ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, 2015, 502; European Parliament, Resolution on cultural dimensions of EU’s external actions, paragraph 30.
\textsuperscript{172} European Parliament, Resolution on cultural dimensions of EU’s external actions, paragraph 22.
relations to its own international actoriness and status. This reflects a more self-centred usage of culture as the Union’s international attractiveness and success is regarded the primary objective and not global sustainable development. This is also visible in the emphasis on the economic and profit related benefits of the promotion of European CCIs. At the same time the Union did not completely abandon its commitment to sustainable development as an emphasis is also given to “the value of culture as a force for tolerance and understanding and as a tool for growth and more inclusive societies”. 173

Prompted by the EP’s resolution, the Commission funded a Preparatory Action (PA) to analyse existing resources, strategies and opinions of involved actors on a cultural dimension in external relations and to give recommendations on a possible European added-value. A proposal by a consortium constituted of cultural institutes and civil society organisations won the call and finished their report titled “Culture in EU External Relations – Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship” by 2014. As the study was conducted by an expert group and not EU officials the rhetoric and aim slightly differ from the official discourse. The argument of economic benefits of culture was pushed to the background – even though it was not completely abandoned – for the sake of a more theoretical and ideological driven aim: EU engagement in the spirit of global cultural citizenship. Building on the UNESCO Convention, the idea of global cultural citizenship advocates both rights and responsibilities for every individual and group, and a more active engagement on their part. The PA’s envisioned role of culture in the EU’s external relations thus goes beyond traditional strategies of cultural diplomacy in form of the communication of the actor’s international attractiveness or economic benefits. Instead, it advocates the development of “a global civil society and public sphere that is able to constructively negotiate difference and foster a spirit of trans-national solidarity”. 174 Thus, such engagement is not only based on understanding and tolerance but requires mutual learning, recognition but also links social and political rights to the promotion of cultural diversity. 175 To achieve this, it is necessary to not only engage national governments but the approach should be bottom-up, also involving all cultural stakeholders, ranging from international organisations such as the EU to NGOS and civil society. 176 This vision is more in line with the UNESCO Convention’s endorsement of culture to develop an international environment based on mutual exchange and respect for diversity. According to the PA, a

173 European Parliament, Resolution on cultural dimensions of EU’s external actions, paragraph 2.
175 Isar, ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, 2015, 503.
European strategy would not only result in heightened visibility and greater impact of the EU’s and MS’ activities through “smart complementarity” such as the pooling of resources and coordination. It could also promote global cultural citizenship through mutual learning, intercultural dialogue and, for instance, sharing of European expertise in the field of cultural management, capacity building and training.\footnote{Isar et al., \textit{Preparatory Action}, 2014., 104f.} Even though the term of global cultural citizenship was not adopted by EU officials, some voiced similar visions. Androulla Vassiliou, then Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth said at a summit on culture in Edinburgh:

> I am interested not so much in the promotion of one specific culture or collection of cultures as in the progress of a certain idea of what culture means. I do not believe that Europe’s ‘soft power’ in the 21st century is about projecting a cultural vision of what Europe represents. Nor should it be reduced to a question of helping its artists and promoters to find new audiences. […] Rather, I believe it is about taking Europe’s major historic challenge – how we manage our diversity – to the global stage, and engaging our partners in the debate. Europe’s openness both among its own nations and communities and towards the rest of the world should, I believe, help to shape the EU’s approach to cultural diplomacy.\footnote{Androulla Vassiliou, \textit{Culture’s role in the European Union’s external relations}, speech (13 August 2012).}

Prompted by a general rethinking towards a cross-cutting approach to culture in international relations and the explicit reference of culture within the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the European Council also endorsed a more sustainable approach to culture. In the 2030 Agenda, culture is, for the first time, explicitly mentioned within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals as an “enabler and a driver of the economic, social and environmental dimension of sustainable development.”\footnote{UNESCO Website, \textit{Culture for Sustainable Development}, accessed 12 July 2017; \url{http://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development}.} In November 2015 the Council adopted a conclusion on Culture in the EU’s external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation, committing themselves to the objectives and implementation of the UNESCO Convention and the 2030 Agenda:

