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THE ROLE OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN FRACTURED
LANDSCAPES: A CASE STUDY OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND ITS
CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF SOFT POWER
NARRATIVES

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to
obtain a Master's Degree in Culture Studies – Management of the
Arts & Culture

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Abstract

Soft power, as coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980's refers to a nations ability to wield international and political influence through the diffusive power of attraction. The UK and consequently, the British Council has long been considered a global leader in the instrumental use of culture as a means of diplomacy and foreign policy. However, as the cultural landscape in Europe begins to shift as a result of Brexit, Britain's soft power becomes increasingly more relevant. The strategic use of cultural relationships has always been a fundamental way through which nations have communicated and created narratives which in turn, construct an external perception of their culture and values. As a result of the socio-political disruption since June 2016, cultural institutions have begun to question and debate the UK's role within the international cultural sphere. The process of adaptation to Brexit was described in a debate conducted by the Royal Society of Arts as a catalyst for cultural revolution, one through which, new opportunities may arise. Thus, the fractured landscape in the UK presents an opportune moment in which cultural institutions can re-establish themselves and their narratives in order to set the agenda around arts and culture both at home and abroad. The productive nature of soft power allows for the exploration of new cultural narratives between Britain and the rest of the world. Exhibitions provide spaces where these issues can be thought about within the public sphere and debates, conferences and events provide a framework through which these new narratives can be established. Thus, cultural institutions such as the British Council through their various initiatives, play a vital role in constructing discourse around themes of cultural identity, foreign policy and physical as well as cultural borders. The plethora of messages conveyed, work together to set a broader international agenda as cultural institutions lead the way in navigating shifting landscapes.

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Introduction

The term Soft power as coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980's refers to the way in which nations can harness their attractive power to exercise political influence (Nye, 2004, p.x). The power of attraction and a nation's ability to harness said power is fundamental to setting the agenda for political discourse. According to Nye, Soft Power has a few primary currencies through which it is manifested including values, culture, policies and institutions (Nye, 2004, p.31). Cultural institutions are therefore primary vehicles through which soft power enables international agenda setting to occur. In today's political climate, Europe is more fractured than ever. The run up to Brexit implies hugely significant political and social shifts through which governments and institutions are attempting to determine discourse and use it to their own advantage. However, the fractured landscape provides an opportunity for the creation and communication of new narratives. The current restructuring of the social and political context provides a catalyst for agenda setting and new discourses. This thesis therefore analyses the British Council as institution which employs soft power in order to mold political narratives through cultural experiences, within a Brexit context.

By drawing from the literary author, Ngozi Adichie's belief in the danger of the single story, it explores the necessity for the communication and creation of multiple narratives in times of shifting political and cultural landscapes. As stated by Adichie, the problem with the single story is that it creates stereotypes which are not necessarily untrue but rather incomplete, thus making one story the only story (Adichie, 2009). Consequently, it is vital for nations to use several means of communication to convey their balance of stories. The power to tell stories lies in the ability to convey messages and there are various means through which said messages may be communicated. The various different currencies of soft power (values, culture, policies and institutions) are capable of transmitting different messages in different ways. When merged, these currencies produce a variety of narratives, dialogues and discussions which in turn contribute to the external perception of a nation. The concept of power in this thesis is therefore considered to be a productive network, relating directly to the creation of new artistic projects, discussions and discourses being voiced by British institutions, specifically the British Council, during the two-year run up to Brexit. Not only this, but the concept of power is considered in relation to individuals, thus exploring the dynamics between state and subjects. Social distribution of individualizing power and the analysis of power relations come hand in hand with concepts of communication and

production of meaning. Within a Brexit context, the notions of political messages and their individual reinterpretation allow for the exploration of new British identities which are being reconstructed and re-contextualized.

Furthermore, the analysis is inevitable comparative. To quote Boris Groys, the field of art "is structured to the logic of contradiction" (Groys, 2013, p.2) and is embodied by paradox. The fact that it is "radically pluralistic" (Groys, 2013, p.1) allows for the interpretation of several narratives and multiple truths, all of which can be validated within their specific context. Thus, the cultural initiatives of institutions such as the British Council and the unique responses of individuals, all contribute to a plurality of truths. The coordination of these parallel narratives isn't uniform nor constant but depends upon the circumstances in which these entities establish themselves. Thus, cultural institutions and their activities must be considered for their interrelationships of power and effect.

The topic chosen for the purpose of this thesis relates directly to some of the principal themes of Culture Studies. The analysis of institutions as objects of culture through which soft power is harnessed, draws several theoretical parallels with the work of key thinkers in the academic field. The topic of power cannot be approached without first referencing the work of Michel Foucault on the subject. Foucault's several texts which explore themes of truth, power, governmentality, space, place and the relationship with the subject, provide a comprehensive foundation from which the notion of power can be further investigated. Foucault grounds the concept of power in society within the concept of scientifically acceptable propositions. He argues in his text *Truth and Power* that it is not so much the external imposition of power on society that needs to be considered, but rather the "effects of power" which create an internal regime and circulate among scientific statements. It is this regime which sometimes undergoes a "global modification" and the moments in which this occurs he refers to as "take off moments" of knowledge (Foucault, 1954-1984, p.114). He highlights one of the principle difficulties in understanding and analysing power relations by arguing that power does not occur on one level but on several levels, which differ in amplitude, breadth and capacity in producing effects. Thus, the major problem in analysing power lies in the fact that it is difficult to distinguish among events, networks, and levels, making it almost impossible to understand the lines through which they are connected and engender one another (Foucault, 1954-1984, p.116). When considering the current context of the UK one must therefore not

depart from the notion of the single event (Brexit), or the singular institution (the British Council) as isolated levels in which all modification is happening, but rather acknowledge the whole order of levels and events which in turn produce multiple effects.

It is further important for the purpose of this thesis to refer to Foucault's views on the relationship between power and discourse. He claims that power is an accepted force and inevitable fate of our society due to the fact that it is not only repressive but also productive and thus, in contradiction to much of Western literature on the subject, it should also be considered as a positive notion rather than the traditionally negative perception (Foucault, 1954-1984, p.120). Foucault demands that power be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body and makes a point of suggesting that power should not only be considered as a phenomenon erected by the state, but that the analysis should also "extend beyond the limits of the state" (Foucault, 1954-1984, p.122). To limit power to the apparatus of the state is to perceive it as an essentially repressive force and it to ignore the creative and innovative facet. Furthermore, Foucault argues that the state is unable to occupy the entire field of power relations, it is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth" (Foucault, 1954-1984, p.123) thus, any analysis of state structural power must be complemented by an exploration of non-state power relations. Within a current Brexit context, it is therefore essential not only to analyse the relationship of the British Council with the state but also the multiple relationships the council has with other cultural institutions and the thousands of individuals it comes into contact with and transmits messages to. The whole social body and the two-way traffic between several layers of events and effects should be considered for their ability in generating multiple cultural and political narratives. Furthermore, it is vital to consider the productive nature of power and its ability to create new stories and thus new meanings within the social body.

The discussion of notions of power, influence and coercion over the masses within the field of Culture Studies further draws parallels with Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci, society could be divided into two superstructural levels, civil society and political society, both of which contributed to the way in which the ruling class would use cultural institutions to develop a hegemonic cultural ideology and consequently maintain power in capitalist society (Gramsci, 1999, p.118). This hegemonic

culture leads to the spontaneous consent of great masses to conform to the general direction of social life, without state coercive power which imposes a legal obligation to conform. The passive consent given by masses mirrors some of the founding principles of soft power which according to Nye, influences through diffusive effect, shaping the preferences of large groups of society without enforcing military strength (Nye, 2004 p.16). Unlike Gramsci however, Nye believed that the most "effective soft power is generated by civil society rather than government and large corporations" (Lord & Blankenberg, 2015, p.10). The roles are therefore reversed, according to Nye's concept of power, the ability to get people to follow the desired ideological and behavioural patterns, comes largely from common or low culture rather than the dominant bourgeois which through historic prestige exercises influential power. However, both intellectuals refer to a type of cultural power which is often intangible. Said power, is exercised almost ephemerally over society and appears to be untraceable, yet neither deny the existence of a cultural force that softly shapes preferences of the masses. Institutions such as the British Council must therefore be considered for their interactions on a mass scale. The sheer number of people who are influenced (often unknowingly) by the activities of the council, represents the diffusive effect of cultural institutions in wielding their soft power.

Despite the use of an institutional case study, it remains vital to reflect on the transition between state and institutions as dominant sources of power, to the gradual recognition of power within of civil society. This transition mirrors Bauman's concept of modernity, the melting of solids to liquidity which he states is the "permanent feature of modernity". He claims that the melting of solids has expanded beyond its purely scientific meaning and has above all, been redirected towards a new target. According to Bauman, one of the most significant effects of that redirection is the "dissolution of forces which could keep the question of order and system on the political agenda" (Bauman, 2000, p.6). Thus, one can perhaps draw parallels between the academic shift towards notions of modernity and the political shift between hard and soft power during the 19th and 20th Centuries. Furthermore, the metaphors of fluidity and liquidity provide appropriate means of grasping an understanding of the present by evoking notions of mobility, which in turn contribute to a dissolution of forces and a breakdown of orders and systems.

> "Fluids travel easily. They 'flow', 'spill', 'run out', 'splash', 'pour', 'leak',
> 'flood', 'spray', 'drip', 'seep', 'ooze'; unlike solids, they are not easily stopped –

they pass around some obstacles, dissolve some others… The extraordinary mobility of fluids is what associates them with the idea of lightness (Bauman, 2000, p.2).

The rise of modernity therefore coincides with the increasing concern of soft power within political and institutional structures. Power has shifted from "system to society, from politics to life policies" or has "descended from the macro to the micro level of social cohabitation" (Bauman, 2000, p.7). This not only reinforces the increasing role of civil society, but also the significance of the role of the individual in power relationships. Consequently, it is essential for the purpose of this thesis to reflect on the relationship between the individual and the institution and the diffusive effect of said relationship.

It is perhaps impossible to begin discussing both politics and culture without acknowledging the work of Raymond Williams and his focus on the politics of cultural practice. In the publication *Resources Hope*, Williams begins by making the claim that "culture is ordinary, in every society and every mind" (Williams, 1989, p.4), thus democratizing the notion of culture and asserting that it is a resource for the masses, not the few. This concept of a common culture is developed further through the distinction between two opposing meanings of culture, the very nature of culture is both traditional and creative. On the one hand there is a series of common meanings that together can be used to describe a whole way of life of a group of people, on the other hand, the term is also used to refer to the new interpretations and the process of creative discovery of individuals (Williams, 1989, p.4). Each society is therefore constructed of common meanings which are then re-defined and re-conceptualized within the mind of each individual. As a result, it is vital to consider the instrumental use of culture and tradition by institutions such as the British Council, as a means of communicating soft power narratives. Furthermore, it is equally important to acknowledge the creative aspect of culture as said narratives are re-interpreted by individuals to produce multiple truths.

Despite the fact that culture is ordinary, Raymond Williams does however argue that when it comes to culture, Western societies tend to fail to practice what they preach and omit their supposed democratic values (Williams, 1989, p.x). He refers to the fact that the "organization of present mass culture is very closely linked with the organisation of capitalist society" (Williams, 1989, p.17) therefore suggesting that one cannot separate the concept of culture from that of power. His essays analyse several specific cases and institutions in the UK

including the Arts Council which is fundamentally a state department and as such, unable to become a public democratic body. Despite the lack of democracy, Williams argues that there is a social need for freedom in arts (Williams, 1989, p.46). According to Williams, the need for many voices, narratives and stories reflects the cultural health of any complex society yet ironically, "freedom in our society is the ability to say anything you wish, provided you can say it profitably" (Williams, 1989, p.89). One can therefore assume that culture is irrevocably linked to capital and consequently power. The battle for influence between cultural institutions and creative individuals is inevitably complex and struggle between these entities is fundamental to the way in which culture is manifested throughout society, yet the two must coexist in order to achieve balance, ergo the future of one cannot be considered without the other. This argument is developed further by the claim that the power of money is becoming ever more influential in imposing specific powerful patterns of communication (Williams, 1989, p.19). As cultural messages are transmitted over the various means of communication, they are open to re-interpretation, analysis and change. The plurality of culture is highlighted once more as prescribed messages are subjected to individual assessment and thus contribute to the overall effect of molding a dynamic, living and breathing cultural force. Power of an institution can therefore be argued to rest in the ability to convey several messages across various communication channels, thus allowing concepts to be rejected, recreated and adapted to suit multiple individuals.

The topic proposed for the purpose of this thesis therefore leads to the development of several questions which guide the research. Firstly, it is fundamental to consider in what way do institutions such as the British Council set the agenda around culture and politics. Not only this but, as power is being diffused away from the hands of governments and into the realm of civil society, how do cultural institutions through their policy making and cultural activity act as a go between the macro and micro levels of social cohabitation? What are the effects of top down (state-institution-individual) and bottom up (individual-institution-state) interactions and how do these contribute to the production of multiple narratives? Not only this but, how do said narratives contribute to the broader political agenda? Furthermore, during periods of socio-political disruption (in this case between June 2016 and March 2019), how do cultural institutions contribute to the re-construction, re-definition and re-establishment of cultural identities, values and policies, and to what extent is paradox and plurality a strength when navigating fractured landscapes?

The research is grounded within principle methodologies of cultural studies as it takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of culture and ergo, cultural institutions. It incorporates key elements of different methods used within the humanities, and consciously blurs the boundaries between these methods. Cultural Studies as an academic subject was born out of a wide variety of approaches to the study of culture. Thus, this methodology for the purpose of this thesis, follows this tradition. Furthermore, it demonstrates a "consciousness of borders and gaps which could no longer be ignored in the cultural context of social and political power struggles" (Asmann, 2012, p.22), by attempting to analyse and take into consideration the various levels of interaction between state, institution and individuals.

The primary purpose of this research is to examine discourse created and communicated by the British Council as narratives of soft power, and as such, it seems logical to first ground the methodology within Lilie Chouliaraki's concept of reflexive "Discourse Analysis" as described in *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis* and published online by LSE. As defined in the text, discourse analysis is the process of analyzing culture "from within" and therefore "refers precisely to the capacity of meaning-making resources to constitute social reality" (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.1). Consequently, one of the principle areas of focus for discourse analysis is language. Chouliaraki refers to Foucault and his work on power / knowledge relations, stating that the "Foucauldian concept of discourse sets up a constitutive relationship between meaning and power in social practice" (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.1). Discourse analysis as a practice of cultural studies therefore claims that through "engaging with texts, that is to say practical forms of language use", it inevitably deals with issues of power. The discourse analysis for the purpose of this research, therefore implicates an engagement with British Council policy documents and publications as means of communication and creating meaning. The study of language suggests that meaning, rather than being a constant between the "human mind and external objects, is in fact "inherently unstable and contingent upon the social rules of human interaction (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.4). Thus, the analysis of the language used through official means of communication, not only permits an exploration of the "relationships and practices within which discourse is produced" by the British Council (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.1), but also reflects the plurality and complexity of interactions between institutions and individuals. Chouliaraki states that

"Foucault thinks of discourse as a productive technology of social practice, which subjects people to forms of power, while at the same time providing them with spaces of agency and possibilities for action" (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.1), thus illustrating the adequacy of discourse analysis as a research method for topics that focus on multiple layers of social interaction and power struggles between various social actors.

Another primary methodology incorporated into this research is the concept of ethnography as interviews with British Council and British Embassy professionals are collected and transcribed for the purpose of data production and analysis. Furthermore, the collection of policy documents and texts produced by the council reflects and intensely ethnographic approach, as choices are made with regards to which texts, interviews and conversations are included. In keeping with ethnographic method, the analysis of the material collected does not "involve a strict indexing or coding procedure" as this is likely to neglect the "interactive temporal nature of their (inter)textual and narrative structures" (Fabian & Rooji, 2008, p.623). Instead, the analysis takes a less classical approach to the analysis of discourse, in an attempt to more accurately depict the plurality and multiplicity of messages produced through discourse.

Finally, the research for the purpose of this thesis is embedded within the notion of 'case study' as a method of analysis. As Lauren Berlant states in the text *On the Case,* "it is a genre that organizes singularities into exemplary, intelligible patterns, enmeshing realist claims" (Berlant, 2007, p.670) thus indicating the usefulness of the case as a means of demonstrating concrete examples which support wider claims. The British Council as a case study is therefore used as an example of a cultural institution which actively contributes to a nation's soft power. Furthermore, it's activity between 2016 and 2019 is indicative of the ways in which cultural institutions navigate periods of social disruption and provide important points of reference as creators and communicators of soft power narratives.

Chapter 1: An Introduction to Soft Power

1.1 Defining Soft Power

As previously mentioned, the term Soft Power as coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980's, refers to the ability of a nation to achieve their desired outcome through the power of attraction rather than coercion (Nye, 2004 p.x). The concept of Soft Power is firmly grounded in the notion of attractive power, most significantly its diffusive quality allows influence to be exercised almost seductively across nations and cultures. Nye, in the book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, states that there are several meanings of the word power however, its most general meaning is essentially "getting people to do what you want" (Nye, 2004, p.2). He acknowledges the fact that there are several means of going about it and that even within the concept of soft power, there are several different sources which can be actively engaged to exercise power. The three principle sources according to Nye are the following; culture, political values and foreign policies. Together, these elements create a network of parallel narratives which when perceived for their overall effect, can prove to be extremely successful in setting agendas. In order to analyse the soft power of the British Council it is therefore necessary to focus on the way in which the institution engages with society through Nye's three sources.

Contradictory to hard power, soft power cannot be attributed to a specific time, event or decision and as such is not a constant but rather a variable resource (Nye, 2004 p. 44). This fluidity represents a challenge for governments and institutions as Soft Power is something which is not easily controlled and therefore not always smoothly employed as a means for conducting international politics. Thus, despite the extensive list of soft power resources, mobilising it proves to be a problem for governments as it's liquid nature and vehicles of transmission are inherently intangible. Literature, culture, heritage, television, artists, language and intellectual thinkers are all means through which soft power can be exercised, yet the state plays very little part in the creation of content within these sectors nor can it be said to have total control over them. In fact, Nye claims that in a "liberal society, government cannot and should not control" culture (Nye, 2004, p.17). As a result, soft power is largely generated through interactions within civil society and only a few vehicles are in fact within the hands of the state. It must therefore be recognised that mobilising soft power is a difficult challenge for governments as the large majority of resources lie outside their direct control.

Consequently, institutions such as the British Council must be considered for their strategic placement between state and society, often acting as a mediator of culture between the two.

Furthermore, it is important to note that soft power is extremely susceptible to collateral damage from external agents. It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that there is a hard/soft power continuum at play and that progress in the realm of soft power can easily "backfire if the state fails to take into account interplay with other more assertive external policies" (C.Hill & S. Beadle, 2014, p.7). While hard power is generally perceived as negative within the international domain, soft power is on the contrary largely positive due to its "self-styled character as a civilian and normative power" (C.Hill & S. Beadle, 2014, p.17). Thus, the positive effect of individual initiatives of soft power can easily be canceled out by other factors. Initiatives of soft power should therefore perhaps be assessed within the system of relations in which they operate rather than their individual level of success or effect. Not only this but, the status of cultural institutions as instruments of the state must be carefully considered for their potentially biased and heavily politicized agendas.

Furthermore, soft power and its effectiveness as a method for diplomacy not only relies heavily on the notion of legitimacy of a nation's values and beliefs, but also the way in which these ideas are conveyed. Consequently, it is dependent on a system of sending and receiving messages. Each message is interpreted differently by individuals in different contexts, thus soft power is complex and unpredictable. As it is not clear "who will be attracted by what", there is no universalization of messages or perceptions of a nation's soft power (C.Hill & S. Beadle, 2014, p.14). The clashes between these contradicting facets are in fact fundamental in characterising the plurality of soft power and the way in which it creates multiple cultural narratives. Nye summarises the way this is done by stating the following:

> "In the case of soft power, the question is what messages are sent and received by whom under which circumstances, and how that affects our ability to obtain the outcomes we want. Messages and images are conveyed partly by government policies at home and abroad, and partly by popular and higher culture. But the same messages are downloaded and interpreted with different effects by different receivers in different settings" (Nye, 2004, p.44).

Therefore, Nye suggests that soft power is characterised by its ability to mean different things to different people. Rather than limiting the potential of soft power as a vehicle for influence, this in fact enhances its network. It could be argued that it is the very adaptable, fluid and

unpredictable nature of soft power which makes it an integral means of navigating complex, fractured socio-cultural landscapes. Nye proceeds to state the following:

> "By definition, soft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want, and that requires understanding how they are hearing your messages, and fine tuning accordingly" (Nye, 2004, p.111).

Consequently, the self-reflective characteristic of soft power implies that there is a curation of said messages. Despite the fluid and uncontrollable nature, it can be harnessed and exercised through trial and error, thus producing a contrived discourse, one which is aligned with the agendas of the institutions that curate it.

The sheer variety of means through which soft power can be employed leads to "running the risk of defining soft power as everything and nothing" (C.Hill & S. Beadle, 2014, p.21). The culture sector alone has several subsections such as food, film, music, art etc. It has therefore been suggested that vehicles of soft power be divided into two main categories, general societal ones (culture, heritage, language, education & socio-cultural institutions etc.) and state ones (political values, diplomacy, monarchy etc), (C.Hill & S. Beadle, 2014, p.22). In the case of the British Council it is important to acknowledge its interaction with not only general societal vehicles but also state ones as the council is largely funded by the UK government. It is however significant to note that not all soft power initiatives are government initiatives or government funded. Soft power is in fact rooted in civil society and perhaps this is the unique quality which allows it to be successful in its achievements. It is therefore fundamental that those engaged in socio-cultural activities in all levels of society recognize the fact that they are to some extent representative of their country's values and that they contribute to the network of soft power initiatives which are cross culturally transmitted. This thesis therefore analyses the case study of the British Council as not only an instrument of the state, but as a resource of the several individuals who interact with the council on a daily basis. It considers the activity of the council within the broader societal framework and acknowledges the cultural experiences facilitated by the council as a means of soft power, located within a broad network of relationships which combine both state and individual acts of agency.

It is perhaps vital to recognise that soft power has long been a term of considerable debate due to its problematic characteristics. To add to the list of issues surrounding the concept, is

the fact that it is extremely subjective with little or no means of measuring through quantitative data. Indicators such as numbers of cultural missions, audience numbers and international ratings appear to be largely unsatisfactory as they fail to address the multiple layers of relationships and the plural characteristic which is unique to soft power. Consequently, it has been argued that the analysis of a nation's soft power is "best done through a qualitative focus on the structural assets" of a given country (C.Hill & S. Beadle, 2014, p.12). The insight provided into the intricacy of the British Council's soft power relations must therefore be done through an approach which permits the acknowledgement of exceptions and details that may otherwise be overlooked through a purely quantitative approach.

1.2 Culture as a Resource of Administration & Policy

It is not only the task of defining the concept of "Soft Power" and its principle characteristics which poses a problem for analysis. A further dilemma is that it is in fact, a notion which traditionally has been regarded as extremely difficult to translate into official policy. As previously mentioned, much of soft power originates within civil society, making the task of effectively harnessing it through government policies increasingly more difficult.

Tony Bennett in his text, Putting Policy into Cultural Studies, highlights the fact that typically, the tendency within academic circles was to separate policy studies and cultural studies, placing them on opposite ends of the discursive grid however, more recently there has been a shift towards "an interface between pragmatically oriented theoretical tendencies" and "existing policy agendas" (Bennett, 1993, p.481). Not only this, Bennett addresses the fact that historically there has been a tendency to perceive "cultural policy studies" from a top down approach rather than a bottom up one. This perspective is in favour of a study that focuses primarily on governmental practices and as such, dismisses the community practices which occur within the social body. In contradiction to both these historical perspectives, Bennett aims to stress the "two-way nature" of traffic between cultural criticism and policy processes and thus, bridge the gap between state and community. Furthermore, he refers to theoretician O'Regan and supports the belief that cultural criticism and discourse, shifts the "discursive grounds on which policy options are posed and resolved" (Bennett, 1993, p.483), therefore suggesting that the two fields of study inevitably inform and influence one another.

Bennett further develops his argument to claim that the politicization of culture emerges from the activities which have been "instrumentally fashioned as a consequence of their governmental deployment for specific social, cultural or political ends" (Bennett, 1993, p.485), thus proposing a modification of the functioning of culture in society through a variety of technical adjustments. It is therefore essential for the purpose of this thesis to acknowledge technical adjustments within cultural institutions, namely the British Council, to further understand the way in which the two-way traffic between culture and policy serves to create and foster community knowledge, as well as provide resources through which it can operate in a structured and organized manner.

One of the technical adjustments Bennett refers to is the modification of the functioning of museums, transforming them into cases of "radical political engagement" and "instruments of community empowerment and dialogue". This changing functioning of museums and as a consequence, the "measurement of arts as culture in relation to political ambitions", has been argued by several cultural critics including John Tusa, the Managing Director of the Barbican, to impose a distance which removes museums from their true nature (Selwood.S, 2015, p.45). Bennett however, perceives this as a positive rather than a negative and states that this shift:

> "fundamentally reconnects them to a new form of government program and does so - as any effective engagement with the sphere of culture must - precisely by tinkering with the routines and practices through which they operate" (Bennett, 1993, p.485)

Thus, Bennett presents the contemporary role of museums as productive instruments through which community is shaped and identity is shared. The notion of technical adjustments and their role in the productive nature of power will be further significant for the development of this thesis, as notions of placemaking and identity are considered within the parameters of soft power narratives. Arguably museums are not the only institutions which have undergone significant technical adjustments in order to create politicized narratives.

Furthermore, Nye states that "It is easier to trace specific effects of high cultural contacts than to demonstrate the political importance of popular culture" (Nye, 2004, p.46) therefore, there is a conflict between the different levels of culture and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluating each. Consequently, the implication of this is that perhaps high culture has

had more precedence within academic discourse as it is typically more easily traced. As previously mentioned, this poses a problem for the analysis of soft power which is largely produced within civil society and consequently has a diffusive, intangible effect. However, Bennett's later text, *Making Culture, Changing Society*, offers a solution to this issue through Cultural Studies by providing an account of the way in which culture is produced and understood as "a specific form of public organisation" (Bennett, 2007, p.610). He refers to Actor Network Theory and the displacement between different levels of reality, addressing the heterogeneous nature of the various networks that produce culture. Not only this, Bennett acknowledges a need to assert values of equivalence between all types of culture and to apply similar methodologies when analysing both high and low culture. Bennett highlights the paradoxical nature of cultural relationships by stating the following:

> "Yet it is also the case that it is precisely from within the practices of government that 'community' acquires this paradoxical value of something that is both to be nurtured into existence by government while at the same time standing opposed to it as its antithesis" (Bennett, 1993, p.490)".

