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Mediatized Practices of EU Digital Diplomacy

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Blending Politics and New Media

This thesis explores the relationship between politics and new media in the context of digital diplomacy. In contrast to dominant mediatization approaches to politics that consider political logic to be dominated or even replaced by media logic, it develops a politics-centered approach where mediatization is considered an interinstitutional process. Using the case of the EU’s digital diplomacy, the thesis analyzes how practices of digital diplomacy have developed and are talked about among their practitioners. The conclusion is that mediatization of politics happens through an interaction of media logic and the hosting political context, where expectations, threats, leadership, resources, skills, learning, and individuals influence the practices where new media and diplomacy ultimately blends.
Blending Politics and New Media
Blending Politics and New Media

Mediatized Practices of EU Digital Diplomacy

Elsa Hedling

LUND UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
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Professor Alister Miskimmon
Queen’s University
Title and subtitle
Blending Politics and New Media: Mediatized Practices of EU Digital Diplomacy

Abstract
This thesis explores the relationship between politics and new media in the context of digital diplomacy at the European External Action Service (EEAS) 2011-2017. In contrast to dominant approaches to the mediatization of politics that consider political logic to be dominated or even replaced by media logic, it gives greater emphasis to the role of the political context, its actors and their practices. In effect, attention is directed to the ways in which a diplomatic organization internalizes media logic. This entails that the thesis develops a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics where mediatization is considered an interinstitutional process. It argues that this process can be studied through attention to everyday practices that signal varying degrees of blending logics. Using the case of the EU's digital diplomacy, this thesis studies how practices of digital diplomacy have developed and are talked about among their practitioners.

The empirical material consists of 23 informant interviews conducted during a number of visits to the EEAS in Brussels, official documents, newsletters and social media observations (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube). The case study analyzes the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS through three empirical snapshots that illustrate crisis management communication during the Ukraine crisis 2013-2014, responses to Russian disinformation 2015-2016 and the projection of the EU Global Strategy 2016-2017. The conclusion is that the mediatization of politics happens through an interaction of media logic (here new media) and the hosting political context, where expectations, threats, leadership, resources, skills, learning and individuals influence the practices where new media and diplomacy ultimately blends.

Key words mediatization, digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, EU, EEAS

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Blending Politics and New Media

Mediatized Practices of EU Digital Diplomacy

Elsa Hedling

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To my family
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<td>CSDP</td>
<td>Common Security and Defense Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EaP</td>
<td>Eastern Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>European Defense Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEAS</td>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>EED</td>
<td>European Endowment for Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENP</td>
<td>European Neighborhood Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESS</td>
<td>European Security Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUGS</td>
<td>EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUROMED</td>
<td>European Mediterranean Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUROTOM</td>
<td>European Atomic Energy Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAC</td>
<td>EU Foreign Affairs Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAQs</td>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCO</td>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR/VP</td>
<td>High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>IDF</td>
<td>Israel Defense Forces</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>MFA’s</td>
<td>Ministries of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPD</td>
<td>New Public Diplomacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>PESCO</td>
<td>Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defense</td>
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<td>RISS</td>
<td>Russian Institute of Strategic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEDE</td>
<td>European Parliament Sub-committee on Security and Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>StratCom</td>
<td>Strategic Communication</td>
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Chapter 1.
Introduction

Studying the Mediatization of Politics

Politics is increasingly conducted by means of mediated formats, channels and interactions brought about by the Internet. This emergence of new media has been coupled with demands for more transparency and visibility in world politics. The opportunities of social media were therefore anticipated as revolutionary in terms of the transparency and the connectedness they could bring to politics. Later, when political communication had to a large extent been digitalized, the new media environment that the Internet had enabled was widely considered to be equally concerned with challenges to politics. The challenges were associated with the emergence of transnational terrorism, international populism and illiberal movements. Politics have thus adapted to, changed with and made use of new media. The transformation of the relationship between politics and media is therefore considered to have accelerated through the introduction of the Internet (Bennett 2003; Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl 2005, 2012; Earl & Kimport 2011; Seib 2012). While political organizations and their actors continue to engage with both the opportunities and the challenges of new media, we still know very little about how this behavior has influenced political practice and how this engagement may have developed as a political practice in its own right. A widely shared assumption is that politics has become increasingly “mediatized”, that politics is practiced according to media demands and that new media are the latest wave of such a mediatization process. Still, we know very little of the transformation taking effect. In this thesis I therefore study what happens to political practices in a mediatization process.

New media are part of the communications technology revolution and defined as digitalized, interactive and networked forms of communication (Der Derian 2009, p. 247). Most commonly, we associate new media with social media, social
networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. This new wave of media intensification has had new implications for the relationship between politics and mediated communication. Social media are now a central channel of news consumption and political information and increasingly also a new arena of engagement and two-way interaction with other actors, and with transnational publics. Their ability to bypass the news media and reach a wide audience through self-presentation has also resulted in their becoming a new channel of more traditional international political practices such as consular services, diplomatic signaling or even high-stakes negotiations (Cassidy 2018). In effect, international politics is no longer confined to closed summits and state-to-state communication out of the glare of the public eye (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin & Roselle 2018).