> To realise culture’s potential to be an important part of external relations, it is necessary to go beyond projecting the diversity of European cultures, and aim at generating a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, joint capacity building and global solidarity.\footnote{European Council, \textit{Conclusion on culture in the EU’s external relations with a focus on development cooperation}, 2015, 4}

The European Council emphasised the need for better cooperation and called upon the Commission and HR/VP to propose a more strategic European approach to culture in external relations which is complementary to the activities of its MS. It also mimics rhetoric of the 2030 Agenda by linking the significance of culture with the social, economic and environmental dimension of development and the contribution of dynamic CCIs to the reduction of poverty.
and a catalyst for growth-employment. Further, the protection of cultural heritage and promotion of cultural diversity positively contribute to the fostering of understanding, conflict prevention and peace building, issues that also featured in the 2030 Agenda.¹⁸¹

4.4. Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations
EU officials and institutions very much embraced the vision and rhetoric of a broader understanding of culture as an enabler for global, sustainable development, as is visible in the most recent developments towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations. In early 2016, current HR/VP Federica Mogherini responded to the call by the Council and advocated to put “culture at the heart of Europe’s external action”. She stressed not only the economic benefits of culture and its potential to prevent and defuse conflicts and radicalisation but also “strengthen diplomatic relations and mutual understanding. It can help us stand together to common threats and building partnerships and alliances”.¹⁸² This speech was only a brief introduction to the Joint Communication “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations” which she and European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Tibor Navracsics presented to the EP and Council in June 2016. The communication represents a significant step towards the formulation of concrete European policies and mainstreaming culture in external relations, by aiming to define a strategic framework based on “smart complementarity” with the MS – a term which they adopted from the PA. The aim of the communication is to propose “ways to develop the EU’s international cultural relations in order to advance the Union’s objectives to promote international peace and stability, safeguard diversity and stimulate jobs and growth.”¹⁸³ The Council formally endorsed and adopted the Joint Communication on 23 May 2017.¹⁸⁴

Within the joint communication, three pillars are proposed to advance the development of a coherent strategy. First, principles are established which should guide EU action in international cultural relations, ranging from the promotion of cultural diversity to human rights, as the former can only be protected if the latter is being guaranteed; fostering of mutual respect and intercultural dialogue to “go beyond projecting the diversity of European cultures, and aim at generating a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, joint capacity-building and

¹⁸¹ European Council, Conclusion on culture in the EU’s external relations with a focus on development cooperation, 2015, 5.
¹⁸³ European Commission, Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations, 2016, 2.
¹⁸⁴ European Council, Council Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations (2017).
global solidarity”; emphasising the commitment to complementarity and subsidiarity to MS’ competence; encouraging a cross-cutting approach to culture which not only constitutes cultural products but also an important dimension to other issues and policies; and finally, promoting culture through existing frameworks for cooperation and financing instruments, such as the Partnership Instrument (PI), Development Cooperation Instrument or the European Neighbourhood Policy, to avoid duplication and ensure coherence. The general rhetoric and principles are very much in line with developments in international politics of the preceding years towards and open and “sustainable” understanding of culture which was promoted in the UNESCO Convention, 2030 Agenda and the PA. Not only is a “encompassing concept of culture” adopted within the communication, which is “not just about the arts or literature” but “spans a wide range of policies and activities”, but cultural diversity also takes up a central position within the guiding principles. The centrality of promoting cultural diversity and cultures in the plural is not surprising considering it constituting a cornerstone of the Union’s values since at least 2000 and its commitment to the UNESCO Convention.

The second pillar is concerned with advancing cooperation with partner countries via three “work streams”: Culture is understood and supported as an “engine for social and economic development” and thus needs to be “a strategic element in national and international development policies, as well as in development cooperation”. Here, the communication directly cites from the 2005 UNESCO. This strand includes supporting the development of cultural policies and strengthening cultural and creative industries through sharing of expertise with and capacity-building initiatives in third countries. Economic arguments of the benefit of culture, especially of strong CClS, re-emerge at this point in light of the continued dragging economic performance of the Eurozone, emphasising its potential to create jobs and promote “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. Especially in developing countries, the strengthening of their CClS is perceived to also promote the sustainable development of these states. The second strand focuses on promoting culture and intercultural dialogue which will “help promote the building of fair, peaceful and inclusive societies that value cultural diversity and respect for