It is therefore fundamental (despite the fact that the concept of soft power has been criticized for its difficulty in translating directly into government policy), that the notions of culture and political policy are not polarised on opposite ends of the discursive spectrum. An analysis of any one of these fields must acknowledge the fact that there are patterns of interactions between the two, and that in order to achieve progress in one, it may be necessary to work through the other. In relation to the concept of soft power, it is therefore integral to analyse the interrelationships between state initiatives, institutional initiatives as well as the common cultural practices of individuals, in order to provide a balanced perspective on the way in which these entities are informed and inform each other. As such this thesis aims to stress the complexity of the system of relations and two-way traffic between these entities.

To quote the title of Peter Osborne's article it is therefore inevitable that "Whoever Speaks of Culture Speaks of Administration As Well" (Osborne, 2006). Osborne's article re-visits existing cultural theoretical ideas in light of "the growth in the deployment of 'culture' as a political and administrative resource – as if the gap between thinking and administration could somehow be reflexively redeemed" (Osborne, 2006, p.34). Thus, he too highlights the fact that traditionally there has been a tendency to perceive cultural thinking and policy as polar opposites. The transition between cultural thinking and policy reflects the increased

"notion of culture as a resource" which inevitably "entails management" (Yudice, 2003, p.4). Not only this but, George Yudice in his book *The Expediency of Culture*, argues that there has been a "transformation in what we understand by the notion of culture and what we do in its name" (Yudice, 2003, p10). Consequently, he suggests that our conception of culture has change and that the academy in recent years has "turned to managerial professionals" who bridge the gap between thinking and policy (Yudice, 2003. p.13). Literature in the humanities and arts therefore strongly proposes a significant shift in the way in which culture has been employed as a tactic. The changing functioning of culture in society towards what Osborne describes as a new form of metaculture (in which culture is perceived as a resource), refers to an expansion to the conception of culture whereby the cultural economy is also the political economy (Yudice, 2003, p.17). The term cultural economy is defined by Yudice as the following:

> "Artistic trends such as multiculturalism that emphasize social justice (perhaps understood no more broadly than equal visual representation in public spheres) and initiatives to promote sociopolitical and economic utility have been fused into the notion of what I call the 'cultural economy' and what Blair's New Labourite rhetoric dubbed the 'creative economy'. Also marketed at home and to the world as 'cool Britannia', this creative economy includes a sociopolitical agenda, particularly the protagonism of multi-culturalism as embodied in the work of the so-called young British artists, as well as an economic agenda, that is, the belief that the creativity provided by this new generation transformed London into 'the creative hub for trends in music, fashion, art and design'". (Yudice, 2003, p.16)

Thus, agendas of sociopolitical and economic utility have merged consequently making the notion and practice of culture as a resource extremely complex, situating it at the intersection of several social, political and economic issues.

As presented by theorist Peter Osborne, Horkheimer and Adorno both published literatures giving accounts of the "social and conceptual conditions that made increasing use of culture as a resource possible" (Osborne, 2006, p. 42). Not only this, Yudice states that "the culturalization of the economy has not occurred naturally" but has been constructed and "carefully coordinated via agreements" (Yudice, 2003, p.17). Thus, theorists have not only acknowledged a series of societal conditions which have permitted the changing functioning of culture to occur, they have also recognized the fact that this change has been intentionally brought about. The use of culture as a resource is a tactical move employed by state and institutions, making it impossible to consider the two as separate entities. According to

Yudice, common culture, shared as an ensemble of ideas and values, is "mobilized for political ends" and this leads to the receding importance of the content of culture, "the result is that politics trumps the content of culture" (Yudice, 2003, p.23). The resourceful use of culture which focusses primarily upon its utility in society, can therefore be argued to have led to a dissolution of the content of cultural activity and initiatives. While this thought is quite negative in its suggestion that culture is perhaps no longer valued nor understood, it is in fact not the case. The value of culture, similar to its function, has changed, and this transformation has enabled the concept of culture acquire new power. Yudice emphasizes this new power by stating the following:

> "The anthropological turn in the conceptualization of the arts and society is consistent with what might be cultural power – my term for the extension of biopower in the age of globalization – and is also one of the main reasons cultural policy has become a visible factor in rethinking collective arrangements."
> (Yudice, 2003, p.25)

The tactical use of culture therefore brings about new relationships and interactions between cultural practice and society, all of which are increasingly embedded with multiple layers of economic, social and political meanings. This changing function re-positions culture at a junction of overlapping and often contradictory ideas. Culture as a resource therefore needs to be approached from a holistic perspective, one which is capable of taking into consideration the intricacies and paradoxical nature of cultural relations.

1.3 Standing Out vs Reaching Out

The use of culture within its new contextualization of utility and function has not merely occurred within the UK, but has also had an impact on the UK's relationships with its international partners. A report conducted by Kings College London titled *The Art of Soft Power: A Study of cultural diplomacy at the UN office in Geneva,* reflects on the way in which art and culture have long been used as instruments of diplomacy in order to bridge gaps and promote understanding between nations.
The report presents a heuristic device as a method of approaching the difficulty of understanding both the inwards and outwards characteristics of activities carried out by cultural institutions. It begins by highlighting the fact that the terms 'soft power' and 'cultural diplomacy' have been used interchangeably by both politicians and academics, consequently

blurring the boundaries of meaning between the two. As a result, the report proposes two categories in which activities can be placed, 'Standing Out' and 'Reaching Out'. The categories are defined as the following:

> "'Standing Out' relates to countries wanting to differentiate themselves. This is often through acts of leadership and displays of power, but can also be about shoring up authority, exerting influence over decision-making, increasing visibility or grabbing attention, and even foregrounding national values. This neatly maps onto the common understanding of soft power. 'Reaching Out' is about displaying unity with others, building political solidarity, bringing countries closer together and sometimes acting as a bridge between other parties. This is almost shorthand for Cultural Diplomacy" (Doeser & Nisbitt, 2017, p.14).

Thus, despite the fact that the terms 'soft power' and 'cultural diplomacy' are often fused together, there appears to be a distinctive difference in the way in which they are implemented, ergo, operate within institutions. This heuristic framework provides a useful system through which the motive of initiatives can be identified and understood within their broader global context. Despite this distinction however, the overlapping and contested terms of 'soft power' and 'cultural diplomacy' come hand in hand. As stated by the report,

> "The rhetorical labels of 'reaching out' and 'standing out' form an initial heuristic device to consider the concepts of Cultural Diplomacy or Soft Power. Characteristic of 'standing out' is the notion of competition through national projection, whilst at same time, the multilateral nature of business at the UN demands collaboration. There is a delicate balancing act to be navigated in order to simultaneously compete and cooperate. On one hand, these dual notions of competition and cooperation are at odds. The world is not a compatible and harmonious community of nations. Many would argue that cooperation and competition are not complementary aspects of global order but opposing forces. Yet surely successful strategies for tackling human rights abuses or developing meaningful solutions to global public health challenges need both leadership and collaboration" (Doeser & Nisbitt, 2017, p.14).

The report's findings therefore dictate a need for both terms and ergo, both types of activity to be used interchangeably. The blurry nature of the two concepts is a precise balancing act and both notions work together to complement each other. Soft power is therefore not a concept which can be isolated and analysed, but must be considered in relation to cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, the relationship and equilibrium between the two is fundamental to achieving success. This heuristic device enables us to question this balance, examining

whether the narratives created and communicated during periods of fractured landscapes, are predominantly ones of 'Standing Out' or 'Reaching Out'. Furthermore, it is the precise fact that one cannot exist without the other, that the complex relationship between institution and state must be discussed. Soft power depends on the notion of cultural diplomacy and vice versa. The concept of diplomacy is embedded within contextual references to foreign policy and international relations, hence making it impossible to distance any kind of analysis from the interference and influence of the government. Despite this fusion between the two, it is however important to highlight that the distinction is necessary. Tim Rivera argues in his text, *Distinguishing Cultural Relations from Cultural Diplomacy: The British Council's Relationship with Her Majesty's Government,* that the British Council's role has typically been one of cultural relations and not diplomacy. Diplomacy implies an officialization of activity which is heavily embedded within the practice of government. Cultural Relations, on the other hand, is perceived as independent, and is defined as "the mutual exchange of culture between peoples to develop long-term relationships, trust, and understanding for the purpose of generating genuine goodwill and influence abroad" (Rivera, 2015, p.11). Thus, it is essential for the effectiveness of cultural relations that it remains separate from government and is externally perceived as an authentic exchange between entities. Rivera states that,

> "The British Council itself has expressed that government has only a peripheral and indirect role to play in "creating the conditions for cultural exchange to flourish." Government can financially support cultural relations so long as those activities remain free of political influence and independent of foreign policy objectives. Cultural relations can support the 'national interest,' but any such support would only be an indirect byproduct of the trust, understanding, and relationships developed through cultural relations" (Rivera, 2015, p. 11)

The distinction between the two concepts is therefore vital for the sake of external appearances, masking initiatives of the British Council as independent and authentic relationships and hence, providing a sense of security through trust. The fact however, that the terms and the concepts are actively confused in academic and political discourse, suggests that they are in fact two sides of the same coin, working towards the same objective, merely promoted under different names as a marketing tactic. It is therefore important for the purpose of this thesis to use the heuristic device as a means of analyzing British Council specific activities, in order to understand the relationship the council has with the state, and the way in which it communicates this relationship. The performative aspect of the British Council and its activity is further significant in the way in which messages are presented.

Furthermore, the confusion and disagreement within academia regarding the positioning of soft power and cultural diplomacy within politics "signals the need for multi- and interdisciplinary approach" when analyzing these phenomena in order to provide a "more realistic (and thereby more complex) understanding" (Doeser & Nisbitt, 2017, p.32). Thus, the interview with the British Embassy in Portugal for the purpose of this research, combined with other methodologies, will be fundamental in understanding and analyzing the interchangeable relationship and patterns of interaction between the notions of soft power and cultural diplomacy, and their current political position.

1.4 The Current State of Britain's Soft Power

The UK's government can consider itself fortunate in the fact that the country has amassed a wide range of institutions and relationships in the areas of politics, economics, science and culture, over an extended period of time (House of Lords, 2014, p.6). The Select Committee of soft power was formed in May 2013 for the period of a year as an attempt to analyse the use of soft power in British politics (House of Lords, 2014, p.23). The temporary committee claims in its 2014 report that the UK is in fact a leading global player in its use of soft power however, it warns against the blind almost absent acquisition of soft power resources (House of Lords, 2014, p.6) which appears to have been the strategy until now. Evidence from the report calls for the start of the use of 'smart power', a combination of hard and soft power to "project and gain influence in a fast changing world" (House of Lords, 2014, p.5). It is argued that soft power has therefore been an untapped dimension of political affairs however, more recently it has been consciously activated by government and institutions in an attempt to achieve advancement on the global stage. It is this activation of soft power which the committee coins as the beginning of the use of 'smart power'.

There have been two major political power shifts which can be considered reasons for the recent activation of soft power in British political strategy. The first of which, is transfer of power from West to East as emerging economies such as China occupy "increasingly prominent roles" on the international stage. Secondly, there has been a gradual "diffusion of power away from states towards civil society", meaning there are several more actors and players producing new networks and blurring boundaries (C.Hill & S.Beadle, 2014, p.14). Soft power has therefore become increasingly activated within state policy as a reaction to

radical global changes in the balances of power. Contemporary global politics are confronted with several new challenges such as the increasing empowerment of individuals within the information age, the rise of the rest and growing competition with other nations presenting themselves as candidates for leading global powers. In the age of hyperconnectivity, power is now gradually being diffused away from the hands of governments and into the reach of multiple others (House of Lords, 2014, p.27). Thus, the historical perspective of the development of soft power suggests that the conscious activation of soft power is a response to oncoming threats and changing dynamics on the global political stage.

One of the ways in which culture as a means of soft power has become activated is through its rising visibility within the political arena. This has not however, come about without creating a new set of problems. The "wooly" language which surrounds arts policies hides the fact that several soft power projects are not actually proved to have worked (Mirza, 2006. p.17). As previously mentioned in this thesis, there is one fundamental difficulty with the use of culture as a means of power, the difficulty of measuring the unmeasurable. As governments invest increasingly more money into culture as a means of power, there are growing demands to justify, measure and evaluate the outcomes in order to prove that there is a concrete return on investment. Previously, art and culture have been argued to hold a transformative power which enables politicians to make positive changes to society (Mirza, 2006, p.18). This claim however, comes under ever more scrutiny as the pressure for results mounts. In order to combat this, culture has been attached to what can be considered more worthy causes in government policy (Belfiore, 2006, p.21), most notably social development projects in which art and culture is promoted as the vehicle through which transformation occurs. Thus, as Munira Mirza argues in The Therapeutic State,

> "Arts policy today is directed towards social and economic goals, not only as a
> result of economic pressures, but also of broader cultural attitudes towards the
> arts and politics. In this sense we need to consider a parallel narrative about the
> rise of emotional politics and the role of arts" (Mirza, 2005, p.262).

Mirza argues that the UK government has therefore shifted and re-structured itself around the emotional needs of its citizens. Combined with the development of the academic field of cultural studies in the 1970's, she claims that creativity began to be perceived as fundamental to the "relationship between individual and society" and as such a new "therapeutic ethos

emerged" (Mirza, 2005, p.265 & 266), changing the way in which relations between the individual, social, private and public were experienced. Mirza elaborates her argument further by claiming the following:

> "Since 1997, the Arts Council and arts sector has become invigorated with a new sense of purpose in a world where therapeutic ideas have become dominant. It has institutionalised thinking around the social and political emotion in the arts, and its relationship with artists, campaigners and other government departments is concerned with issues of access, diversity, empowerment and inclusion" (Mirza, 2005, p.269).

This therapeutic ideology surrounding arts and cultural policies will be significant to the analysis of the British Council's current policies and agenda which focusses predominantly on issues of access and inclusion. Furthermore, the therapeutic phenomenon emphasizes the increasing importance of the individual in society, hence questioning the value of soft power initiatives in defining both a sense of place and person during periods of political, economic and societal instability, as landscapes fracture and while institutions and individuals strive to re-establish themselves and their discourse.

It is therefore fundamental when analysing Britain's current soft power initiatives and resources, to consider the broad set of contextual particularities in which they are framed. Referring back to Baillie Card´s chapter in the book, *Cities, Museums and Soft Power*, the UK is currently operating inside what the author refers to as a "knowledge economy" where contextual intelligence (the ability to adapt strategies to new contexts), is vital to the success and effectiveness of initiatives (B.Card,2015, p.62). An example of this contextual intelligence is further put forward and analysed by the author through the presentation of "The Knowledge Quarter" project, "a consortium of organizations" such as The British Library, The British Museum etc, in London, which was "developed to connect all public and private organizations that create and disseminate knowledge within a roughly one-mile radius of Kings Cross" (B.Card,2015, p.60 & 61). The primary purpose of the initiative is to foster collaboration between member organizations in the hope that by pulling together and sharing resources, they can achieve more and thus, exercise a greater influence. The theorist argues the following:

> "By combining forces, KQ members not only magnify their influence, but also change the terms of the national conversation around arts and culture to explicitly

embed it in discussions of the knowledge economy. Following Nye, this exhibits
a core form of soft power, which is the ability to achieve desired ends by
'framing the agenda'" (B.Card,2015, p.62).

British institutions therefore appear to be consciously working together to align their messages, communications and discourse in order to set the broader socio-political agenda. By doing so, they are not merely transmitting one message, but rather they are emitting several versions of the same message through a variety of different channels and under various different institutional brands. British organizations are therefore acting within the context of their contemporary environment. To refer back to Nye, "power always depends on the context in which the relationship exists" (Nye, 2004, p.2). By deliberately considering the current challenges and socio-political context and by clustering together, knowledge organizations are far more significant in defining the parameters in which discourse operates. It is therefore fundamental for the purpose of this research to reflect upon the British Council's external relationships with other institutions.

In conclusion, the UK is currently at the beginning of a period in which soft power is being consciously activated by government and institutions in an effort to mold the discourse surrounding arts and culture and as such, transmit prescribed messages which are aligned with the broader political goals of the nation. Current strategy therefore appears to be increasingly focused on the curation and communication of specific narratives as the state grapples for control over the way in which British stories are told and exposed abroad. Furthermore, strategies are grounded within principles of co-collaboration in order to enhance the influence of said narratives. The wide array of messages being communicated in parallel to one and another serves to set the agenda of international discourse. As argued by Vuyk in the article *The Arts as an Instrument*:

> "Art influences greatly what gets attention and what does not, who may speak,
> who has to be silent, what is spoken about, what is visible and to whom, and so
> on" (Vuyk, 2010, p.178).

Consequently, by collaborating, it can be argued that institutions in fact set this cultural agenda through their shared agenda, hence shared cultural discourse. The British Council must therefore be considered its individual agenda, as well as the ones it shares with other cultural institutions. Not only this but, Nye suggests that the countries most likely to be

successful in wielding soft power in the information age are those whose culture and ideas are closer to prevailing norms, whose credibility is enhanced by their policies and who possess multiple channels of communication which serve to frame broader issues (Nye, 2004, P.31 & 32). The UK has a wide range of cultural soft power resources currently at its disposal. These resources include a wide range of cultural experiences (expressed through industries such as music, film and literature), education (in which the UK is generally considered a leading player and which has a large international impact), language (largely due to the fact that English is the most predominant language) and socio-cultural institutions which have a global reach such as the BBC and British Council. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the British Council does not work in isolation, but is part of a broader network of British institutions, producing and communicating messages which contribute to the external perception of the nation.

Chapter 2: The Individual, The Institution & The State

2.1 Formation, Values & Mission

It is perhaps impossible to begin analyzing the British Council as a vehicle for soft power initiatives, without first acknowledging the historical context in which it was founded and the fundamental values which continue to guide its mission. The Council was originally formed in 1934 and the first overseas offices opened in 1938, making the British Council the oldest cultural relations agency in the world. The aim for the council in 1940-41, as stated on the official website, was the following:

> "to create in a country overseas a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding of the people of this country, of their philosophy and way of life, which will lead to a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy, whatever for the moment that policy may be and from whatever political conviction it may spring."

Thus, the existence of the British Council has, since its birth, been an exercise of soft power by the British government (one which has tried to gain political favour abroad through the communication of British values and culture, or in other words the philosophy and way of life of British people). At first sight the creation of the Council therefore appears an exercise of promotion and thus 'Standing Out', distancing the Council's principles away from any concrete notion of active political action through cultural diplomacy. The formation of the council is however, fundamentally linked to the notion of cultural diplomacy or the concept of 'Reaching Out' as a means of proactively conducting political business and promoting prosperous relationships, despite the potential strain caused by formal politics and global pressure. The original mission does in fact make a direct connection between foreign policy and the British Council, therefore expressing the inevitably strong link to the state and highlighting the Council's utilitarian function as a political resource. The combination of both 'Standing Out' and 'Reaching Out' and the evident clash in its mission therefore serves to present the council as an unofficial facilitator of relationships as well as an instrumental resource of the government. Thus, it is both independent and dependent upon the state at the same time. The Royal Charter emitted in 1940 sets out the objectives for which the Council exists as the following:

> "[to] advance, for the public benefit, any purpose which is exclusively charitable and which shall

(a) promote cultural relationships and the understanding of different cultures between people and peoples of the United Kingdom and other countries;
(b) promote a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom;
(c) develop a wider knowledge of the English language;
(d) encourage cultural, scientific, technological and other educational cooperation between the United Kingdom and other countries; or
(e) otherwise promote the advancement of education"

The online discourse used to describe the British Council's mission (when broken down into more actionable points), again combines both notions of 'Reaching Out' and 'Standing Out', or 'Cultural Diplomacy' and 'Soft Power'. Point 'a' from the Royal Charter clearly indicates a relational initiative which focusses on the desire to collaborate with other cultures and ergo nations. Thus, it implies the creation of a sense of unity and reflects and action of extension (a reach out) to other people despite cultural differences. Points 'b' and 'c' however, are clearly demonstrative of a 'Standing Out' approach as the discourse forms itself around the concept of cultural promotion and showcasing the best of Britishness. They aim to actively market the UK abroad and create awareness of British culture, policies, values and language. Point 'd' refers back to the notion of collaboration between nations and fostering close relationships which encourage cooperation. It therefore again, harks back to a 'Reaching Out' approach by extending a friendly and welcoming arm out to other nations with the objective of producing positive outcomes for both. Finally point 'e' expresses a 'Standing Out' approach as it highlights the notion of promotion. The discourse communicated online, at first glance, therefore appears to combine both notions of cultural diplomacy and soft power, emphasizing the previous point in Chapter 1: that one cannot exist without the other and that they must be considered as two sides of the same coin, working towards the same overall goal. Consequently, it is the narratives that these two distinctive approaches produce and the ways in which they are used to navigate fractured social and cultural landscapes, that are to be considered simultaneously.

As Nye points out, "effective public diplomacy is a two-way street that involves listening as well as talking. Soft Power rests on some shared values. That is why exchanges are often more effective than mere broadcasting" (Nye, 2004, p.111). It can therefore be deduced that the analysis of the British Council and its founding values are embedded within Nye's notion of effective soft power, a resource which if wielded correctly, combines both the 'Standing Out' and 'Reaching Out' initiatives. The relationship between these two is not however constant and can be adjusted according to the specific needs of the political climate. Thus,

narratives produced and communicated alternate between the opposite ends of the discursive grid depending on the current context. An analysis of British Council narratives between 2016 and 2019 therefore highlights the technical adjustments made in order to shift between a 'Standing Out' and 'Reaching Out' framework according to the political situation. Not only this, these adjustments which create a sort of pully device along the grid, serve a further purpose, to provide the Council with flexibility. This flexible, or to reference Bauman's 'liquid' approach, is fundamental to the success of the Council, permitting it to distance itself from the British government as and when it sees fit.

The British Council operates largely on money generated from teaching and exams. Despite this, it does receive financial support from the FCO and thus is accountable not only to the British government but also to the British taxpayer. As indicated in the 2017/18 annual report produced by the Council, it is a "UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body" therefore immediately implying that the Council serves a higher purpose, one that is beneficial to everyone with whom it works and engages. This is further elaborated in the report through the following claim: "Our work enhances the security, prosperity and influence of the UK and, in so doing, helps make the world a better, safer place." (British Council, 2018, p.4). The moral stance in which the Council is grounded therefore provides the institute with credibility and consequently there appears to be yet another entity to which it is accountable. Mary Douglas in her publication *How Institutions Think,* argues that "the whole process of entrenching a theory is as much social as it is cognitive. Conversely, the entrenching of an institution is essentially an intellectual process as much as an economic and political one" (Douglas, 1986, p.45). In other words, the rise of the British Council was not purely a result of the political situation in 1934 which called for an agency of cultural relations as a means of conducting diplomacy. It was embedded, and continues to this day to be entrenched in a source of social legitimacy and a notion of morality. Douglas continues her argument to state that "to acquire legitimacy, every kind of institution needs a formula that founds its rightness in reason and nature" (Douglas, 1986, p.45). Thus, it stands to reason that the narratives of the Council flit between discourses which relate to the entities to which they are accountable. Hence, the relationship between institute and state is ambiguous.

The fact that the British council is a non-profit organization and that the money generated as a result of its activity is recycled back into the system, to deliver more cultural relations work

(British Council, 2018, p.4), is a reflection of the ambiguity in which it is founded. All of the entities to which it is accountable are intertwined hence the narratives and discourse also being convoluted. In order to make headway in specific areas and to take a stance, the Council therefore has to make some narratives louder than others so that they can be heard above the noise. The increase in volume, hence noise of explicit narratives within specific periods of time, further serves to place the discourse along the discursive grid. To quote Katharine Felton from the British Foreign Office in Lisbon, soft power works through "push and pull" along a grid (Felton, 2019). The volume adjustments are as a result essential to the effectiveness of communication, allowing the Council to portray itself as both independent from the state but equally, an ambassador for the government.

2.2 Creating a Collective British Identity

As previously discussed, the plurality of the institute and the various methods employed to create multiple meanings, is the very characteristic which allows the Council to adapt fluidly and change the perception of its complex relationship with the state. This fluidity and tendency for rapid change does however present a problem when considering the process through which collective cultural identities are produced. Thinking and feeling are generally considered to be activities that occur on an individual level however, the fundamental principle of a shared collective identity relies on a social group's ability to do these things as well (Douglas, 1986, p.16). Given this paradox, how then do institutions such as the British Council create notions of collective identity, particularly when the societal landscape is extremely fractured?

Donald's work titled *The Citizen and the Man About Town* highlights the fact that the problem with the legal status of the citizen, and therefore the official recognition of the individual by the state, is that it "does not feel as though it has anything much to do" with the individual's sense of self (Donald, 1996, p.172). Thus, he forms his argument on the basis that the notion of citizenship is in fact an empty concept, one which lacks substance and is not fixed. Donald's argument is summarized through the following:

> "'the citizen' should be understood in the first instance not as a type of person (whether German nationalist of constitutional patriot) but as a position in the set of formal relations defined by democratic sovereignty. Just as 'I' denotes a

position in a set of linguistic relations, an empty position which makes my unique utterances possible but which can equally be occupied by anyone, so 'the citizen' too denotes an empty place. It too can be occupied by anyone – occupied in the sense of being spoken from, not in the sense of being given a substantial identity" (Donald, 1996, p.174).

The subjective nature of citizenship and the lack of an individual's primordial identity therefore allows identities to be transformed, re-created and re-negotiated depending upon the system of relationships. Not only are the identity of institutions fluid and able to adapt to the current context, the identity of individuals is also entirely flexible. Consequently, Donald suggests that the lack of an original identity "produces the need for identification" and hence provides the demand for a dominant symbolic network (Donald, 1996, p.176).