This new role of media practices in politics therefore resonates with the mediatization of ideas by breaking the boundaries of media influence (Krotz 2009; Lundby 2009; Hjavard 2013). Mediatization goes further in its assumption of the force of this influence than classic media interaction theorizations by considering media an all-encompassing and permeable force (Hjavard 2008). In conceptualizations of this influence, a guiding “media logic”, has supposedly and to increasing degrees invaded politics that were originally guided by a “political logic” (Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999; Meyer 2002; Strömbäck 2008). Media logic and political logic are here understood as ideal type institutional logics, a core concept in sociological theory defined as ”socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton & Ocasio 1999, p. 804). The invasive role of media logic varies in different accounts but the mediatization framework has generally suggested the upper hand of media, in that political actors are now typically compelled to adapt to media logic (Robertson 2015, p. 134). More recent work has acknowledged that the mediatization of politics may also be a result of more proactive strategies on the part of political organizations (Strömbäck & van Aelst 2013, p. 354; Donges & Jarren 2014), but the dominant view is still to consider it a reaction in the political sphere. The shared assumption is however the tendency of political organizations to internalize media logic.

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2 The history of social media dates back to the 1970s but became a common term when the first blogging sites became popular around the turn of the millennium. In this study the rise of social media however refers specifically to the social networking sites that became new arenas and channels for politics as from about 2009.

3 I discuss the concepts political logic and media logic at greater length later in this chapter.
On the basis of these assumptions, this study is empirically concerned with the recent tendency of Ministries of Foreign Affairs to engage in “digital diplomacy”, here exemplified by the EU’s diplomatic service, the European External Action Service (EEAS). Digital diplomacy broadly refers to the intersection of diplomacy and technology and thus represents one field of political practice that has been transformed through the interaction with new media.\textsuperscript{4} International organizational bodies or national foreign policy organizations may not be the first political entities that come to mind in a discussion of mediatization. Traditionally, international politics has been considered secretive, forward-looking and elite-driven and therefore less susceptible to media influence (Brommesson & Ekengren 2017, p. 5). The new demands of transparency and the greater role ascribed to publics in international politics have however led to increased attention to media and lately to new media (Seib 2012; Duncombe 2017; Jackson 2018).\textsuperscript{5} Within this development, social media have found a place in the contemporary practices of diplomacy. Theoretically, this thesis thus strives to connect mediatization theory with the conduct of international politics, which is realized through a study of digital diplomacy. Here, this tendency of “doing digital diplomacy” serves as a focal point and the EEAS as a laboratory in which to study what happens to political practices in a mediatization process.\textsuperscript{6} The EEAS presents suitable grounds for this task because when it was launched in 2010, with the task of consolidating EU diplomacy and with a special emphasis on increasing visibility and reaching the public audience, the new information environment was from the very outset acknowledged as a challenge and an opportunity. It was a challenge because the period of setting up a new organization, its communication structure and diplomatic capacities, coincided with uprisings in the Middle East at the time described as a “social media revolution”.\textsuperscript{7} Social media had been anticipated as a tool of public outreach but at about this time were also becoming an expected channel of diplomacy. In addition, the new empowered role of the post of High

\textsuperscript{4} I discuss the definition of digital diplomacy further on pages 17-18.

\textsuperscript{5} The increased role of public opinion in foreign policy is widely attributed to the technological advancements of communication first through real-time news reporting during the 1990’s and only later through the Internet (Robinson 1999, 2002, 2005; Gilboa 2002; Cull 2013).

\textsuperscript{6} Others have argued in favor of abandoning the view of the EU as a sui generis political order and instead consider it a “laboratory” where one can explore themes of relevance to the broader academic community (Jørgensen & Rosamond 2002; Knodt & Princen 2003, p. 207; Checkel 2006, p.2).

\textsuperscript{7} Research on the Arab Spring has debunked the understanding of social media as a revolutionary force in the uprisings but maintains that the new media environment via preexisting information infrastructures together with the networking capacity of mobile phones, was a significant factor in the protests (Howard & Hussain 2013; Wolfsfeld, Segev & Sheafer 2013).
Representative (HR/VP) as the head of EU foreign policy, led to new expectations of visible EU leadership. This presented new media as an opportunity for the EEAS’s new task of projecting coherent and visible EU foreign policy, especially because it was a low-cost, low-risk way of experimenting with the new mandate.

Little did the staff at the newly formed EEAS know that the uprisings in the Middle East were only the beginning of the entanglement of new media and international politics. Instead, they were about to experience a series of challenges related to a new information environment that would not only put their new role in international politics to a severe test but also position them in the midst of turmoil. In 2014, during the height of the Ukraine crisis, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs used their Twitter account to confront the EU by speaking directly to the EEAS counterpart official Twitter account. What followed was a harsh awakening to the fact that the EU’s efforts at diplomacy in the Eastern neighborhood had been outmaneuvered by a Russian disinformation campaign.8

As the Russian creative use of new media practices to distort the EU was advancing both within and outside the union, the EEAS was tasked with counter-action. In 2016, when the Brexit campaign, which was to a large extent digital, succeeded in convincing a majority of British voters to leave the EU, the external challenges in the new media environment were matched by internal mistrust and threats of disintegration. Communicating the EU and its role in the world became more pressing but also more expected than ever before, sentiments which charged the launch of the EU’s new Global Strategy in 2016.

