Executive summary – Feedback welcome!

Public diplomacy encompasses communication activities of international actors that aim at managing the international environment. It can be understood as an instrument of an international actor to improve its international relations and facilitate the assertion of its interests. (cf. Auer, Srugies, Löffelholz, 2015, p. 40; Cull, 2009, p. 12) International actors operate in an increasingly interconnected world. Challenges like the European migrant crisis or climate change do not stop at national borders, but demand transnational cooperation as well as engagement of state and non-state actors. These real-world phenomena are increasingly taken up by public diplomacy scholars. While national governments have been the sole or main public diplomacy organizations for a long time (see for instance Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Tuch, 1990), actors beyond and below national level are increasingly recognized (cf. Cross & Melissen, 2013; Melissen, 2011A; Pagovski, 2015; Rasmussen, 2009, 2010).

This study looks at national and regional actors in Europe. It centers on the European Union (EU) and its member states. Since its foundation in 1957, the EU has engaged in a process of regionalization to foster peace, stability and economic prosperity among European nations. It constitutes the most ambitious and far-reaching example of regionalism to date (cf. Schulz, Söderbaum & Öjendal, 2001, p. 10). Nonetheless, the recent example of the Brexit illustrates a tension between developments of regionalization and re-nationalization in the European context. European public diplomacy organizations at regional and national level may pursue a competitive or cooperative approach to public diplomacy. Organizations pursuing a competitive approach compete, for example, for access to markets and pursue public diplomacy activities which should bring benefits to the respective international actor alone. Organizations adopting a cooperative approach to public diplomacy, pursue goals jointly with other organizations and promote common interests. (cf. Leonard, Stead & Smewing, 2002). Transferring these assumptions to the European context, member states can either complement EU public diplomacy efforts or pursue competitively oriented public

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\[1\] Despite this differentiation between competitive and cooperative approaches, we mustn't forget that all public diplomacy organizations have a natural interest in competing for power and influence.
diplomacy strategies, which neglect or even contradict EU public diplomacy strategies. Scholars and practitioners agree that there is a gap between the EU as a normative or civilian power (see for instance Manners & Whitman, 2013; Telò, 2006), and the international visibility of EU policies and actions. One important reason for this observation is that public diplomacy strategies of single EU member states can impede the visibility and the success of EU public diplomacy (cf Cross, 2011). However, there is hardly any empirical evidence to substantiate this claim. Therefore, this study seeks to …

- comparatively analyze the public diplomacy understanding and practice of the EU and France and Sweden as selected member states, and
- explore European public diplomacy at national, regional, and transnational level, as well as the interrelations between these levels.

It goes beyond the scope of this study to compare EU public diplomacy with the public diplomacy efforts of all 28 EU member states. To be able to analyze the public diplomacy of the EU as a regional organization and member states in greater detail, this study focuses on a qualitative analysis of France and Sweden as two selected member states. These two countries were chosen on the basis of four criteria that describe their relationship to the EU. It is assumed that these criteria influence the public diplomacy practice of the respective member state organizations and their motivation to cooperate with EU organizations on public diplomacy. These criteria include 1) the year of accession to the EU, 2) the adoption of the Euro currency, 3) the influence on the decisions of the EU, and 4) the monetary contributions to the EU. France is included as a founding member of the EU, which has adopted the Euro currency, exercises a comparably high degree of influence on EU decision-making, and contributes a comparably large share of money to the regional organization. Sweden, on the contrary, represents a less influential EU member state, which has joined the EU after the inception of the Maastricht Treaty, kept its own currency, and contributes a comparatively small share of money to the EU.

