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The mechanics of cultural diplomacy:
a comparative case study analysis from the European context

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Abstract: The National Institutes for Culture have not attracted much scholarly attention examining their managerial practices. The aim of this article is to explore how the state expresses its agency over the Cultural Institutes of six European countries, namely the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden and Greece. Agency presents varying modalities making instrumentalism more multifaceted than it has been implied so far. The authors are introducing here a framework of 5 ‘touchpoints’ to capture and analyse instrumentalism in cultural diplomacy. Funding, agenda setting, evaluation, hierarchy and appointment power constitute the typical system of interactions between the Cultural Institutes and their reporting authorities.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; international cultural relations; arm’s length principle; Cultural Institutes; instrumentalism; agency;

1. Introduction

The article explores how the state organizes and expresses its agency with regard to the strategic planning of the National Institutes for Culture of six European countries. The Cultural Institutes, as they are also known, are public bodies “focused on the promotion of their national culture and language(s)” rendering them quintessential organs of cultural diplomacy for their nation-states (European Cultural Institutes Abroad 2016, 11). But how do governments exercise control over these organizations and what are the implications of state intervention on their social impact? In the context of this study, we will examine how the agency of the state apparatus affects strategic planning and produces different versions of instrumentalism arguing that agency is characterized by a variety of modalities, some more imperative which leave no room for manoeuvre and others more dynamic that allow for initiative and divergence. The paper uses as a starting point Gray’s (2007, 204) call “to identify both the causal mechanisms through which it [instrumentalism] takes place and the reasons for the creation of differential responses between nation-states.” Comparative studies exploring the operation of the Cultural Institutes are rare and the need to do comparative research in cultural policy has been long recognized (Kawashima 1995). This is probably the first academic effort that looks at the work of the Cultural Institutes trying to aggregate so many case studies under one analytical umbrella. Naturally, the challenge has been enormous to maintain a balance between breadth and depth in the analysis respecting the word limitation. We should note that this study has not looked into instrumentalism through the perspective of government departments and has not turned to political actors who are indeed the great force behind policy making but has only investigated instrumentalism through the perspective of the Cultural Institutes (CIs). Bringing

into a point of convergence literature from cultural policy and cultural diplomacy this study aspires to contribute to an under-researched but promising area which will rapidly develop the following years thanks to the systematic interest the European Union is now showing to culture in external relations (European Commission 2016).

2. Background

Instrumentalism is a well researched topic in cultural policy studies and constitutes one of the core issues in cultural diplomacy research. According to Vestheim (1994, 65) instrumentalism can be summed up as the use of “cultural ventures and cultural investments as a means or instrument to attain goals in other than cultural areas.” Cultural diplomacy probably epitomizes the above definition since culture at the service of diplomacy is used as a means to achieve political outcomes. As Belfiore (2002) has argued instrumental cultural policies are designed with a priority to justify government funding by linking the impact of these policies to social outcomes. Policies that benefit the nation, however, are not the same as policies that benefit the state, therefore instrumentalism in the context of cultural diplomacy acquires a different more political hue. Cultural policy has been linked to different areas of public policy making to acquire gravitas either by assisting in the creation of additional revenue streams or by achieving social goals as mentioned above. These are areas “which are seen as being more worthy, or which have higher levels of political importance and acceptability attached to them” (Gray 2002, 81). Despite the negative affect against instrumentalism, Nisbett (2013, 572) has shown that instrumental policies even in the context of cultural diplomacy are far from “prescriptive and rigid” and calls for more empirical studies to confirm or repudiate the assumption that instrumentalism is ordinarily harmful to the cultural cause. Along the same lines, Carter (2015) rejects the nonproductive academic critique against cultural diplomacy arguing that it is exactly the cultural arm that we should empower with our research instead of renouncing the entirety of the practice.

Instrumentalism is linked to another well researched concept in policy studies, that of the arm’s length principle. This institutional design ensures the organization’s autonomy from the government but at the same time situates it under its aegis. The arm’s length principle is used in many areas of public policy and has been a very popular institutional form in the cultural sector (Hughson and Inglis 2001; Belfiore 2004). Most National Institutes for Culture are classified as arm’s length bodies usually reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of their country although this is not a rule (European Cultural Institutes Abroad 2016). According to Chartrand (1989, 7): “The principle is the basis of a general system of ‘checks and balances’ deemed necessary in a pluralistic democracy to avoid undue concentration of power and conflict of interest.” Therefore, the arm’s length relationship is an organizational invention that protects both the arm’s length body from questionable state interference and its reporting department from unnecessary interventions that are often disapproved by the public. The role of the public is crucial to understand why organizations are operating under this institutional form. The arm’s length relationship has a high display value which makes the organization appear as more legitimate, hence trustworthy, in the eyes of its audience. When the

metaphorical arm is shortened the organization loses its credibility and, therefore, its impact is minimized.