The series of communication challenges that followed certainly put new emphasis on new media in EU foreign policy, but above all the EEAS developed in a time characterized by political events and the increased role of publics in foreign policy. Russia’s annexation of Crimea became a political and security crisis, disinformation became a new political problem (rather than a communication problem) and projecting the EU’s role in the world became increasingly essential to the EEAS’ operations and its perceived legitimacy both within and outside the EU. This development, which to all appearance fits the profile of a mediatization process, led to changes in the relationship between political and media practices of diplomacy. In 2011, when the EEAS took its first steps in practising digital diplomacy, the social media channels were managed by two persons. Six years later, after a period of adapting, responding, experimenting and learning, the by then Strategic Communications Division, had grown substantially to a staff of 51 persons that according to many of them “for the first time in history were

---

8 In combination with other political and military actions.
communicating EU politics in a strategic manner".9 As we will see, this process was, however, never solely about adding communicative capacity to a political organization but was also a matter of merging political and media practices in the consolidation of EU diplomacy in a changing international environment. As this thesis will argue, digital diplomacy is not the simple result of diplomats adapting to a new media channel or a commercialization of political communication, but is, rather, a practice that reflects the political organization, the leadership, the staff, and the political challenges and opportunities they face in the process of developing a digital diplomacy capacity. Essentially, it is thus about the interactions within politics and ultimately the blend of politics and new media.

In order to grasp what happens to political practices in a mediatization process it is thus vital to connect mediatization theory to the conduct of politics. This is therefore a thesis situated in the media-politics nexus that connects mediatization theory and its assumptions of the internalization of media logic to theories of International Relations (IR) and its assumptions of political practices.10 In this task it engages literatures of diplomacy, EU studies and practice theory to offer a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will first present the research questions, the puzzle and the motivations that have guided this study. I will then turn to discuss the research strategy and some methodological considerations. Finally, I state the contributions to the related strands of research this thesis aims to make and I end this chapter with an outline of the chapters to come.

**Questions, Puzzle and Motivations**

The overarching purpose of this thesis is to develop mediatization theory by offering a way of including the role of the political context in which institutions, actors and their practices undergo a mediatization process. The guiding research question in this study, that has already been presented upfront, is therefore: *What happens to political practices in a mediatization process?*

Imperative to answering this question is the ability to connect the interactions between the institutional logics at stake; political logic and media logic, to the varying expressions of the mediatization of politics that appear to present

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9 A statement often repeated in the 23 interviews I conducted for this study.

10 Mediatization is an interdisciplinary research agenda that has foremost been conducted by scholars from the field of media and communication, journalism, sociology and political communication. This thesis therefore also implicitly engages with these fields.
themselves in political practice. In order to do this, I develop a politics-centered approach, to focus on mediatization within politics rather than in the media sphere. In this regard, I ascribe a greater role to agency in mediatization where the structural presence of media is met by organizations and individuals that both shape and enact the practices that can be traced to a mediatization. The overarching research question has therefore been supported by two additional questions that served to further focus the contribution of this thesis:

How can we account for variation in, and of, the mediatization of politics?

Under what conditions has the mediatization of politics occurred in the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS?

Mediatization theory departs from the increasing presence, power and reach of the media sector since the 1990s where technological advancements and commercialization are assumed to be the driving forces of such permeation into other areas of society (Hjavard 2008). Since then, media have become more and more relevant for human activities and social relations (Krotz 2017). The assumptions of omnipresent media logic are thus still relevant, if not even more so, in the age of the Internet and new media where media practices have transcended the media sector and become integral in everyday practices (Archetti 2012, 2013; van Dijk & Poell 2013; Hjavard 2013; Jackson 2018, p. 11). Thus, in this thesis I study the mediatization of politics in which new media have entered into politics.

The mediatization of politics however remains a puzzling phenomenon because despite the assumptions of invasive media logic and an evident intensification of media practices in society, most studies of how politics have become mediatized do not support the claims of omnipresent transformation (e.g. Kepplinger 2002; van Aelst, Brants, van Praag, de Vreese, Nutemans & van Dalen 2008; Strömbäck 2010). Although influence rather than transformation is significant in its own right, such conclusions have been difficult to connect to the theoretical ambitions of mediatization. This might have provided enough reasons to abandon mediatization theory altogether if it was not for the connection of this mismatch to the dominance of media-centered approaches to mediatization (Deacon & Stanyer 2014). In addition, the general absence of a theory that can account for

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11 By omnipresent transformation I am here referring to the assumptions that a mediatization process would permeate everything, everywhere, every time.
the shifting media ecology in society has kept the mediatization agenda alive.\textsuperscript{12} In this regard, mediatization has remained promising (Hepp 2009; Jackson 2018). The challenge therefore concerns a general mismatch in the theoretical assumptions and the empirical findings of mediatization studies that would suggest that we need to rethink how to conceptualize and operationalize the mediatization of politics.

The dominance of media-centered approaches is characterized by studies in the news media sector. The mediatization of politics is for instance primarily studied through news media content analysis. Political science has only to a limited extent contributed to this challenge but instead largely accepted mediatization as a media centric perspective in the field by continuing the tradition of studying the mediatization of politics as something that takes place only in the media sphere (van Aelst, Schaefer & Stanyer 2012; Robertson 2015). This is particularly troubling in light of new media and the ways in which the Internet has created opportunities for political actors to bypass the news media and speak directly to their intended audiences. While there are thus ample opportunities to study the mediatization of politics in practice, mediatization claims in the study of politics are often restricted to stylistic and rhetorical changes in political campaigning, media management and relationships with journalists. In addition, the few studies that have considered how mediatization occurs in political organizations have ascribed more influence to management structures and the perception of mediatization than to structural media pressures (Fredriksson Shillemans & Pallas 2015; Maltby 2015). Such findings thus suggest a resilience of political logic at stake.