Douglas' research is vital here as she explicitly aims to explain the "commitment that subordinates individual interests to a larger social whole" (Douglas, 1986, p.18) and therefore focuses on the interaction between the individual and the master signifiers implemented through organization of institution and state. She elaborates further to state that all institutions must be embedded in both notions of "rightness and reason in nature" if they are to have long lasting impact. Furthermore, institutions are born from conventions and "established institutions are able to rest their claims to legitimacy on their fit with the nature of the universe" (Douglas, 1986, p.46). Thus, institutions such as the British Council actively encode information for individuals by using past experience to provide a guide as to what to expect in the future. Douglas states that "the more fully the institutions encode expectations, the more that they put uncertainty under control" (Douglas, 1986, p.48). Institutions which have been able to stand the test of time are therefore founded in nature and in reason. They arise from conventions and establish themselves by logically and rationally implementing reason, thus permitting them to do a lot of thinking on the behalf of individuals (Douglas,1986, p.47).

Given this argument, it stands to reason that the British Council, as the oldest cultural relations institute in the world, has therefore managed to thoroughly entrench itself within these concepts, both at home and abroad, providing it with the legitimacy and power to define sameness, ergo producing a collective British identity. Douglas states that "the intellectual requirements that must be met for social institutions to be stable are matched by social requirements for classification" (Douglas, 1986, p.63). Institutions such as the Council are

therefore likened to theoretical frameworks which embrace objects and confirm sameness between them. The argument is furthered to claim that "sameness is not a quality that can be recognized in things themselves" but is in fact "conferred upon elements within a coherent scheme" (Douglas, 1986, p.59). Thus, institutions bestow sameness through systems of classification which are burdened with political content.

This notion of sameness created by institutions relates directly to the concept of unity which is characteristic of the 'Reaching Out' tactic previously mentioned. The British Council, as a cultural relations agency, often communicates narratives which actively encode notions of sameness and hence unity as a process of mediating cultural relations. Furthermore, by dictating and categorizing society, they create order from chaos, thus navigate uncertainty by creating expectations. One of the primary ways in which the British Council has done this in the current climate of uncertainty is to open up to its partners around the EU and to create spaces for dialogue which enable cultural, political and economic representatives to come together and share their views and experiences (Carvalho, 2019). This immediate reaction from the Council in response to the UK's decision to leave Europe allowed it to create narratives of openness, presenting the Council and by extension Britain, as a nation that despite the political context, one that valued its European counterparts. The four meetings conducted as a response to Brexit highlighted the fact that "there was a huge amount of desire to carry on continuing dialogues" and that in fact there would be significant effort on both the behalf of Britain and Europe, to mitigate the effects of any political outcome on the cultural work between them (Carvalho, 2019). Hence, the Council immediately communicated notions of certainty in a period of uncertainty by asking European partners how important the relationships and work they were doing together was, and by guaranteeing its openness and its continuity. The outcome of these summits was that the Council acknowledged that the way it will work with other European institutions might change, but it provided assurance that the work would continue (Carvalho, 2019). Thus, actions of the Council actively sought to bring together and unify cultural institutes within Europe. Furthermore, it permitted the Council to align its narratives with the rest of Europe. It has "steered away" from creating its own narratives and the narrative of the Council is the same to that of its partners (Carvalho, 2019). Boris Groys in his book *Art Power,* states that "Europe is not just a community of economically defined interests but something more – namely, a champion of certain cultural values" (Groys, 2008, p.173). The Council has therefore consciously aligned itself with

European narratives by actively seeking open dialogue and by 'Reaching Out' to its fellow partners in an effort to unify European cultural dialogues, ergo mitigating risk and uncertainty around culture during a period in which Europe is politically fractured. Furthermore, "Europe ends where its culture ends" (Groys, 2008, p.173) and by confirming sameness between British cultural institutions and other European institutions, the Council embraces all institutions within the same theoretical framework, hence contributing not only to the establishment of a collective British identity, but also a collective European one which to an extent, are one and the same. Moreover, European values are generally thought to "include respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance of the foreign, and openness to other cultures" and by creating discourses of openness and receptiveness to the concerns of other European institutes, the Council mirrors essential European values and counteracts several of the clashing values being voiced by British politics. Groys however also highlights the ironic fact that "the values that are proclaimed to be specifically European values are in fact universalistic" and are actually too general to define any specific cultural identity (Groys, 2008, p.173). The argument can hence be further elaborated to suggest that institutes create narratives which align specific groups of individuals to fundamental humanistic values, unifying institution, individual and primordial human nature shared among the entire social body.

The current political climate surrounding the UK's exit from the European Union, does however present institutions with a fractured cultural landscape which provides an opportunity for the re-construction and re-negotiation of Britain's collective identity. Stuart Hall in his text, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, presents two different ways of approaching the concept of cultural identity. The first of which is grounded in the notion of "one true self" which hides within the individual and is a result of a shared history and ancestry held in common between a group of people (Hall, 1994, p.223). The second is a "matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall, 1994, p.225). It is this second approach which is interesting for the purpose of this research as it enables an analysis of processes which have not yet finished, such as the ongoing process of Brexit. Stuart Hall develops this second approach further by stating the following:

> "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything
> which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being
> eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous

'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1994, p.225).

It can therefore be inferred that cultural identities are constantly changing and that institutions are continuously altering the framework through which notions of representation operate. This notion of 'play' between positions and systems which encode identity, emphasizes the concept of liquidity and movement between altering positions of 'Standing Out' and 'Reaching Out'. We have therefore moved away from perceiving cultural identities as purely unifying concepts and embraced the fact that they also distinguish difference. As a result, identity is not an "already an accomplished fact" but rather a "production which is never complete" (Hall, 1994, p.222). Institutions such as the British Council therefore not only unify, but also actively differentiate in order to create new parameters and positions for cultural narratives, furthering the production of what appears to be collective identities. Cultural identities are "unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture" they are not "an essence but a positioning" (Hall, 1994, p.226), hence emphasizing the fact that narratives, position institutions and individuals along the discursive grid between both unity and difference. Stuart Hall argues that "this second sense of difference challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other additional or supplementary meanings" (Hall, 1994, p.229) thus, institutions such as the British Council play a significant role in incorporating and enveloping new meanings as part of the ongoing process of production.

One of the principle ways in which the British Council has created and communicated narratives which emphasize Britain's difference to the rest of the world, is the technical adjustment it has made to the way in which it deals with and promotes British culture. Horkheimer and Adorno both make the case in their text, *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,* that the cultural industry does the schematizing and that there is nothing left for consumers to classify. Traditionally the Council acted as a curator, selecting what was worthy to go abroad and adapting it to best suit the agenda in a particular region (Carvalho, 2019), hence producing what it deemed as a positive collective British identity and confirming Horkheimer & Adorno's theory. More recently however, this

approach has changed and rather than curating British cultural identity, the Council acts as the interlocutor of connections providing the network to realise cultural activities and initiatives (Carvalho, 2019). The best of British culture from the Council's perspective is therefore no longer the culture itself (that sort of selection is left up to the art market), but the processes through which British culture interacts and impacts society. This is quite a particular approach to culture which differs from most of the other European counterparts as "different countries develop models of public diplomacy suited to their global outlook, capacity and pre-existing profile" (Bound, Briggs, Holden & Jones, 2007, p.27). British institutions' model for soft power is unique in the fact that the instrumental use of culture as a means of developing networks, emphasizes the significance of processes rather than outcomes and operates through a distributed system. "The result is that politics trumps the content of culture" (Yudice, 2003, p.23) and there has been a reduction in the importance of content. Institutes such as the British Council, through their networks, act as the points of suture and provide unstable points of contact through which the various positions of cultural identity come into play. In an interview titled *Culture and Power,* Stuart Hall states the following:

> "Identity is the sum of the (temporary) positions offered by a social discourse in which you are willing for the moment to invest. It is where the psyche is able to invest in a public space, to locate itself in a public discourse, and from there act and speak. It's both a point of enunciation and a point of agency, but it won't be repeated, it won't be the same position that you will take up later on; or at least, it won't be the same position that you have in relation to another discourse" (Hall, 1997, p.33).

It is therefore fruitless to part from the assumption that cultural institutions construct fixed identities. The Council acts as a mediator through which the various cultural positions are produced, constructed and negotiated. The enunciation of current British cultural identity is not the same as it was 10 years ago, nor will it be the same in ten years time. The Council's shift towards operational processes rather than content, not only differentiates it from other European approaches, but also provides significantly more points of discourse production, increasing the quantity of cultural narratives created and communicated and thus, molding a British collective identity which ironically, is constituted of several clashing and opposing elements. This is possible due to the fact that the technical shift negates the notion of one contrived cultural identity, carefully crafted by the Council and permits several contradicting narratives to come into play. These narratives, within the everchanging social and political

context, hustle for positioning. Not only is the collective identity as a whole differentiated from other approaches, within the collective identity there are several elements of differentiation united merely by their use of what may be regarded as British best practice.

Consequently, there is a paradox within the operation of the Council. Its current arm's length approach to the classification and evaluation of British culture serves to produce a perception of the Council as a non-biased entity which facilitates cultural activity. Its emphasis on operational processes rather than cultural content and pure promotion of culture distinguishes its approach from other cultural institutions. Yet, the Council actively seeks to unify itself with other European cultural institutes when it deems it necessary through initiatives which reflect its receptiveness to feedback and the openness of its narratives. The British Council therefore appears to have shifted its position within the realm of "identity politics" by providing points for "exposition and explanation, for dialogue and debate" (Bound, Briggs, Holden & Jones, 2007, p.27).

It would be incorrect to assume that this particular shift is a direct reaction to the Brexit vote. The pure promotion of culture has been slipping from British agendas for some time (Carvalho, 2019). It is a technical strategy that does however currently serve useful when navigating fractured landscapes. Cultural institutions are "active participants in the articulation and communication of our own and other's sense of identity" (Bound, Briggs, Holden & Jones, 2007, p.27) and the increased importance of operational processes has provided the freedom for British identity to relinquish itself from boundaries and restrictions. Thus, British identity is anything and everything, it is undergoing constant de-construction and re-construction within changing parameters. The question posed as a result of the technical shift is therefore no longer what is British identity but rather how does it operate and through which processes? It is therefore the processes of notions of best practice which instill a sense of collective Britishness, rather than the content.

2.3 Creating Collective Cultural Memory

It is impossible to reflect upon the way in which institutions create and embed notions of collective cultural identity within the social body, without also acknowledging and investigating the way in which they contribute to the creation or the articulation of concepts

grounded within the academic field of memory studies. Fortunati and Lamberti in their text *Cultural Memory: A European Perspective,* state that there is an inevitable connection between both notions of identity and of memory and that the two are irrevocably linked. They quote Francesco Remotti at the beginning of their article by stating that "in order to understand the processes of identity formations of a collectivity or of a nation, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between 'what disappears', 'what remains' and 'what re-emerges' (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.127), therefore supporting the belief that any research which focuses on institutions and their role in constructing frameworks of identity, must also explore their effect in producing frameworks of collective memory.

Similar to the way in which cultural identity is not fixed in time or place, cultural memory has also become an increasingly fluid concept within academic discourse. Cultural memory studies has moved away from the static aspects of memory such as mnemonic practices, and has expanded towards notions of dynamic relations which are constantly being re-negotiated. Fortunati & Lamberti have highlighted the parallel shift between identity and memory studies by stating the following;

> "The breaking of all canons, the juxtaposition of macro and micro history, the questioning of the ideas of objectivity and subjectivity in the historiographic rendering, as well as in literature, have taught us all to be prudent observers and to use the plural instead of the singular: no longer a unique 'memory', but many 'memories', many traces left by the same event which in time sediment in the individual consciousness, as well as in the collective consciousness, and that are often – consciously or unconsciously – hidden or removed; traces that nevertheless stay and that suddenly or predictably re-emerge each time the historical, political or cultural context changes" (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.128).

Cultural institutions play a significant role in sedimenting said traces and articulating memories through the communication of politically charged narratives. The European Thematic Network (as described by Fortunati and Lamberti), is a European movement through which the ACUME project exercises an interdisciplinary approach which actively seeks to create a European identity by implementing a unified university curriculum for the development of the field of memory studies. The project's premise is that it begins research from a shared set of values which expand to conclude that European identity is the "sum of various identities" (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.131). Its overall aim was to investigate the way in which "within the history of various countries, there has always been a very close link

between memory and power" (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.132). The project included 5 principle research areas or sub-projects, all of which are relevant to the analysis of the British Council and its role in creating collective memory as a means of soft power.

The first research area is described as "Cultural Amnesia" and addresses the fact that remembering is inevitably linked to forgetting. Aleida Assmann in the text *Canon and Archive,* highlights the fact that things must be "continuously forgotten to make place for new information" (Assmann, 2008, p.97) and claims that this is a social norm, on both and individual and collective level. The text divides the process of forgetting into two main practices, the practice of actively forgetting, which is primarily the aggressive and intentional destruction of culture, and the passive form, which is essentially the non-intentional acts of losing, hiding, dispersing and abandoning of culture (Assmann, 2008, p.98). By presenting the concept of forgetting as a cultural norm, it is implied that remembering is the exception. Assmann claims that the act of remembering within the cultural field takes place through costly precautions in the "shape of cultural institutions" (Assmann, 2008, p.98). Thus, institutions such as the British Council are the principle ways in which social and collective remembering occurs. Remembering, as does forgetting, also has both an active and a passive side. Assmann states that "The institutions of active memory preserve the past as present while the institution of passive memory preserves the past as past. The tension between the pastness of the past and its presence is an important key to understanding the dynamics of cultural memory" (Assmann, 2008, p.98). The text further links these concepts of active and passive by referring to the work of Burckhardt and his categories of "messages" and "traces", messages being the staged cultural elements of carriers of power and traces being the unintentional cultural elements of a society (Assmann, 2008, p.99). Thus, institutions such as the British Council produce messages which actively preserve the past as present.

This preservation of the past as present is perhaps most evident in the way in which the British Council reacted to the UK's decision to leave Europe. The discussions conducted with other European partners appear to have focused on the practical challenges associated with the split, problem solving and coming up with solutions to ensure that the work which has been done so far, can continue to be done in the future (Carvalho, 2019). Thus, the Council through its cultural discourse with other European partners, has mobilized the past and its previous work and relationships in the present, actively transgressing boundaries of time.

The second research area of the ACUME project refers to the concept of "bearing witness" and looks at the way in which written sources, visual documents and oral testimonies play a role in cultural making (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.133). The British Council's role in bearing witness is fairly evident through its continuous production of documents and annual reports which serve to sediment cultural discourse as official and everlasting frameworks. The British Council has, during this recent period of social and political un rest, produced several articles and Communiqué which have been published on its official website and have been distributed to the wider public. These documents serve to provide primary sources which witness the current fractured European landscape. The article titled *Our Shared European Future*, gathered and documented by the British Council through their panel discussions with members of Europe's education, culture, science and research sectors, provides a series of recommendations for EU/Brexit negotiators. The fact that the Council produces documents which have been "formally endorsed" by organizations and representatives, demonstrates its ability to collect, select and construct witness accounts which are then communicated and received as descriptions grounded in truth. The majority of the article expresses a joint European desire for unity and cohesion, with sub-sections referring to "a shared vision", "a shared challenge" and a "consensus" (British Council, 2018). Thus, the documented and therefore official response (as presented by the Council), to the fractured European landscape, is one which further looks to the future as it conveys desires associated with "continuity". The use of language such as "maintain", "enhance" and "ensure" all denote an idea of preservation, thus reflecting Assmann's notion of institutions of active memory, bringing the past into the present (British Council, 2018). Consequently, the document not only affirms and communicates an official truth, it also collapses the time continuum by bringing past action into the present and by extending it into the future.

The third field of study analyses the role of places and landscapes, both real and imaginary, in recalling collective memory. The British Council's global presence is both real and imaginary as it occupies physical premises and operates in 100 different countries. Similar to the way in which other cultural institutions contribute to notions of placemaking, the British Council and its buildings occupy a physical space in foreign countries, like embassies, bringing a real and tangible part of Britain to the rest of the world. Furthermore, its premises create a global network, expanding across geographic borders and providing points of accessibility in which individuals can come into contact with British values, histories and

culture. The multiplicity to the various sites of the British Council across the globe further enhances a sense of collectiveness and unity, both real and imagined.

The fourth sub-project focused on the way in which language, through both oral and written history, contributed to the production of collective memory (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.135). The Council's primary financial activity is in fact the teaching of the English language. In Portugal alone, it provides education in the English language to several thousand individuals a year, excluding the thousands who come in to the British Council to sit external exams in English. Thus, the methodology used to teach within the Council provides a collective learning experience, one which uses language as the primary enabler for the production of collective memory.

Finally, the fifth research area analysed foundation texts and mythologies and looked specifically at the formation of traditions (Fortunati & Lamberti, 2008, p.135). The Council has a long history of successful cultural relations through its global network. In 2018 the Council celebrated 80 years in Portugal, re-affirming its presence through various commemorative initiatives. Furthermore, it recently celebrated "70 years in India and Pakistan" and "it was also 70 years since the founding of the Edinburgh Festival". These anniversaries "marked the British Council's involvement" in historic landmarks and were highlighted through special programs of "international cultural collaborations" (British Council, 2018). The Council, through its extensive history of cultural relations, has therefore embedded itself within the historic past. Furthermore, it has "shored up legitimacy by generating a sense of historical endurance" (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy, 2011, p.13). Consequently, the traditions generated by the Council throughout its long-lasting presence are effective in producing notions of collective memories which transgress the boundaries of time.

The European methodology for the study of collective memory, as outlined by the ACUME project, therefore provides a useful framework through which the active working memory of the British Council can be analyzed. It is not however the only approach to the study of collective memory. *Memory Acts: A Theory for the Study of Collective Memory in Every Day Life*, written by Constance de Saint-Laurent, presents a pragmatic approach to the difficulty of collective memory studies. Memory is instinctively perceived as an individual act, thus the

concept of collectiveness in association to memory tends to present several issues in academic discourse. Saint-Laurent's re-definition of memory provides various new guidelines for an analysis of institutions' production of collective memory. Rather than excluding other approaches, the memory act, as presented by Saint-Laurent, aims to add to the literature, providing a framework and new venues of enquiry (Sain-Laurent, 2017).

Firstly, collective memory is re-defined as the "collective past" which is "enacted and mobilized in discourses, practices and artefacts" (Saint-Laurent, 2017). Secondly it is a theoretical and social construct which perceives the past within the present. Thirdly, it is socially negotiated as "what may qualify as truth and who may talk about it is an ongoing negotiation between people proposing versions of the past and their audiences" (Saint-Laurent, 2017). The British Council therefore mobilizes discourses and narratives of the collective past through what is described in the text as "the memory act". One of the most evident ways in which the Council mobilizes discourse and negotiates its version of the truth is through the repetition of metaphors. Dietrich Harth in *The Invention of Cultural Memory,* highlights the significant effects of metaphors on cultural memory. The metaphors of net and connection, as outlined by Harth, evoke "the work of knotting together loose ends to interlacements" hence offering an image of "coordinative and cooperative continuity" (Harth, 2008, p.85). The brief introduction to the 2018 corporate plan produced by the Council refers to the term "connection" six times while the 2017-18 annual report uses the metaphor of "connection" seven times in its introduction, hence demonstrating the institute's active repetition of terminology in order to produce discourse of truth. Culture connects "individual subjects on the basis of shared (rules) and stories (memories) to the experience of a commonly inhabited meaningful world (Dietrich Harth, 2008, p.86) and cultural institutions therefore define said rules and articulate said memories in order to connect individuals to a meaningful world. Thus, the memory act, as described by Saint-Laurent, focuses on how the "context – both material and intersubjective – shapes what is told and how it is told" (Saint-Laurent, 2017). Both policy documents, the Corporate Plan and the Annual Report, refer to the challenges of Brexit, describing the current political and social context as one of "change and uncertainty" (British Council, 2018) however, the use of metaphors which denote "net" and "connection" reflect the institute's determination to link, connect and unify the discourse of the Council with that of its partners. The resurgence of the term "network", denoting the term "net" as a "permeable" and thus also a "transparent" fabric, throughout the documents

provides connotations of security as well as trust. Furthermore, "they offer, as seen in the example of the World Wide Web, possibilities for linking and unlinking within seconds, without the fear of disturbing or destroying key organizing patterns" (Harth, 2008, p.86). The use of this type of imagery is further evident in British Council discourse and strategy as its performance as an "interlocutor" hence connector of various entities serves to make it less biased. Carvalho describes this phenomenon in his interview by stating that "people can see that we are more transparent and that we are more open, and they are more open with us. In terms of our ability to influence and lobby, it's actually become stronger, we can be more open and more transparent about what we are doing. We are not trying to push a particular artist or push a particular art form" (Carvalho, 2019). Thus, the memory act, as exercised by the British Council, acknowledges the difficulties of the current European context, while simultaneously controlling and framing the way in which these difficulties are discussed through the use of metaphors and their constant repetition.

Cultural memory therefore "contains a number of cultural messages that are addressed to posterity and intended for continuous repetition and re-use" (Assmann, 2008, p.99). Said messages constitute the active working memory which is best described by Assmann through the following;

> "The active working memory stores and reproduces the cultural capital of a society that is continuously recycled and re-affirmed. Whatever has made it into the active cultural memory has passed rigorous processes of selection, which secure for certain artifacts a lasting place in the cultural working memory of a society… Selection presupposes decisions and power struggles; ascription of value endows these objects with an aura of sacrosanct status; duration in the cultural memory is the central aim of the procedure" (Assmann, 2008, p.100).

The British Council therefore carefully constructs the active working memory of individuals by choosing which metaphors to articulate and in which context to do so. Not only this, the repetition of messages serves to produce narratives of longevity, which over time, are perceived as truthful representations of the past, present and future. Institutions engage in both the active and passive "realms of cultural memory" as they "allow for mutual influx and reshuffling" (Assmann, 2008, p.106) which enables cultural collective memory to be open to change and negotiation. Thus, institutions such as the Council are able to adapt, re-negotiating their positions and shifting the parameters of collective memory according to their current contextual needs. Thus, stories and memories are hidden, displaced and

overwritten as this shuffling occurs and selected narratives are brought into the forefront of cultural memory through practices of discourse articulation and communication.

2.4 Downloading Messages & Measuring Impact

If cultural institutions produce collective memory through the repetitive communication and recycling of cultural content, the issue which requires further analysis is therefore, the relationship between these institutional acts, and the impact upon the individual. As previously mentioned in this thesis, the question for soft power "is what messages are sent and received by whom under which circumstances" (Nye, 2004, p.44). The same messages conveyed by institutions like the British Council, are downloaded and interpreted "with different effects by different receivers in different settings" (Nye, 2004, p.44), therefore inferring an inconsistency in the effect of institutions upon the individual.

One theory which provides a possible insight into this dilemma is Hans Robert Jauss' *Reception Theory,* which emphasizes the notion that meaning is not stable and is in a constant state of production. Despite his theory being birthed out of an analysis of classical literature, it provides a useful insight into the way in which institutional text and narratives can be interpreted. Jauss claims that the literary movements from the nineteenth- century onwards led to a "distinction between poetic and practical language" and consequently, the formation of "the concept of "artistic perception", which in turn, "completely severed the link between literature and lived praxis" (Jauss, 1982, p.16,).

He offers a solution to this, fusing artistic and practical language into social praxis by claiming the following;

> "In the triangle of author, work, and public the last is no passive part, no chain of mere reactions, but rather itself an energy formative of history. The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its addressees. For it is only through the process of its mediation that the work enters into the changing horizon-of-experience of a continuity in which the perpetual inversion occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production that surpasses them (Jauss, 1982, P.19".

The longevity of memories, stories or narratives in the active working memory, as described previously, does therefore not only depend upon the communication and repetition of

metaphors and memories by institutions. It must also (according to Jauss' theory), take into consideration the mediation "between passive reception and active understanding, experience formative of norms, and new production" (Jauss, 1982, p.19) as a process which constructs collective memory. The individual is therefore not merely a passive receiver of information in a chain reaction, but rather, receives information communicated by institutions and actively participates in order create a system of continuing productivity. As a result, "the endlessly growing sum" of "facts" which inevitably winds up as conventional history, "is merely left over from this process; it is only the collected and classified past and therefore not history at all, but pseudo-history" (Jauss, 1982, p.21). Thus, the factual knowledge regarding the British Council, its role and contribution to society is the result of a series of mediations between institution and individual. Furthermore, the narratives and dialogues communicated by institutions such as the Council are not new but rather, predispose their "audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions" (Jauss, 1982. P.23) which in turn, awaken memories of that which was already received. Jauss explains this phenomenon through the following statement;

> "The psychic process in the reception of a text is, in the primary horizon of aesthetic experience, by no means only an arbitrary series of merely subjective impressions, but rather the carrying out of specific instructions in a process of directed perception, which can be comprehended according to its constitutive motivations and triggering signals, and which also can be described by a textual linguistics" (Jauss, 1982 P.23).

Thus, the thread between past appearances and present experiences are re-connected. Not only this, Jauss' theory draws parallels with Foucault's notion of power as a productive network, one which is generated by the two-way traffic between actors rather than a linear flow. By applying this theory to the interpretation of institutional narratives, one can analyse the way in which these mediations between cultural institutions and individuals actively and continuously produce cultural discourse and history and as a result, through their longevity, articulate power.

Participation of the individual with the activity of the Council occurs in many different ways and through several different remits however, perhaps the most evident way in which individuals actively participate with the Council is through the teaching of the English

language. This participation tends to be more extensive than the engagement with exhibitions and short-term initiatives or events as students usually commit to engaging with the Council over several years through the practice of learning English. Emmanuel Carvalho from the British Council in Portugal claims that the teaching of the English language is probably the Council's "primary cultural achievement. It's the one that stimulates the demand for everything else" (Carvalho, 2019). Individuals learn a language so that they can communicate and consume culture hence, the exams and teaching business exercised by the Council are "the essential pillars of cultural engagement". The Council's most powerful cultural instrument is therefore the 12000 people a year "sitting English Exams in Portugal and the 9000 students of English" in centers across the country. If you are coming in week after week to do English lessons at a British Council center, after several years of that, it is much more influential in terms of engaging people in British culture than any of the work" done in projects (Carvalho, 2019).

The teaching of the English language provides a concrete example of the way in which reception theory operates. The receiver, in this case the students, are not passive agents but rather, reproduce the English language they have learnt within their own personal and professional contexts. They are active consumers contributing to the continuity and hence adding to the longevity, impact and relevance of the English language within present experience. Each individual will of course adapt the English language according to their own needs, re-cycling it through their own experience and thus reproducing it. These individuals extend the discourse of the Council into the rest of the social body and network and in so doing, recall memories, stories and narratives of the institution. This relationship of mediation and reproduction is the primary source of the Council's lasting impact, providing its discourse surrounding British culture with longevity and eventually translating into power.