The debate around the arm's length principle is interestingly relevant to the discussion around definitions in cultural diplomacy. Academic research has sought to establish a distinction between cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations on the grounds that diplomacy is by definition an instrumental project. Richard Arndt maintains that while cultural relations "grow naturally and organically without government intervention" (Arndt 2005, Introduction xviii), cultural diplomacy describes solely government initiatives. What is interesting in this definition is the use of the adverb 'naturally' which implies that government initiatives in the field are perhaps unnatural. As Longhurst et al. put it (2008, 47): "There is in English culture a widespread belief that nature and the natural are truthful and reliable since they are apparently outside the realm of human manipulation". Consequently, instrumental use(s) of culture are considered by definition opposite to its nature for we are prone to believe that culture is inherently ethical. The questions that arise from this thesis are pressing: Can governments exercise cultural relations or is it a sphere of activity that belongs exclusively to non-state actors? Do the Cultural Institutes exercise cultural diplomacy for their governments promoting national interests or are they working independently fostering cultural exchange and dialogue? We can only begin to imagine answers for these questions if we explore how instrumentalism works on the microscopic level. The following sections attempt to analyze how instrumentalism functions in cultural diplomacy examining issues of agenda setting and hierarchy.

3. Methodology and Limitations

We believe that the subject deserves a comparative treatment so in this project we selected six European Institutes based on the size and nature of their networks. The selected Cultural Institutes are the British Council, the Institut français, the Goethe-Institut, the Instituto Cervantes, the Swedish Institute and the Hellenic Foundation for Culture. The United Kingdom, France and Germany are historically considered the top three players in the cultural diplomatic arena with their Cultural Institutes sparking great interest among foreign audiences. The 'big three' maintain a global network with presence in all five continents. The researchers decided to include the Instituto Cervantes in the study due to its growth dynamics. The Hellenic Foundation for Culture was chosen as it has a regional presence with a concentration of offices in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Last, the Swedish Institute was selected as it poses an interesting case having only one office in Paris it invests heavily on digital media. In short, based on the number of their offices abroad, this study features four large-sized and two small-sized Cultural Institutes (European Cultural Institutes Abroad 2016, 37).

The leading author conducted 9 semi-structured interviews, 5 with branch directors in London and 4 with senior staff at the headquarters of the Institutes through telephone or Skype (Table 1). The questions touched on themes like strategic decision making, funding and evaluation with an emphasis on agenda setting issues (Table 2). The interviews were analyzed with the aid of NVivo software using thematic analysis to produce codes (Braun and Clarke

2006) with the most frequently coded nodes touching upon strategic planning (Table 3). Admittedly, information derived from interviews should always be critically assessed as

Table 2. Typical questions asked to the participants.

Themes	Questions
Strategic vision	- What is the mission of the [Cultural Institute]?
Strategic vision	- What are the [Cultural Institute's] geopolitical areas of focus and target groups?
Funding	- How is funding being allocated to the [Cultural Institute] and distributed throughout the network?
Strategic planning	- Which stakeholders take part in building the strategic agenda?
Strategic planning	- How does the coordination of the global network take place? (if they maintain global presence)
Evaluation	- How does the [Cultural Institute] measure its performance?
Perceptions	- Would you say that the [Cultural Institute] exercises cultural diplomacy or international cultural relations?

Table 3. NVivo coding tree presenting the most frequently coded nodes.

Name	Sources	References
Collaboration with partners (governmental+non-governmental)	9	42
Funding	9	50
Historical Information	9	29
Issues of Strategic Planning	9	146
Global network	8	46
Major Strategic Aims (agreed with the reporting authority)	9	43
Organisational Structure	9	83
Presence in countries with the same language	5	12
Target groups and Areas of focus	9	44
Reporting	7	17
Research and Evaluation	8	17
Staff Background and Skills	3	24
Mobility and the Principle of Rotation	7	10
State agency	9	97
Politics, vested interests and personal agendas	7	57
Relationship to other Ministries & Departments	8	57
Relationship to the Foreign Ministry	9	77
Relationship to the Parliament and the Prime Minister	4	9
The other Cultural Institutes as a paradigm	1	14
The trilemma. Cultural diplomacy, Cultural relations, Public diplomacy	9	28
What is Culture	1	19

interview data generally contain subjective judgments. Therefore, triangulation was highly necessary. The participants were asked if they could provide additional material to the researchers for triangulation and, indeed, they shared documents like the strategic plans, management statements and statutory frameworks that act as points of reference to them. However, there is an asymmetry in the collected material since some Cultural Institutes are, in general, more 'vocal' publishing their material (British Council, Goethe-Institut, Institut français, Swedish Institut). For other CIs, most of these documents are confidential and are not to be disclosed to third parties outside the organization (Instituto Cervantes, Hellenic Foundation for Culture). Consequently, gathering same-level data for all our case studies was a major challenge. Last, the researchers provided the participants with the opportunity to review the information they gave on behalf of their organization in order to validate it (Creswell and Miller 2000) and through the vetting process they got informed about the discourses and practices of the other participating CIs.