While the empirical findings of the mediatization of politics may seem to contradict theory, they are foremost a reflection of the fact this topic is under-researched and that few studies have focused on changes in political practices. The claims of mediatization penetrate much deeper into to the institution of politics and the Internet has supposedly changed more than the way that politicians communicate with journalists. I therefore consider many findings in previous studies distorted by the assumed invasive role of media logic and therefore unfortunately blind to the media practices that occur within other areas of contemporary politics. Looking for instance at the numerous studies of social

\textsuperscript{12} In this broad field of research it has become common to speak of the presence of new media in society in terms of a “new media ecology”. Speaking of a media ecology suggests an inclusion of environments, actors and technology together in a set of interrelationships that alludes to an organic life form (Merrin 2014; Miskimmon et al. 2013; Jackson 2018). I use media ecology as a descriptive term in this study which is why I leave the discussion of this term to the literature review in chapter two.
media and political activism that were sparked by the Arab Spring, findings suggest that the political environment rather than technological advancements best explain the uprisings. In such studies the role of social media in politics has been characterized by a hierarchy in which “politics comes first” (Wolfsfeld et al. 2013, p. 116). In addition, rather than a case of adaptation, political protesters grasped the opportunity of social media to amplify their political struggles (Howard & Hussain 2013). Still the capture of new audiences and the connectedness between transnational movements were unprecedented and social media thus transformed how politics was practiced. Studies of political protests and social movements in general may favor this view of a more politically steered and strategic use of media logic (because of the inherent role of advocacy and strategies of reach). Still, there are other reasons to argue for a more prominent role of politics and its context in a mediatization process. The increased attention to social media in IR and specifically digital diplomacy, for instance, serves the argument as to why a mediatization process should be approached as a less deterministic and more entangled process in the interactions between politics, media and society in general. Finally, studies of the role of media and lately social media, in political science are often criticized as either underestimating or overestimating the role of the media in politics which further stresses the need for cross-fertilization of these fields of research.\(^\text{13}\) I therefore argue that the mediatization of politics is puzzling and misconceived, in part because the widely accepted understanding of media-dominated mediatization takes its departure in a media perspective rather than a political perspective.\(^\text{14}\)

This thesis therefore departs from a disbelief in the assumed upper hand of a media logic and the relative neglect of central areas of political practice that have undergone changes associated with the intensification of new media in the theorization of the mediatization of politics. In this light, this thesis confronts much of the existing literature on the mediatization of politics by questioning the supposed stark contrast between political logic and media logic. Instead, I view the relationship between the institutional logics as interdependent in a mediatization process which leads me to believe that a politics-centered approach

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\(^{13}\) This tendency is related to the opposite sides of cyber-enthusiasm and cyber-sceptics that have characterized the debate of the Internet’s role in society (see Joseph 2012).

\(^{14}\) Here I am departing from the dominant approaches to mediatization (Strömbäck 2008; Krotz 2009; Lundby 2009, 2013), I am aware that there are more recent examples of less media centered approaches in the field of media and communication studies (Pallas & Fredriksson 2013; Pallas, Strannegård & Jonsson 2014; Donges & Jarren 2014; Fredriksson et al. 2015; Klinger & Svensson 2015) and I partly build on these in the following chapters. In the context of political science, the media centrism has however largely subsisted in textbook accounts of mediatization and studies of political communication.
which considers the political context is better suited to consider the mediatization of politics. In effect, I suggest that the resistance, adaptation and development of political practice, in this study illustrated by diplomacy, play an equal role in the social change that results from mediatization. This also leads me to ascribe greater importance to the micro level of mediatization which is often ignored, but where actors both drive and resist their structural environment.

This study is thus motivated by the need to bring politics into the theorization of the mediatization of politics and to resolve the inherent tensions in assumptions that seem either to overestimate or to underestimate the role of media logic in politics and vice versa. This leads me to follow the promise of a political and contextual analysis of the mediatization of politics in which practices in the everyday are central to theorization. To this end, I focus on variation in the expression of mediatization that previous research has struggled to conceptualize and I seek to specify the conditions under which the mediatization of politics happens by learning from the empirical context at EEAS. This entails that this study also carries some empirical motivation and seeks both to illustrate and to learn from a process of mediatization in the development of EU digital diplomacy. The empirical study thus serves to develop the conditions under which the mediatization of politics can be expected and this is also where I direct more attention to agency as a condition. Studies that engage with mediatization theory have often lacked articulated scope conditions, which is a significant shortcoming since it makes it difficult to assess the prerequisites of the mediatization of politics.15 In a contribution towards this end, Douglas Brommesson and Ann-Marie Ekengren (2017) specify the scope conditions of mediatization in the case of mediatized foreign policy roles and argue that uncertainty, identity and resonance are the scope conditions of mediatization in the particular context of mediatized foreign policy roles. Nevertheless, while the focus on mediatized foreign policy roles conditionalizes the claim that foreign policy actors will adopt media logic, it does not zoom in on the interaction between the logics. The role of scope conditions in this study is instead to specify the conditions under which the mediatization of politics understood as an inter-institutional process (thus increased interaction between the logics) is more likely to occur and intensify. Finally, in the context of diplomacy and EU foreign policy, my aim is that this study should draw attention to, and advance, the understanding of, the emerging practice of digital diplomacy. A final motivation for carrying out this empirical study is therefore also to contribute to the historical record and understanding of

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15 This is of course also a reflection of the assumptions of omnipresence and all-encompassing influence that do not favor attempts of conditionalizing theoretical claims.
the evolution of diplomacy and of the assumed role which new media technologies play. While the contribution is primarily directed to the scholarly field of political science, the results of this research may therefore also prove useful for policymakers and politicians in their practices that are affected by the mediatization of our time.