A further way in which the British Council produces experiential meaning for individuals is through projects which specifically aim at creating cultural continuity. The Alumni Network initiative is an example of this. The project focuses on collaborating with individuals who have studied in the UK but have since then, had little involvement in Britain's soft power initiatives. The initiative, driven by the Council and implemented in collaboration with the British Embassy, is intended to create lasting relationships with individuals and provide continuity to pre-existing relationships. Furthermore, it aims to strengthen people to people

links, which in turn, will develop individuals as multipliers within the social body, people who are willing to share, through personal experience, positive messages about the UK (Felton, 2019). The concept on which this project is based further reflects Jauss' reception theory as people who have engaged with Britain on an academic level, are encouraged to reproduce positive discourse and dialogues on a people to people level. Thus, the initiative adapts top line institutional discourse and translates it into experiential communication through engagement with individuals hence, actively prescribing the way in which Britain is perceived on an individual level.

This reproduction of discourse does not however stop once it has reached individuals. Initiatives and their processes of production and communication are further recycled and reinterpreted on macro levels. The constant re-shuffling between micro and macro levels further emphasizes Foucault's notion of two-way traffic in cultural discourse as a production of power. The British Council's principle tool for production of power on a macro level is the Results and Evidence Framework, introduced in 2017, as a means of monitoring and evaluating institutional activity. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, one of the principle issues with soft power is its diffusive quality and its production within civil society, hence making the impact of soft power initiatives difficult to quantify. The Council however, measures its activity with its carefully structured framework, providing a systematic and quantifiable methodology. The framework outlined by the Council aims to "provide evidence" of what the Council delivers, demonstrate how the Council adds value to the rest of the UK, how it creates opportunities, builds connections and engenders trust. Furthermore, it attempts to tell a "narrative of impact effectively to satisfy external scrutiny", to use "evidence to continuously improve" the delivery of programmes and to "demonstrate value for money" (British Council, 2018). The Results and Evidence Framework is split into four levels, the third of which is most significant for the purpose of this research. The third level, *Impact*, gathers information in connection with 40 different impact statements in order to "demonstrate the contribution" that the Council makes towards those outcomes. The strategy for measurement involves theories of change, quantitative and qualitative methods which are used to "generate evidence over time". The Results and Evidence Framework states that:

> "This level captures evidence of the impact of our work at a programme and
> thematic level, through methodologically rigorous evaluation, gathered through
> breadth and depth of analysis, so that by 2020 we will have a very good narrative

of our impact based on the best possible evidence. To help with implementation, we have launched eight 'evidence strategies.' The evidence we gather in connection with the impact statements below will demonstrate the contribution that we are making towards those outcomes through our activity" (British Council, 2018).

Thus, each British Council initiative is scrutinized and evaluated thereby transforming the experience of individuals into statements and narratives of impact, fit for scrutiny and presentation on a macro institutional level. It is through this framework that the council recycles cultural discourse of individuals, feeding it back into an institutional system that can be repeatedly used for the production of further narratives. Consequently, the working relationship between institutions and individuals is fundamental to the longevity and continuous production of narratives of history and ergo, power. The interaction between entities is not passive but rather active as it requires the constant mediation and engagement of individuals as part of the process of production. The consistent shuffling between agents and institutions serves to recycle cultural discourse, feeding informal people to people communication into a formal systematic framework which permits the further articulation of memories, stories and narratives. Thus, the two-way traffic between institutions and individuals is fundamental to the construction of soft power narratives. Soft power narratives are therefore not fixed, but continuously undergoing negotiation and alteration, creating a dynamic and fluid energy which simultaneously recycles and reinterprets past narratives to create present ones.

Chapter 3: Borders of Influence

3.1 The Bordering Perspective

The increased academic preoccupation with Border Theory reflects a change in perspective often described as "a conceptual transition". Said transition, has shifted "from seeing the border as a physical and often static geographic outcome of socio-spatial dynamics, to a context in which the borders themselves are understood as dynamic functional processes" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.3). Within these productive processes, the distinction is made between the "profound psychological significance of formal and informal boundaries" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.3). Furthermore, the bordering perspective regards borders as entities which are continuously being made and ergo, in a constant state of production. This notion of repeated construction, draws parallels with Foucault's concept of power as a dynamic force which like borders, is continuously created. Thus, the bordering perspective brings about "a highly critical re-evaluation of the relationship between states, societies and the borders they create" (Bufon, 2014, p.2) and a re-evaluation of the power relationships at play.

Kolossov & Scott in their publication *Selected conceptual issues in border studies,* state that borders are constantly reproduced as a part of shifting space-society relationships and the bordering processes they entail" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.2). This argument is developed through the following;

> "The present state of border studies indicates that recent developments have deeply changed the "power" of borders; they have modified the dialectical relation between their fixed nature and constantly changing, fluid regime and framed the impact of borders on human activities in a new way. Borders not only have a different meaning for different actors but are a manifestation of power relations in society at different scales. In particular, they reflect the normative power of international organizations, including the EU and the power asymmetry between states in different fields." (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.13)

Consequently, there are two main border perspectives from which an analysis of the Council can be approached. Traditionally state borders have marked territory and been symbols of control, sovereignty and security. Similar to the way in which state embassies around the world transgress borders and blur the lines between geographical fixed locations, the British

Council's physical presence through its premises, reflects the territorial perception. The territorial bordering perspective is adopted by the Council as a means of explaining and communicating its 'reach' or in other words, the geographical extent of its impact. Furthermore, "bordering, as a socio-spatial practice plays an important role in shaping human territoriality and political maps – every social and regional group has an image of its own territory and boundaries" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.3) and as such, cultural institutions play a significant role in this bordering practice, shaping geographic areas of power.

The Council in most of its communication declares itself as a 'Global' institution, thus delineating its impact and influence as universal and shaping its own geographic field of power. The 2017-2018 Annual Report describes the Council's activity and refers to the longevity of its "global network" (British Council, 2018, p.3) thus, bounding the Council's web of relationships into a common territory. This territorial approach serves to emphasize the strength of the British Council and similar to the way in which nation states have historically defined their borders as an act power, the Council constructs its own limit as worldwide.

The second perspective arises from the increase in theorization of borders. Rumford in his text, *Theorizing Borders,* refers to the way in which theorizing the concept of borders "involves an attempt to understand the nature of the social" (Rumford, 2006, p.155). The Council therefore, not only delineates its territorial impact, but also actively engages in the theorization of borders. This second perspective is intangible and is concerned with the "nexus between everyday life- worlds, power relations and constructions of social borders" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.2). As a result, theorizing borders makes them transitory and they appear and disappear as social relationships of power come in and out of focus. Borders, from this perspective are malleable and operate through various different vehicles rather than only one, as is the case with the territorial perspective. Fluid borders reveal themselves and take on their social reality through practiced culture such as language. However, the two differing border perspectives often clash and it is evident that often one perspective is not possible without an alternative. Bonnie Urciuoli describes this phenomenon between differing bordering perspectives through the following;

> "When languages take on sharp edges, i.e. borders, they are mapped onto people and therefore onto ethnic nationality (which may or may not map onto a nation-state). Given that ethnicity has become nonlocalized as people move into ´global

ethnoscapes´, much of what the ´border´ represents is in effect deterritorialized, as is, for example, the case with foreign languages" (Urciuoli, 1995, p.533).

Thus, the practice and performance of foreign languages are a prime example of the way in which borders are deterritorialized, ergo losing their sharp edges and diffusing across geographic landscapes. Language as such, mirrors the fluid nature of soft power as describes by Joseph Nye. The Corporate Plan for 2018-2020 states that "the power of language is recognised as an important component of soft power" (British Council, 2018, p.12) As previously mentioned, part of the Council's core business is in fact the practice of teaching English as a foreign language through its various different teaching centers. Research conducted through the Councils activity claims that "the strongest predictor of trust in the UK is a person's ability to speak English. It facilitates international trade, diplomacy, opens doors to international study and enhances career opportunities. Learning English through the British Council also leads to a greater understanding of UK culture" (British Council,2018, p.15). The Council therefore harnesses the power of English as a means of soft power, breaking down borders and expanding its influence across the globe. It could be argued that the extent of the Council's influence equates to the reach of the English language. The relationship between the English language and its influence is described by Carvalho through the following;

> "I would say that our sphere of influence ends where the influence of our language ends, now you tell me where English doesn't have any influence or impact in some way. Find a country like that and then yes, we have no influence but I can't see it. Thinking of the EU as a region is too narrow minded and small. There is a reason why we are the 7th or 8th largest economy in the world with 50 million people and it is not because we are really good at politics, it's because we have used our English language to create commonality and shared values in all corners of the world that allow us to punch way above our weight. If the US had gone French and not British, the UK wouldn't be anything near to what it is now, so I think that our language is our most powerful cultural tool. It has few if not, no borders and the reason, I think this is quite particular to the English language, I think the language itself brings something to the table in terms of openness and innovation that few other languages bring. Proof is in the pudding, there are more words being created every day in English then in any other language, there are more versions of English then there are of any other language and a lot of our influence is around the sphere of influence of the English language" (Carvalho, 2019).

Thus, the Council adopts the second bordering perspective by using the English language as a deterritorializing tool. Furthermore, the English language is used constructively, as a means

of building relationships hence, the constant adaptation and production of new elements of language. The fact alone that there are more versions of the English language than any other, supports Foucault's notion of productive power. "Language shifts are inextricably tied to shifts in the political economy in which speech situations are located" (Urciuoli, 1995, p.539) and the use of English globally reflects said shift. The continuous re-articulation and re-production of English around the world, multiplies English language narratives, breaking down barriers of communication between individuals. The re-articulation and re-production through the "social deployment of language in contact and shift situations", encourages an alternative version of the language to emerge. Individuals engaged in this process "bring into being a sense of boundedness, which may also map onto a border" (Urciuoli, 1995, p.531). Thus, the two bordering perspectives are inextricably linked as they are formed by and inform one another. As a result, bordering perspectives are highly useful, allowing institutions such as the British Council to not only, delineate the extent of their influence, but also transgress across borders and expand their reach. Furthermore, social actors who deploy language bring into being borders and in doing so, mirror relationships of power. Cultural institutions adopt both perspectives in their approach, occupying physical territory as well as using social conventions such as language to articulate political and economic positions.

3.2 Instruments of Integration

The new bordering perspective, as characterized by the process of theorization, is particularly significant for the critical analysis of areas which share political and economic interests. The European case reflects a melting pot of identities and cultures, all different yet united under the same geographic, political and economic umbrella. Thus, Europe represents a physical and ideological paradox as it attempts to create unity in diversity. The contradiction between unity and diversity recalls notions of the 'Standing Out' vs 'Reaching Out' concepts previously addressed in chapter 1. Within the context of border theory, the paradox can be perceived as an instrument for integration, actively establishing cross border relationships. Bufon in, *The New European Frontiers: Social and Spacial (Re)Integration Issues in Multicultural and Border Regions,* highlights the fact that European countries have begun "to devote greater attention to the development problems of their border areas that needed help to undertake certain functions in the international integration process" (Bufon, 2014, p.2), thus acknowledging the ongoing process of unification which is central to the attempt at forming a shared European identity. Prato states in *From Nation States to European Integration:*

Ideological Constructions of Border Co-Operation, that "past and recent European projects of integration and of cross- borders cooperation could be viewed as part of a larger European identity project" (Prato, 2014, p.25). As such, academic literature seems to suggest that borders are inevitably linked to the concept of identity politics and geopolitical interests therefore impact the way in which cross border integration occurs.

Fundamental to this process of integration, is the rise in cross-border regionalism as a system for cooperation. Prato develops the argument to claim that the formation and development of Europe arises from a need to integrate and cooperate in the wake of border conflicts. The case of the Cold War is presented, as Prato states that for a long time the European network constituted of western countries, until political conflict made it necessary to include Eastern nations with the aim to "create a "truly" unified Europe" (Prato, 2014, p.27). Thus, integration appears to be a solution for conflict. Not only this, regionalization is part of the "Unitarian European project" which Prato states that "together with the accompanying restructuring process, has been implemented through various Regional programmes, such as the creation of Euro-Regions and, more recently, the 2007-2013 Planning of "European Territorial Co- operation"" (Prato, 2014, p.27). This type of integration is "characterised by very heterogeneous institutional strategies as it is constituted through multilateral agreements relevant not only to individual national governments but also to local administration and civil society" (Bufon, 2014, p.8). Cultural institutions are key players in the process of cross border policy making, often structuring and constructing said strategies. Bufon states that cross-border cooperation implies the bringing together of various different parties as well as "representatives of different professional bodies, in particular local universities and other "non-governmental" social organisations, mostly from the economic and cultural fields" (Bufon, 2014, p.9). Furthermore, it is argued that strategies of integration depend upon non-government agents in order to break up traditional hierarchical relations and encourage "'regionalisation'" of social and spatial processes both at the top-down and bottom-up levels (Bufon, 2014, p.10). Therefore, the role of cultural institutions is fundamental to this process of integration. Their creation and communication of narratives around the concept of cross-border regionalism is essential to the blurring of European boundaries and to the assimilation of different nations into united bodies. The rise of the region, particularly within Europe, "has been a parallel tendency with the integration process" and Europe is a mosaic of various different regions, each with their own long history and with overlapping cultural traditions

(Paasi, 2009, p.126). Institutions such as the British Council, are integral to the production of systems of integration and government around borderlands, developing discourses of sameness despite linear distinctions between nations.

The British Council's Annual Report for 2017-2018, reflects the institutional use of cross-border regionalism as a means of developing partnerships and narratives of cooperation internationally. Furthermore, the report mirrors the contemporary perspectives of borders as its areas of geographical focus are not defined by nation state borders, but rather social constructions of borders for economic or political purposes. Thus, the Council merges national borders into relational ones which highlight similarities between nations that don't necessarily share physical borders. The report is split into 6 geographical focus areas, each one with a specific socio-economic objective. Geographical focus area one, groups together the nation states that have emerging economic markets. Within group one, nations such as India, China, Nigeria, Korea, Saudi Arabia as well as some of the Latin American countries are represented. The Council's report claims that "there are substantial mutual benefits from close co-operation with these countries" and that its work with emerging markets "supports long-term growth and development globally" hence, increasing "the attractiveness of the UK, thereby enhancing the UK's influence" and complementing "the government's ambition for a truly global Britain" (British Council, 2018, p.18). The objective for focus area one is therefore to support the UK's influence and prosperity through stronger relationships with emerging markets. Thus, the Council brings together various geographic territories under one regional umbrella with an overall objective for the UK's soft power. It is important to note that regions in this sense, "are not natural entities, but rather social constructions, in a given space, representing the confluence of various economic, social and political processes in territory" (Bufon, 2014, p.5). Thus, the perspective of region adopted by the Council is "simultaneously a territorial space, a functional space and a political space" (Bufon, 2014, p.5).

Focus area two aims to build educational and cultural partnerships with countries of the European Union. Europe is complex in the sense that it is comprised of both the market model and the cultural pluralist model, "in the market model, the internal borders of Europe disappear but an external border is erected in their stead and in the cultural pluralist model, the zones of inclusion and exclusion remain clear and are marked by places of strong cultural

attachments" (Bufon,2014, p.5). Thus, Europe is both divided and united. A possible solution through which Europe attempts to create unity in diversity is through the "emergence of overlapping, differentiated places of attachment with relatively permeable boundaries: the regions" (Bufon,2014, p.5). The fractured landscape in Europe emphasizes the importance of this regional division for the Council as it acknowledges there is a need to preserve good relationships in Europe (British Council, 2018, p.24). Furthermore, this particular regionalization reflects a tendency to institutionalise cooperation. Prato states that a most common outcome of regionalization and integration, "especially in the last few decades, has been the implementation of joint programmes, in particular for the creation of business opportunities and the exchange and mobility of so-called human resources. Very often, these joint programmes also imply the common management of public resources" (Prato 2014 p.29). Thus, the development of Euroregions and their role in institutional practice has been integral to the process of integration in Europe. Bufon summarises the European approach to cross-border regionalization through the following;

> "Cross-border policies are most probably the most tangible manifestation of the new system of governance and planning gradually developed within the EU system. This process of "Europeanisation" of spatial and development policies has led to the emergence of new institutional structures and ties that perforce transcend state borders and challenge traditional hierarchy in the decision-making process. According to some authors (e.g. Castells 1998), such developments bring about the formation of a new, postmodern socio-political network structure or authority manifested in the system of the so-called multi-level governance involving not only inter- and supra- but also sub-state dimensions." (Bufon p.13)

Consequently, the British Council is part of these new emerging institutional structures. It operates on a horizontal level, creating networks and challenging the vertical hierarchy of power. One of the ways in which the Council has challenged the hierarchy within Europe is to cooperate with "institutional and policy leaders in education, culture, arts and science from 30 countries across Europe" (British Council, 2018, p.25). *Our Shared European Future*, a publication produced by the Council and already referenced in this thesis, provides recommendations and information for "Brexit negotiators about the implications for the education, culture and science sectors across Europe, including the importance of continued participation in multilateral programmes such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe" (British Council, 2018, p.25). Furthermore, the Council's report was endorsed by over "450 educational, cultural and scientific organisations and representatives" thus providing it with

significant lobbying weight. Regionalisation of Europe therefore allows institutions to implement systems of multi-level governance however, it should be recognized that "there is no regional level of government in Europe and that regions remain in many parts of Europe an "invented" category, which plays only a sporadic and partial role in the continental architecture of politics" (Bufon, 2014, p.5). Consequently, cultural institutions play an important role in inventing said systems, as they bring together institutional processes of integration which provide a formal framework for implementation.

Aside from developing a regional strategy and actively challenging the hierarchy of power, the Council further acts as an instrument of integration through its institutional partnerships and bilateral agreements. Examples of these cross-border policies include a signed memorandum in partnership with the Polish Institute for Music and Dance which establishes the development of a three-year programme for engagement of artists between Poland and the UK, and an invitation from Portugal's arts council DGArtes to develop and enable a two-year "programme focusing on disabled access in arts" (British Council, 2018, p.27). Thus, the Council, through its international programmes and policies adopts an outwards looking perspective, institutionalising cooperation abroad.

Out of the six different regional focus areas included in the Council's current strategy, two highlight the importance of maintaining European ties in the wake of political fracturing. Focus area six aims to create international opportunities and connections for young people in the UK. It states that "as the UK prepares to leave the EU, the UK government's vision is for the UK to develop a stronger international role and profile, expanding partnerships and ties with countries around the world" (British Council, 2018, p.38). Internationalism is therefore an integral part of the Council's strategy as this socially constructed regional focus attempts to support young people to "study, work, volunteer, teach and train abroad" furthermore, this particular area supports "schools, youth and sports organisations to build transnational partnerships" (British Council, 2018, p.38). One of the principle ways in which the Council actions this objective is by implementing the Edinburgh showcase every two years. The showcase is "the single biggest opportunity for UK theatre companies to introduce their work to international promoters" and British companies are "given the opportunity to present to a delegation of visiting international programmers" (British Council, 2018, p.38). The British

Council therefore actively enables integration within Europe through its outwards looking policies and approach to internationalism. The signed multilateral agreements institutionalise cooperation and the regional strategy which is socially constructed enables the Council to network across borders and engage in the cultural pluralist European model. The emphasis on this cultural pluralist model in the annual report suggests a shift within the balance of the European paradox. As the market model begins making preparations to push the UK to the periphery of Europe's boundedness, the cultural pluralist model grows in response, highlighting and prioritizing cultural connection across borders. Within this context, the Council acts as an instrument of integration, actively using concepts of regionalization to create unity in diversity.

3.3 Contact Areas

The European process of integration has therefore been built upon a regional model however, one cannot ignore the role of globalization in the "threat of the deterritorialisation of society and space" (Bufon, 2014, p.3). Consequently, the resurgence of the regional presents an alternative to state centralism and as Bufon claims, is "the principle of resistance identity, which is turned towards the maintenance of regional autonomy and diversity" (Bufon p.3). Bufon's argument is elaborated to state that "place contributes not only to the understanding of self and identity but also to the constitution of collective identity through territorially based communities. Most often, the relationships of self and community to place are associated with difference, particularism and localism" (Bufon, 2014, p.3). Thus, placemaking as a process of producing contact areas is one of the fundamental ways in which Europe has attempted to remove the problem of the 'other', by producing concrete practices of integration between different states. Bufon claims that "current processes in European "contact" areas are increasingly influencing the shaping of people's personalities, making them multilingual and multi-cultural, despite the opposition of traditional 'uninational' political structures" (Bufon, 2014, p.6), hence intensifying cross border cooperation and perspectives. Furthermore, "the 'unity in diversity' European integration model" is tested and becomes operative in the many European contact areas (Bufon, 2014, p.7). As a result, placemaking as a process of producing contact areas is fundamental to creating "the dialectic relationship between local societies and territorial spaces defined by borders" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013, p.8).

One of the fundamental ways in which the Council creates contact areas is through its teaching centers. Blankenberg & Lord, in their chapter *Thirty-two Ways for Museums to Activate Their Soft Power,* state that "in the context of soft power today, the magnitude of need for skills and knowledge development has increased greatly" (Blankenberg & Lord, 2015, p.224) thus, the need for educational services has grown. This does not however apply only to museums, but to any cultural institution that has educational services. Training and skills have been identified as some of the main reasons for economic production and growth (Blankenberg & Lord, 2015, p.224). Therefore, the British Council's production of learning spaces across the globe addresses an increasing demand for engaging learning environments. Furthermore, the activity of place-making through these sites of engagement, directly reflects Bufon's argument that contact areas are increasingly affecting people's everyday lives through multi-lingual and multi-cultural activity. Card states that in the 21st century, the soft power of institutions increasingly depends upon the "value of the knowledge that they produce and disseminate" (Card, 2015, p.60). Not only this, it is highlighted that "in Britain, the 'knowledge economy' has been a key driver of growth since the late 1980's" (Card, 2015, p.60). Thus, the Council uses its teaching centers as international sites of knowledge production in order to enhance its soft power.

Teaching centers do not however stand on their own as objects of place. Cultural institutions through their cultural programmes, outreach activities and collaborations with schools, universities, museums etc, interact with their immediate environment and enhance a sense of place. As a result, cultural institutions such as the British Council are increasingly involved in the fabric of society and have become adept at performing cultural diplomacy. One of the ways in which the Council has recently enhanced placemaking and created multiple contact areas for engagement is through the REFRESH Project. The project stands for Relate, Experience, Find Research Everywhere and Share and was implemented in Bulgaria with a programme with over 11 towns and cities. The programme was led by the British Council and involved over 13 different institutions and over 20 associate partners (British Council, 2018, p.24). The aim of the project was to enhance public understanding and engagement with science, focusing particularly on children and their interaction with STEM subjects. The project was manifested through a series of face to face events in schools, science talks and shows and lab visits in various different cultural venues. Thus, the programme pooled

together different localities in Bulgaria with one core objective for the purpose of the initiative. The Council therefore interacted with its immediate environment abroad in order to enhance place through a concentration of science related activities. Consequently, it embedded itself within the fabric of Bulgarian society, bringing added value to the location in which it operates. As a result, the institution disseminates knowledge and through its programming and outreach activities, contributes to the international knowledge economy.

Furthermore, the fractured landscape and current political uncertainty means that institutions such as the Council embody an increasingly political role and are ever more internationally implicated as well as socially situated. Not only this, cultural institutions are integral to the process of generating reputation, hence contributing to a nation's influence and attraction. Cultural institutions therefore create symbolic images of place, implementing cross-border cooperation through political projects of placemaking. To date, most academic study on placemaking has focused on the role of the city and its position as a creative platform that emphasizes development, innovation and culture in order to enhance a nation's attractive power. Placemaking of cities is largely done by cultural institutions such as museums which not only act as contact areas, but which actively contribute to city branding. Within this context it is fundamental to consider the unusual position of the British Council which operates largely outside of its national territory. Museums and other types of cultural institutions are often perceived as landmarks of a city, enhancing the cities sense of place. The British Council operates in multiple cities across the world and unlike museums which often possess a unique collection of material and visual culture which adds to a city's identity, the Council operates through aligned processes between its contact sites across the globe. Consequently, British Council centers are not one of a kind in the same way other cultural landmarks often are. Centers don't therefore necessarily act as landmarks for the city in which they are present, but rather act as landmarks of britishness around the world. Similar to embassies they provide a contact points with Britain in foreign countries however, unlike embassies they are much more accessible to the public and engage in many more outreach activities. As a result, the centers provide British landmarks and enhance notions of place and national territory outside of Britain's borders.

The production of contact areas, highlights a focus within the concept of borderlands on lived spaces. Within these lived spaces, "the everyday can be understood as a reflection of larger

processes of social transformation, but arguably with greater relevance to social realities 'on the ground'" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013 p.8). One of the primary ways in which said lived spaces contribute to placemaking is through the formation of creative hubs. As previously mentioned in this thesis, the Knowledge Quarter in London localizes culture within one square mile, framing the universal conversation around arts and culture through collaborative partnerships. Thus, the lived spaces in London contribute to a larger process of transformation, setting agendas for discussion and consequently bringing issues in and out of public focus through the communication of specific narratives. Similar to the way in which members of the Knowledge Quarter join resources in order to enable larger processes of transformation, the Council participates in collective consortiums. EUNIC is the European National Institutes for Culture and is an organisation that joins together cities, regions and countries to collaborate on common projects and programmes to promote culture. The British Council is an active member of this consortium, collaborating in EUNIC's process of pooling together resources and expertise in the field of culture in order to achieve common European objectives. Thus, the Council through its formal partnership with other organisations contributes to the production of European clusters of culture, emphasizing the notion of creative hubs and their reflection in placemaking. Despite operating largely outside of its nationally territory, the Council effectively engages in placemaking activity by participating in a Europe wide process which transgresses national boundaries. Furthermore, the collaboration with consortiums helps bridge gaps in order to "define new conceptual and geographic territories" (Card, 2015, p.61).