4. A working framework for instrumentalism

In this article we are linking instrumentalism with agency. It would be useful to explain how the term 'agency' is used in the context of this study since it is a key idea that runs through the article. Agency is a process of social engagement that shapes the present and orients the future of an actor (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). In this article, agency is seen as an overt expression of state power that regulates the operation of the Cultural Institutes through specific mechanisms of control. Our analysis here focuses on structure and function leaving out issues like the internal dynamics produced by personal relationships which very often tone down power imbalances. We will focus on how state structures relate to each other to come to an understanding of how agency and therefore, instrumentalism, functions. Borrowing terminology from linguistics we identify two 'modalities' through which state agency is expressed: the deontic modality which describes an event that "is controlled by circumstances external to the subject of the sentence" and the dynamic modality that asserts that "the control is internal to the subject" (Facchinetti et al. 2003, 7). Similarly, in cultural diplomacy not all relations between the state and the Institutes are prescriptive but more than often there is space for negotiation moderating the asymmetry of power. Simply put, there are cases where the subject, namely the Cultural Institute, has considerable power in shaping its own agenda (dynamic modality) making instrumentalism more *mild* than it has been implied so far. By contrast, there are cases where the Institute has indeed little authority over its matters reaffirming the *invasive* character of instrumentalism (deontic modality).

It is important to understand that modalities are not fixed states but depend on both the political vision of the party in power and the organization's capacity to accept or to resist structural changes. As Rivera (2015) showed in his study of the British Council, the past decade the British government has managed to bring the organization at an arm around the shoulder relationship by demanding transparency of operations and by restructuring funding flows. In the light of these developments the organization was not able to do much to avoid it (Pamment

2012). But what can an organization do to regain or maintain autonomy and how can we monitor the agency of the state when studying these complex policy networks? Quinn (1997, 130) was right when she pointed out that funding and membership are “means to influence”, nevertheless, there are other important bureaucratic aspects that need to be studied when investigating the arm’s length relationship and, consequently, instrumentalism itself. Taylor (1997), for example, examined the operational styles and policy networks in the UK’s newly founded at the time Department of National Heritage and found that professional networks act as an important barrier to government control since the engagement of practitioners in decision making dilutes the monopoly of the government.

Based on the discussion on modalities presented earlier, we introduce a framework in order to track agency in cultural diplomacy and understand the nature of state intervention. We argue that state agency can be traced through the various interactions between the Cultural Institutes and their reporting authorities. These interactions, or else touchpoints, can be studied to reveal the level of autonomy from the state. As a result of our analysis, we conclude that we can explore this relationship through five touchpoints: a. funding, b. agenda setting, c. evaluation, d. hierarchy, and, e. appointment system. The first three touchpoints are characterized by regularity in the sense that cooperation between the reporting authority and the arm’s length body is taking place repeatedly while the last two are characterized by institutional embeddedness and their effect is continuous. Specifically, in funding government grants are allocated annually to the CIs in a very specific time period that has been agreed by both parties. Strategic planning is also an activity that takes place yearly with the setting of the annual agenda which is negotiated and endorsed again by both parties. On top of that, there is the wider negotiation on the strategic mission of the Institutes which may take place every four or five years depending on the case. Last, evaluation takes effect not only annually but also every time a renewal of the strategic mission is ahead. The three touchpoints describe the obvious and standard interactions that happen between the Institutes and their reporting authorities and constitute the typical architecture of the system. Hierarchy and the appointment system are touchpoints which form far more complex relationships and are much more difficult to modify once set as there is no space for negotiation.

5. Agenda setting and order of command

In this section we will look at agenda setting through the analysis of the global strategy models of three Cultural Institutes. The researchers chose the British Council, the Goethe-Institut and the Institut français as these three organizations have worldwide representation and long-term experience in how to run their physical networks. The figures presented below are a product of the interviews and have been discussed, revised and validated by the participants. The rest of the CIs in this project did not have a concrete strategy yet as to how the physical network should be coordinated so they were left out of this analysis. This is an important observation since another conclusion we have reached to after the thematic analysis we ran is that the Cultural Institutes are constantly copying from one another with the greater degree of policy mobility occurring - perhaps unsurprisingly - not between the ‘big three’ Cultural Institutes but from this bloc towards the rest of the CIs. Our participants from the Instituto

Cervantes, the Hellenic Foundation and the Swedish Institute would often mention in the interviews the practices of the British Council, the Goethe-Institut and the Institut français, however, the opposite would not happen. So, policy transfer in cultural diplomacy is a reality and although forecasting is dangerous, our data supports that we will witness a degree of homogenization in how the Cultural Institutes manage their operations in the future. Paschalidis (2009) notes that homogeneity is manifest not only in organizational practices but also in rhetoric and content. The rhetoric of cultural exchange with a programmatic focus on the export of elite culture has been the model the older Cultural Institutes originally set which the emerging CIs subsequently copied.