**Relevance of the study**

This study enriches the small body of empirical knowledge on French and Swedish as well as EU. Until now, there are only very few comparative public diplomacy studies (see for instance Pamment, 2013b; Valentini, 2008; Wang & Sun, 2012; White & Radic, 2014). The current debate on public diplomacy research shows that scholars stress the demand for (more) comparative public diplomacy research to “prepare the ground for generalizations needed to construct theories” (Gilboa, 2015) and to understand the “often very different cultural and political understandings of why and how states need to communicate to foreign publics” (Hayden, 2015). This study contributes to enriching comparative public diplomacy research by analyzing similarities and differences of the public diplomacy approaches of the EU as well as its member states. Not least, this study adds to theory development by introducing an interdisciplinary research model that draws on findings and concepts from public diplomacy research, communication science, particularly public relations research, sociology, and organization theory.

The findings of this study generate empirical knowledge on the public diplomacy strategies of EU and member state organizations, detailing the use and relevance of the concept public diplomacy, goals, strategic publics, tools and communication channels as well as messages. Moreover, this is the first study to present empirical data on interorganizational cooperation in
public diplomacy. It highlights a preference for selected, project-based cooperation between EU and member state organizations and outlines differences between national and transnational public diplomacy networks in terms of network motivation and network structure. In addition to the study’s academic relevance, this study sheds light on best practice examples that can advance the public diplomacy practice of the EU and its member states as well as identify the factors that facilitate and/or constrain their communication practice.

Theoretical Framework

In a recent reflection on the state of the art in public diplomacy, the British scholar Robin Brown (2014) argues that there “is a divide between the macro world of International Relations and the micro world of Communications” (p. 3). Connected to this statement is the assumption that many scholars neglect that public diplomacy “involves the flow of money, people, information, meaning through specific organized networks” (p. 8). Brown (2014) points to the need of investigating the “organizational dimension of public diplomacy” (p. 7). International actors like the EU or France are not capable of acting themselves. The public diplomacy of an international actor can be understood as an aggregation of the public diplomacy efforts of single public diplomacy organizations that communicate on behalf of an international actor. Thus, this study concentrates on public diplomacy as a form of organizational communication conducted by the organizations that communicate on behalf of an international actor. It conceptualizes public diplomacy primarily from an organizational perspective.

Organizations “are formed by a fusion of individual actors” (Auer & Srugies, 2013, p. 12), who share a common aim or interest (cf. L’Etang, 2008, p 190). Public diplomacy organizations are a specific type of organization, which purposefully contributes to the management of the international environment of an international actor (cf. Auer, 2015, p. 159). At national level, they comprise governmental organizations as official representatives of a country. Governmental organizations include the foreign ministry and its network of foreign representations as well as other ministries like the ministry of culture or education, which increasingly engage in transnational and international relations. At EU level, the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are mainly concerned with public diplomacy. Whereas the EC corresponds to a national government, the EEAS combines features of a foreign ministry and a diplomatic service. Both EC Representations in EU member states and EU Delegations in third countries and to multilateral organizations fulfill similar functions like embassies.

Governmental organizations may conduct public diplomacy themselves or act in the role of a ‘sponsor’ (cf. Zaharna, 2013, p. 175). As strategic publics may be more skeptical of public diplomacy initiatives that are directly associated with the government, governmental organizations may prefer coordinating and financing public diplomacy activities of other organizations. These organizations are termed ‘government agencies’. The Institut Français, for example, is a government agency, which promotes French culture abroad under the supervision of the French Foreign Ministry. In addition to governmental organizations and government agencies, non-state organizations such as companies or NGOs play a pivotal role in public diplomacy. They play an important role in addressing cross-border issues, navigating between official and non-official coalitions and, developing transnational coalitions.
The scope of this study does not permit to analyze governmental organizations, government agencies and non-state organizations. Therefore, this study concentrates on governments and government agencies in the empirical analysis. Non-state organizations are only addressed in the context of interorganizational cooperation. While this study focuses on the meso level, investigating how organizations conduct public diplomacy, it also takes micro level considerations such as the perceptions of single public diplomacy practitioners as well as macro level considerations such as infrastructure or media environment into consideration. These internal and external environments of public diplomacy organizations serve as a starting point to conceptualize the research model that guides this study. Drawing on organizational sociology and organization theory, the researcher has identified the overall organizational mission, the structural embeddedness of public diplomacy, the resources dedicated to public diplomacy as well as the decision-making power of public diplomacy practitioners as important formal criteria to describe the internal organizational environment. Additionally, informal communication structures and processes also contribute to shaping the internal environment of public diplomacy organizations. (cf. Preisendörfer, 2008; Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012) To fathom the external environment public diplomacy organizations operate in, the ‘theoretical framework for global public relations research and practice’ by Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) was adapted. Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) define infrastructure, cultural environment and media environment as three groups of external environmental factors. To adequately describe the external environment of public diplomacy organizations, the political environment (cf. Brown, 2013), including an international actor’s international relations and policy priorities, was added as a fourth group of factors. The internal and external environments of organizations influence their public diplomacy understanding and practice.