Delimitations

To clarify further the purpose of this study I will briefly state the delimitations that concern the objective of theory development. First, the interdisciplinarity at stake in this project requires clarification. Here, I aim to develop mediatization theory within political science by bringing the theorization into the studies of international politics. This entails that I do not aim to make an interdisciplinary theoretical contribution but rather that I am bringing an interdisciplinary theory into the discipline of political science. I clarify this because it affects the choice of literature that I engage with (and do not engage with). I further develop the contributions which this study makes later in this chapter but this clarification serves to position it in the interdisciplinary field of mediatization research.

Secondly, mediatization is both an empirical phenomenon and a theorized process and the research questions concern the latter. Hence, when I speak of new media as the latest wave of mediatization, it is a widely agreed upon way of referring to mediatization as an empirical phenomenon. (Hepp, Hjavad & Lundby 2015; Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2015). The purpose of this study is thus not to investigate whether or not mediatization has occurred: I am assuming that it has done so, through the intensification of media practices and I study what it means for politics.

Finally, the rise of the Internet and the emergence of new media have led to numerous claims of impact on politics and on international politics more specifically. This is a wide and multifaceted field of inquiry. While this thesis will engage with some of these claims, its purpose is not to evaluate the impact of new media on politics but to further our understanding of the mediatization of politics by focusing on new media.

16 The methodological delimitations of this study will be discussed to greater length in chapter three.
Methodological Considerations

In this thesis, I study EU digital diplomacy and I use the EEAS as a laboratory in which to develop a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics which is both a theoretical and methodological task. In order to develop the argument of mediatization of politics as an inter-institutional process and, further, to show its value convincingly, I study practices of digital diplomacy in the EEAS. The political context in a mediatization process, that I have stressed as being under-researched and often underestimated, is here thus one of diplomatic development within the scope of EU foreign policy. I speak of digital diplomacy in EU foreign policy because this is not just one case of digital diplomacy among many others but should be considered within its context of EU foreign policy. Before developing a discussion of what this particular context and this case implies imply, some clarifications and definitions are in order.

First, the focus on digital diplomacy and the EEAS implies that I assume a mediatization process at stake from the outset of this study. The EEAS is a relatively new institutional body charged with consolidating EU diplomacy, a largely communicative practice, in a time of information abundance. Without accounting for the political events discussed in the introduction, we could still assume a mediatization at stake in the development of digital diplomacy. Further, the political context is understood in broad terms but is here considered as the political aspects of the environment that are relevant to the practices that take place in the EEAS. This entails that I consider political context in a broad sense compared to, for instance, “politics”, which is a narrower definition of the political sphere. A political context is here nonetheless understood as a field of activities where international organizations and diplomacy are covered. This leads me to consider the activities of EU digital diplomacy as one among many other political contexts. The role of political context in this thesis is thus to develop an approach to mediatization where context is ascribed a greater role in the theoretical claims. This also leads me to position this thesis within the tradition of producing and evaluating partial and contingent claims rather than all-encompassing truths

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17 By inter-institutional process I thus mean that I consider mediatization to be a societal interaction that involves the equal involvement of two social institutions, here politics and media.

18 Within the poststructuralist tradition, political context could be understood in a broader meaning as everything that is political or has implications to politics, leading to a less material understanding (Mouffe 2000).

19 See for instance discussion by DeRose 2009 on the value of contextualism in the philosophy of science.
The political aspects of an environment can include the internal distribution of power, actors and their interests and the interaction between them, formal and informal rules but also the external political conditions facing the environment such as cooperation, conflict, threat or mistrust. This understanding of political context hence considers political behavior to be both defined by and created in constant recursive interaction. In consequence, the variation of social processes such as mediatization are considered reflections of the interactions that take place in a given political context.

Secondly, the political context in this study is a diplomatic one which has implications for how I study mediatization. The study of diplomacy has in recent decades been concerned with understanding change in relation to globalization processes where digital diplomacy is one of the latest developments (Pouliot & Cornut 2015; Wheeler 2013; Bjola 2016). Mediatization can be considered one such process of globalization that has significantly changed patterns of communication that are essential to diplomacy. Despite the context of change, the most common definition of diplomacy remains “the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means” (Bull 1997, p. 33). In comparison, digital diplomacy broadly refers to the intersection of diplomacy and technology but more specifically to the impact of information and communications technology (ICTs) on the practice of diplomacy.

Definitions of digital diplomacy (and the term itself) are contested, because attempts to understand the role of digitalization, in combination with other processes of global change, challenge the above quoted traditional definition of diplomacy by suggesting more than just a transfer of a “business as usual” to the digital sphere. The common view is for instance that diplomacy in the digital age is no longer an activity restricted to relations between states and conducted through official agents (which in reality was never really the case). It is instead considered a more visible, but also more complex and illusive, activity that involves a plurality of actors using a plurality of channels to conduct diplomacy.

I refrain from developing this discussion about the meta-theoretical underpinnings of this study as I consider the lengthy debates over knowledge claims often unproductive and such assumptions implicitly present in the remainder of this thesis.

This is a broad understanding and I consciously refrain from quoting a previous definition because I consider them limiting and often misleading. Instead, digital diplomacy as a field of political practice will be further operationalized and defined throughout this thesis.