Thus, placemaking through contact areas is one of the principle ways in which the Council manipulates the traditional concept of the border as a linear limit to geographic territory. Furthermore, contact areas provide sites through which knowledge production and dissemination can occur. Within the current knowledge economy, this is integral to strengthening soft power narratives. Fractured social landscapes inevitably mean that institutions such as the Council and their contact sites become ever more socially and politically situated. Contact sites are lived spaces which reflect broader social processes on the ground. It is argued that "as more people enjoy and become accustomed to participatory learning and entertainment experiences, they want to do more than just 'attend' cultural events and institutions". Consequently, "when people can actively participate with cultural institutions, those places become central to cultural and community life" (Blackenberg, 2015,

p.106). As a result, the Council's premises provide participatory sites of interaction which within the European context, enable integration and enhance its relevance by molding individuals into multi-lingual and multi-cultural beings.

3.4 The Practice of Marketing & Branding

Within the context of placemaking it is important to analyse processes of marketing and branding as strategies of cross-border influence. Placemaking initiatives, as acknowledged by Card, are in fact strategic exercises of branding (Card, 2015, p.61). Visible institutions nurture collective imagination, thus allowing people to associate them with the impressions they have of an entire nation. Furthermore, institutions exploit this by advertising their image and disseminating it, thus branding themselves similar to the way in which corporate entities do. It could therefore be argued that the Council's presence around the globe is in fact part of an international branding strategy. Ying Fan, in the text *Branding the Nation: What is being branded?,* identifies two main types of nation branding summarized through the following;

> "At the simplest, it is a synonym of product- country image. The country's name or logo can be used by either a single company or an organization to emphasize the COO. This form of nation branding has the clear purpose of using the nation's image to promote sales and exports. The second form of nation branding is in fact place branding – to promote the country (or maybe a city in the country) as a destination for tourism. Place branding is a component of tourism marketing."
> (Fan, 2005, p.7)

Fan develops his text to highlight the fact that "according to the American Marketing Association (AMA), a brand is a 'name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition" (Fan, 2005, p.7) however, a nation is not a product in in the conventional sense. There are therefore two fundamental flaws when applying these two types of nation branding to cultural institutions. Firstly, the product (Britain) is not in fact sellable. Secondly, the Council does not operate as a component of tourism marketing despite its activity clearly promoting 'place'. Its place branding extends to incorporate business, prosperity, education and culture, not merely for the purpose of tourism but rather for broader objectives. A nation therefore combines various complexities and social factors which are not limited to the traditional product/selling model. As a result, "the message being communicated by the nation brand is dispersed over such a nebulous

collection of associations and attributes, the intended audience may be left confused, if not slightly bewildered, by the precise nature of what is being communicated" (Fan, 2005, p.7). Thus, the concept of nation branding mirrors the diffusive, uncontrollable nature of soft power through which different messages can be downloaded differently by various people.

Nation's unlike products, therefore have more than one brand. Examples of Britain's nation branding include 'Cool Britannia', 'Green Britain' and more recently the 'Great' campaign (Felton, 2019). The multiple campaigns for the UK reflect the fact that "a nation brand is not owned by the nation" (Fan, 2005, p.8), despite the fact that they may be initiated or heavily influenced by the state. Any organization can participate in the process of nation branding and ergo exploit the image of the nation. Consequently, the nation or state has very little control of its own image. Despite this lack of control, "Nation branding concerns a country's whole image, covering political, economic, historical and cultural dimensions" thus, "the concept is at the nation level, multi- dimensional and context-dependent" (Fan, 2005, p.8). The British Council can therefore be perceived as an institution which effectively exploits the concept of nation branding and engages in a multidimensional process of branding. Fan claims that "any organization seeking to capitalize on a country's nation brand must attempt to evaluate the existing qualities the country possesses in order to reinforce the positive perceptions" and "deflect attention away from the negative aspects" (Fan, 2005, p.11). Thus, successful efforts of nation branding involve an attempt to shift attention towards attractive notions of the nation. This becomes ever more imperative when negative notions surrounding the nation circulate during periods of political and social unrest.

Examples of the Council's recent activities in branding include the way in which it has tried to disseminate an ideology of openness towards not only the EU, but to the rest of the world. Within the UK, the Council's strategy for 2018-2020 is to open up opportunities to allow organizations and people in the UK achieve their international objectives (British Council, 2018, p.3) thus, the Council positions itself as an accessible institution, promoting notions of receptiveness and broadmindedness. The branding strategy is summarized by the following;

> "In 2016 we conducted a pilot survey reviewing our global brand in 22 countries. This told us that familiarity with our brand is fairly strong (70 per cent) while 30 per cent of people who have some knowledge of us felt close to our brand. We are aiming to improve this brand sentiment in 2018. Underpinning the above is transparency. We are fully committed to transparency in our decision making

processes, the way we work and in the programmes and services we provide."
(British Council, 2017, p.25)

Thus, the Council associates its brand, and consequently exploits the nations brand, to communicate discourse of transparency and openness. Not only this, the Council claims to be fully open about its decision making and therefore aims to great a notion of trust around its processes and activity. A further way in which the Council engages in branding activity is by actively participating in the Great Britain Campaign, to "bolster the reputation of the UK as an innovative, diverse and creative nation" (British Council, 2017, p.9). As described by Katharine Felton, the Great Campaign was a collaborative effort to create "a unified brand, unified imagery and unified language" (Felton, 2019) as part of the UK's positioning itself towards the rest of the world. While image branding is a continuous activity it provides an extremely useful soft power tool during periods of uncertainty. Katharine Felton from the UK's foreign office highlights the usefulness of branding during political disruption through the following description of the Great Britain campaign.

> "It's definitely pre-Brexit but I think that we have probably drawn on it even more since the time of the referendum and over the last couple of years because obviously we are trying to talk about other things. The UK is not defined by Brexit. It might feel like that sometimes, but there are hundreds of other things that we want to talk about and demonstrate that those themes link. In this case the people of Portugal and the people of the UK. I think that is a really powerful tool that we have developed that over the last few years." (Felton, 2019)

It can therefore be concluded that nation branding is an ongoing activity however it becomes more relevant and perhaps increasingly effective as a means of dealing with uncertainty and disagreement. The Council actively engages in the practice of nation branding. As an institution, it claims to promote British best practice around education, communicate British art and culture, build international relationships, build prosperity and development and improve security and sustainability. Thus, the Council's activities are disseminated through various different levels and areas of activity. The nation branding initiatives exercised by the Council therefore capitalize on the multidimensional and multicultural aspects of British society in order to further the UK's "political, social and economic gains and create competitive advantage" (Fan, 2005, p.9). As expected, the Council's branding activity does not therefore reflect the typical product/sales function previously mentioned.

Branding is not however the only business-like activity in which the Council engages as a means of exercising soft power. Academic literature argues that there has been a fundamental change in the way in which cultural institutions and arts organisations approach managerial practices. Consequently, ideologies have evolved, allowing cultural institutions such as the Council to "think and function as if they were for-profit businesses" (Lee, 2005, p.289). Traditionally, arts marketing practice has been likened to the notion of audience development, which focused on broadening public accessibility to the arts. Furthermore, it tended "to employ the 'product led' approach rather than the 'market led' approach (Lee, 2005, p.290). This approach however clashed with the fundamental principles of marketing which is to focus primarily on the market or customer. Marketing, from a business perspective suggests that production "should not merely be conscious of market needs, but it should in fact start from them" (Lee, 2005, p.291). Thus, there is a movement within cultural organisations to put market needs at the forefront of decision-making processes. Not only this, by extending definitions of the customer and the product, cultural institutions are actively engaging in marketing tactics as a means of generating influence. Within cultural organisations there is however a reduction of marketing to function through the "frequent emphasis of 'neutrality' of marketing" (Lee, 2005, p.298). Neutrality within cultural marketing was initially adopted as a process to legitimize the transfer of the marketing concept into the field of arts. Thus, neutrality has become a common narrative within the marketing discourse of cultural institutions. This particular narrative of neutrality is reflected in Carvalho's discourse as he claims that the Council does not set its own agenda but rather responds to the industry's needs, whatever they may be (Carvalho, 2019). As previously mentioned in this chapter 2, the shift in the Council's policy towards culture signifies a relinquishing of control over the type of culture promoted. The Council currently considers its job to be to engage and open doors and according to Carvalho, this is great because it makes the Council more "agenda free" (Carvalho,2019). Thus, the Council's policies have become more responsive to the market needs, allowing the arts industries to curate the discourse around British culture. The shift towards a market ideology enables the Council to engage effectively with its customers by addressing the needs of its partners. Not only this, discourse of neutrality is often the Council's lifeline in politically difficult foreign territories. The fact that the Council positions itself as neutral potentially allows the Council to operate in areas which it otherwise would not be permitted to do so (Carvalho, 2019). Consequently,

neutrality as a marketing discourse is an effective way in which the Council appears to listen and consider the opinions of cultural consumers.

A further way in which the Council puts needs at the forefront of its decision-making processes and ergo adopts a market led approach, is through its external policy making activity. The Council frequently engages in lobbying and policy making with state actors as well as other institutional partners and as a result, often acts as a mediator for change. An example of said activity is the Council's initiative to provide increased accessibility in the arts in Portugal on a national scale (Carvalho, 2019). Its strive for national impact and its focus on partnerships which lead to fundamental change in common practice, reflect the way in which it considers necessity and impact as an integral part of institutional decision making, and consequently action. Furthermore, it claims to draw on its research and "understanding and assessment of the need" of its partners overseas (British Council, 2018, 50), and apply this to its practice with the Foreign and Common Wealth Office. As such, the Council investigates in order to provide a better service to cultural consumers and consequently contribute to the UK's overall level of attraction.

Not only this, the research and quantitative data is used as a marketing tactic to provide validity and strength to the Council's position. Similar to the way in which product/sales functions in corporate organisations use data as a means of quantifying success and market dominance, the Council employs numbers as a means of market measurement. One fundamental difference however between cultural institutions and corporate companies is that data, within cultural organisations, is presented within the context of research. The Council's various social activities allows it to engage with the fabric of the society, collecting information as investigative practice. This research is transformed into data and is used strategically to present various different cases which work in the Council's favour. Pages 15-17 in the annual report for 2017-2018 provides evidence of this research-based marketing. The report presents descriptions of British Council research conducted in relation to each subsection of the global summary. The investigation provides quantitative figures of the impact of the Council. The Council claims that 64 percent of its participants in programmes are "more favourable towards the UK as a result of their participation in British Council programmes" (British Council, 2018, p.25). The Council's use of research therefore mirrors the way in which corporate entities employ data as a marketing tactic. The Council as a

cultural institution therefore adapts business, branding and marketing strategies as a means of disseminating its image, communicating narratives of neutrality and creating cross-border international influence through soft power.

3.5 The Practice of De-Bordering & Re-Bordering

Finally, one must consider the practice of de-bordering and re-bordering as a means of manipulating international impact and influence. Szary and Giraut in the text, *Borderities: The politics of contemporary mobile borders,* describe the contemporary relationship between bordering and de-bordering through the following;

> "We clearly belong to an era that has seen the destabilization of a world order based on the quest for a stable balance between states, an era whose spatial alphabet relied on dividing lines in the form of borders (or dyads). This new processual paradigm relies on two phenomena (opening and closing of borders) that were long thought to be in opposition to one another, until border studies finally concluded that both these phenomena could affect the same border at the same time." (Szary & Giraut, 2015)

Thus, a social imperative to create and use borders exists simultaneously with a temptation to deconstruct them. Furthermore, there is a second phenomenom which also affects the contemporary perception of the border. Szary and Giraut argue that traditionally, border functions were enacted upon the border lines however, these border posts could not act alone and as such, were connected to a decision center. Consequently, this made borders appear peripheral (Szary & Giraut, 2015). Nowadays however, sites of enactment for border functions have changed. This suggests that processes of control, regulation and division are increasingly diffused and as a result, the relationship of power between decision center and border is less visible. Within this context, Szary and Giraut summarize the current border situation by stating that;

> "the material expression of the border does not always coincide with its functions, which everyday become more diffuse: the control of different types of flows is henceforth enacted using a multitude of adapted technologies which do not only distinguish between persons, goods, capital and information, but also between those flows that are desirable and those that are not. This growing dissociation between border functions and border locations provides the border with a mobile dimension that breaks with its traditional fixity in time and space." (Szary & Giraut, 2015)

The border was therefore originally employed as a technology of state power however, recent analysis of border relationships brings to light further complexities. Thus, the border is a collage or assemblage of social relationships, collective entities and various different actors. Consequently, the notion of the border is one which is constantly being constructed and deconstructed, is expanding and collapsing as a result of the various different points of tension and pressure from which it is informed. One of the ways in which the border undergoes the process of deconstruction and reconstruction is through the individual relationships developed in relation to the border. Szary and Giraut comment on the fact that borderity, the ability to produce and visualise borders, is equal to social quality. This claim considers the individual's own "appropriation of border spaces and spatialities" (Szary & Giraut, 2015). Borders have therefore adapted to include a new meaning.

> "In this new meaning, borderities vary according to various personal interests and statuses. They account for their spatial expression, without eliminating the political dimension of relations, as well as opening up the possibility of taking into account the diverse imaginaries that underlie them." (Szary & Giraut, 2015)

The Council actively encourages the development of new imaginaries and possibilities surrounding border theory, thus contributing to the contemporary de-bordering and re-bordering process. "Each individual makes his or her way through this complexity and territorializes the border apparatus through his or her own borderities" (Szary & Giraut, 2015) and institutions such as the Council implement strategies in order to facilitate this negotiation. One of the fundamental ways in which this is done is by strengthening people to people relationships through various different activities. An example of the Council's attempt to participate in people to people interaction is through its "cultural engagement programme for the Russian-speaking people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania" which aims to "overcome barriers that can arise between those who speak Russian as a first language and those who speak Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian" (British Council, 2018, p.26). Projects such as these, focus on limiting conflict between European communities by encouraging people to "see beyond language barriers and gain an appreciation of shared values" (British Council,2018, p.26). Cultural institutions, through their programmes therefore encourage social cohesion by strengthening people to people links and by engaging individuals in cross cultural collaboration. Within these programmes, individuals re-negotiate the boundaries of

borders and their own understandings of spatial relations. As a result, each individual is provided with the opportunity to de-construct and re-construct their own perception of cultural borders. The Council through the establishment and development of said programmes is able to target specific border areas and acts as an enabler through which processes of negotiation can occur. Consequently, institutions are able to manipulate the negotiation process and exercise influence depending on where and when they implement cross cultural programmes.

Not only this, the disassociation between border and function as previously mentioned, acknowledges the intricate relationship between new concepts of the border and mobility. European borders are currently being re-defined and negotiated and as such, mobility, movement and flow are impacted by the knock-on effect of these political negotiations. Durand and Perrin in their publication *The "represented" borderscape of the Eurometropolis Lille- Kortrijk-Tournai: What interplay between cross-border integration and cross-border cooperation?*, argue that European borders vacillate and multiply. Furthermore, they claim that;

> "In Europe, the mutation of national borders raises many questions about the future of the European project. Indeed, the European context encompasses two different trends. On the one hand a de-bordering process, linked to the construction of the European Union, has for decades promoted cross-border interactions by opening up borders in order to facilitate movements across border, the development of partnerships, of the single market, and of the Schengen Area. Yet, on the other hand, a latent re-bordering, due to a many-facetted crisis (socio-economic, political and identity- based)" (Durand & Perrin, 2016, p.3).

Thus, Europe by nature and as a result of its founding principles is a concept which is constant flux. Within the current political climate in which the core of Europe's structure is being re-negotiated and questioned, issues of mobility are recurrent themes. Carvalho highlights this in his interview by reflecting upon the fact that cultural institutions rely upon the mobility of people in order to create partnerships and develop cross border relations. In fact, one of the primary concerns of institutions within Europe is how they will ensure mobility post Brexit in order to keep doing the collaborative work they have done until now (Carvalho, 2019). Due to the fact that borders are no longer dependent on function, Szary argues that "borders are increasingly organised in networks, promoting the idea of reticular borders, located at communication hubs" (Szary, 2016 p.2). Thus, networks are one of the

primary ways in which mobility is enabled between borders. Rather than creating barriers, networks facilitate movement, creating vital fields of experimentation in which operators can engage in various different processes. The Council therefore participates in the construction of a contemporary ideology surrounding the notion of reticular borders. This is done by creating fluid territories in which various different agents can interact. A recent example of this type of activity includes the Council's increased activity and presence on social media which provides a platform through which direct social interaction can occur (British Council, 2018, p.44). The Council has focused on creating a digital communication hub through which social communication translates fluidly between individual, institution and the wider public. Aside from the virtual, the Council creates physical fields of synergy between agents. Exhibitions, fairs and performances all provides sites in which mobile cross-cultural networking occurs. Furthermore, education through its very nature and production and dissemination of knowledge, provides a vital means through which processes, in every aspect of society, are experimentally transformed. The Council, as a result of political disruption has capitalized from the value of education, creating communication hubs in Europe as a means of strengthening its position. Carvalho claims that the fractured European landscape has provided a catalyst for discussion and collaboration around mobility within the education sector. Prior to the rift between the UK and Europe, things occurred naturally and consequently mobility was less of a focus. Currently, dialogue generated through networks has emphasized the need to maintain educational partners and links thus, increasing the Council's relevance and soft power within the EU (Carvalho, 2019). The hubs of communication created through the Council's initiatives such as international summits, provide networking locations and sites of collaboration and exchange. Thus, narratives surrounding the subject of borders have become mobile, embedded within dynamic relationships "in the processes of disintegration or integration, in the methods of identification, social interaction, production and contestation (translation)" (Szary,2016 p.4).

Finally, borders are sensitive and complex as they call into question issues of identity, control and security. There has been a gradual "transition from one general and strictly fixed border line to multiple lines created for different actors" (Kolossov & Scott p.7). This diffusion mirrors Foucault's notion of power which occurs on multiple levels and through various different relationships. Thus, borders as exercised and implemented by the Council are generally non-linear. They have multiple functionalities and exist in plurality. This is evident

through the multiple networks and processes of integration in which the Council engages. Groys claims that the "history of Europe is nothing other than the history of cultural ruptures, a repeated rejection of one's own traditions" (Groys, 2013 p.178) and it could be argued that, the fluid territories created through the cultural activity of the Council provide the site through which said rupturing can occur. The plurality of connections, borders, lines and relations in which cultural institutions engage and create as a means of soft power, produces powerful dynamic networks. Groys furthers his argument to state that "the power of European culture is precisely that it is constantly producing its other. If there is anything at all that is unique in European culture, it is this ability to produce and reproduce not only oneself but also the possible alternatives to oneself" (Groys, 2013, p.180). It can therefore be suggested that the negotiation of borders is something inherently European and that the current reconstruction of said concepts (as a result of the recent political ruptures), is in fact part of the natural European process. Institutions such as the British Council provide networks through which this re-negotiation both conceptual and physical, can manifest itself in processes of interaction and experimentation. The various cross cultural programmes which create sites of collaboration and sharing is fundamental in enabling social relationships of construction and deconstruction to occur.

Chapter 4: Performativity in Institutional Practice

4.1 Performative Pedagogy

As previously mentioned, the growing demand to demonstrate value for money of cultural initiatives has led to an association between the arts and more worthy causes. Thus, art and culture have begun to play a therapeutic and ethical role in society. Their transformative power is often harnessed as a means of bringing about social change and this phenomenon is closely linked to what Henry Giroux describes in his publication, *Cultural Studies as Performative Politics,* as 'performative pedagogy'.

Giroux presents his case by articulating a relationship between the political and pedagogical, which is fundamental to the critical analysis of cultural politics. The links between the various actors, are conveyed as intertextual sites of cultural production and his notion of performative pedagogy is grounded in the concept of border crossings. It is stated that the notion of border crossing "foregrounds the historical specificity and relational nature of different modes of address, the shifting nature of borders, and the demands they pose in naming and articulating the problems involved in considerations of agency, identity formation, politics". Furthermore, it highlights the "struggle over resources and relations of power" (Giroux, 2011, p.6). Not only this, the crossing of borders emphasizes contemporary cultural work which increasingly takes place in the "borderspace between high and popular culture, between the institution and the street, and between the private and the public" (Giroux, 2011, p.6). Consequently, the border is fluid and according to Giroux, is "open to the incessant tensions and contradictions that inform" individuals and their various forms of social engagement (Giroux, 2011, p.6). Thus, the interplay between representations, discussion, material relations of power and cultural politics within borderspaces, have created a type of cultural activity which Giroux coins as 'performative pedagogy'. According to Giroux, learning is "the outcome of diverse struggles rather than a passive reception of information" (Giroux, 2011, p.7). Implicit in the notion of 'cultural project', is the "public and imaginative nature of arts as a form of cultural politics and the importance of culture and public pedagogy, as a struggle over meaning, identity, and relations of power" (Giroux, 2011, p.9). Thus, Giroux asserts the notion that culture holds a moral and transformative power to enable social change. Consequently, Giroux claims that "pedagogy, in this context becomes

public and performative" (Giroux, 2011, p.9), opening up spaces for collaborative discussion and dispute. Performative pedagogy, as described by Giroux, therefore uses theory to understand and contextualize relations of power while simultaneously creating imagined possibilities through cultural practices. These imagined possibilities reflect a potential for social change and thus, performative pedagogy combines theory and action to produce transformation. In so doing, it contextualizes social relations and provides a platform on which relations of power can be discussed and disputed.

The British Council grounds most of its discourse within this notion of change, bringing to light societal issues of power and actively creating imagined possibilities through cultural practice. The interview conducted with Carvalho demonstrates the Council's approach to culture in Europe. It highlights the fact that the Council aims to share British best practice in culture in order to generate positive change. Carvalho states that there is little point, from the Council's perspective, in engaging in cultural activities which do not act as a catalyst for change (Carvalho,2019). Thus, it is highly important that the institution's activities are embedded within concrete theories of change and consequently measured against them. One of the initiatives which reflects this, is the Council's work for the *Post Pop* exhibition produced by the Gulbenkian, in Lisbon, in 2018. According to Carvalho, the Council worked actively on making the exhibition accessible to people with physical impairments, by producing audio guides for the exhibition (Carvalho, 2019). The collaboration and act of performative pedagogy arose from the criticism that culture should be made accessible to all. Thus, the Council reflected on issues of accessibility and power and created not only an imagined, but a realistic possibility for change through its cultural practice. In doing so, it not only generated an awareness of the issue of accessibility for individuals with physical impairments, but also brought the issue into the public sphere, enabling cultural discourse on the topic. It is important to note that the Council's focus on accessibility mirrors the focus of the European Union, which through the 2020 *Accessibility Act*, aims to make services more accessible to people who are affected by disabilities. As such, the Council maintains its humanistic, ergo European values. As previously mentioned, "the values that are proclaimed to be European values are in fact universalistic" (Groys, p.173) and as a result, the performative pedagogy enacted by the Council remains to be embedded within the same criticisms of society and hence imagine the same possibilities for change as other European partners, despite the fractured lines between Britain and Europe. The therapeutic ethos

portrayed by the Council's performative pedagogy reflects a general movement within arts and culture. According to Mirza, this type of performative pedagogy has "institutionalized thinking around the social and political importance of emotion" in arts and culture. Consequently, these industries are increasingly "concerned with issues of 'access', 'diversity', 'empowerment' and 'inclusion' (Mirza, 2005, p.269).

A further way in which the Council exercises a performative pedagogy is through education. Education as a performative practice "opens up a narrative space that affirms the contextual and the specific while simultaneously recognizing the ways in which such spaces are shot through with issues of power" (Giroux, 2011, p.13). Thus, pedagogy defines the performative as the following;

> "A transitive act, a work in progress informed by a cultural politics that translates knowledge back into practice, places theory in the political spaces of the performative, and invigorates the pedagogical as a practice through which collective struggles can be waged to revive and maintain the fabric of democratic institutions" (Giroux, 2011, p.14)

The 2017-18 annual report demonstrates the various ways in which the British Council has used education as a performative practice, translating knowledge into cultural practice as a transformative act. The Council states that it is "at the forefront of shaping the UK's new cultural relationship with Europe" (British Council, 2018, p.24) and thus, the report illustrates a close educational tie between the UK and Spain. The British Council collaborated with the Ministry of Education to implement a programme of bilingual education in state schools. The "programme was based on the curriculum of the British Council School, founded in 1940, which today prepares almost 2,000 pupils for a unique bilingual, bi-curriculum baccalaureate qualification" (British Council, 2018, p.24). The Council therefore applied its English teaching theory and knowledge to its cultural practice in Madrid. The fact that the programme was based on the implementation of bilingual education is highly significant as the interplay between the Spanish and English language, reflects the fluidity of linguistic borders, creating between them, a borderspace in which representations and relations can be critically questioned. This borderspace which is characterized by debate and dialogue, is fundamental to Giroux's notions of performative pedagogy. Furthermore, "in collaboration with Madrid's Ministry of Education" the Council "led a review of the impact of bilingual and non-bilingual education". Evidence collected from this review demonstrated that "bilingual school students

performed better across all skills" and the Council claims that "these findings will further shape the development of bilingual education in Spain" (British Council, 2018, p.24).

As a result, the performative practice of the Council in Spain, is embedded within its function as an educational body. Not only this, the Council conveys the potential for social change within the education sector through its therapeutic ethos. Its work engages in capability building, providing more students with access to English education and enabling students to perform better. As such, the performative practice highlights issues of accessibility and inclusion and through a transitive act, embeds the Council in a notion of democratic cultural politics. This concept of democratic cultural politics is extremely significant in conveying soft power narratives which are attractive to the rest of the world.

4.2 Linguistic Performances

A further perspective on performativity as part of institutional practice, focuses on the use of language and its consequences. As Judith Butler states in her text, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative,* "we claim that language acts, and acts against us…thus, we exercise the force of language even as we seek to counter its force" (Butler, 1997, p.1). We are therefore caught up in a bind as we battle with the issue of language as a paradox. Language, as described by Butler, provides entities with the possibility for social existence, fixing them in a temporal life. On the other hand, it also produces an "enabling response" (Butler, 1997, p.2). Thus, "we do things with language, produce effects with language, and we do things to language, but language is also the thing that we do". Butler further develops this point by stating that "language is a name for our doing: both "what" we do (the name for the action that we characteristically perform) and that which we effect, the act and its consequences" (Butler, 1997, p.8). One must therefore note the importance of "naming" as a means of performance as it is one of the primary ways in which entities are fixed as well as enabled within their social context. Within institutions, this notion of 'naming', draws several comparisons with the practice of categorization, which is essentially the practice of naming and ergo fixing things, paralyzing them in a temporal life while simultaneously generating and enabling responses.