Back to the issue of agenda setting, an important aspect of strategic planning in the Cultural Institutes is undoubtedly the relationship between the headquarters and the offices. In the case of the British Council and the Goethe-Institut, the order of command from the center to the periphery follows a rather standard approach: the offices design their local programmes based on the basic strategy plan agreed by the headquarters and the Foreign Ministry (British Council 2016; Goethe-Institut e.V. Munich 2004). Funding flows the same way with the Foreign Ministry approving grants to the headquarters which, in their turn, allocate funds to the offices as stipulated by the strategy plan. The British Council follows a very concrete top-down rationale (Figure 1) in designing its strategy. The basis for all the strategies, of course, is the management statement which is essentially a contract setting time-bound targets signed between the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and British Council London (British Council 2013).

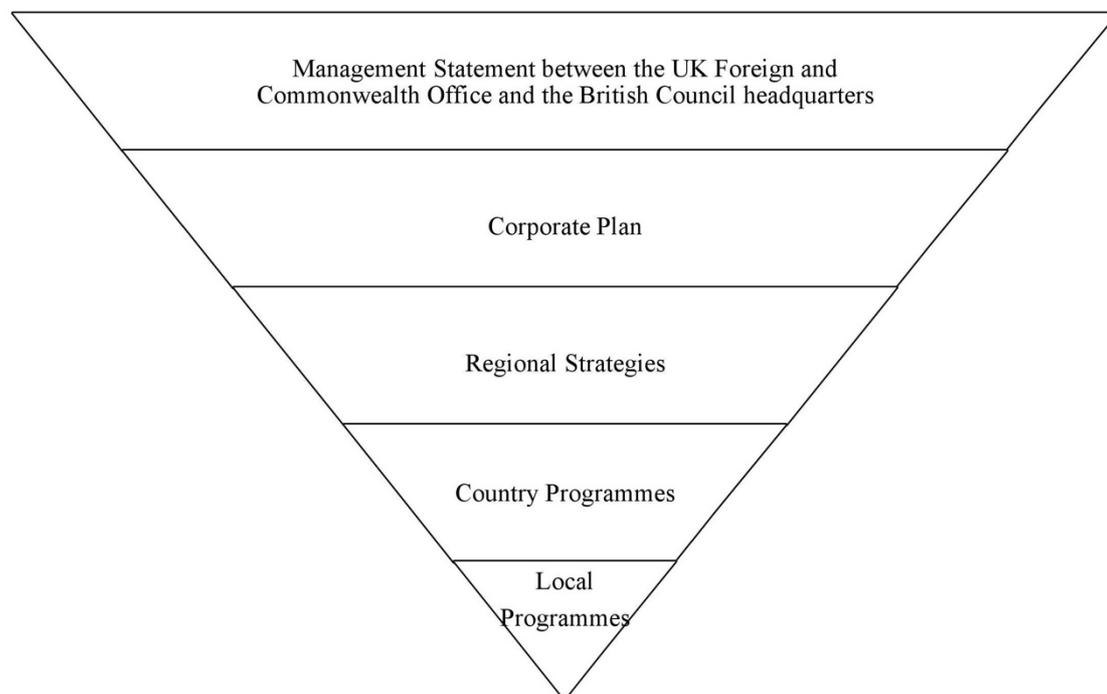


Figure 1. Strategic planning in the British Council. Source: Author.