This study explores both communication activities that are explicitly referred to as public diplomacy and communication activities that are not labeled as public diplomacy, but contribute to public diplomacy in the scholarly understanding of the concept. The empirical analysis of the public diplomacy understanding seeks to find out 1) to what extent public diplomacy practitioners are familiar with the term and concept public diplomacy, and 2) to what extent the interviewees apply this concept in their everyday work to describe their own communication activities. The public diplomacy understanding of the single public diplomacy organizations provide first indications of the goals, strategic publics, and the competitive or cooperative focus of their public diplomacy practice. (cf. Gregory, 2010; Melissen, 2013)

Public diplomacy practice encompasses a strategic and a tactical level. The strategic level concentrates on an organization’s direction for a longer period of time and covers public diplomacy goals, strategic publics, and the approach to public diplomacy. Building on that, the analysis of the tactical level explores how the respective public diplomacy approach is implemented and adapted to realize public diplomacy goals and reach strategic publics. Public diplomacy typologies indicate that public diplomacy goals range on a continuum from information / persuasion to cultural communication (cf. Cowan & Cull, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2010; Signitzer, 1993). Strategic publics comprise collective actors (e.g. political bodies, companies, media organizations) and individuals, which can be further subdivided into public figures such as the artist Ai Wei Wei or the actress Angelina Jolie and citizens. Public diplomacy primarily, but not exclusively addresses foreign publics. There is a domestic

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2 The structural embeddedness addresses two questions: 1) Is there a public diplomacy department within the organization?, and 2) if so, where is this department located (at/below management level)?
dimension of public diplomacy that involves communication with immigrants, but also with domestic citizens in general. Public diplomacy towards domestic citizens aims, for example, at legitimizing foreign policy programs and generating public support for these external actions (see for instance Huigj, 2013; Potter, 2009). Similarly, EU public diplomacy comprises an external dimension focusing on third states and international organizations outside of the EU as well as an internal dimension within the EU, including France and Sweden as member states. To analyze the definition of strategic publics, this study has looked at both approaches from public relations theory (cf. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Reper, 1992) and contributions from public diplomacy research (cf. Fisher and Bröckerhoff, 2008). As public diplomacy organizations only command a limited amount of resources, they need to prioritize strategic publics on the basis of the publics’ attributes (power, legitimacy, urgency, support of the EU) and situational conditions (cf. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Reper, 1992; Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997; Rawlins, 2006).

To describe the public diplomacy approaches pursued by EU and member state organizations, this study takes up Rhonda Zaharna’s (2009) differentiation between an information and a relational communication framework of public diplomacy. The information framework is coined by a focus on one-way communication that gives a high degree of “control [over] the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the [public diplomacy] initiative” (Zaharna, 2009, p. 88) to the respective organization. In contrast to that, the relational communication framework draws on normative approaches to conceptualizing public relations as well as dialogue and is more differentiated. Zaharna’s (2009) differentiation between information and relational communication approaches serves as an overarching framework that allows for the integration of existing public diplomacy models detailing the time frame of public diplomacy activities, the mode of communication, as well as the role of strategic publics in public diplomacy approaches (see for instance Cowan & Arsenault, 2008; Fisher & Bröckerhoff, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; Leonard, Stead & Smewing, 2002; Nye, 2004).