The concept of naming as a means of performance is further developed through Butler's reference to the work of Austin titled, How to Do Things with Words, which distinguishes between illocutionary and perlocutionary language thus, differentiating between "actions that are performed by virtue of words, and those that are performed as a consequence of words" (Butler, 1997, p.44). The two perceptions are summarized by Butler through the following;

> "According to the perlocutionary view, words are instrumental to the accomplishment of actions, but they are not themselves the actions which they help to accomplish. This form of the performative suggests that the words and the things done are in no sense the same. But according to his view of the illocutionary speech act, the name performs itself, and in the course of that performing becomes a thing done; the pronouncement is the act of speech at the same time that it is the speaking of an act." (Butler, 1997, p.44)

As a result, words are instruments of performance. Furthermore, Butler extends the argument to suggest that they are also transitive. They not only signify things, but they are also the enactment of the thing and as such "the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting" (Butler, 1997, p.44) If this is the case, then the issue which requires further analysis for the purpose of this research, is the question of how the British Council, and cultural institutions in general, use words to signify as well as enact in a performative way.

One of the primary ways in which the British Council conducts this act of naming and ergo process of signification is through its practice of categorization. The Results and Evidence Framework previously mentioned, is a prime example of institutional categorization. It organizes the British Council's activities into four levels which not only name and ergo fix its activities in temporal space, but also, in so doing, enact and enable them. Level 1, titled *Global Results,* fixes British Council activities on the global stage, thus exercising the force of the term 'global' and consequently enabling the Council to perform and act as an institution with an international remit. As a result, the Council is global because it makes the declaration that it is, despite the fact that it does not operate in every existing country or corner in the world. Level 2, titled *Customer and Partner Data,* measures engagement and demonstrates the volume of the Council's activities. Furthermore, it quantifies initiatives and impact in order to clarify the Council's narrative structures. By quantifying and applying data collection frameworks, the institution is able to perform data collection by virtue of categorization and as a result of categorization. Level 3, as previously analyzed, is titled

Impact. The narrative conveyed as a result of this naming is highly performative. In claiming that the Council has impact, it enables opportunities for impact. The purpose of this level is to provide a stronger narrative of British Council activities by 2020, hence, the enabling response of the perlocutionary language used to classify this level. Finally, Level 4 titled, *Organisational Performance,* provides indicators which are aligned to the Corporate Plan. They provide a summary of performance against key organizational priorities (British Council, 2018). As a result, the naming here enables the alignment of the Councils activities with its agenda. The use of language creates tandems between the Council's priorities and actions, thus permitting it to perform its role as set out by the agenda. Consequently, an analysis of the British Council's systems of naming, ergo categorizing activities, demonstrates the performative power of language and the way in which institutions wield it on the global stage.

There is however, another element which must also be considered as part of the use of language as performance. In *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* Butler questions to what extent discourse gains "the authority to bring about what it names through citing the linguistic conventions of authority" consequently highlighting the concept that performances succeed as a result of their accumulated force of authority through repetition (Butler, 1997, p.51). Thus, the performance enacted by institutions is a ritualized practice which through its repetition and continuity, gains power. The language used in the *Results and Evidence Framework* is not isolated from the performative use of language in other British Council documents rather, it acts as complimentary in support of the wider performance. A brief glance over the 2017-18 annual report is sufficient in providing an understanding of the repetition of terms such as "global", "impact", "data" and "performance", all of which are embedded into the Council's discourse, and the use of which become ritualized.

It is therefore evident that language, is a performance that institutions such as the British Council enact in a ritualized manner. As a result, further enquiry is necessary to explore how this ritualization of performances change or occur in fractured social and political landscapes. The 2018-2020 British Council Corporate plan states the following.

> "In the current context of change and uncertainty, the British Council's
> steadfastness of purpose and our commitment to mutually beneficial and

respectful relationships between the UK and countries around the world matter more than ever. Our history has shown that it is at times such as these that we can achieve the most as we help to reaffirm and strengthen the UK's international and cultural connections" (British Council, 2018).

Thus, it appears that the political uncertainty as a result of the UK's decision to leave the EU has increased the relevance and importance of the British Council's performance on the global stage. This is re-iterated through the annual report which claims that the British Council's reason for being is more important than ever. Not only this, it is stated that "right now, if the British Council didn't exist we would need to invent it" (British Council, 2018) thus, emphasizing the increased need and social desire for institutional performances. As a result, the weight and power of ritualized performances is extrapolated as the fabric of society becomes increasingly fractured. Consequently, an analysis of the use of language as performance in institutional practice, highlights the fact that theories of the performative are "already at work in the exercise of political discourse" (Butler, 1997, p.40. Furthermore, it stresses the notion of "performativity as a renewable action without clear origin or end" hence, suggesting that speech is not constrained by the speaker nor is it constrained by its originating context. As seen through the analysis of the *Results and Evidence Framework*, language fixes the existence of performances as well as enables them thus, demonstrating their transitive nature. As a result, language is both defined by its social context and marked by its ability to break from context suggesting that "performativity has its own social temporality in which it remains enabled precisely by the contexts from which it breaks" (Butler, 1997, p.40).

4.3 Reflexive Performances

A further perspective on institutional practices of performance worth considering as part of this research, is that of Vitoria Turner in the publication *The Anthropology of Performance*. Turner considers the work of several different academics before taking a postmodern stance and concluding that performances are reflexive in nature. She claims that there has been an "extensive breakdown of boundaries between various conventionally defined sciences and arts, and between these modes of social reality", thus presenting contemporary society as a "crisscrossing of processes of various kinds and intensities" (Turner, 1987, p.11). With this multiperspectival approach and the increased dislodgement of cognitive and social structures,

she further claims that there is a movement towards a study of processes as performances. Turner states that;

> "Performances are never amorphous or open ended, they have diachronic structure, a beginning, a sequence of overlapping but isolable phases and an end. But their structure is not that of an abstract system; it is generated out of the dialectical oppositions of processes and of levels of process. In the modern consciousness, cognition, idea, rationality, were paramount. In the postmodern turn, cognition is not dethroned but rather takes its place on an equal footing with volition and affect." (Turner, 1987 p.11)

Thus, both social and cultural performances are derived from social processes. Paradoxically, they are structured yet fluid at the same time and are embedded within collective social experience, which upon reflection, can be extrapolated into broader generalizations about the human social condition. This argument is strengthened by the fact that Turner states that artistic and dramatic performances partly imitate the "processual form of the social drama and they partly, through reflection, assign meaning to it" (Turner, 1987, p.31). Consequently, social performances are the manifestation of experience and social drama is a "process of converting particular values and ends, distributed over a range of actors, into a system (which may be temporary or provisional) of shared or consensual meaning" (Turner, 1987, p.33). As a result, the force of social drama arises from the reflexive process which assigns meaning. Turner states that "the category of meaning arises in memory" (Turner, 1987, p.32) it is self-reflexive and orientated towards past experiences, thus negotiating a relationship between the past and the present. Furthermore, it is "connected with the consummation of a process" and is "bound up with its termination" suggesting that "the meaning of any given factor in a process cannot be assessed until the whole process is past" as a result, it is "retrospective and discovered by the selection action of reflexive attention" (Turner, 1987, p.34).

Thus, if a social performance is reflexive and bound up with meaning, the British Council as a case study initially presents a dilemma as it is an ongoing organization, one whose mission is still being carried out and therefore not yet terminated. Not only this, the period of social disruption which provided the focus for this thesis is not yet over, the process of the UK leaving the EU is ongoing and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. As such, the Council, from this perspective, should be considered for its individual processes and their ability to orchestrate social performance and convert several values and ends, over several different actors into a structured system.

The most evident way in which the Council is able to carry out such conversion from several different participants into a structured system, and hence enact a reflexive performance, is through its development of strategies and its monitoring and evaluation of performance against specified indicators. The Council's strategy, as outlined in the 2017-18 Annual Report, outlines three main policy objectives, *Influence and Attraction, Prosperity and Development,* and *Security and Sustainability*. Each of these objectives is measured in three separate ways through the following; external reports, British Council research and programme evidence. Thus, the institute's approach actively dislodges social constructs and adopts a highly postmodern attitude through its engagement with multiple different perspectives. Furthermore, the reflexive activity is continuously ongoing and as such, the Council is able to continuously embed meaning into its performance.

The British Council's performance is structured similar to the way a drama might be. It has a beginning, middle and end and ergo, mirrors the several stages of a process. The external reports used as part of this processual performance, provide the context for the wider global stage on which the British Council enacts. They are the beginning of the performance, in which the actor (in this case the Council) sets the scene and introduces the audience to the principle themes which will be later developed. The British Council research is the middle, in which the peculiarities of the Council's activities are distributed over a series of actors and hence present, the "sequence of overlapping but isolable phases" (Turner, 1987, p.11). The third and final stage of monitoring and evaluation employed by the Council, provides the end to the performance. The use of programme evidence presents a conclusion in which all the loose ends and overlapping diffusive entities are tied together. As such, the programme evidence allows the Council to extrapolate generalizations consequently, terminating the process.

Thus, the structure or the process through which the Council operates is highly performative in its distinction between beginning, middle and end. The fluid and dynamic middle is converted into a structured framework, permitting the process to conclude with statements or theories which can then be applied to a wider remit. Consequently, the Council is able to adapt individual experiences of actors and apply them to structured frameworks, enabling it to claim a broader truth. Furthermore, the process of monitoring and evaluation within the

Council, is continuously reflexive as data is being constantly extracted from social experiences and inserted into the governing structure. Not only this, there is a multiplicity in its reflexivity. Not only do the annual reports, and strategies within them, operate with fixed time constraints and therefore naturally terminate at the end of a cycle, they are characterized through their process of continuous reflection and assessment. As a result, the plurality of the reflexive process embeds the performance with multiple meanings, which reflect the dynamic and diffusive quality of the social while simultaneously mirroring its structured nature. Thus, the paradox of the social is mirrored in institutional performances. As previously mentioned, it has been suggested that the British Council has become more relevant as a result of the social and political uncertainty between the UK and Europe. British Council employees argue that nothing has really changed in the way in which the Council operates, its narratives have merely become more important. It therefore appears that the Council has been assigned more meaning as a result of the political disruption, its work ingrained with increased importance. As such, one can conclude that the uncertainty has meant a rise in reflexive action. Turner states that at every moment, and particularly in the face of crises, "the meaning of the past is assessed by reference to the present and, of the present by reference to the past" (Turner, 1987, p.35). Consequently, the Council can be considered to be continuously and constantly reflexive in its performance, it is however given greater importance, ergo meaning, in the face of uncertainty.

4.4 Mimicry and the 'Other'

As previously observed, the notion of soft power is essentially pluralistic. For soft power to be effective its messages must multiply through various different media. Furthermore, it is highly diffusive and fluid. Soft power relies upon the merging of boundaries and consequently, is borderless. It is a hybrid of various different narratives, all the same yet slightly different. Without digressing too far into the area of Post-Colonial Studies, as this is a whole separate area of research to which this thesis cannot do justice, it is perhaps important to reflect briefly upon the work of Homi Bhabha and his concept of mimicry as a form of hybridity. In his publication *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivilence of Colonial Discourse,* Bhabha states that mimicry is "the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (Bhabha, 1984, p.126). Thus, mimicry implies a process of 'normalization' of the other and operates

through the hybridity of cultures. Not only this, Bhabha reflects upon the way in which mimicry is used by individuals who have been colonized as a strategy of desire. He claims that mimicry has strategic objectives and he highlights the difference between "being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition also become different" (Bhabha, 1984, p.130). These strategies of desire are considered "nonrepressive productions of contradictory and multiple belief" (Bhabha, 1984, p.130) and it is within this realm that the Council operates, creating a desire and producing multiplicity. Mimicry is therefore, "like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence" (Bhabha, 1984, p.131) and re articulates presence.

Within this context, it is vital to consider the Council not only as an enabler for said mimicry, but also as a champion in creating the strategic desire for said mimicry to occur. It could be argued that the Council effectively Anglicizes individuals through its nonrepressive approach towards creating strategies of desire. The ability to communicate in English is widely considered as the key to having success upon the global stage and the Council actively engages in the promotion of this notion, in order to produce an emotional need for language learning and to encourage engagement. The Corporate plan for 2018-2020 states that "the power of language is recognized as an important component of soft power" and that "research shows that the strongest predicator of trust in the UK is a person's ability to speak English" (British Council, 2018, p.12). Thus, a strong command of the English language is presented as fundamental to enabling access for individuals to the rest of the UK. Not only this, the Council's discourse conveys the notion that through its English language teaching, it supports individuals, particularly young people, with "life-changing opportunities to open doors to international study and enhanced career opportunities" (British Council, 2018, p.12). As a result, fluency in English is associated to success and opportunity and this effectively produces desire.

It could be argued that in places like Portugal, this perception of the English language is reflected in reality as according to Carvalho, most decision makers within cultural institutions have had some sort of relationship with the UK and particularly, the Council (Carvalho, 2019). Furthermore, the Council in Portugal is one of the most expensive providers of English language education on the market. Consequently, association with the Council not only reflects notions of prosperity, but also implies assumptions regarding social class. This

is similar in Spain where the Council, according to the annual report, is held in high regard and has in turn embedded the notion of learning the English language in prestige (British Council, 2018, p.25). The Council therefore effectively creates emotional desire through its positioning as a leading educator within the industry of English language teaching. Thus, individuals invest in a form of resemblance through the process of learning English. It could be implied, that the current fractured landscape in Europe strengthens the Council's position, increasing its soft power. The UK's potential exit from the EU has increased the ideology surrounding the concept of the 'Other' and the ruptured landscape has in fact exacerbated this notion of difference. However, with or without Brexit, the UK's universities and education sector is world leading and has significant presence on the global stage. Consequently, there is an emotional desire to study or engage in the UK's education sector and the Council positions itself at the forefront of this, providing access and enabling individuals to perform said mimicry as an appropriation of the 'Other' which reflects power. It's discourse actively promotes study in the UK and between 2018-2019, it encouraged over half a million enrollments in UK universities (British Council, p.21 2018). The Council describes its activity in this area as attracting "higher education students to the UK contributing to the vitality of academic life in the UK and bolstering the UK's international reputation" (British Council, p.21 2018). As a result, it harnesses the power of education, producing hybridity as it encourages individuals to reform through Anglicization. Social unrest therefore provides the Council with increased relevance (Carvalho,2019) as it positions itself as the link through which appropriation of the 'Other' can occur. The mimicry of individuals which is amplified by the mass of students engaging in the Council's English teaching services, serve to create production of multiple belief ergo, visualizing Britain's soft power.

Conclusion

The British Council therefore provides a complex, yet rather complete case study with regards to the institutional use of soft power as a means of creating and communicating narratives. It is important to highlight that the use of this case permits us to reflect upon the technical adjustments and strategic action taken by cultural institutions in order to navigate fractured socio-political landscapes. It can be argued that many of these institutional strategies are pre-disruption, embedded into the fabric of institutional practice and interaction with the social body. They do however, appear to gain relevance during periods of mass uncertainty as individuals and organisations alike seek reassurance. The social imperative for the existence of institutions such as the British Council is therefore not new. Cultural institutions and their discourse, diffuse in and out of the canon and archive depending upon the social context.

Referring back to the research questions outlined at the beginning of this thesis, cultural institutions such as the British Council act as a mediator or go-between. They operate within a complex social nexus, creating connections between both macro and micro levels of social cohabitation and structure. According to Foucault, power is generated on multiple levels and between the various relationships and layers within society. Not only this, Nye's concept of soft power relies upon the notion of shared values and exchange. Thus, interaction between layers is fundamental to ingraining ideology and narratives of soft power within the social body. The Council, employs various tactics of two-way exchange in order to provide points of interaction. An example of this type of duality is the 'Standing Out' vs 'Reaching Out' paradox which appears to be sown into the fabric of the Council's foundation and mission. The Council also creates discourse of plurality through its push and pull mechanisms. The British Council has various different political as well as social accountabilities. The entrenching of the Council and its position as described in chapter 2, therefore depends upon its ability to change its discourse to meet the needs of those to whom it is accountable, ultimately producing a variety of different narratives. Not only this, the Council's policy making is an effective means of interaction with multiple layers of society. As a result of its policy making, the Council is able to engage with local communities with the help of its local

institutional partners. This is evident through the Council's work on accessibility and its partnering with other institutions to further national impact (Carvalho, 2019). Furthermore, the Council engages in processes from a top-down as well as a bottom-up perspective. These two perspectives are combined in the Council's discourse. The summits and White Paper produced as a reaction to the UK's decision to leave Europe, is an example of this two-way exchange which was led and mediated by the Council. The exercise required listening to feedback from cultural partners and communicating it effectively back to parliament. Thus, the Council participates in both the act of creating Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy.

Similar to the way in which academic discourse uses the two terms (Soft Power & Cultural Diplomacy) interchangeably, the Council flits between the two as a means of providing ground for engagement with all types of actors. Finally, the Council acts as a go-between through its networking practice which serves to shift the boundaries of the conventional perception of the border. The Council's various bordering perspectives and its social engagement activities which encourage individuals to adopt new ideologies surrounding the notion of the border, serve to provide fluidity and mobility across cultural borders. This contemporary notion of mobile borders mirrors Bauman's concept of liquidity and consequently, it can be argued that institutions such as the Council, adopt fluid approaches to their practices in order to transverse the various levels that make up the social body. This flexible quality enables the diffusive movement of the Council's influence across international borders. Furthermore, it permits narratives to shift along a discursive grid, depending on the current political context. Institutions such as the Council exploit this mobile aspect of soft power in order to bring issues in and out of focus. Thus, they effectively curate discourse in response to the contemporary context.

Furthermore, Cultural institutions have undergone several technical adjustments, particularly in recent history, in order to produce narratives with a coherent agenda. One of the fundamental adjustments which is clearly visible in the Council's operation is the adaptation of practices of management similar to those of corporate businesses. As described in Chapter 3, the use of marketing tactics and the technical adaptation of placemaking as a branding exercise, reflects the conscious as well as strategic methods in which contemporary cultural organisations attempt to curate the wider political agenda. Collaboration with other institutions in order to share resources and develop discourse is one of the fundamental ways

in which cultural institutions produce communication hubs. These hubs are integral to the plurality of narratives surrounding specific topics of debate as they include multiple actors and voices. The Council, through these collaborative partnerships, therefore provides platforms of discussion and debate in which agendas are constructed on an international scale. This, coupled with the marketing narratives of neutrality, produce a powerful discourse which is embedded within the knowledge economy. As a result, the Council positions itself as an open and transparent entity which through its various interactions with state, institutions and individuals, constructs a plurality of truths.

A further way in which the Council contributes to the broader political agenda is through the use of English both as a powerful cultural tool but also, as an effective performance. The strength of English as a means of international communication, brings to light several social aspects related to narratives of power such as, the generation of strategies of desire and as well as the deteritorialization of borders. Furthermore, the re-articulation of English through the plethora of teaching centers re-produces multiple individual narratives in the English language, thus exercising Foucault's productive notion of power. Not only this, the British Council is effective in molding political narratives through its cultural experiences and programmes. Cultural events and programmes currently have the power to "shape national reputations globally" (Olivares, 2015, p.51) and are major sources for positive reputation generation. The Council's programmes offer a chance to build people to people connections. This is vital to the production of soft power as according to Nye, soft power is grounded within civil society. The people to people links nurtured through the Council's programmes aim to develop lasting relationships with individuals outside the UK and are vital to this process. Furthermore, much of the content of "global communications is cultural" (Olivares, 2015, p.52) ergo, cultural institutional narratives are at the forefront of production of discourse and content.

Finally, paradox and plurality are fundamental characteristics of the British Council and its practice. The Council, re-constructs as well as de-constructs notions of identity, border and nation. Furthermore, it embeds itself within self-reflexive practices which are both fluid and structured at the same time, providing narratives with continuity and history, ergo political weight, and also a creative power to respond and react to new situations. Soft power, and consequently, narratives disseminated by the Council do collide. This fact does not however

reflect a weakness in the activity of cultural institutions but rather, a strength. Transparency, local engagement and the presentation of multiple perspectives are vital to a cultural institution's soft power. The Council effectively engages in all three of these aspects however, the use of multiple perspectives is perhaps the most interesting as it permits the Council to, operate in geographic areas of political tension, create relationships of trust with both individuals and state as well as play with the concept of canon and archive as a means of public diplomacy. Not only this, the Council's use of paradox allows it to mirror European trends and thus, create unity with Europe during a period in which the lines and borders that make up the European landscape are fracturing. Europe is characterized by its paradoxes of fluidity yet rigidity and thus, the Council is able to interact with Europe on a level playing field, similarly picking and choosing the narratives and messages which suit its agenda best at any given time.

Institutional practice of soft power is therefore a melting pot of colliding and contradicting phenomena. The British Council specifically engages in various processes which produce infinite clashing narratives surrounding the UK. Paradoxes of the Council include the notions of sameness and difference, language as both a contextual breaker, as well as a tool which defines context, repetition and metaphor as a means if drawing narratives in and out of the active working memory and the use of culture as a resource, which serves to both emphasize tradition as well as create new practices. Thus, cultural narratives are constantly being constructed and deconstructed. The reflexive and paradoxical nature of British Council practices blurs boundaries, reinforces social ideologies and destroys social structures simultaneously. Consequently, the Council's narratives are hybrid, producing a series of imagined possibilities which are diffusive in nature. To refer back to Adichie's theory, multiple stories and therefore, multiple truths are necessary in any healthy society as a means of counteracting social stereotypes (Adichie, 2009). Within the current European landscape, the production of multiple narratives is vital in counteracting notions of the 'Other' and creating unity in diversity.

This research has therefore focused on the single case of the British Council and the way in which it harnesses soft power through the creation and communication of cultural narratives. It addresses the current political climate of uncertainty however, it has become evident throughout this research that narratives of soft power are entirely context dependent. Cultural

institutions engage in various techniques and management practices in order to operate fluidly and thus, enable the contemporary adaptation to context. The British Council as a case study, provides an insight into institutional practices of soft power generation however, the research highlights the fact that the production of soft power narratives relies upon the interchangeable patterns of interaction between all levels of society. In an age of hyperconnectivity it would be naïve to assume that the Council exists in isolation and is the sole agent in this process. Thus, further research is required in order to relate the Council to other institutional partners and actors also engaging in this process and simultaneously reacting to the current political context. Development to this topic should perhaps focus on the points of interaction or hybridity between agents in order to provide a broader outlook into both the macro and micro levels of soft power generation.

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Annex A

Interview Transcription

Emanuel Carvalho, Director Education & Culture, British Council, Portugal,

15th January 2019

Participant:

I joined the council in 2016 so we were just, I think a year and a few months, oh no sorry we were six months in to the vote, and the council, although we are an organisation that represents the United Kingdom, we are independent from government. The Queen is our patron but we report into Whitehall nonetheless, so even though our agenda is set by us, our overall remit is set by the Whitehall agency and the government and they pretty much let us set our agenda and go off and do it. And roughly every 3 years they review us through a process which over the last few years has been known as a tailored review where essentially they set up a cross Whitehall kind of audit team and they come and inspect all of our activity to make sure that we are doing the things we said we were going to do, we are doing them for the right reasons and they are things that are still in line with our mission. So we are not kind of getting mission creep and getting into other things. A lot of that has been about kind of financial responsibility, making sure that taxpayer money is going to things that taxpayers should pay for and vice versa, but also about the kind of work we do and why. In Europe we have, I think looking back at a trend possibly a good decade, decade and a half where our, I wouldn't say our soft power has diminished but our role in soft power has changed. So, we've gone away from promoting British culture as a start to saying British culture is doing pretty well on its own, young people in Portugal know all about British artists and British persona and music, it's kind of what do we do underneath that direction so that people and professionals can grow and develop and create networks. So, 5 years ago I would have given any artist that came to Portugal that wasn't kind of really well known some money to come, paid for their flight, accommodation and done some events with them... Now we kind of don't do that. Now if you are coming to Portugal to do something anyway, now we build a programme around what you are doing and we try and build a programme for young people that's around education and around kind of capability building, so building skills. So, we are promoting the best of British culture, but the best of British culture in our mind is not the culture anymore but it's the processes, the system behind it and the approach. That's true in

accessibility in the arts we are kind of leaders, our museums are the best museums in the world without failure, in terms of our policies of engagement, our activity numbers, accessibility etc. So with those kind of things we think that perhaps pure promotion of culture was already slipping. Brexit brings along an opportunity to say, ok, promoting culture is still there but actually in this world we have a lot of influence and a lot of friends that we have spent 30, 40 years building relationships with and really the first thing the council tried to do in terms of input with the government was not to say "this is what the council thinks" but to say "we as the council have had a conversation with all of our partners around Europe, and all together these are the things our partners are saying - this is what they want to see come out of Brexit and out of any deal". So how do we do that, the regional team set up a series of summits that happened, policy dialogues, the first one was in Berlin, there was one in Madrid, there was one in London, and one somewhere else, I think there were four in total. What we did is we invited all of our fellow cultural institutions so the Goethe, the Alliance, the Cervantes, and in each country then and in all the other countries, people we thought were stakeholders from Portugal to Spain, we invited people from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, senior leaders in our cultural world, museum directors, all to come along and say "guys sit back, honestly and just kind of tell us what you feel first of all about Brexit because it is important for us to understand how you feel", almost everyone feels betrayed and left alone, and lost by us. And then what could we do as a group and as the British Council to mitigate the effects of that? Out of those three, four events came a wide paper and that wide paper is what we officially presented back to parliament in the Whitehall. So, we are not inventing our own agenda, our agenda and our narrative is a narrative of our partners and the landscape in Europe and this is what they want. There are some interesting things in that document, a lot of it you read and think ok well that's nice but what does it mean and what is the take away? But what we found from that is that there was a huge amount of desire to carry on continuing dialogues, to talk, to say "ok yes, some of the mechanisms might change around how we work together but if we carry on talking then we can probably get around most of those and we can solve those problems. Bog concerns then were around, okay cultural soft power is very much based on mobility, the mobility of artists and the people around them to travel around, showcase their work and for people to engage with it and Brexit presents some serious challenges there. So, some of those sessions got into some really detailed things like what do we try to do about mobility? How do we secure mobility in education / culture? None of which have yet to make it into the Brexit deal that is to be voted

on today. So rather than us (trying to address your questions) creating a narrative ourselves of the importance of our work in soft power, we've gone out to our colleagues in the world and asked them to tell us how important our relationship is with them, how important the work is that we do, and what specific things they want to protect, in terms of our soft power. Now the fact that we were able to do that, I think already illustrates how strong our soft power is, that without fail, from each of the countries that were invited to come along, people came, big names came and they shared their open honest opinions. Sometimes from a professional standpoint reviewing what their institutions wanted to say, other times really individual kind of things came out like "personally I am really hurts and personally this is what I think we should do". So, our role has not so much been to construct a narrative of our own, but to use the reality of our relationships to construct a narrative by itself. So, what our partners have said is what we believe, luckily, they could have come out and said "good luck guys, we are sick of you interfering in Europe" but they didn't. So that validated the importance of our role in Europe, the really strong desire from our partners, even though politically come countries might be like "you know what guys, if you want to go, go", our partners have never said that. In Portugal in particular all of our partners in the world of culture and education (I mix them all together because culture is education, its science, it's all those things put together), they have all said "let's just do as much as we can until something changes and when it changes we will work out what to do then". Which is a really positive approach and it allowed us to carry on doing things sometimes without money, without support and resources that we wouldn't have been able to do, simply because people want to get it done quickly while they can, because they don't know what the future holds. So that's the kind of landscape, we have kind of steered away from creating our own narratives, we know what our mission is, that never changes.