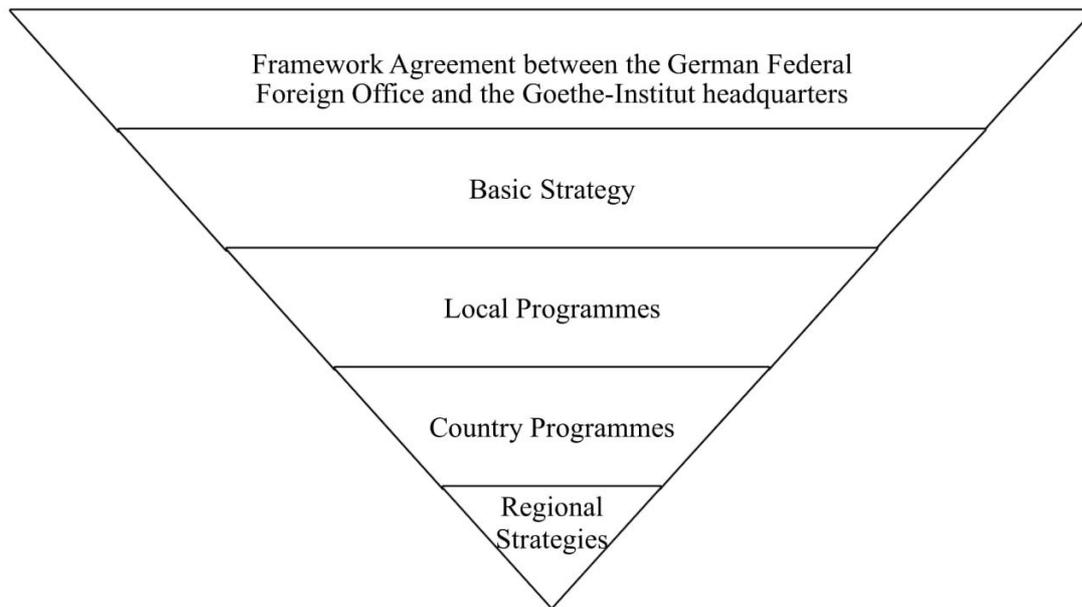


Figure 2. Strategic planning in the Goethe-Institut. Source: Author.

A notable difference between the model of the Goethe-Institut and that of the British Council is how they manage their regional strategies. The Goethe-Institut builds its basic strategy (Figure 2) based on the framework agreement signed between the German Federal Foreign Office and the Goethe-Institut Munich. The regional strategies shape the strategic framework of the country programmes and the local programmes (Interview with Irene Bark, February 2017). The Germans follow the reverse logic from the British and entrust the local offices with the responsibility to draft first their programmes. After a year of planning and constant consultation with the regional Goethe-Institut branch as well as with the headquarters in Munich, all local programmes will come to the hands of the regional director who is the key person to design the regional strategy and will allocate the necessary funds to the offices (Interview with Angela Kaya, February 2017). Despite following the top-down concept in its overall design, this model contains a mechanism that moderates the power of the headquarters and the regional offices (top-down design with a bottom-up component).

In the case of the Institut français (Figure 3), the Paris office is not the headquarters. The office is seen more as a resource center that prepares material to be used by the network; for example, cinema is a basic component of France's strategy and the Institut français in Paris negotiates the rights for the films that the Institut français offices worldwide will showcase. This also means that the Institut français offices are not funded by the Paris office as in all other cases but they cover their operational costs by grants coming directly from the French MFA (Commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées 2017). To work on their programmes they need to apply for funding either to the MFA or to the Institut français in Paris through a call for projects. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its embassies signs separate action plans with the Institut français franchise of each country and the strategy is built top-down following the lead of the Ambassador each time (Interview with Valérie Mouroux, March 2017).

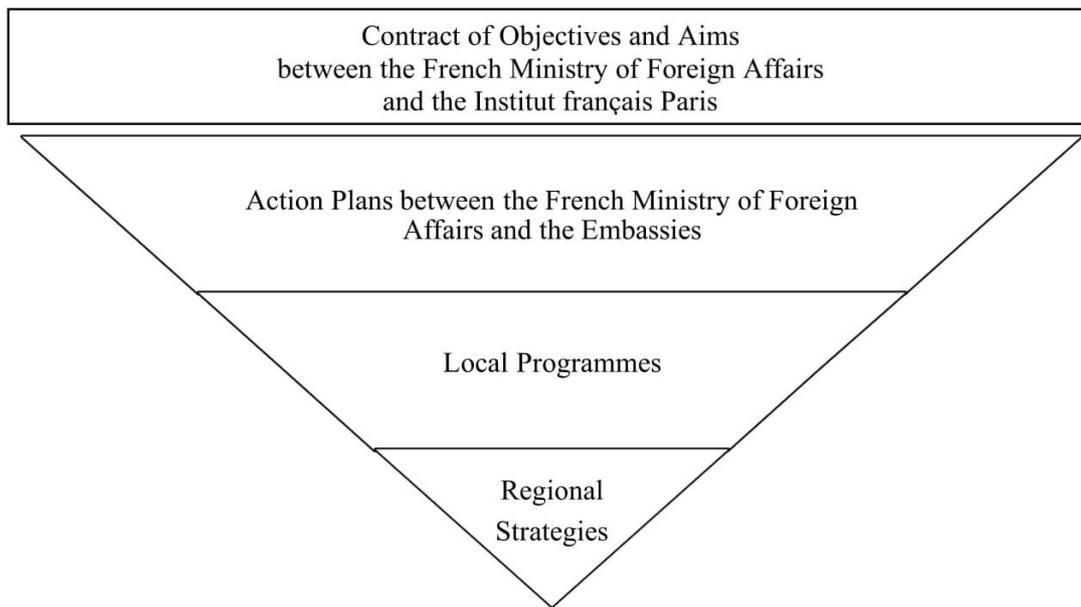


Figure 3. Strategic planning in the Institut français. Source: Author.