The analysis of public diplomacy at tactical level centers on public diplomacy messages as well as tools and communication channels. This study draws on strategic framing literature to examine the context and the focus of public diplomacy key messages, as well as the depiction of other public diplomacy organizations and/or international actors in these key messages (see for instance Matthes, 2012; Strugies, 2013a). The ‘Integrated Public Relations Media Model’ by Hallahan (2001) and its adaptation by Löffelholz and colleagues (2011) serve as the basis for the analysis of public diplomacy tools and communication channels. The model suggests that public diplomacy tools can be allocated to five different groups of media (controlled media, public media, interactive media, events and group communication, and one-on-one communication), which differ with regard to their purpose, the time frame, the nature and the directionality of communication, the role attributed to strategic publics, and the degree of control maintained by public diplomacy organizations.

Public diplomacy organizations can either conduct public diplomacy on their own or cooperate with other public diplomacy organizations on the strategic and/or tactical level. Interorganizational cooperation can occur in dyadic relationships between two public diplomacy organizations or in public diplomacy networks of three of more public diplomacy organizations on national, regional or transnational level. This is the first study to empirically explore interorganizational cooperation in the context of public diplomacy. At the level of the single organization, this study investigates the motivation to engage in interorganizational cooperation, the structure and the mode of communication of collaborative public diplomacy
efforts, as well as the factors that enable and/or constrain interorganizational cooperation (cf. Biermann, 2008; Kenis & Oerlemans, 2008; Wukich, 2011; Zaharna, 2013). Moreover, this study explores the potential of applying organization-public relationships to the analysis of perceived relationships between public diplomacy organizations (see for instance Broom, Casey, Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Hon, 2000; Huang, 2001). The actions of single public diplomacy organizations influence structures and processes at the network level. At the same time, the collective behavior within networks has also a decisive impact on the way the single public diplomacy organizations operate and develop. (cf. Provan, Fish & Sydow, 2007, p. 480) The aggregation of findings at the level of the single organizations allow for cautious statements about the purpose, the structure, the governance, as well as the sustainability of interorganizational cooperation at the network level (cf. Provan & Kenis, 2008). The research model depicted in figure 1 below combines the building blocks of the theoretical framework outlined in this section. The research model fulfils two important functions: 1) It provides a structure for the analysis of the state of research on European public diplomacy, focusing on the EU as a regional organization as well as France and Sweden as selected EU member states3, and 2) it guides the operationalization of the empirical study.

Figure 1: Research model4

Research Design

The empirical study concentrates on the following three research questions:

1. How do EU organizations conduct public diplomacy?

3 The state of research on European public diplomacy is not part of this summary. I am happy to provide you with the full doctoral dissertation upon request.
4 Public diplomacy practice leads to outputs and outcomes that need to be evaluated by public diplomacy organizations. As neither outcomes nor evaluation are foci of the empirical analysis, they are not further discussed in this summary.
2. How do organizations from the EU member states France and Sweden conduct public diplomacy?

3. To what extent do the public diplomacy efforts of EU and member state organizations complement or contradict each other?

The first two research questions center on the analysis of public diplomacy conducted by EU and member state organizations respectively. They constitute the basis for the third research question which compares the public diplomacy understanding and practice of EU and member state organizations. The third research question is connected to the underlying assumption that synergies between national and regional public diplomacy efforts can only be achieved if national public diplomacy organizations pursue a cooperative public diplomacy strategy or include at least cooperative elements in their public diplomacy practice.

As there is only little (empirically grounded) knowledge on European public diplomacy at national and regional level, this study pursues a primarily qualitative approach, which combines qualitative methods of data collection and analysis with single elements of quantitative research. Knowledge on the organizational public diplomacy understanding and practice is reconstructed on the basis of an analysis of strategy documents and guided expert interviews with representatives of public diplomacy organizations. This combination of research methods enables the researcher to level out the weaknesses of one specific method with the strengths of other methods and to shed light on different aspects of a research object. On the one hand, the analysis of strategy documents discloses information on formal communication structures and processes, as well as the question of how public diplomacy should be conducted. Guided expert interviews, on the other hand, concentrate on the question of how public diplomacy is actually conducted on a day-to-day basis and how both formal and informal communication structures and processes influence public diplomacy. This study applies a comparative research design which does not only look at similarities and differences between particular objects of investigation, but also provides insights into the infrastructure, as well as the political, cultural and media environments, which surround the objects of study (cf. Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004).