185 European Commission, *Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations*, 2016, 4 – as has been recommended by the PA using the same wording (Isar et al., *Preparatory Action*, 2014, 107.)
186 Ibidem, 3-7.
189 The Union remains the only international organisation to have subscribed to the 2005 UNESCO Convention – Figueira, ‘A Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council’, 2017, 82.
human rights.” To achieve this, the communication calls for supporting cooperation, dialogue and mobility amongst cultural operators as well as the circulation of art works and cultural products. The idea is, that primarily through people-to-people exchanges, mobility and dialogue, people will learn from encounters with people from other countries, cultures, religious believes, etc. and, among other things, develop more open and tolerant worldviews and attitudes to diversity. Lastly, emphasis is placed on reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage as a manifestation of cultural diversity and since it is currently threatened by natural disasters but also man-made destruction through war, looting and pillaging. In this regard, the communication does not pass-by the chance to stress the “growing global demand for expertise, and the fact that many Member States are willing to share their knowledge.” It also gives examples of how existing EU policies and instruments already tackle these issues. Nonetheless, greater cooperation and joint actions with third countries and other stakeholders is needed which could include strategies for training, skills development and knowledge transfer.

The third pillar of the joint communication proposes a “strategic EU approach to cultural diplomacy”. To advance this strategy it calls upon all “relevant EU stakeholders to join forces to ensure complementarity and synergies”, including governments, local cultural organisations and civil society, EU bodies such as the Commission, HR/VP and EU Delegations as well as the MS and their cultural institutes. This call to engage all stakeholders and commit to smart complementarity is also included in the recommendations of the PA. Even though the commitment to subsidiarity and the importance of CD in the EU’s external relations is emphasised, the communication misses to clearly define the concepts and thus leaves the question open how such “smart complementarity” can be achieved and what it would look like in practice. Even though explicitly mentioning and engaging stakeholders such as MS’ cultural institutes or the EU Delegations are important steps in countering the shortcomings of the EU’s diplomatic system and conduction of external actions, but crucial question remain unanswered. Should MS’ national institutes continue to promote their nation-state as they did before, and now simply add a “European layer” by also promoting “European culture”? Or should the complementary cooperation between the EU, MS and their cultural institutes aim to promote this “encompassing understanding of culture” through intercultural dialogue and capacity building? And how exactly? - The communication simply calls for “smart complementarity” without defining what “culture” it is to promote, and how.

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193 Ibidem, 10f.
194 Ibidem, 11f.
This omission becomes more obvious in the third pillar on “a strategic EU approach to cultural diplomacy” as it lists current and potential projects and initiatives in this field. After the strong commitment in the first two pillars of the communication to culture as a crucial factor in sustainable development and to the aims of global capacity building, intercultural dialogue and mutual exchange and learning, one would expect to find these aspirations prominently featured and addressed in the proposed projects. Instead, more traditional approaches to CD as a tool to enhance soft power as well as showcasing and promoting the EU’s image abroad are prominent. The seemingly focus on a traditional understanding of CD becomes visible as the more detailed and thought-through examples of proposed and current programmes within the communication are aimed at promoting the EU’s image. These initiatives include joint EU cultural events such as the organisation of EU film festivals, the establishment of European Culture Houses and the Cultural Diplomacy Platform financed through the Partnership Instrument which explicitly aims to advance the “EU’s core interests and values abroad”.196

Depending on their actual implementation these instruments could also promote sustainable development, mutual learning and capacity building but, for instance, the description of film festivals as an “excellent way to enhance the visibility of the EU in third countries” does not necessarily encourage this conclusion.197 Also, in 2015 the European Commission requested a feasibility study on the potential of EU Film Festivals (EUFF) that was focused on how such festivals “promote the EU, foster cultural diplomacy and showcase European culture through the diversity of its cinema.”198 The final report of the study mentions possibilities for dialogue and a capacity-building potential for local film industries in third countries, but does not go into details through which strategies and tools to promote this. Instead, the proposed guiding principles focus on the contribution to portraying “a diverse and creative Europe with a mix of […] films” and giving “an image of excellence and quality”.199