As for the rest of the case studies, the Swedish Institute is contemplating a ‘smart’ expansion of their network in the long term which may include placing staff at the embassies or collaborating further with EUNIC colleagues, however, the organization’s limited size so far has allowed for greater flexibility in decision making (Interview with Henrik Selin, March 2017). Nevertheless, the nature and level of intervention of the MFA in the work of the Swedish Institute still requires attention. In the case of the Instituto Cervantes our participants representing the organization support that the CI is very close to reach a consensus over its global strategy and to appoint regional directors. But what will the strategy model of the Instituto Cervantes look like? As argued earlier, policy transfer is a typical phenomenon for the Cultural Institutes. The Instituto Cervantes constitutes a case which looks toward the British Council to change its operational model with a strong focus on financial independence.

“Some would say that the ideal is the British Council but in reality it is the Institut français that we really look like. And obviously the idea is that we should be more self-financed. That’s very important.” (Interview with Julio Crespo MacLennan, February 2017).

Likewise, Greece follows the French paradigm in which central state agents play a predominant role in decision making. Strategic planning here is realised in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, nevertheless, there is no clear mandate by the government as to how the organization should pursue its goals. Although this could prove a valuable asset for the Hellenic Foundation for Culture, the organization has not taken advantage of its autonomy and is in limbo since the first stages of its life (Interview with Stefanos Vallianatos, April 2016).

We have examined the global strategy models of the three oldest and biggest CIs and we found that all three of them use as the basis for their strategies an agreement signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. State agency through this lens reveals the deontic modality

since all the organizations are called to align their cultural and educational strategies with foreign policy priorities as these are dictated by the respective ministries. Although our participants maintained that these agreements are always a subject of discussion and negotiation, the very existence of such documents brings the Cultural Institutes in an arm around the shoulder relationship. By contrast, it may be said that those Cultural Institutes that seemingly suffer from lack of guidance enjoy in reality greater autonomy. The potential to design their own strategy without setting up target-bound contracts is an opportunity to follow an agenda that reflects mainly educational and cultural concerns moving away from the realm of cultural diplomacy and entering the sphere of cultural relations.

6. Relationship to the network of embassies

According to the study 'European Cultural Institutes Abroad' (2016, 38-43) published on behalf of the European Parliament, the majority of the Cultural Institutes report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of their country with the exceptions of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture which reports to the Ministry of Culture and the Instituto Cervantes which reports to both the MFA and the MoC. Interestingly, the information we derived from our interviews comes to challenge the rigidity of the above classification. Although the Instituto Cervantes has an administrative board comprising of representatives of both authorities, the organization drafts its strategy with regard to the foreign policy priorities of the MFA which do not necessarily reflect the cultural policy priorities of the MoC (Interview with Eduardo Sánchez, February 2017). Similarly, although the Hellenic Foundation for Culture is an arm's length body of the MoC, major strategic decisions were always taken in close consultation with the MFA (Interview with Stefanos Vallianatos, April 2016). Apparently, even when one state actor appears to be the dominant authority, a closer look may reveal that another actor is pulling the strings. However, the typology that the study presented is interesting as it is based on official data collected from the organizations themselves, hence, the discourse is indicative of the (hi)stories the Cultural Institutes say for themselves.

Many CIs maintain presence in certain countries only through their embassies rendering them more dependent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs than if they had their own separate premises and staff. Usually the go-to person responsible for culture within the embassy is the cultural counsellor, however, the profession of the cultural counsellor (or cultural attaché) was never well-established and the job tasks are largely ill-defined rendering the post a particularly problematic affair in the diplomatic ranks (Shmagin, 2008). In the case of the Institut français, the cultural counsellor at the embassy serves as director of the Institut français franchise in the country bringing the Cultural Institute under the direct control of the French MFA. Valérie Mouroux, director of Development and Partnerships at the Institut français, explains:

“For example, in Japan the Institut français has many buildings in many cities, but there is the head of what they call ‘Institut français Japan’ who is the cultural counsellor and is now a diplomat. In Tokyo you have an Institut français building that has its own director, but that director is deputy director of ‘Institut français Japan’. And the director of Institut français Osaka serves also as deputy director

of ‘Institut français Japan’. And when you have Alliance française in the country, the cultural counsellor must also try to coordinate the work of Alliance française.”

What is striking is that even a private not-for-profit organization as Alliance française does not act fully independently from the government. In 2011 France fused all networks pursuing foreign cultural policy into one single operator elevating the Institut français to a dominant position in France’s cultural diplomacy strategy. The French government demanded from all other actors to concede their powers to the Institut français and, subsequently, to the MFA. (Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires étrangères 2017). Hierarchy here is the ultimate means that ensures compliance with state priorities.

Quite surprisingly, in the case of Sweden, the cultural counsellors seconded in the embassies are appointed and salaried by the Ministry of Culture, nevertheless, they are working on a budget granted by the MFA (Interview with Ellen Wettmark, March 2017). The Ministry of Culture appoints counsellors for cultural affairs only in key countries with a geographical focus in Europe and EU neighbouring countries (This is the Ministry of Culture 2015). However, the Swedish Institute is in close collaboration with all Swedish embassies and not just with those that maintain a cultural counsellor (European Cultural Foundation 2005). In any case, it seems that the complete absence of an autonomous Swedish Institute network has rendered the organization dependent of the embassy network, however, the symbiotic relationship of the MFA and the MoC in pursuit of their common goals needs further scrutiny.