The study does not define the EU, France and Sweden as single cases, but conducts an in-depth analysis of the most relevant public diplomacy organizations communicating on behalf of the three international actors. This approach to case selection enables the researcher to explore transnational cooperation processes and to draw a differentiated picture of the public diplomacy conduct of the EU and its member states, which also reveals similarities and differences between the organizations that communicate on behalf of an international actor (cf. Srugies, 2013b). The analysis covers strategy documents issued from November 2004 to December 2015. This time frame allows for the analysis of European public diplomacy prior and after the inception of the Treaty of Lisbon, which marked an important step towards a more coherent and strategic approach to EU public diplomacy. As qualitatively oriented studies only allow for the analysis of a limited number of cases, this thesis concentrates on governmental organizations such as the foreign ministry, and government agencies such as the Institut Français and the Swedish Institute in both France and Sweden. Within the EU, this project focuses on the EC as well as the EEAS. In addition to organizations in Brussels and member state capitals, this study also examines communication at local level by

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5 Initially, the time frame of the document analysis covered the term of office of Barroso Commission I and II (November 2004 to November 2014). However, the time frame was extended to December 2015 to cover the entire period of time in which guided expert interviews were conducted.
interviewing EC Representations in Paris and Stockholm as well as the French and Swedish Permanent Representations to the EU. Within each organization, at least one representative was selected who held specific knowledge on public diplomacy, communication and international relations and made a meaningful contribution to the organization’s public diplomacy efforts.

The building blocks of the research model (see figure 1 above) constitute the main dimensions of analysis of both document analysis and guided expert interviews. An additional dimension, ‘Current and Future Challenges’, was developed in the operationalization process to detect additional internal and external environmental factors which influence the organization’s public diplomacy understanding and practice and to identify practical demands for future public diplomacy research. The deductively developed dimensions of analysis were then tailored to the specific organizations under study and refined in an inductive, data-driven procedure (cf. Schreier, 2012). An expert evaluation of both the coding frame (document analysis) and the interview guidelines ensured the quality of the research instruments. Additionally, the researcher has conducted an intra-coder agreement test to assess the consistency of coding over time (overall result of Cohen’s Kappa $\kappa=0.84$).

During the period of data collection the researcher coded 46 strategy documents in English, French and Swedish, amounting to a total of 2.068 coded pages. Moreover, she carried out 25 guided expert interviews with public diplomacy practitioners in English and French language from March 2014 to December 2015. Having transcribed all guided expert interviews, the researcher carried out a content structuring analysis for both strategy documents and interview transcripts (cf. Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Kuckartz, 2012; Mayring, 2014).

Key findings

Understanding

Only the EEAS and the Service for the Foreign Policy Instruments within the EU, as well as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Institute within Sweden apply the term ‘public diplomacy’. The empirical findings disclose that EU public organizations primarily apply the term ‘public diplomacy’ to refer to communication with strategic publics outside of the EU, and primarily perceive public diplomacy as a tool of advocacy. Both French and Swedish organizations work with alternate terms to describe their public diplomacy activities: While French organizations often work with the concept of ‘diplomatie d’influence’, notions of branding and promotion are common in Sweden.

Public diplomacy practice on the strategic level

The majority of French public diplomacy practitioners only agreed to participate in the empirical study if the interviewees were conducted in French. The multilingual data collection allowed for gaining access to data that would not have been available to the researcher if the analysis had only been carried out in English. At the same time, language constructs reality and has a decisive impact on the understanding and definition of concepts. To ensure the comparability of findings, the researcher cooperated with Swedish and French native speakers throughout the process of developing the research instruments as well as collecting and analyzing data. Moreover, the understanding of key concepts such as public diplomacy was part of the empirical analysis itself.
Within the EU, EU public diplomacy seeks to legitimize the EU as a polity, EU policies and actions and to strengthen the cohesion among EU member states. It serves as a precondition for conducting external EU public diplomacy and realizing external EU public diplomacy goals such as increasing the visibility of the EU as an international actor.