To efficiently build on existing initiatives and ensure that European cinema contributes to the EU’s external relations as well as the EU’s influence and attractiveness in the world, EU Delegations need adequate support, in particular assistance, to strengthen their actions and ensure that film festivals become effective diplomatic, cultural and trade tools.200

Coming back to the 2016 Joint Communication, the understanding of culture to contribute to sustainable development through capacity building, mutual learning and exchange is somewhat included in its list but through more generic commitments, such as “promoting active civil

197 European Commission, Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations, 2016, 14.
198 KEA European Affairs and BFI Film Forever, Film Festivals at EU Delegations, (2015), 30.
199 Ibidem, 17f & 49.
200 Ibidem, 6.
society”, and without describing concrete instruments and initiatives how they are to be implemented. Only the promotion of intercultural exchanges of students and academics features more prominently as specific funding instruments such as the Marie Curie-Sklodowska Actions or Erasmus+ are mentioned. It does not specify though how and if these, already existing, instruments should be adapted to meet the overall objectives of the communication and reflect the “new” challenges of international cultural relations. The use of existing thematic and geographical EU instruments might be a pragmatic and legitimate choice but some might have to be adapted to explicitly and reflectively include the objectives, aspirations and aims of the proposed strategy for international cultural relations. For instance, the PA has pointed out that European as well as non-European exchange programmes, especially of artists and cultural operators, are often perceived as one-sided and not truly mutual, in the sense that they often focus on either bringing non-Europeans to Europe or vice-versa, thus not contributing to a real dialogue or mutual learning.201

The terms “culture” and “cultural diplomacy” remain underdefined concepts within the communication and EU documents in general. Both, different understandings of culture exist not only within the Joint Communication but the attitudes of the EU institutions and officials. On the one hand, culture is understood very broadly and including of intercultural dialogue, sustainable development and the aspiration of creating a global appreciation of cultural diversity. On the other hand, CD is emphasised in its traditional function as soft power tool and aimed at image construction. Both these understandings are mentioned in the Joint Communication, blurring the line of what the EU wants to achieve. This is not to say that it is not legitimate for the EU to conduct more traditional style CD and focus on its international image, nor that those two understandings are necessarily exclusive. Does traditional CD reduce the success of striving for a more encompassed understanding of culture and cultural diversity? Is it possible to do both at the same time? These questions need to be left unanswered for now. Nevertheless, there seems to be a discrepancy between what the EU aspires to do – as described in pillar one and two of the strategy – and the concrete tools through which it wants to achieve this – as exemplified in pillar three.

This discrepancy may be best exemplified by the rhetoric and attitudes EU officials and institutions use in official speeches and documents. As mentioned before, the EU usually prefers the terms “international cultural relations” or “culture in the EU’s external relations” over “cultural diplomacy” – even though the latter might be more conceptually accurate due to the involvement of national governments and their institutions in the process. Academics have

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suggested that the terms “cultural relations” and “cultural diplomacy” might be used interchangeably due to their marginal differences and the general difficulty to define and differentiate them. But, at least within the communications and documents of EU institutions and officials, a pattern seems to exist in how they use these terms with slightly different connotations and implications.

4.5. “International Cultural Relations” vs “Cultural Diplomacy”
“International cultural relations” or “culture in the EU’s external relations” are more strongly linked to the idea to promote a more encompassed or relational understanding of culture, intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity. They imply the aim of global sustainable development and culture as a right and responsibility for every individual and group. This understanding of culture is the product of international developments and trends such as the adoption of the 2005 UNESCO Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and can be seen in many speeches and official EU documents.\textsuperscript{202} The Preparatory Action as well follows this, more ideological, aspiration of cultural relations striving for the creation of a new and solidary global environment in the spirit of global cultural citizenship. The focus of this approach lies not on the promotion of a specific self-image or “one specific [European] culture or collection of cultures [than on] the progress of a certain idea of what culture means” through mutual exchanges, reciprocity as well as sharing of knowledge and expertise.\textsuperscript{203} This approach builds on and requires,

\begin{quote}
A recognition of the high degree of global interconnectedness in the cultural field today. [And] the strengthening of ‘external cultural relations’ as a responsibility rather than a tool, citing 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 characterised by an increasingly plural cultural awareness.\textsuperscript{204}
\end{quote}