In the case of the Instituto Cervantes, the relationship to the missions abroad seems to be more flexible compared to the relationship the organization has with the central service of the MFA in Madrid. Eduardo Sánchez, director of the department of Analysis and Strategy of the Instituto Cervantes, observes:

“The operations are determined in big part by what the head office [of the Instituto Cervantes] in Madrid says. So the Ambassador can propose occasionally some partnerships, activities but this is very minor [sic] interference.”

This flexibility is well explained since the Instituto Cervantes represents abroad not only Spain but also the majority of Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America through a mixed board of trustees (Instituto Cervantes 2017). Therefore, it cannot not be situated too close to the Spanish embassies worldwide as this would create a conflict of interest. On the contrary, it should maintain a high degree of autonomy to gain further legitimacy for the Ibero-American cause which has been one of the principal priorities of Spanish foreign policy the past decades (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación 2015). The close attention the Spanish MFA in Madrid pays to the organization proves how closely the ministry monitors not only the spread of the Spanish language, but also the relations between metropolitan Spain and Spanish-speaking countries through the monitoring of the mixed board of trustees. In this respect, hierarchical relations once again define the operation of the organization.

In the British context the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has disengaged from its cultural activities in places where the British Council has representation to avoid confusion and pull resources. British Council’s Charlie Walker notes:

“Where there is British Council representation, the Embassy would not have a cultural counsellor. Nearly always we are the cultural counsellor or we assume that role. So in some countries the British Council is diplomatic because the British Council director has diplomatic status”.

Duignan and Gann (1996, 424) support this statement explaining that historically although “the Council stood outside the civil service . . . its most senior representatives abroad enjoyed diplomatic status as cultural attachés.” This is a suitable design for these cases when the British Council operates as part of the embassy, e.g. in China. This model has emerged out of necessity and is not endemic in the British case only. It is, however, a particularly convenient arrangement allowing the Cultural Institutes to earn from this spatial symbiosis by generating tax-free revenue. According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) all revenue created by consular services is exempt from taxes and although the educational activities of the CIs are not traditionally thought of as consular services, they are frequently treated as such. The symbiosis of the organization with the embassy does not create a superior-subordinate relationship as the organization works with its own budget and strategy.

In Germany, culture and education as public policy areas are not administered by a centralized ministry in Berlin but fall under the responsibility of the federal states, the municipalities and the cities (Blumenreich 2016). Our participants from the Goethe-Institut maintained that the devolved character of the German cultural policy and the trauma of the Second World War has allowed the Goethe-Institut to remain at a distance from the government. Angela Kaya, director of the Goethe-Institut in London, shares on this account:

“The newly founded German government decided to run culture completely independently, so I think that was the main decision why we are who we are. We are an organization, a charity, we are not part of an embassy...”

But is the Goethe-Institut so independent from the embassy network? Similar to the British case, some of the Goethe-Institut offices form part of the German missions abroad and are housed within the embassy premises, e.g. in Moscow. However, this does not necessarily imply dependence from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the British case has demonstrated.

Last, in the case of Greece, the MFA is the responsible authority to appoint and salary cultural counsellors in the embassies. Greece has only a handful of cultural counsellors left in post with most having retired without being replaced, a practice which indicates the status cultural diplomacy has within the Greek MFA. The Hellenic Foundation for Culture has been using these counsellors by sending out grants to support their work thus extending its network (HFC Budget of Income and Expenses 2014). However, there is administrative *bra-de-fer* between the MFA and the MoC that hinders effective policy making (Interview with Stefanos Vallianatos, April 2016). This antagonism remains undocumented in literature on Greek cultural diplomacy, however, similar experience from the Norwegian context shows that cooperation between the two authorities can become particularly problematic when one authority shows signs of dominance (Berge 2016).

7. Concluding remarks

Building international cultural relations has never been apolitical but lately we witness a tendency to think of politics more through Machiavellian terms, as if politics is ipso facto amoral. The loss of trust in government as a creative force of meaningful policymaking derives from the loss of credibility of political actors (Keefer 2007). Therefore, instrumentalism has been treated as an anathema by practitioners who fear that intimate relations with the government will delegitimize their intentions. In the quest for a solution, legislators and practitioners have found different ways to grapple with the problem. Legislators have resorted to complex legal forms to ensure both autonomy and accountability (Pamment 2012). The Cultural Institutes are linked to the state through various control mechanisms some more visible and others planted into the system detectable only by those involved. The complex architecture of the policy environment and the elaborate legal forms organizations take blur intentionally the lines between what is governmental, hence suspicious, and what is non-governmental. On the other hand, practitioners denounce the use of the politically-charged term ‘cultural diplomacy’ to denominate their work turning to the value-neutral term ‘international cultural relations’. It is evident, however, that the rhetoric alone cannot re-legitimize the means and that profound restructuring in the Cultural Institutes needs to take place so that rhetoric, programmatic content and organizational architecture are aligned.