The two member states show a preference for persuasive public diplomacy goals that facilitate the assertion of national interests. Whereas both countries seek to promote national policies and actions, Swedish organizations place more emphasis on increasing knowledge and awareness about the country, especially outside of the EU. French organizations, in turn, highlight increasing France’s international influence as a crucial public diplomacy goal. Both countries also define transnational public diplomacy goals. Swedish organizations stress their commitment to work in multilateral organizations, but make no explicit references to the EU.

As the EU allocates more resources to the internal than the external dimension of public diplomacy, EU organizations directly address citizens within the EU and focus on targeting multipliers in third countries. French and Swedish organizations set different priorities regarding their strategic publics: French organizations highlight the role of citizens and diaspora communities as foci, whereas Sweden as a smaller country concentrates its public diplomacy efforts on ‘connectors’, which have a multiplying function in foreign countries and multilateral fora. Swedish and French organizations also address domestic publics in order to gain support for (external) policies and actions, integrate migrants, preserve minority cultures, and foster the awareness of cultural diversity among domestic citizens. The two countries differ with regard to geographical priorities of public diplomacy: France pursues a global strategy of geographical targeting, but pays special attention to Francophone African countries. Sweden combines a focus on emerging countries with targeting Baltic States in its neighborhood.

EU public diplomacy encompasses an internal dimension addressing publics within the EU, and an external dimension directed at publics in third countries and multilateral fora. The regional organization develops separate strategies for these two dimensions, and tasks different organizations with the communication towards internal and external publics. EC Policy DGs like NEAR or ECHO are among the few organizations that address strategic publics within and outside of the EU. These findings suggest that the complex structure of the EU is reflected in a differentiated approach, in which different strategies coexist.

In contrast to the EU, France and Sweden pursue a rather centralized public diplomacy strategy. The French government even integrates activities of sub-national authorities in its overall public diplomacy strategy. Swedish public diplomacy, as well as the country’s brand strategy are characterized by a high degree of consistency and coherence. ‘Society/culture’ as well as ‘education/research’ constitute core areas of French public diplomacy. Swedish public diplomacy practitioners preferentially engage in the core areas ‘economy’, as well as ‘society/culture’. As a smaller country, Sweden identifies society, innovation, creativity, and sustainability as four areas of perceived strength that present the public diplomacy niches Sweden focuses on.

Public diplomacy practice on the tactical level

Public diplomacy messages can address national, regional or transnational issues. Their focus may be exclusive and competitively oriented or inclusive, encompassing activities and
perspectives of other international actors. The empirical analysis discloses that the majority of EU key messages can be complemented with narratives from member state organizations. Both French and Swedish organizations define key messages with an inclusive focus. However, only the French Permanent Representation to the EU integrates European integration and the work of EU institutions in its key messages.

EU practitioners emphasize the importance of two-way communication in public diplomacy. The EU for example defines dialogue, an orientation towards citizens, as well as a ‘going local’-approach as pillars of communication within the EU. Nonetheless, the analysis of EU and member state tools reveals that instruments that enable a dialogue with strategic publics are often used for promotional purposes and to communicate pre-defined values and messages. New ICT constitute foci of French and Swedish public diplomacy. Organizations from both countries point to the growing relevance of controlled and interactive online media as stand-alone tools and complements to other instruments such as events. Swedish public diplomacy initiatives like ‘Curators of Sweden’ combine the application of new ICT and the integration of domestic citizens in the country’s public diplomacy efforts. In addition to online media, public diplomacy practitioners from both member states highlight the importance of events as well as tools of group communication. Interactive online media, events, and tools of group communication all provide the opportunity of establishing a dialogue and fostering relationship building. Nonetheless, French and Swedish public diplomacy organizations, much like their EU colleagues, mostly use these tools for information and identity management purposes.