On the other hand, concepts such as soft power, public and cultural diplomacy did find their way into the rhetoric of the Union in recent years - prompted by current trends and their increased popularity within the professional and academic field of international relations and politics. The first time “cultural diplomacy” appeared in an official EU document was in the Parliament Resolution and preceding report on “Cultural dimensions of EU external actions” in 2011. Interestingly, the primary focus of the report and resolution was less the encompassing role of “cultural relations” for sustainable development than the need for a traditional CD “to

\textsuperscript{202} Some examples include: European Commission, \textit{European Agenda for Culture}, 2007; Isar et al., \textit{Preparatory Action}, 2014; European Council, \textit{Conclusion on culture in the EU’s external relations with a focus on development cooperation}, 2015; Mogherini, \textit{Putting culture at the heart of Europe’s external action}, 2016; Vassiliou, \textit{Culture’s role in the EU’s external relations}, 2012.

\textsuperscript{203} Ibidem, 2.

\textsuperscript{204} Isar, ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, 2015, 504.
sustain and foster Europe’s attractiveness in a globally connected and competitive environment.”

Also in other documents or speeches specifically mentioning “cultural diplomacy” or when “culture” is linked to public diplomacy initiatives, they usually refer to its more instrumental and traditional understanding in the sense of a soft power asset. Already before this resolution, some EU officials echoed the concern regarding the low visibility and perception of the Union and called for more strategic approaches to communicate and promote their image and interests externally. Public and cultural diplomacy are two possibilities to achieve this. The Union’s PD activities are part of the Partnership Instrument which aims at “increase[ing] the understanding of the EU’s views, policies and priorities”, “promote the EU’s values and interests’ and improve the perception of the EU abroad.”

It thus strives to not only communicate but also enhance the EU’s image and soft power globally by influencing foreign audiences. This somewhat explains the instrumental approach to PD and CD they adopt in their rhetoric as it is more fitting for this overarching objective. It also implies a power dimension to the conduction of cultural diplomacy: The EU strives to positively influence its soft power and international image, thus hopes to establish itself as an effective, successful and influential actor on the global stage.

Ever since the beginnings of the Union’s predecessors, its international actorness and power have been of great interest and importance to many scholars and to the EU itself. It has been described, among others, as civilian, normative or global and this understanding of “cultural diplomacy” more strongly reflects the Union’s struggle to define itself as an international actor. With this context in mind, the 2016 Joint Communication, and the appearance of this second understanding of “cultural diplomacy” within it, might be best read in connection to another document: The Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The EUGS was announced by HR/VP Mogherini only five days after the Brexit-vote and twenty days after the Joint Communication, on 28 June 2016.

It underlines the importance of a strong, united EU that “thinks strategically, shares a vision and acts together”, in the face of current threats and challenges such as terrorism, climate change, security tensions in its neighbourhood and beyond.

We need a stronger Europe. This is what our citizens deserve, this is what the wider world expects. We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union

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205 European Parliament, Resolution on cultural dimensions of EU’s external actions, 2011.
is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned.\textsuperscript{210} 

The Global Strategy thus emphasises the need for greater cooperation, common ambition and complementary action between the MS and the Union, and provides and overall vision of the Union’s role in the world. In the foreword, Mogherini stresses that “global” in the title not only refers to the geographical dimension but also “to the wide array of policies and instruments the Strategy promotes”.\textsuperscript{211} Even though the Joint Communication was presented by Mogherini herself only a few days prior, the EUGS does not explicitly elaborate on the role culture plays within this vision. “Culture” is mentioned sporadically as supporting other objectives such as, “echoing the Sustainable Development Goals”, the adoption of “a joined-up approach to [EU’s] humanitarian, development, migration, trade, investment, infrastructure, education, health and research policies” and nurturing “social resilience also by deepening work on education, culture and youth to foster pluralism and respect.”\textsuperscript{212} This reflects the encompassed understanding of “cultural relations” – even though the term itself is never explicitly used. The term “cultural diplomacy” is also used only once in a more instrumental way as one of the new fields of “joined-up action” of the Union and its MS – as well without more elaboration.\textsuperscript{213} 

When considering that the Global Strategy aims at providing a common, external direction for the Union in pursuit of protecting European values, interests and commitment to “collectively take responsibility for [its] role in the world”, it becomes clear that at the heart of the EUGS lies the concern with the Union’s international actorness. In this regard, culture is implicitly encompassed within the concept of “soft power” that appears a few times within the document. 