By digitalization, I mean the way in which social life is increasingly structured around digital communication and media infrastructures. Mediatization, however, is more that the digital representation of data (see Krotz 2017, p. 104).
The Internet supports a range of new actors who influence society and challenge territorial sovereignty, because it blurs the distinction between national and international communication spaces (Kurbalija 2013, p. 147). While digital diplomacy belongs in this class of new globalized forms of diplomacy, it is also concerned with the very essence of classic diplomatic practice: representation and communication (Jönsson & Hall 2003; Sharp 1999). In this regard, the need to represent and communicate has not been changed by the rise of new communication technologies. Being a highly mediated practice, diplomacy (which has therefore always been a field of interest in the interaction of media and politics) has most recently made urgent by the rise of social media. Finally, the fascination with social media within diplomacy is inevitably linked to Joseph Nye’s theory of “soft power” (1990). While Nye’s understanding of soft power referred to the shifting diplomacy norms after the end of the Cold War where a new globalism had de-emphasized the strength of military power, soft power in the digital age is the perceived ability to change behavior via social reach (Hayden 2012).

While digital diplomacy is still an emerging practice it is often conceptualized as a form of public diplomacy, specifically related to the notion of new public diplomacy that emerged in the 1990s. Public diplomacy broadly refers to the practice of diplomats in monitoring and shaping public opinion, conducting international political advocacy, directing international broadcasting channels and facilitating intercultural exchange, through the use of mediated communication (e.g. Cowan & Cull 2008; Melissen 2005a; Snow & Taylor 2009; Pamment 2014). New public diplomacy (NPM) is defined as originating both from processes of political change that have pluralized global politics and from the emergence of a global communications infrastructure (Brown 2004). Digital diplomacy is then the continuation of the development of new public diplomacy though digitalization. Digital diplomacy has also been associated with a pattern of democratization of diplomacy and thus the increasing role of the public in international affairs (Barberá & Zeitzoff 2017; Bjola 2016). These elements of the evolution of diplomacy therefore provide an excellent opportunity to deepen our understanding of the mediatization of politics because it is a political activity that to an increasing degree has become entangled with media opportunities in many ways, including but not limited to, through digitalization.

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23 Essentially Nye differentiates between hard and soft power. Hard power is ability to coerce, through threats and inducements. Soft power, on the contrary, is the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion. Finally, smart power is the balance of the two (Nye 1990, 2004, 2005, 2011).
Finally, coming back to digital diplomacy in EU foreign policy, I have already declared that I use the EEAS and its context of EU foreign policy as a laboratory in which to explore what happens to political practices in a mediatization process. It is a laboratory because it provides an interesting political context that highlights the evolution of diplomacy and of international politics. It is interesting in this regard because it is a context charged with the legitimacy deficit that challenges EU politics in general, and troubled by the restraints of corporatism and thus difficulties of reaching consensus among its Member States (Bickerton 2011). I will in this thesis argue that EU foreign policy is increasingly in need of public legitimacy and that the communicative opportunities of the EEAS’s digital diplomacy are of great significance in this regard. This argument, which will be developed further in the final section of chapter three and in full in the concluding chapter, departs from the changing role of EU foreign policy after the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty (Treaty of Lisbon) in 2009.24

EU foreign policy has evolved over decades from strictly intergovernmental cooperation to increasing institutionalization of transgovernmentalism. It has developed through its own pillar (Common Foreign and Security Policy) in the post-Maastricht structure, through the establishment of the post of High Representative in 1999 and the introduction of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The Lisbon Treaty however marked an especially significant leap towards consolidating EU external action (Aggestam & Johansson 2017). It resulted from a long process of compromising between the Member States of the EU that first led to the failed Constitutional Treaty in 2005 but was later reworked into the Lisbon Treaty and ratified in 2007. The Lisbon Treaty saw great changes to the area of foreign policy and, in the aim of making EU foreign policy more effective, coherence was a favored new principle. To this end, the Lisbon Treaty led to a simplification of the EU’s structure, the EU became a legal entity and institutional amendments related to the European foreign policy were made to foster coherence.25 Specifically, these were effected through the new position of the President of the European Council, the revised position of the High Representative and a new institutional body, the EEAS. These


25 The new legal personality of the EU implied the ability to enter into a contract, for instance to sign an international convention or to be a member of an international organization which in effect strengthened the status of the EU as an international actor.
developments implied that EU foreign policy had since 2009 been empowered through the principle of coherence and the unprecedented leadership through the HR/VP (the High Representative has since then also served as the vice president of the European Commission). When the Lisbon Treaty entered into effect on the 1st of December 2009, the British European Commissioner, Catherine Ashton, became the first HR/VP to hold the empowered role. She held the role until 2014, when she was succeeded by Italy’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Federica Mogherini.

The EEAS was accordingly first founded on the 1st of December 2010 with the purpose of consolidating the EU’s diplomatic practice that was previously loosely coordinated between the Member States and divided in conduct between the EU Council Secretariat and the European Commission, resulting in various degrees of coherence. The introduction of the EEAS to assist the HR/VP, and as a core facilitator of EU external relations, was therefore considered to have increased the role of EU diplomacy and not least, EU public diplomacy (Duke 2013; Cross 2015).

These developments, the strengthened leadership of the HR/VP and the introduction of the EEAS along with the political challenges it faced in its first years, are of importance as regards the mediatization that I have discussed in this chapter, for two reasons. First, the introduction of the principle of coherence in the media environment of 2009 led to expectations of strategic media management and digital diplomacy accompanied by both opportunity and constraint. Secondly, the HR/VP and EEAS were a new role and a new institutional body where the practices of EU diplomacy were expected to be consolidated and institutionalized to become increasingly coherent, effective and visible. To this end, in the early years of the EEAS it became a “melting pot” of diplomatic practice, charged with both consolidating and developing EU diplomacy, which established the fertile grounds for this study.