Every year we present at Whitehall and the last one was in November; the ambassador presents a joint bilateral soft power strategy document. There are three key elements around the bilateral strategy. One is very much out of our reach which is defense and everything related to the world of defense, the other one is business and enterprise, and the other one is soft power. And business and enterprise is referred to as prosperity. And in both prosperity and soft power the British Council has a really strong role in the embassy's plan. Why? Because prosperity in Portugal is very much connected to the use of the English language. Portuguese businesses do well because of English and the export markets they sell to. We are

receiving lots of new investment in Portugal because we can hire people that speak English, that are good are connecting with people. So English plays a fundamental role in Portugal's success on the global stage. And then on the soft power side we have made a concerted effort over quite a few years now to kind of make visible contributions. So, it's not about promoting its about contributing with capability building. If we are good at something let's share that knowledge and best practice and know how, and between that there is an interchange with artists and culture, great. But as long as you are sharing best practice, things should change. So, in the arts for example, this year and possibly next our only real focus is to build on Isabel's accessibility and disability arts programme. We have worked with individual institutions and now we are working with DGArtes and we want to work with all the museum leaders in Portugal and do a training programme for all of them, to move away from helping individual institutions and to try for national impact. So, if you are not having a national impact, if you are not changing the way things work in Portugal then why are you doing them. Is it worth working with just one institution to train one person? Probably not. It might have been worth it a few years ago when we had lots of money and time and resources. Now we don't have the bodies, we don't have the cash so how do we have national impact with small intervention. So that has kind of changed our role and in lots of ways people have seen that initially I think as the British Council pulling away from its traditional role. No, what it is a kind of re-focus of what we should be promoting and we should be promoting best practice not the art itself, here. In Latin America, in Africa, in Asia, all of those priorities are very very different. So, I will share with you the top lines of our country plan, which is our key three priorities. The one which is the most fundamental is sustainable business in English and Exams, the other two priorities are to support our education and opportunities in the UK with strong links, helping Portugal internationalise their higher education sector, and in the world of science (science and communication) to make sure they are as close as they can be, and in the world of arts and culture it is really about enabling Portuguese cultural professionals to build the skills they need to change the Portuguese ecosystem (almost all focused on accessibility and disability arts).

Just looking at your questions, soft power and concrete action, without fail, visible government interference can almost certainly damage it. I don't think the British Council really suffers from government interference. Our mission has been clear for 80 years, essentially it hasn't changed much, how we do it has changed but the overall mission hasn't.

So, the government doesn't essentially get involved in British Council policy making. Our agenda that is approved by the government does that and then we go out and we deliver policy. How that is done is quite complex. But generally, we set our policy and we go off and deliver. I think with Brexit, the only thing that has really changed is that the communication between Whitehall departments has become much stronger. So, our cooperation with FCO is much much stronger, much more meaningful engagement and much more regular conversations. The same thing with DIFID, we don't really deal with many other government departments on a regular basis. Our engagement with the education sector and that means schools in the UK, education ministry and higher education as a sector on its own, we have been really actively involved in taking the messages that they are giving us and feeding that back into government for policy development but very little of it is influenced by us. It's kind of "what the sector wants is what we convey". In the arts, particularly in the cultural industries, we had a review 18 months / 2 years ago that kind of just asked the arts sector in the UK about the work we do for them overseas and is it the right/wrong thing? Should we do it better? For a long time, the British Council also acted as a curator so we took all this exciting stuff that was happening in the UK and we decided which ones fitted the agenda better and different countries presumably kind of selected them and took them off to work. And what the industry has said to us is that they are the artistic professionals, they curate, they select and develop. What the British Council should be is the principle interlocutor of connections and a facilitator of people. So, they have said to us that curation is not our job. They want to choose what should go overseas and we should work to make the connections they need. So, there is a change happening around our soft power with the sector itself, where they are saying that it's not our job to choose, it's their job. Our job is to go out there and engage and open doors. Which for us is great because its more agenda free. What we are doing is connecting people, if they choose to work together great, we don't support or fund them either way. So, I think we have taken that on board from a policy angle and you will see a lot of activity in the council now is around just that. Forget us choosing 5 artists to participate in the Euro - British music, it's around this happening and there are 5 British artists coming, what can we do with them to add value to what they are already going to do? They might be here for 5 weeks and we think how many people are they going to engage with? How much training are they going to do? We set up meeting with different agencies from around Europe who might be in town that week and want to commission their work. So, it has become much more practical, it's about extending their work and not so much about us

being this filter of what the UK has to offer. That is important because it makes us less biased. People can see that we are more transparent and that we are more open, and they are more open with us. So, in terms of our ability to influence and lobby, it's actually become stronger, we can be more open and more transparent about what we are doing. We are not trying to push a particular artist or push a particular art form.

I think that is now evolving slowly but surely, I think we are much better at being responsive to what the sector wants, the same is true in education. For a long time, the higher education system in the UK, the EU wasn't really interesting for them because they were making big money from Asia and the Middle East with all the international students. The Eu had its own systems, Erasmus plus, things were working nicely, very few British students study in the mainland EU, plenty of EU students study in the UK. So, the UK was kind of winning the UK battle so it didn't really care, wasn't too involved in what happened. Brexit has changed that because it's suddenly realised that actually there is a lot happening in Europe and it needs to maintain this, needs to find different ways of working together and it's kind of come back to the fold in terms of working together to address issues of particular countries. So now UK universities are actively working with us again in Europe where before they weren't. Now the dialogue is much more around looking for partners that can help us do collaborative research, residencies, teacher training, teacher mobility and that is stuff that hasn't really happened in the EU for 10 / 15 years because things just happen naturally. So, one of the impacts of Brexit in terms of our soft power is that our soft power at home as the British Council has become stronger because both the education sector and the culture sector realise that our role is more important than ever, particularly with results in the EU. Because they are more active with us, it means that we have more influence in the market, so now I know in Portugal we can comfortably talk and represent the whole sector. We have a united front particularly in education where we work hand in hand with the embassy. They've got a science team, we've got an education team and we do everything together so that any university dean or minister sitting in front of the British Council and someone from the embassy is essentially talking to the whole of the UK sector and knows that we have access and we are here on their remit (we are doing things that they want and we are not just here looking for opportunities). So that's I think how things have changed in the last few years. We have become more relevant to the sectors back home which make us more powerful in terms of lobbying influence and we have become more relevant outside because people are

noticing that without the EU mechanism, how do we keep connected to the UK and how do we keep things going? Here is the British Council and the British Council can do it. So, our own soft power and the importance of our work has raised because of Brexit. Are we rising to the challenge in terms of resources? It's very difficult because we are under difficult funding conditions anyway, I think there has been a lot of concerted effort to try and guarantee us resources which were going to be taken away. But that resource battle is never ending. So, whether you have more money or less money, it's about how you are working it that makes a difference. There have been recently challenges of financing, and a much reduced grant spend in Europe. Our money is divided into two parts of funding, the money we make through teaching and exams or the money we get via tax payers, or our reserves which are made up of a mix of both. So, in order to continue our cultural work we have been dipping a lot in Europe into our reserves and I would imagine that over the next year, with the new Regional Director and a few other changes that that will change and there will be a new change in direction. So, what's really important in soft power then is demonstrating impact because if you are spending money and you are asking for resources to do things with, it's not enough to say "5000 people came to our shows, or, we reached 500 000 people through our digital channels and they all learnt a little bit about the UK". Impact, what actually changed in the country? So, one of our challenges has been measuring impact, we have invested a lot because we have always believed in soft power, we know it's true, we know we have political influence but people are asking and saying "ok for this 100 000, what soft power are we getting? That's the big challenge. So that's why we used to have what we call our scorecard, now it is our results and evidence framework, so that every piece of work we do we measure the resources that go in, the stakeholders involved, the audiences, and we track the indicators of how they were engaged, at what level, how long they were engaged for… Do we do it very well yet? No but we are probably one of the leading organisations in doing that compared to our peers. Very few others have the systems in place. So, I think for the first time we have more solid mechanisms for measuring the impact of soft power, numerically. A lot of the impact of soft power is influence, so how do you measure influence? It's very tough. Some people measure it through access, so if you need to have a conversation about a topic with a government minister, can you reach them? I think generally in a place like Portugal and Europe the British Council has enough weight and soft power to do that. Can you turn that influence into action? That's kind of almost no longer our role. Once you have set an idea and put it in motion you have to wait for the other side to take it on

board. But we have so much credibility as an organisation that has been around longer than all of our counterparts, we've been in Europe 80 years, that I think we are more impactful now than we were 5 or 6 years ago, because 5 or 6 years ago we were just one of many sitting around a table and chatting, now we get to almost have conversations one to one because people are really preparing for post this vote. So, our conversations aren't diluted in the mix of 27 voices all trying to get their agenda. Now it is all those voices still and us which means that the person listening on the Portuguese side is completely focused on our agenda and when they speak to their other European colleagues they have got 27 noises coming at them. So, in terms of how we operate and soft power in the British Council, Brexit has been a boom because we have become more relevant, we get more one to one time, people are more interested in what we have to say, people are really interested in safeguarding the work we have done in the past. So, I think that it's worked in our favour. Your third question is quite interesting, "create and communicate multiple truths", I don't think we try to share the agenda around British Culture, I think we would be wrong to. I think our role is to disseminate it as effectively as possible based on the needs of British cultural sectors. Maybe a few years ago we would have set the agenda around some areas like accessibility in the arts, but I don't think we need to. I think the British cultural sector is so rich that what agenda are we really setting? If you ask a British artist of a young person in the UK, unless they have been through a British Council funded programme, they generally won't know what the British Council is. 75% percent in the UK probably have no idea who we are and I think if you are in that position you can't possible set the agenda. What you can do is that you can try and say "here is some information about the world out there, this is what the world is asking for, can you rise to the challenge and give us that offering?". So, do we try and set the agenda, no. We let the sector set the agenda, the artists set the agenda, and then we try and work around that as much as possible. We consciously attempt not to set the agenda. It's a change and we do that because we have been asked not to. We have been asked to stop setting agendas. The fourth question I think I answered in my first piece. When we immediately at the beginning decided to respond somehow to Brexit, we knew immediately that our voice alone wouldn't have the necessary weight. So, we went out to our partners. Not just our partners in the UK which were UKI, The Arts Council, the big powers, they were big emergency meetings with the council. The response were all sectoral responses, responses from the art sector, from the education sector, not a response from the British Council. So, the ability to react as a sector is fundamental in terms of getting your message

across so that people take it on board, so that they find it credible. Whether they are actioned or not, I can't tell you how many things in that White paper may or may not find themselves in the Brexit deal, but the fact that those things were considered and we know that they were discussed, is already a strong starting point. I think that we have been really good at collaborating with British institutions to get these messages across. We have been really good at collaborating with our European institutions as well and getting the feedback from them. Aside from those big forums we talked about, we have had a, and this is weird for the British Council, a Whatsapp comms group. All of the country directors around Europe are in it, and our head of comms in London. Every meeting we go to where someone says something about Brexit, we make a note of it and send a message saying communicating what they said. I won't necessarily say who or why, but we are getting feedback. So, we have a continuous stream of real live feedback coming in from all of the different countries. The comms team look at it weekly and see the trends coming in and decide to action or develop a response to specific themes coming in. Whether it's about student fees or mobility funding for the sake of artists, or what taxes will need to be paid. So, we don't invent that, we allow it to come to us and we capture it. The team in London analyses it and decides what are the trends and how to react to it. People don't know that we do this, but it's been a really clever way because if you have this continuous feedback opposed to a monthly report you can react to it quickly and you can come back with answers really quickly and give people the official position. People find that quite comforting. They can air a grievance and if some of them you can respond to and you actually do respond to even though they didn't ask you to, that just makes them much more comfortable with you. We try to resolve the things that they highlight as issues. In terms of specific collaboration and looking at Portugal specifically, what we have done with universities, the embassy and many other cultural organisations is that we have done small events that are tied around Brexit, to let people air their concerns, to provide the latest updated information (up until now the message has generally been that we don't know anything but here are the latest position from education etc) and to maintain a continuous dialogue. When we don't know things, we say that we don't know and that as soon as we have news we will share it. That has gone down particularly well with the universities and students who are looking to go overseas and what to know what is happening with fees. In the artistic sector it has been really good for the longer-term planning because they plan exhibitions and artists one or two years into the future. In the wider world of business, entrepreneurship and prosperity, it's just helped us maintain a regular dialogue with business

in Portugal. If I am honest I use that to position British Council services and not so much for soft power because that belongs to the embassy. Business and enterprise is an embassy job, not ours but if we are there at the table and we can use that opportunity to engage around culture and English and exams then great. We sometimes forget that we do all these cultural projects and all this work in education and science but our most powerful cultural instrument is the 12000 people a year we have sitting English Exams in Portugal and the 9000 students of English we have in our centres across the country. If you are coming in week after week to do English lessons at a British Council centre, after several years of that, it is much more influential in terms of engaging people in British culture than any of the work we do in projects. I could do a UK exhibition every year and there will still be more people in the teaching centre learning English and engaging with teachers than there ever will be going to the exhibition. So, the teaching of the English language is probably our primary cultural achievement. It's the one that stimulates the demand for everything else. You learn a language so that you can communicate and consume culture so our exams and our teaching business, we don't often think of it this way in Portugal, but they are the essential pillars of cultural engagement. If I go out to meetings, whether they are politicians, academics, commercial people, without fail, any decision maker has passed through the council. Either they came for lessons here of they did their Cambridge exams here several years ago. We have fundamentally changed the lives of thousands of decision makers in Portugal over 80 years. That soft power is not one we have ever tried to capture. We have new people coming to us every day, we engage with young people doing arts and culture but what about people who came to us 50 years ago, our leaders of ministry, of government departments and companies… What do we do with them? To date we have done nothing. What we are doing now is we are launching a UK alumni network, which will bring together leaders in the sectors that care about us, arts, education, science, technology etc, to bring those people together on a more regular basis. They are people who are willing to help. They had a good experience with the UK and a good experience with the British Council and they want to do things. We have never asked them to do anything for us but before we ask lets do something for them. So we are setting up a network, with regular engagements around themes that the network cares about to allow people who have been in the UK and want to continue to promote the UK to do so with our support but in their own context and the way they feel is possible. So we aren't going to drive it, we are going to set it up, anything that the network wants to do with the UK then we are here to help but the network itself has to drive the

agenda. I think that will be very important in terms of a new initiative of soft power because for the first time we are saying very specifically "you that loves the UK, what are you willing to do to help? Tell us what it is and we will make it happen". So that is one of the latest things, our collaboration there is specifically with the British Embassy and the FCO and also with the existing networks of alumni that are in Portugal such as LSE, UCL, Loughborough, Cambridge, Lancaster etc. They are small networks that have all been asking us individually to do things. On their own they are too small but by joining forces and working together they are given a voice, the alumni feel like they have a direct input into policy both on the FCO side and the British Council side and it means they are really open to receiving us and our ideas, suggestions, help and requests for support. Wrapping up that fourth question, we have worked on a high level, European level with big institutions to understand what they want and transfer those messages back to Whitehall, we have worked locally with institutions to do the same thing. Now our challenge is to work with individuals that actually appreciate the UK. It is a challenge. Most of this activity has no funding resources so we work a lot on goodwill and by exploiting networks of other organisations. The only way that we can do that is if they also get something out of it. I would love to do UK alumni network meetings in the council every week but we can't do it because we can't pay for it but there are universities who will have an agenda to engage with specific universities in the UK and they are open to having groups of people there to talk about different issues. So, we start by using institutions and we informally get institutions to buy into this work without actually asking them to. It means that at the beginning of the year we are calling them, engaging them and telling them what to do. By month 6 we don't have to contact them anymore because they are calling us. The idea is to have people to come to you and not you chasing them and I think that is the value of soft power. The value of soft power is people recognising that you can help and deliver and they come to you with ideas and suggestions instead and of you chasing business and by business not just in the financial sense but i mean activity, projects and interesting things. We are quite lucky in that we don't get involved in any way in the political side of Brexit. It's not our agenda. We are really focused on the practicalities in the education sector and the practicalities of the cultural sector. Beyond that all we do is convey messages. If we didn't have Brexit for example, there would still be underlying trends of Nationalism, and Populism in Europe that we would have activities and projects working towards solving. So, our society work in Portugal for example last year was quite minimal because Portugal's big societal problems are not really things that we can really solve. Greece had a massive refugee

crisis and we have massive BC funded programmes there teaching refugees English so that they can get jobs and move out of Greece really quickly. In Portugal we received 18 people on a boat and it was frontline news for 2 months. We don't have that particular crisis. It doesn't receive European funding anymore because Portugal has pretty much done its development job. So how do you remain relevant without resource? Tough question. So far, the only answer we have is by making ecosystems better. So, if we collaborate, the collaboration is not the end of. The collaboration has to lead to an improvement in something and something has to be better at the end of it. Not just for a couple of people who came to a show or who had a great exhibition. A great example is Isabel's work with the Gulbenkian last year with Post Pop. We lent them some artwork from our collection and facilitate the connection with others who also lent them art but this isn't new or different or better. What we wanted was for 50% of the exhibition to be available for people with difficulty in hearing and in sight. So, we wanted audio scribes, guides for the visually impaired, school children to come along and do workshops in English and learn about the exhibition. What happened in the end is all of the innovations were so successful because there is so much demand that they are implementing them now as full programmes. The Gulbenkian have now trained all of their curation staff in audio description, all because of the work we did with them. They are now doing regular workshops with kids around the art work, particularly in the English language or the language of origin of the work. So, we have been able to change an organisations whole approach to a sector of the population. It's not what they asked us for, they just wanted some artwork. We could have just given them the work and it would have been a great post-pop exhibition but it's not enough. We used our soft power, our ability to say "you can have access to all these great things but you have to step up and do something different." That is where soft power makes a difference for us because we don't withhold but we add value and get people to take risks through the right collaboration and to look at new areas of development. Because if you don't have that ability to influence, nothing ever changes. So, in a Brexit context, soft power has had 2 specific roles in creating new narratives. It's allowed us to quickly and effectively gather the thoughts and views of all of our partners around Europe, through engagement and to provide a European response to the British government around the world of culture and education. That narrative was not ours but a narrative of the European creative sector. In politics it's not really done that and we have not tried to. The only new narrative we have tried to create around the British Council in particular has been that yes, Brexit will make things more difficult but that there will be more

of the British Council's time, attention and that probably we can get more things done than before. We belong to the EUNIC network of European cultural institutions. In Portugal there are 14 involved and to get 14 to agree on anything is a big mission, we do it but things happen slowly. Today I had a meeting where we got things done straight away, while the EUNIC member had to confirm and hold off. That narrative of yes Brexit makes things difficult but the one to one dialogue actually has a lot of value, that's the biggest take away. There is actually strength in our one to one relationships and Brexit made us more relevant.

Do you have any specific questions?

Interviewer

Osborne states that whoever speaks of art speaks of administration as well. There has been an attempt to bridge the gap between cultural thinking and administration, there are several of patterns of interaction between the two but sometimes in order to achieve progress in one it is necessary to work through the other. Has the British Council actively attempted to bridge the gap and worked through alternative means to achieve desired outcomes in something else?

Participant

I think that is a fundamental to the way we work and how we have always worked. It is exactly how we have to react. We live in a strange world where we probably influence policy of the countries we work in more than we influence policy in our own country. I can tell you of the last five different policy implementations in education and culture in Portugal, a few of them were heavily influenced by our work. I can't tell you that anything in the UK has been influenced by our work in terms of policy or law. So, we have an ability to do that overseas but at home we have to be part of a much bigger family in order to get that done. I think we are very unique and quite lucky in the fact that we are as non-politicized as we could possibly be as a cultural institution. Yes, a few years ago Putin shut down the council and put us in one little office in the embassy and the whole reason we exist is to counteract his whole approach to the world. So, we live in this strange dichotomy, people recognize our role. It might be against the politics like in China because we are about freedom and rights of individuals, but actually they see the value in it because they've got a job to do. Their

political anxiety is to get 6 million people fluent in English in the next five years, they don't give a damn about the cultural awareness side of it but they need to get that done. So, when we are invited in to do that we can do other things. So, the connection between the two is always fluid. Because we are not a government ministry, because we are an arm's length body, we react very little to political change. The only political concern we have as an organisation is that we are always on mission and never doing mission creep. The British Council is often used by other government agencies to do their dirty work in some ways but I don't think there is any real, hard numerical example that I can give you. But it is a strange world to be in to influence policy abroad and not at home. I think we are quite depoliticized, it doesn't hurt us at all at home but it helps us enormously overseas and I think in the world of education and culture people see us for exactly what we are. And soft power, I don't know if I agree with the idea that it is extremely difficult to translate into policy. You can say that you can feel soft power more than you can measure it but that's not true. This is not fake news where you feel it and it's. You measure soft power by access, the ability to change and influence. Measuring those things is tricky but there are ways to measure them, so I measure how many decision makers I talk to every year and how many actions come out of that and how many policies in Portugal are changed by our work. So, there are ways of measuring it. Translating it into policy is not that difficult either, our whole ethos and global plan is exactly that, it's soft power translated into policy. Our corporate plan is also exactly this, translating soft power into policy and how does that work.

In what ways has the BC made technical adjustments in response to the growing instrumental use of culture as a resource?

Interviewer:

I think that probably from what you were saying, one of the technical adjustments might be that there has been a shift between trying to set the agenda and curating…

Participant:

Yes, to stop being a curator, and it's interesting because that was sector led and not politically led. That's a good example of it. There are probably others, in education too and I will send you the education White paper to give you some specific examples of that.

Interviewer:

What about individuals? You mentioned the biggest contact with individuals is the number of students that come in every single day to learn English.

Participant:

Yes and no. We reach far more people through our cultural work than our education and teaching centre. It's just that teaching is where people spend more time with us. We reach more people outside the council than we have people actually in the council. I will give you an example, our digital reach is around half a million a year, at events people are actively engaged, involved and taking part, we had an audit of about 70 thousand people last year who spent at least 2-3 hours with us in one way or another consuming culture. So, we have got big numbers for Portugal.

Interviewer:

One of the big things surrounding soft power is the discussion around institutions who wield soft power and individuals. In fact, a lot of soft power is created by individuals in civil society. It is popular culture. Discourse around soft power has suggested that either it's a very institutional thing or it's a civil society thing but they have been on opposite ends of the discursive grid. Now dialogues suggest that in fact there is a lot of two-way traffic and that they form and mold each other. So, when I think of the British Council and all of the people who come through the door, it's a very tangible case study of this two-way traffic.

Participant:

Yes, it's an interesting challenge. One of the challenges is that we have 9000 people who come to us to learn English but what do we do with them beyond teaching English? Up until recently not much. So, one of the things we tried to do was to make them target audience one

and our priority for all of the work we do in education, science and culture. So rather than just putting up a poster in the council that informs them of our work, we started taking classrooms with their teachers and went out into the landscape. One of the things we have done specifically is to get our students much much more involved in our cultural programme and taking them out of the council to do that. So, over the last few years students participated in the roots and shoots programme with National Geographic at the big national geo-summit. So, they have had a chance to work on a project that we are working on in the English classroom and then physically go to an event and be part of something bigger than themselves as BC students. Another example was talking about sustainability, oceans and plastic in classrooms and the taking them out to the Volvo Ocean Race, meet a captain of a yachting race boat and see what they do. So, we have tried to in a very instinctive, not reactive way but I think proactive way, make sure that the blunt instrument of culture which is the English lessons benefits from the sharp razor of the individual interventions around specific areas. So that is the interesting dynamic. We have done it very well ourselves, we have not yet been able to do that outside of the council. So, from lots of the partner schools that we teach in, no one ever goes to a BC event, no one ever comes to our things and that's a big challenge.

The values one is pretty easy, I'd say that all of our initiatives work towards transmitting the same messages, I don't think that there are many contradictions at all within the BC in theory. The practice of delivery is slightly different but our values are around, essentially focused on one word "mutuality". Make good things happen for both people. From the whole list of our common and share values, the only one which perhaps wraps them all up is mutuality. Whatever we do has got to be good for us and it has got to be good for whoever we are doing it with and if it isn't good for both then why on earth are we doing it? So, I think externally we live and breathe our ethos, our messages and our values quite well. Internally I think we are incredibly poor at doing the same thing and there are huge divisions still within because of our business. Teaching centres do things one way, exams another, culture another and people hardly ever get to meet and to crossover between themselves. So, there are sometimes internally individual cultures that don't reflect our values as an organisation but I think that to the outside world, our values around inclusion and accessibility and mutuality and shared responsibility, shared values, I think that we do that very well and that we communicate that very well.

(Reading) Soft power is largely created by civil society…

Interviewer

It's kind of what we have been talking about in terms of the students and individuals.