The European Union has always prided itself on its soft power – and it will keep doing so, because we are the best in this field. However, the idea that Europe is an exclusively ‘civilian power’ does not do justice to an evolving reality.\textsuperscript{214} 

At its core, the EUGS aims to re-define the Union’s actorness on the global stage, whose image and reputation has been weakened in recent years due to challenges such as the Eurozone crisis or its handling of the migration influx. In accordance with the shift identified by James Rogers, towards an outward, more-state like oriented “global power” Europe, the EUGS commits to a greater focus on hard power within the EU:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{211} Ibidem, 4.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibidem, 26.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibidem, 49.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibidem, 4.
\end{flushleft}
In this fragile world, soft power is not enough: we must enhance our credibility in security and defence. To respond to external crises, build our partners’ capacities and protect Europe, Member States must channel a sufficient level of expenditure to defence.\textsuperscript{215}

The Joint Communication as well as the EUGS show that the EU continues to commit to the importance of a relational understanding of culture and cultural relations and through doing so will continue to maintain its normative power and externally diffuse values and principles which itself deems universal and fundamental such as human rights, the rule of law, multilateralism or sustainable development. At the same time a new – as Rasmussen called it – euronational narrative emerges, aiming at repositioning and communicating the EU as an effective international actor based on more state-like actorness. Through the emphasis of its own global power and influence as well as its “unprecedented” success and achievements not only for Europe but also the rest of the world, the Union positions itself very high within the international power hierarchy. And within this narrative, culture can play a supportive role especially if implemented through more traditional CD actions.

The two readings of “international cultural relations” and “cultural diplomacy” which can be found within the EU’s documents and attitudes, are linked to two of the many narratives which the EU communicates externally. The former indicates a more relational and moralistic approach, aimed at the re-structuring and shaping of the global system based on values such as sustainability and fundamental rights and thus is more in line with the EU’s normative influence and power. The latter approach reflects a more traditional and instrumental narrative, aimed at communicating a strong and international actorness for the EU which aims to position it as a global power. These two narratives are not necessarily exclusive of or negating each other and in many aspects even overlap. Both are legitimate aims and aspirations for an international actor such as the EU. It is important though that the Union does not lose track of its relational aspirations for cultural diversity. First, the traditional CD activities are more thoroughly defined within the Joint Communication even though EU institutions and officials themselves emphasised that there exists not one European culture but many cultures within Europe. If there is no clearly defined European culture to showcase why focus so much on such external actions? Instead, it might be more promising if the Union fully embraces its facilitator role, supporting MS to display their national cultures as well as the idea of cultural diversity in general. To achieve the more relational aspirations of international cultural relations, as defined within the first and second pillar of the Joint Communication, it might be necessary to not only use existing thematic, geographical and financial instruments but to create new ones specifically aimed at

\textsuperscript{215} European Union, \textit{A Global Strategy for the European Union}, 2016, 44.
those objectives, or, at the very least, adapt and restructure the existing ones to encompass and promote them. A good development towards this was the signature of a partnership arrangement between the EEAS, European Commission Services and EUNIC in May 2017. The administrative arrangement focuses on “intercultural dialogue for peaceful intercommunity relations”, “supporting culture as an engine for sustainable and economic development” and “reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage” as set out in the Joint Communication, and does not include a “cultural diplomacy” dimension.216

Since the Joint Communication does not constitute the final version of the EU’s strategy for international cultural relations, but only strives “towards” it, as suggested in the title, there is still potential and possibility for improvement. Future international and local developments will show how the Union adopts and implements these recommendations and how its strategy and initiatives will eventually look like.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to track the internal discussion and narratives on the role of culture within the EU’s external relations. The focus was not to analyse how individuals and publics perceive these narratives or if they are successful in construction and shaping the perceptions of their audiences. Instead, the EU institutions’ and officials’ intention and aspirations behind sending those messages are the focus point of the analysis, as well as the critical identification of the tools and methods through which the Union strives to do so.