Adding to this, the consolidation of diplomatic practice that the EEAS was charged with was also a matter of merging and integrating staff from two existing institutions - the Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council. In addition the EEAS was tasked with adding a “presence” of staff coming from the diplomatic services of the Member States. Meaningful presence was, according to the Council Decision establishing the EEAS, reached when at least one third of all staff came from the diplomatic services of the Member States (Council of the European Union 2010/427/EU). This objective was reached less than three years after the launch of the EEAS.
Research Design

The ambition of this thesis is to develop an approach that can advance mediatization theory in political science. The research design follows this rationale, and is intended to assist the development of an analytical framework of the mediatization of politics by making useful connections to scholarship and practices that signal mediatized politics. In order to achieve this aim, I ask questions about how political logic and media logic interact, rather than why or to what effect they do. We already know that there is interaction, that it has intensified and we can already see results of such mediatization. Even more so, the motivations between interactions are rather commonsensical, since in a denser information environment, political actors must add capacities of communication. But how this actually happens and therefore what it means in practice remains elusive. The research design is therefore intended to grasp, through illustration, how mediatization happens, using the example of digital diplomacy at the EEAS. In sum, the research design can therefore be described as a reflexive and as a process-oriented design that sought to capture the transformation claim of the mediatization of politics in a defined political context. It is reflexive in the sense that the political context in which the mediatization is studied remains central to the attempts to understand the process in focus. This design is realized by approaching digital diplomacy as set of practices in which mediatization can be expected to be found and is assisted by qualitative methods that can capture observations and accounts of such practices. In the following sections I will develop in more detail what such a design means and what it entails for the following chapters.

Political Context, Institutional Logics and Agency

The theoretical contributions of this thesis build on a rethinking of the relationship between the institutional logics, in which more attention is given to the political context and agency in the analysis of mediatization. My argument is that political logic and media logic should be studied and thus understood in the context in which they interact rather than using predetermined and vague assumptions of normative underpinnings (political logic) and commercialism (media logic). I instead suggest that the relationship between the logics is constructed and maintained by the organizations and actors in which they interact and that their resulting practices can therefore only be understood through questions of how politics is being conducted.

Institutional logics is a field level concept that includes institutional norms, practices and principles and points to the social construction, stability, historical
patterns and extensive reach of belief systems and practices (Friedland & Alford 1991; Thornton & Ocasio 1999, 2008; Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012; Pallas et al. 2014). Specifically, it has been used to study institutional pressures in studies of organizations (Kraatz & Block 2008; Pallas et al. 2014). In the context of political science, institutional logics are associated with neo-institutionalist theory which stresses the value of analyzing politics as organizational behavior (Hall & Taylor 1996). Neo-institutionalism is a broad theoretical perspective and, as such, institutional approaches vary greatly in their emphasis on micro and macro features, cognitive and normative aspects of institutions and the role of interests and relational networks in the creation and diffusion of institutions (DiMaggio & Powell 1998). In this study, the institutional approach is leaned towards micro processes and actors that influence how change, here mediatization, results from translations, analogies, combinations and adaptations of more macro-institutional logics (Thornton et al. 2012, p. 4). Here I thus use institutional logics to consider such processes in the interaction between a given political context and new media change. The institutional logics are ideal type constructs based on deliberate simplification and exaggeration. For instance, market logic is assumed to emphasize the accumulation of wealth, religious logic is assumed to favor modesty of means and personal charity – although simplifications, they serve as a means of studying a theorized change in a particular spatial and temporal setting (Skelcher & Smith 2015). Political logic and media logic are thus used to theorize the connectivity between organizational form, normative frames, and individual agency in the interaction of politics and media. Although ideal types, I argue that they should be developed with greater consideration of the political context in mediatization theory to avoid concept inflation.

Although this thesis emphasizes political logic in a mediatization process compared with previous research, I also seek to develop the concept of media logic in mediatization research. The media environment since 2000 is described as a hybrid media ecology in which both old and new media logic exists (Jackson 2018). In this this study, I focus on new media that, according to some, have their own logic defined as “the processes, principles and practices through which [these] platforms process information, news, and communication” (van Dijck & Poell 2013, p. 5). I will argue for the continued value of the original concept; media logic is in this study understood as the more specific modus operandi of social media. On the other side of the interaction, political logic is then the modus operandi of politics but here politics does not lend itself to a similar simplified definition but must be understood in a given political context prior to a mediatization process. This is complex because, in reality, multiple processes of mediatization can be traced through history. The introduction of the printing
press and the telephone are historical media developments that caused changes in politics linked to previous waves of mediatization. Waves of mediatization are thus moments of qualitatively intense media change, when a given media technology is appropriated in a certain context for the first time (Hepp et al. 2015). Since the beginning of the 1990s, mediatization has been assumed to be digitalized and omnipresent, thus being appropriated across different contexts and the latest wave of mediatization, that is in this thesis is related to the rise of social media and user-generated media content (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2015, Couldry & Hepp 2017). Hence, when I speak of studying mediatization in a political context I am not assuming that this is a context guided solely by an ideal typical political logic where there was no media logic before. Instead, I seek to capture one of many such processes of mediatization of politics and the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS provides an opportunity to do just that.