**Interorganizational Cooperation**

Organizations from different EU institutions cooperate on overarching communication priorities and goals, but seldom coordinate activities to attain these goals. Similarly, there is hardly any cooperation on the implementation of public diplomacy strategies between organizations focusing on the internal and the external dimension of EU public diplomacy.

Depending on the political will of single member states, cooperation between EU and member state organizations may stretch from ad-hoc cooperation on single issues and activities to the development of joint communication plans. Interviewees from EC Representations in Paris and Stockholm assess cooperation with member state organizations more positively than their colleagues in Brussels. Whereas EU representatives suggest a closer collaboration with member states, interviewees from the French and Swedish government do not share this opinion, and show a preference for cooperation in the context of single EU programs and single issues. French public diplomacy organizations consider other EU member states, particularly Germany and the UK, as important cooperation partners they also develop strategies with. Sweden, on the contrary, engages in close cooperation with other Nordic countries. Their geographical and conceptual proximity facilitates interorganizational cooperation with these countries.

National networks within member states are smaller and more homogeneous than transnational networks. Governments and governmental agencies constitute the core of the majority of national networks, whereas non-state organizations such as professional associations or trade unions are located at the periphery. Networks at national and transnational level are either composed of organizations from single public diplomacy core areas such as ‘society/culture’, or gather organizations from different core areas that work
together on single issues such as digital diplomacy. Public diplomacy organizations analyzed primarily engage in national networks to gain international influence or achieve shared outcomes. In addition to that, transnational networks also foster mutual learning, innovation, as well as experience and information exchange. Swedish and French organizations comprehend transnational networks rather as an opportunity of cooperation with other member states than with EU organizations – even if these networks have been established by the EU itself. The analysis of interorganizational cooperation discloses that French and Swedish organizations rather pursue pragmatic cooperation that resonates with the ideas of a ‘Europe of Projects’ and ‘Europe à la Carte’, than endorsing strategic cooperation on an overarching EU public diplomacy strategy. These findings suggest that French and Swedish public diplomacy organizations are more likely to engage in selected, project-based cooperations with EU organizations than in long-term cooperation efforts.

The comparative analysis of French and Swedish public diplomacy has revealed that France as a founding member that has adopted the Euro currency, and a comparably high degree of influence on EU decision-making, pursues a slightly more cooperative strategy with regard to EU public diplomacy. Sweden, as a smaller and less influential EU member state also includes cooperative elements in its public diplomacy strategy to attain goals it would not be able to reach on its own. Cooperation does, however, not focus on the EU specifically, but refers to multilateral organizations in general. The empirical findings indicate that there is no simple answer to the deliberatively provocative question ‘Competition or cooperation?’ In contrast, this thesis depicts a differentiated picture of European public diplomacy, including complex interorganizational relationships at national, regional and transnational level. The EU is a multi-issue organization. EU competences as well as political consensus among EU member states vary significantly between the different policy areas. Rather than supporting entire EU public diplomacy strategies, member states add selectively to EU public diplomacy. Sweden, for example, considers the Baltic Sea Program as a priority, but strongly opposes cooperation with the EU on trade promotion in third countries.