As evident, instrumentalism in cultural diplomacy is linked to broader bureaucratic formations which determine its function and underlying structure. We should not forget that instrumentalism as a concept sprang out from philosophy to cover today remarkably varied disciplines like economics, political science and pedagogy among others. In all these areas we can find discussions which juxtapose the pragmatic approach of instrumentalism to the romanticized notion of idealism. But what are the narratives that tie culture to different areas of public policy and move it away from the tenet ‘culture for culture’s sake’? The civilising mission of culture which can cultivate the masses and uplift them to play their social role as good citizens has been a narrative that sees culture through the educational lens and puts it at the service of society. There are other forms that instrumentalism can take in which culture can be placed at the service of the economy with the concomitant invention of the ‘creative industries’ and the treatment of cultural goods as products (Belfiore 2012). Culture is also used to deliver political outcomes with cultural diplomacy providing an exemplary case to this argument. However, cultural diplomacy has also known other than purely political instrumental uses.

Paschalidis (2009) has distinguished among four phases in how foreign cultural policy has developed which pinpoint the different instrumental uses culture has known outside the domestic frontier. Initially culture in external relations was used with a civilizing mission to educate the ignorant ‘others’. This treatment of culture accentuates its role as a generator of societal value making culture a fine ingredient of social policy. In the second phase, culture was used to display national superiority through the use of cultural symbols which served as a testimony for the sublime nature of the nation. The third phase saw culture acting as a liaison to ease out tensions and stabilize an extremely polarized international field as the case of US diplomacy displays during the Cold War. Paschalidis (2009, 283) maintains that today foreign cultural policy has passed into the era of “cultural capitalism” which is characterized by an

intense focus in profit making through the exploitation of the creative industries. This is a development that seems to have arisen from domestic concerns over the economic value of culture. Naturally, instrumental uses of culture in both the domestic and the foreign frontier tend to coincide as one feeds into the other. But what is the effect of instrumentalism on the cultural practice itself regardless of the locus it is practiced in?

Hadley and Gray (2017) have made a convincing case for hyperinstrumentalism in cultural policy arguing that when the pragmatic outcomes of the policy are prioritized, they lead to a loss of cultural meaning. Hadley and Gray's conceptualization is similar to what we have called in this paper 'invasive instrumentalism' pointing out to prescriptive relations and asymmetrical power dynamics ('deontic modality' in agency). By contrast, Gray (2008) has pointed out that agency exists in both sides of the instrumental relationship. The cultural sector itself may exhibit a tendency to attach to other realms of policy redefining in positive terms the relationship (Belfiore 2012). Evidently, this notion is not situated very far from our conceptions of 'mild instrumentalism' and 'dynamic modality'. Actors who may seem to subsume their authority to dominant agents can demonstrate their own form of agency remolding, thus, the relationship creating cultural value out of a seemingly impossible relationship. Through a different path we have shown that indeed instrumentalism is a protean phenomenon able to shift appearances across contexts making it an extremely volatile subject to study especially in a field such as culture in external relations where the stakes are always stressingly high.

In this article we have introduced an analytical framework to explore the relationship between the Cultural Institutes and their departments by mapping their interactions. The ministries' perceptions of instrumentalism could provide crucial and compelling insight as to how the phenomenon is understood in political circles and could lay the basis for a future research project. The results from this study will hopefully inform cultural policy researchers who study the institutional design of instrumentalism and the implications it has on the social impact of cultural organizations and legislators who are looking for policy solutions beyond their borders.

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Appendix

Table 1. List of participants.

Name	Role/Department	Institute
Irene Bark	Referee and Assistant Director of the Department for Strategy and Evaluation	Goethe-Institut – Munich headquarters
Angela Kaya	Branch Director and Regional Director of NW Europe	Goethe-Institut – London branch
Eduardo Sánchez Moreno	Director of Department of Analysis and Strategy	Instituto Cervantes – Madrid headquarters
Julio Crespo MacLennan	Branch Director	Instituto Cervantes – London branch
Henrik Selin	Director of Department of Intercultural Relations	Swedish institute – Stockholm headquarters
Ellen Wettmark	Cultural Counsellor	Swedish Embassy in London
Charlie Walker	Regional Head for EU Europe, Wider Europe and Americas, Global Network Team	British Council – London headquarters
Valérie Mouroux	Director of the Department of Development and Partnerships	Institut français – Paris branch
Stefanos Vallianatos	Director of the Department for International Relations	Hellenic Foundation for Culture – Athens headquarters

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