The overarching research question of how the EU uses these narratives on the role of culture and international cultural relations to construct itself as a relevant international actor, is based on the social constructivist paradigm of international relations theory. Social constructivism emphasises intersubjectivity in the process of meaning making and how ideas, ideologies and socially constructed concepts define and influence the international system, interests and identities of the actors involved and vice versa.\(^\text{217}\) For the analysis of the selected texts, which primarily included official EU documents, speeches and other international declarations and communications, a critical discourse analytical approach was chosen. CDA allows for and emphasises the critical reflection of discourses, helping to shed light on identities, ideas and narratives which are constructed within them. Within this framework, language is understood as not simply a tool for communication but constructive of social realities.

Within the first chapters and sub-chapters, relevant concepts and theories were established and the link of these concepts with and their implications for the European Union and its external actions were critically reflected upon. The chapters set out with seemingly more easy-to-define concepts such as Joseph Nye’s “soft power” and the development of public diplomacy. These terms seemed relevant to this study, not only due to their great popularity within the public and academic discourse when talking about international cultural relations but also because they both focus on attractiveness, influencing perceptions and shaping images of foreign audiences abroad.

Then, an attempt at deconstructing the impossible-to-define concept of “culture” was tried, which emphasised the terms ambiguous understandings, ranging from tangible cultural objects, goods and services to a broader reference to culture as a social and relational construct and form of knowledge.\(^\text{218}\) Due to people’s and academics’ inability to agree on a definition, the concept “culture” remains open to recontextualization, redefinition and attachment of new meanings.

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\(^{218}\) Reeves-Ellington, What is Culture?, 2010, 16.
depending on the actors involved and the power relations between them. Nye pointed to an international actors’ culture as one of its assets for soft power, next to its political values and foreign policies. Thus, this link between culture, soft power and international actoriness had to be elaborated upon, based on existing studies and research. In the case of this study, this meant investigating how the EU makes use of the rhetoric of “European culture(s)”, (European) cultural identity and culture in general to not only justify the European integration process but also imagine and construct an identity for itself, both internally and externally.

Like other international actors, the EU constructs political narratives about itself, the global system and other actors to strategically influence the system and its own standing in it. The question of what sort of an international actor the EU is or imagines itself to be as well as how this role and image influences and is influenced by the international system have been of interest to scholars and the EU alike. Many of the narratives deployed by and on the EU have been identified by other scholars, including the its civilian, normative or global power. Those narratives are not static but develop and change over time and often exist parallel to each other.

The main body of this study was dedicated to tracking the historical development of the discourse and role of culture within the EU, investigating key aims, aspirations, narratives and identities constructed within them and how they developed over time. To provide a complete picture, the starting point was the very beginning of the EU’s predecessor, the European Economic Community, and its founding treaties. Even though the focus of this study were the EU’s international cultural relations, it seemed important to briefly include the development of the internal European cultural policies as this discussion was directly linked to and preceding the discourse on a cultural dimension in its external relations.

The role of culture within the EU started with the general and strategic omission of the concept in the early years of the European project. Eventually the Community got more interest in culture and cultural activities, at least within its own borders, in face of a general lack of popular support by its citizens. Modelled on strategies for national identity construction, such as the adoption of a European anthem, flag and “Europe Day”, the Community deployed ad hoc cultural policies and increasingly turned towards culture to legitimise the European project. In 1992 the Community eventually gained legal, partial competence over culture as a facilitator