**Practical implications**

EU public diplomacy organizations communicating to internal and external publics should not only agree on overarching communication priorities, but exchange more regularly on the strategic planning and implementation of public diplomacy efforts. This refers particularly to DG Communication and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments within the EC and the EEAS. Moreover, the empirical findings have shown that EU, as well as French and Swedish organizations underline the importance of two-way communication in public diplomacy, but primarily use interactive tools for promotional purposes and to communicate pre-defined values and messages (technical dialogue). This thesis strongly encourages European public diplomacy organizations to not only adopt a rhetoric of dialogue, but to integrate genuine dialogue in its public diplomacy activities. Genuine dialogue in domestic, but also foreign public diplomacy has the potential to strengthen national cohesion within EU member states. This includes the recognition of countercultures and an on-going (re-) negotiation of a country’s identity and its values. If citizens cannot identify with the values public diplomacy organizations communicate within a country or on behalf of a country to foreign publics, they may search for alternative, perhaps more extreme conceptions of society. A genuinely dialogic approach may conflict with a country’s pre-defined brand values and messages, but has an important integrative function.
Strengthening the role of genuine dialogue may also contribute to a more pluralistic, diverse EU public diplomacy approach. In an empirical study on German public diplomacy, Löffelholz and colleagues (2015, see also Auer & Srugies, 2013) have shown that German organizations successfully communicate a pluralistic picture of the country abroad. Applying these findings to the EU, a public diplomacy approach that integrates diverging positions on single issues does not necessarily constrain the success of EU public diplomacy, but contributes to the credibility of promoting the inclusive, multifaceted nature of the EU.

**Outlook**

This study provides a broad overview on European public diplomacy understanding and practice. It serves as a starting point for deepening single aspects of analysis, including public diplomacy messages and messaging strategies as well as interorganizational cooperation. Additionally, further research should also turn its eyes on broadening the knowledge on European public diplomacy by including further EU organizations and more EU member states in empirical analyses. Dolea and Ingenhoff (2016) point to different positions of ‘old’ and ‘new’ EU member states in the current European migrant crisis and, subsequently, different actions and discourses on migration policy. It would be very interesting to examine the extent to which the public diplomacy understanding and practice of ‘old’ and ‘new’ member states resemble each other or differ, and to what extent their public diplomacy approaches complement or contradict EU public diplomacy. The state of public diplomacy research discloses a dominance of qualitative studies. Future research needs to give a more prominent role to quantitative approaches and integrate them in mixed method designs. One way to advance quantitative public diplomacy research is a follow-up study that comparatively analyzes the public diplomacy approach of all 28 EU member states, and EU public diplomacy practitioners on the basis of a more quantitative research design. To realize such a large-scale research project, this thesis encourages more joint projects in public diplomacy research. It suggests adopting Hanitzsch and Esser’s (2012) collaborative model of scientific cooperation to conduct large-scale comparative studies. Within this model international research teams jointly develop guiding concepts and instruments and are also integrated in the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data, while one researcher or one research institution coordinates the project (cf. Hanitzsch, 2008, p. 262).

The study at hand analyzes public diplomacy of regional organizations on the basis of one single actor, the EU. To gain a deeper understanding of public diplomacy by regional organization, future research needs to turn its eyes on trans-regional analyses that comparatively assess the public diplomacy practice of regional organizations. While ASEAN is “[w]idely perceived as the [Southeast Asian] region’s version of the European Union” (Löffelholz & Arao, 2011, p. 79), there are significant differences between the two regional bodies. Whereas the EU features a high level of regional integration with regard to “institutional structures, dominant principles and decision-making processes” (Löffelholz & Arao, 2011, p. 72), the “ASEAN Way” implies, “partnership known for minimal institutionalism, a low level of supranational elements and a preference for consensus-building” (ibid., 2011, p. 7). Pagovski (2015) refers to this differentiation as ‘hard’ and ‘soft

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7 The term ‘new’ member states refers to all EU member states that have joined the regional organization in the course or after the 2004 enlargement.
institutionalism’. A comparative analysis of the EU and ASEAN could shed light on the question of how the different institutional contexts of these two regional organizations influence their public diplomacy understanding and practice.

This study has focused on governmental organizations and government agencies. Future research should explore the role of non-state actors in European public diplomacy in greater detail. Mobilization theory constitutes a valuable theoretical perspective to analyze how non-state actors use public diplomacy to create consensus and stimulate joint action (see for instance Klandermans & Tarrow, 1988). Not least, future studies should also consider public diplomacy as a tool to manage and mitigate transboundary crises, such as the European migrant crisis (see for instance Auer, 2016; Olsson, 2013).

References