Participant

I feel like I should answer your question at the bottom. I think almost without fault, the BC has really strong relationships with influences from both sides, both home and abroad. I think that because of those values, and because we are apolitical and because generally if you engage with the council you engage over a long period of time, very few people just engage with us once and then never do anything again, I think we have very strong relationships and I think that there is a natural balance set and I don't think that we try to balance it ourselves, I think that the individuals and civil society and the official approach they kind of meet nicely in the middle. I don't think we don't anything in specific to shift things one way or another, at least nothing I have ever seen in terms of activity or strategy. So we have incredibly strong relations with individuals in and outside the market. The effect of these relationships I think is something we are still really learning about. Because we have always been good at relationships, now turning relationships into soft power measurable impact, that is where we are learning. It is where the REF's come in and we are capturing the relationships and we are capturing what level of relationship we have and how regular they are but that is one thing maybe I have to think about and give you an open-ended answer. Fundamentally strong relationships with individuals, fundamentally still challenged by turning those relationships into actionable conduct. I would say that is the case there.

The whole thing around policy and data I have got the whole reference framework and the White paper there that explains exactly how we have approached it. We have tried to overcome it by developing a system and that included all the methods of monitoring and evaluation which we do on every single project, before it starts, while it is going on and when it finishes. Again, in theory, in practice it happens probably 1 in 5 times.

Question 6 - everybody knows the BC was created in 1936 for a specific reason, to promote British culture and battle the rise of fascism. There should be no surprise that our agenda has a political aim, obviously, that's why all cultural institutions exist, because their aims are political. But I think that we have been very very good at using our values to avoid the politicization of our work, which is why we have only been kicked out of Russia twice and we have not been kicked out of China and we are still working in Venezuela and we are still doing things in strange places in Africa. Even the most evil bastards in the world recognize there is a value and that we are kind of politically neutral, even though we are still funded by the British taxpayer and the Queen is our patron. They still see us as independent enough because we deliver enough independent action and demonstrate impact and measurable impact that they accept us even though we stand against their whole government ethos. That is really weird, I can't think of many organisations that can get away with that. Somehow because 80 years down the line we have proved over and over again that we haven't bent because of politics, that our mission has always been the same, that our values have always been the same, we can operate in places and in ways that government and government departments never can and we can have conversations that they never can. Capturing that is quite tricky. So, what have i got to send you? We have got some technical adjustments in how we approach the promotion of culture, some detail on how we try to capture evidence that guides our policy, around our influence and impact, a record of the White papers around collaborating with European partners to create a shared narrative, our values, I will send you the corporate plan to get a sense of how those values translate into action for Portugal.

Interviewer

I just have one last question, something that I read the other day from Boris Groys and it said that basically Europe ends where its culture ends and that the boundaries of Europe are de facto self-imposed by the notion of culture. What do you think of this statement in terms of the British Council and its relationship with Europe.

Participant

Well that's Teresa's whole line, we are leaving the EU but not Europe. My personal view here is perhaps different to what the council view would be. There are no borders to the

influence of the EU, there is no country in the world at the moment that doesn't have something changing because of the EU. No matter how far flung you are, whether it's Uruguay, Peru or Swaziland or Singapore, things are happening and changing in those countries because of the EU whether they like it or not. Whether it is because of aid work or quite clearly around policy development or cultural engagement the EU is still the leading light of civil society globally. The influence is way beyond our 27/28 countries so I don't agree with an idea of a border to the EU. Similarly, with the British Council, I don't think there is any kind of physical border where we don't reach or where we don't work at all or have little influence. Everywhere we work we have influence. Now, in a Brexit context, leaving the EU or not leaving the EU, I would probably say that the UK never really belonged to Europe anyway. The UK has never been European in its approach, in its outlook even within Europe it was always different and will continue to be so. So I think of this thing of coming in and out of Europe as a misnomer, The UK has always been out of Europe, it has always been essentially out of the EU even emotionally if not physically. And even physically it had different deals to everybody else and it wasn't one of many it was always one of one. I would say that our sphere of influence ends where the influence of our language ends, now you tell me where English doesn't have any influence or impact in some way. Find a country like that and then yes, we have no influence but I can't see it. Thinking of the EU as a region is too narrow minded and small. There is a reason why we are the 7th or 8th largest economy in the world with 50 million people and it is not because we are really good at politics, it's because we have used our English language to create commonality and shared values in all corners of the world that allow us to punch way above our weight. If the US had gone French and not British, the UK wouldn't be anything near to what it is now so I think that our language is our most powerful cultural tool. It has few if not, no borders, and the reason I think this is quite particular to the English language, I think the language itself brings something to the table in terms of openness and innovation that few other languages bring. Proof is in the pudding, there are more words being created every day in English then in any other language, there are more versions of English then there are of any other language and a lot of our influence is around the sphere of influence of the English language. Yes because the US spent a century fighting the battle for us, but while there is that relevance I don't believe that there is a Europe and an EU. There is a European culture, the British culture which is a little bit like European culture with an Atlantic spin to it, that's why I think there is really not much regret in the UK around cultural loss because we have always been the guys

in the corner who ask for different things and get our own way. The only real change I think that comes out of Brexit is the change that impacts opportunity of experience, not opportunity in terms of jobs because the UK will still have lots of jobs and a strong buzzing economy, the cultural sector will still be much more booming in London then it will ever be in Paris or Berlin. Those things are not going to change. I think in our context as the British Council, language gives us an advantage that no other cultural institution has. And if we just sit back and watch the UK exit the EU, whether it happens or not, the only real negative impact for me is that the next version of us are not going to be able to go to the UK to do what we did and come back to Europe as easily and do what we did. I don't practically see any other changes in the cultural engagement. The UK has always had a very different approach to culture than mainland Europe. Proof in the Pudding is that the French cultural scene has suffered a slow strangulated death over the years, Paris is miserable as a city caught up in an old world that hasn't evolved, Berlin is nice and buzzing but still nothing like London and I think language is a real part of that. The English language just brings other things to the table that you can't do in German, you can't do in Portuguese and you can't do in French and you can't do them in a Portuguese or French environment. The reason Portugal is booming at the moment and so many cool things are happening is because our English is awesome. If this was happening across the water in Spain, it just wouldn't be happening because their English still sucks. I think we sometimes forget that. We think this great British culture and all the great things we do but it's the language, there is something about the English language that creates environments where people work together and brings new approaches. Like the whole "agree to disagree" thing. In Portugal no one agrees to disagree, you agree to carry on disagreeing and fighting. In the UK, people agree to disagree, move on to the next point and don't take it personally. That's not a British think, it's an English language thing and why do I know that? Because the Americans do that, the South Africans do that the Canadians do that and the New Zealanders do that. So, I don't buy the kind of hard divide through culture and that we are now separating. They have never been together, they have always purposefully been different and the appeal of the British cultural sector has always been its difference and its outward outlook. The appeal of European culture has always been that it is inwards looking, people like French stuff because it is very French, they like German stuff because it is German, they like British stuff because it could be anything. You don't know what it is or where it has come from or what the influences are. So, I am not buying this hard divorce, the only thing that will really change is that younger people ten years from now will find it more

difficult to have the experiences available now. But they will still exist and people will still keep collaborating between the two. So, what does Brexit really mean for culture? It just means that young people are going to have it slightly harder. There is no break between two cultures because they were never one culture.

Just to give you an example, I have not spoken to any British artist since 2016 who has voted to leave. I think that is the saving grace. That in the area that we care about and in soft power, there is no appetite for leaving whatsoever. You can kind of capture that and say well if nobody in culture wants to leave then why are we leaving? But that's not really the point. If the cultural sector had to react to political circumstance at the time it would never do anything meaningful. It kind of reflects culture, sometimes drives it but it should never be reacting to politics. On the Portuguese side I have not once met somebody, like I have in other countries, who has told us to go. In Portugal our colleagues have all told us that we have always been different but that is why we are valuable and I think that is something we may have left forgotten in this Brexit process. It's that our differences are actually the things that actually made us valuable and not our values. It is our different approach that actually makes us impactful. We all believe in mutuality and we all things to get better, but it is how you go about it that distinguishes you as an organisation. I don't think anyone has been able to create a new narrative in the last few years. The only narratives that have been created have been political. Cultural, no one has even attempted. Our White paper was probably the closest thing but I think the sectors have been very much left behind. What has mattered in Brexit has been big business, immigration and finance. So, the narratives around shifting cultural landscapes, are they new ones? No, because if you lived in the UK for the past 15 years you knew that every paper in the country blamed the EU for everything that was wrong with Britain so you kind of saw this coming a few years down the line. So, is any of that narrative about the EU and Britain new? No, it's not new. Collaboration in arts between the two has always been positive and we have always wanted to collaborate more so no changes there. Has there been an attempt from the cultural sector to create a narrative around populism as a general concept or theme? Yes, not directly but a lot of our engagement with society are small plays towards the rise of populism, but not as overtly as we would have perhaps done it in the past. One of the things we are doing in a few weeks time on the 14th of February is a "Democracy Cafe", a young politician from the UK is coming to run the session. One of the things he noticed was not that young people were disinterested in politics

but that they just didn't trust the mechanisms of it so he set up this event to let people come together and talk about new forms of democracy. This is a British Counsellor of I think Armenian origin who came to the UK through migration and is now going around Europe and engaging European young people in democracy and that conversation. I can't tell you how well received he was. When we pitched the idea to universities, forget his political life this is about open democratic discussion for 18 to 30 year olds around new political systems, everyone was enthusiastic. We have kind of exaggerated the impact of culture, I think because we see it as an end of mobility and increased cost but we have underestimated the power of the cultural sector and the cultural landscape to power through these things. No country will engage more or less with us culturally and we are not going to do more or less than we otherwise would have done, it will just be a little more difficult to do the things we were going to do anyway. The desire to work together remains unchanged.

You use the expression, "shifting cultural landscapes". I don't know if there are shifting cultural landscapes… To me that expression means that most people thought one way a few years ago and now they think another. I don't think that is what has happened in Brexit. Everybody that supports the concept of Brexit always supported the concept of Brexit and everybody that doesn't never has and never will. Very little people have changed their minds. It's the same thing with populism, you are either a nationalist or you are not. So my challenge to you would be are there shifting cultural landscapes or are we just getting clearer division within the cultural landscape? Are people more willing to put their flag on the ground and declare their cultural position? Are people not just more comfortable expressing their views? I think that is what is actually happening. I think that people are more comfortable voicing their opinions because there are so many more people doing just that. I don't think we live in a time of shifting cultural landscapes, i think we live in a time of ever more entrenched and defined cultural outlook where people are more happy with division than they would have been maybe ten years ago.

Interviewer

So maybe going back to this point of it not being new narratives being created but rather the quantity is more.

Participant

The quantity is more and I think the division between them is more. They are clearly more against each other. People might not have previously said it but they will say it now and they definitely always thought it. The only shift in the cultural landscape in the last 10 years for me has been that one that has been led by the world of social media which has enhanced people's ability to express themselves because they feel comfortable to do so either as a result of anonymity or because many other people like them are doing the same thing. It's the only thing that has changed. Their views haven't, they just have more means to sharing them and feel more comfortable doing so. Our challenge in creating a narrative around that is understanding why people are more comfortable and whether it is a good thing or a bad thing. Where do we react to that? These divides, I think we have just been really unaware of them for so long. Our big challenge I think is how do we address the fact that more people are more comfortable expressing their views than in the past and those views are more divisive because this will carry on. I don't think we have a response yet and we don't understand yet how we can help change this fact. So maybe the biggest shift in the cultural landscape is the disconnect between the kind of work that the council does and the dangerous reality of people just having more platforms and feeling more at ease expressing themselves, which is kind of what we always wanted, we just didn't expect people to express themselves in such controversial ways. We don't have an answer to that yet but that is the biggest shift. So has there actually been a shift in our cultural landscape or has there just been a shift in our understanding of what the cultural landscape is? It's a shift in communication not in culture.

Interviewer

That's really relevant in soft power, the fact that different messages are being communicated all the time by different institutions with different aims and agendas in mind but they are also being downloaded by individuals all over the world in very specific ways. Everything that informs the individual, education, society, culture, background, ultimately informs the way they download and interpret the messages and that is the difficulty with it.

Participant

The individual ability to engage with communication yes, that's the real trick. Are individuals ready, are they equipped to deal with the plethora of communication? Do they know how to ask the right questions or make their own decisions? These are tools that have to be taught and by the time someone is in their late teens it is too late to try to engage them then. Sadly all of our education is not around issues like that, it's around better English and better assessment and we don't really engage young enough with those issues, we try to engage them when they are adults and teens and by then, if you don't have the skills to make decisions yourself it's too late. So you are right, it's a much bigger challenge, I think that's the bigger shift. I don't think the cultural landscape has shifted but the sheer weight of communication has and our challenge is to somehow give people the skills to navigate that is why we focus on capability building. Let's build skills within people rather than promote culture even if those skills are a result of our culture.

The role of soft power is essential but creating new narratives, no one has done it. LSE did a study to show that the overwhelming majority of leave voters did it because of immigration. That's not why they say they did it but the whole narrative around the leave campaign was based on the notion of us and them. The other big cultural shift is therefore perhaps the importance of feeling. Feeling is as important now as knowing and that is where there is space for new narrative and for soft power to say no, it's not about how you feel. That's been a failure, we haven't been able to rise to the challenge. The media in general hasn't been able to rise to the challenge. So where do we go next because perhaps the only things that beats feeling is skills which enable you to make things your own. I have not seen any policy or any institution who has yet to tackle the change that feeling has become more important than reality and that is maybe one of the biggest shifts I can think of.

Interviewer

I use the concept of new narratives because power has until recently been perceived as repressive from a top down approach. State power or having power has meant to repress. And then there was a shift academically and philosophically of the the idea of power actually being productive. So power is the ability of a nation or state to produce multiple different kind of perceptions of itself externally. Maybe the effect of one of those perceptions has little

impact but holistically, all those different productions have a greater impact beyond the tangible effects of one individual initiative.

Participant

Yes, on a really macro level. I work on a pragmatic level with policy.

Interviewer

Maybe they are not new but they are being exploited and communicated in a different way and the sheer scale is exponential.

Participant

Yes, because I can't think of anything terribly new. I don't think Brexit was a new narrative, I think the only people caught by surprise were those who weren't paying attention to the climate they lived in.

Annex B

Interview Transcription, Katharine Felton, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Portugal

29th January 2019

Interviewer: There was a report written analyzing the UK's soft power and it claimed that in an increasingly connected world, we shouldn't think of culture as subordinate to politics, instead we should think of it as providing the operating context for politics. To what extent do you think that is true for British Embassies around the world?

Participant: I think that is probably right. I quite often think about it as sort of push and pull almost, a lot of the soft power assets that the UK has are those things that instinctively pull people towards a country. Either, the music or the films or the sense of shared values, whatever it might be. I think it's that bit that perhaps we don't always work as hard at or think as actively about but we know is just there in the background. It's possible that it's easy to sometimes overlook it and take it for granted. The headline sort of harder politics is probably what we spend more time focusing on or have traditionally spent more time focusing on in our diplomatic network but I think that has probably changed in the last few years and there has been a real realization of what a powerful asset it can be. In my last posting I was in South America, I was working in Uruguay and one of the main issues there is to do with the Falkland Islands and countering the Argentine narrative because obviously Argentina is a very powerful, well connected neighboring country and it was always really striking the huge asset that all of our different bit of cultural offer, how powerful all of that was. It really kind of came to the fore that despite, at face value, perhaps some quite significant differences over one particular policy issues, it didn't really matter. We managed to maintain perfectly normal broad, deep, friendly relations on a whole range of issues. I think that was largely supported by good political connections and relationships but all of that underpinning stuff, the bit that brings people together, I think is extremely helpful and that's an issue that has obviously been running on for decades. Now in the context of Brexit, I think people in general terms will have had some contact with the UK in some way or another. Maybe not physically having gone there but they will be aware of or had some contact with something that is to do with the UK, or know something about it. I think the positive on the soft power side, we can use to kind of mitigate some of the current negatives and challenges that we have around the politics.

Interviewer: Is there anything happening now actively in relation to Brexit and soft power?

Participant: I think that the biggest thing that I would say that we have made in the last few years, I think it started just before the London Olympics so this is pre-Brexit but it was part of the UK's positioning itself and presenting itself to the world as the Great Campaign. This is basically a coordinated approach across all sorts of government departments and a sort of bringing together of a unified brand, unified imagery and unified language. We have these different pillars of the campaign and we use those depending on the local context. The core of those would be around things like film and music, heritage, royal family, the sort of traditional things but we have also then tried to build in a lot around presenting a modern face of the UK. It's not just about castles and guards and all of that, it's around innovation, it's around technology, it's around cutting-edge research and that kind of thing. I think that's the biggest shift that I have seen in the time that I have been in the foreign office certainly, in terms of the level of organization and to put out something coordinated and coherent. I think it has made a huge difference, the 'Great' brand for want of a better word, the 'Great' campaign, I probably see it more because I am looking out for it sometimes but I really think it has made a difference just in terms of the quality of the influence and the information we put out. It looks more professional, it is more professional and it means that we have got better material to draw on to put forward this face of the UK to the world and then there is consistency around the way that we do that. So, it's definitely pre-Brexit but I think that we have probably drawn on it even more since the time of the referendum and over the last couple of years because obviously we are trying to talk about other things. The UK is not defined by Brexit. It might feel like that sometimes but there are hundreds of other things that we want to talk about and demonstrate that those themes link so in this case the people of Portugal and the people of the UK. I think that is a really powerful tool that we have developed that over the last few years.

Interviewer: I was reading recently that the UK's model has typically been an arm's length approach which is very different to the French model or the German model. I wondered how this works in terms of the relationship between the British Council and the Embassy here in Portugal.

Participant: I think it's interesting this kind of arm's length thing. I think that there was a period where it was taken for granted that we had all of these strengths and they just kind of took care of themselves. I think the Great campaign was a bit of a change of approach which became more organized and more structured. I think we are seeing more around the UK's higher education offer for example and again in my last post, we really tried to tap into the interest there was in UK universities in promoting themselves in other markets and I think that there was a recognition on our part and on their part that we could actually work together in partnership quite well and help each other achieve our objectives. So, I think that has changed. For example, in my last post, the French embassy had a thing which I think is called ´Campus France´ and they have at their embassies a place where you walk in and you get all the information and prospectuses of French universities and you can have chats with admissions people and that kind of thing. It's much more inhouse so perhaps they do approach it in a slightly different way. You would probably be better placed then me to comment on the difference between the way that the British Council work as opposed to other cultural organizations in Portugal. But I think that there has been a definite improvement in terms of the way that we coordinate with each other. I think that we are different outfits thought. The British Council has very different drivers and in the way that changes to the British Council structure have occurred over the last few years, ultimately at its heart, the English language teaching and examining, as a kind of financial activity, the British Council has to cover itself, inevitably it means that your premises look and feel very different to ours. You are open to the public in a way that we aren't always, and I think that there is inevitably a different focus. I think that where I have seen it work really well is where there is at least an amount of coordination and making sure that we are kind of helping each other out. We are not necessarily always going to be working super closely together but I think that at least an alignment in the coordination can really help each other. If we can help lobby on political issues that the Council is facing on for example the take up of English language within higher education or pushing for really big programs in schools and universities then we can help each other out and equally I think the embassy as a sort of platform can help project what the British Council is doing. So, hopefully it works to the mutual benefit of both although we work in sometimes slightly different spheres.

Interviewer: I have read a lot about how the British Council is often perceived as the unofficial ambassador for the UK government but so far it has been able to maintain its

appearance of independence and separation from the government. How important do you think it is that there is that visible separation between the two.

Participant: This is just a personal view but I would say it is probably more important slash helpful for the council to be able to say "We are not government" sometimes, to tread that line and work it in whatever way is most helpful and suitable for the council. I think for us, we kind of take it for granted that there is an organization, regardless of its formal status, which is in country promoting both the English language specifically British English, and the British cultural offer. The session I was just in was about how you can energize and promote what is called 'Creative Beurocracy' and that doesn't necessarily look like a UK culture thing but actually it is talking about the desire for innovative and creative design in public services. It isn't necessarily something perhaps that anybody, if you said to them "name ten things that the British Council is doing" would occur to them to suggest but I think that it's really interesting in terms of how the British Council has a different kind of reach and different type of partner sometimes which is really interesting for the embassy and can be really useful. I think that perhaps the Council can be a bit of a chameleon and fit most conveniently whatever suits it on any given day.

Interviewer: With regards to culture specifically, in Portugal at the moment is there anything currently aligned between the British Embassy and the Council? Do you have any concrete examples?

Participant: It's not specifically on the culture side but in science I think is an area where we have quite a bit of potential to overlap and work side by side. Fatima who is our principle contact here on the science side and I have a contact on the Embassy side, I think the two of them have found a way of working quite well together. Sharing networks and working on the basis that they might come at things from a slightly different angle or have access or have different answers to a problem, they can share those ideas and work in a reasonably coordinated way to try and meet the needs of whoever it is that they are dealing with. So, I think that in science there is a bit of scope for coordination. One area that we are starting to work on together is around alumni engagement. This is helpful for us at the embassy in terms of strengthening our people to people links which is one of the areas of work that we want to try and do a bit more of. There are lots and lots of people in Portugal who have studied in the

UK at university. Some of those people have been paid for by the British government with achievement scholarships, most of those people will have paid for themselves and at a formal, global level there is an alumni network which we are trying to energize here in Portugal but more broadly, people who have studies in the UK, we hope, will have had a positive experience and will feel positively towards the UK and it is helpful for us as an embassy to be aware of those people, try and engage them a bit more and hopefully use them as multipliers in terms of spreading positive messaging about the UK and that is not meant in a cynical way but it's just meant as a kind of they will have, hopefully a positive perspective of the UK that they are willing to share with others. Also, a bit more directly useful for us is that those people will have probably gone on to positions of influence or interesting jobs which might be interesting to the embassy in terms of putting together programs or just knowing who is out there that has a positive feeling towards the UK. So, that is an area we are working on together and there are sometimes things that we can align on. We at the embassy here, and I am saying the Foreign Office in general over the last… I have been in the Foreign Office for over fifteen years and it has changed a lot. We used to think of and do a lot of sort of cultural events like organizing classical music concerts, those sort of high culture grand events and that has really changed over time. Now we do virtually nothing of that. I know that the council do a little bit of that but it´s not core business here either and I think that differs quite significantly compared to other embassies and other foreign services approach and sometimes we have to work hard to try and explain that to other diplomatic colleagues but I think we have become a bit more hard-nosed about who we are trying to reach. If we are trying to reach the elite through a classical music concert then that is probably the way to go but more often than not we might be trying to reach a younger slightly more and less obvious group and that is not necessarily the way to go. So, I think that we have changed the way that we do that and reach local publics. So, we have moved away from that formal stuffier stuff perhaps.

Interviewer: Yes, it is the same in the British Council, the whole perspective has changed. Instead of dictating what British culture is, it's more open.

Participant: Yes, being a bit more responsive to whatever the local audience or group are interested in rather than… again I have seen it before where, not here but in another job, I was approached by another embassy that wanted to put on a festival of 16th Century chamber

music and I thought oh no this is the worst! We don't do this kind of stuff and we haven't done this kind of stuff for quite a long time and it is very unusual that we would get involved in that type of activity and we had to try and find a way to explain that it wasn't our cup of tea and that we would rather be doing something else. So, sometimes it is a bit challenging locally because I think there are still certain expectations around the type of event that an embassy would put on or a cultural organization would put on. Bit by bit I think we are trying to move away from some of those traditional, high culture things.

Interviewer: I was reading bout marketing in the arts and how it's moved from a product focused approach to more of a marketing perspective which is far more market driven based on what the needs are of the people in the community and just to compare the shift in the British Council to a more business-like framework there are some parallels. Instead of trying to sell British Culture it is now a more responsive marketing approach which has been happening in business and economics for a long time now but the cultural world seems to be a little bit more behind.

Participant: Yes, exactly it's true. It's interesting. As a simple example I guess, quite often at events I have been to in the past you see people selling English language textbooks or study books, literature, and you think yeah that is kind of flogging a product basically. But then is it really that or is it actually that you are trying to respond to the needs of the people that you are trying to reach.

Interviewer: I noticed in a lot of the British Council discourse there is a focus on accessibility. Europe's 2020 is also to do with this. It seems to be the narrative that it focused on at the moment and I wondered if that was the same for the embassy or if the embassy has a different narrative?

Participant: I would say that it is not as front and center. I have been here for about a year and a lot of the conversations that we have with the Council it is about exactly promoting accessibility within the arts section, so whether that is encouraging local institutions to cater better for people with whatever special needs they might have, to bare that in mind and factor it in. It's not something that we necessarily particularly lead on in the same way and here it is possibly slightly an unusual scenario because if we were in a country where there were for

example, significant human rights issues, we would be working on those issues from a slightly different perspective, trying to encourage the country to improve its legislation or accessibility whatever it might be. Here as an EU country we don't necessarily have those conversations. I think we try, and within the work that we do, we have a focus on at the moment, sustainability of our operations which is around reducing our environmental footprint and trying to become more sustainable, use less plastic, less everything. We are trying to improve our own operations that way. I think that is one of these values type issues that is something that we are working on for ourselves but it is also something that if we found that there was a local partner so that might be something that although it is a largely internal project, we do a bit of awareness raising and find a way of partnering with local organisations. It's not so much on the accessibility side but I suppose we have other issues and we work on them in a similar way I suppose.

Interviewer: I was also thinking that maybe with relation to the European Union framework because it seems that a lot of these things seem to trickle down and I wondered if in fact there was a trickling down of these kinds of issues and maybe accessibility might be one of them. It certainly seems to be a parallel between what is happening in the British Council and what is happening on a European Union level.

Participant: I think it is one of those things where… I am looking around at the British Council and it is always a real challenge that, on accessibility for example, we talk a good game but then how accessible is this building and how accessible is our embassy and how accessible are the buildings that we operate out of and where we expect people to engage with us. At the Foreign Office in London for example it is a real challenge because with a heritage building there are only so many adaptations we can make. So, you might talk a good game but you can't necessarily back that up with what you would want to be able to. I suppose you make the best and adapt as well as you can do and also it is about that kind of commitment and recognition that there is an issue that you want to do better at so I suppose on that basis you are in a reasonable position to be able to try and push for improvements in other places because you know that you are doing what you can. I suppose it goes back to that thing where soft power isn't just about Harry Potter, it's about those kinds of values. What do you think is important or what kind of defines national characteristics? People talk sometimes about the UK and say people have a ´sense of fairness´ as a part of Britishness.

The other day I went to Australia national day and I was really struck that the ambassador in his speech said ´the sense of a fair go´ which is something that you think, it´s an Australian sounding phrase, but it is part of the idea that everyone is able to give it a shot. I think it is those values bits, the intangibles of what you associate with a country or a group of people that we try to push for as well whether explicitly or implicitly.