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222 Tagiuri, ‘Forging Identity’, 166f; Shore, Building Europe, 2000, 12f.
and promoter of its MS national cultural policies and diplomacies.\textsuperscript{223} Only years later, prompted by international trends and developments, such as the adoption of various resolutions and conventions focused on the importance of culture in international relations by the UN, as well as an increasingly interested and active civil society within Europe, did the Union start to look outwards. The call for more strategic external relations in general, and for international cultural relations specifically, echoed within the Union as EU officials increasingly committed to these ideas as well.\textsuperscript{224} Developments within the EU, such as the Lisbon Treaty, were first steps in the process towards a more traditional foreign policy and presence for the EU, while others, such as the Agenda for Culture officially endorsed a role of culture within the Union’s external relations.\textsuperscript{225} What form this role should take up exactly, how it was to be implemented or even what it was to communicate remained unclear for the following years. Eventually, in June 2016 HR/VP Federica Mogherini addressed the EP and Council with a Joint Communication “towards” a strategic approach to international cultural relations.\textsuperscript{226} Even though the Council adopted the recommendations in May 2017, this document does not yet constitute a complete strategy on the issue but it is a crucial step in its development.

The last part of the analysis focused on identifying two different narratives framed around divergent ideas of the role of culture within the Joint Communication and recent EU rhetoric. The first narrative, which is often framed around the terms of “international cultural relation” or “culture in the EU’s external relations” implies an encompassed or relational understanding of culture. This narrative advocates the deployment of international cultural relations not for simply showcasing one’s own, national culture but for a greater, ambitious goal of global responsibility and sustainable development. The focus of this approach lies in the development of a new and solidary global environment which respects and celebrates (cultural) diversity, through mutual exchanges, reciprocity and the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The narrative contained in the rhetoric of “international cultural relations” strives to influence and restructure the international system in general, and not display one specific culture but communicate an idea what culture and cultural diversity mean for the world. Thus, in advocating and communicating this narrative the EU plays more strongly to its normative power, as it tries to influence what is considered “normal” in international politics – how cultural relations should be conducted and for which greater aspirations.

\textsuperscript{224} Isar, ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, 2015, 499f.
\textsuperscript{226} European Commission, \textit{Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations}, 2016.
The second narrative reflects the EU’s current shift towards constructing itself as a “global power” and emphasises the importance of a more traditional European “cultural diplomacy”. This construction of a global power Europe does not exclude its normative power, but it additionally stresses the inclusion of ideological, civilian as well as military components within the EU’s new self-imagination. By including a military dimension, the Union strives to construct itself as a more state-like international actor.\(^\text{227}\) Due to its sui generis nature as well as the continually strong and autonomous member states, the EU has ever since its beginnings struggled to legitimise its competences and power. Often in face of perceived crises – such as the weak perception of the EU abroad, the Eurozone crises, the threat of a potential end of the Union as exemplified by Brexit, but also climate change or terrorism – do EU officials and institutions emphasise the need for a stronger Union shaped more closely after the nation-state model. It is thus not surprisingly that this also includes the conduction of more traditional cultural diplomacy in the sense of displaying the diversity of European cultures and its slogan “united in diversity”. The current elevated prominence and popularity of this narrative is best visible in the Global Strategy for the EU from Summer 2016 but also appears in the Joint Communication.\(^\text{228}\)

This study has traced the development on the role of culture within the EU’s external relations and aimed to identify culture’s contribution to contemporary construction and self-imagination of the Union’s international actorness. It has shown that currently two different understandings and roles of culture and international cultural relations coexist within the EU’s internal discourse, often even within the same documents or speeches. As the Union has yet to officially adopt a strategy for international cultural relations, it remains to be seen how this strategy will eventually look like and be implemented, and how these two understandings of culture will be reflected in it. But its seems clear that:

Culture definitely seems to be a European policy domain that is here to stay and be developed […] This fluid context [of global developments] will impact on the interaction and implementation of the EU strategy for international cultural relations and the related global strategy. Culture is, no doubt, important as a fundamental part of our identity and enjoyment of life, but as a public policy it cannot be, on its own, an aliment for the wrongs of the world.\(^\text{229}\)

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7. Appendix: Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CIs</td>
<td>cultural institutes</td>
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<td>CIIs</td>
<td>cultural and creative industries</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>cultural diplomacy</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
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<td>EC</td>
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<td>EUFF</td>
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<td>EUGS</td>
<td>Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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<td>EU-I</td>
<td>EU Information Centre</td>
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<td>EUNIC</td>
<td>European Union National Institutes of Cultures</td>
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<td>HR/VP</td>
<td>High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the EU Commission</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>member states</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Preparatory Action</td>
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<td>Partnership Instrument</td>
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