I study the role of political context, institutional logics and agency in the mediatization of politics through an illustrative single case study of the EEAS development of digital diplomacy 2011-2017. The political context is operationalized as digital diplomacy in EU foreign policy, which has been motivated above to provide a relevant context in which to study a mediatization process. The institutional logics are treated as ideal typical constructs that separate the political context from the media change and the definition and description of them are integrated in the aim of this thesis. At a practical level, political logic is further operationalized as diplomatic logics that guide different diplomatic practices. Specifically, I focus on the diplomatic dimensions of crisis management communication, countering disinformation and public diplomacy and the way that they interact with new media logic. Finally, I study the role of agency in the mediatization of politics by on the one hand accounting for organizational agency (through the emphasis on political context) in the appropriation of media change, but primarily by studying mediatization at a field level. At this field level, actors, or as I will later call them, practitioners and leaders drive, enact, and adapt to the interaction between political logic and media logic.

Finally, I will clarify that the purpose of using a single case study for theory development is to provide a high level of detail and understanding of the complex phenomena in focus (Bennett & Elman 2007, Yin 2009). This approach thus resulted in a focused within case comparison through three connected but separate moments of mediatization collectively understood as the gradual increase in the interaction between political logic and media logic. The empirical chapters thus

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27 The EEAS was officially launched in December 2010, but it was during the 2011 that the organization began to take shape why I start this study in 2011 rather than 2010.
provide three “snapshots” of a mediatization process. The first snapshot was characterized by the EEAS efforts of crisis management communication on Twitter 2013-2014, followed by a snapshot of the efforts to contain and counter Russian disinformation in 2015 and 2016. Finally, the last snapshot pictures the projection of the new EU global strategy in 2016 and 2017. These snapshots and the more specific context and diplomatic logic they illustrate are clarified in the introduction to each of the empirical chapters (five, six and seven).

Day-to-Day Practices of Mediatization

The politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics that I develop in this thesis depends on a way of studying day-to-day practices of mediatization in politics. Although this study departs from an institutional perspective on mediatization, conceptualized through the institutional logics, I suggest that the interaction in focus is best studied through attention to practices. This is in part motivated by the nature of new media, and the way that we communicate using social media has been identified as a key opportunity for researchers to study the politics of everyday international relations (de Silva & Crilley 2017, Jackson 2018). Practices are also, as I have defined along with processes and principles, the essence of institutional logics and I here consider them the best way of capturing the interplay of the three.

Practices have become a contested term in IR since being associated with the “Practice Turn” and the rise of international practice theory (Pouliot 2008; Adler & Pouliot 2011; Acuto & Curtis 2013; Adler- Nissen 2016b; Bueger & Gadinger 2014). Specifically, there is some confusion surrounding the added value of a practice approach, political practice it would seem, is a general interest in the social sciences. Practice approaches, however, take practices as the core unit of analysis moving away from models of action that focus on the calculation of interests or the evaluation of norms. The value of emphasizing practice is therefore the ability to specify “doing politics” in a given context and to consider practices constitutive of politics.28 Further, important to its value, the practice approach was initially a reaction to the so-called linguistic turn and an attempt to complement linguistic analysis which tended to exclude non-textual elements (Neumann 2002). The initial purpose of the practice approach was therefore to consider the way that discourse and practice are engaged in interplay. While definitions of what

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28 Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot maintain that although practices are not new in the social sciences, they have predominantly been conceived as a dependent variable, viewing practices as outcome in need of an explanation. A key added value of practice theory is therefore to view practices as both explanandum and explanans (2015).
practices actually mean differ in scope (which has also been critiqued), they are commonly considered as competent actions that capture the interplay of doings and sayings (Adler & Pouliot 2011; Neumann 2012). This is also where the practice approach offers a way of drawing on both behavior and discourse in the analysis of politics. Practices are a type of action that can be distinguished from individual habits or activities but still charged with both subjective and intersubjective meaning and organizational context. They are thus repetitive, iterative and collective and can therefore both reproduce or change existing social order. Political practices are thus understood as ways of doing politics that are known to the practitioners and which entail a micro-sociological context. This micro-sociological context is especially relevant to attempts to understand how processes at the macro level lead to varying results (Græger 2016). For researchers of political practice, the central task is thus to grasp practices as they unfold locally (Pouliot 2014).

This thesis does not aim to contribute to practice theory but the practice approach here aligns well with my interpretation of institutional logics and therefore led to a methodological focus on practices. The role of the practice approach has been to inform the research design in terms of methodology and methods. Following a practice rationale, in this thesis the everyday practices of diplomats and communicators in the EEAS are the object of investigation. The politics centered approach builds on a focus on them, in order to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of order and change in the mediatization of politics. I will clarify here that I do not study practices in addition to or at the expense of institutional logics, rather practices are the units of analysis in which I study the institutional logics. Accordingly, the snapshots act both as separate illustrations of interactions within the mediatization of politics and constitute a collective illustration of a gradual transformation of practice. The selection of events that constitute the snapshots was therefore a reflection of the development of the EEAS practices in this field and the external conditions they were facing. This led to a focus on the EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) and to some extent, its confrontation with Russia. EU-Russia relations are however not at the center in this thesis nor is Russia the only identified adversary of the EU’s diplomatic efforts. The focus on the Eastern sphere of influence is hence only a reflection of the time period in focus in the snapshots (2013-2017) that saw increased efforts of public and digital diplomacy in relation to the EU’s Eastern neighborhood.

29 I discuss the selection of snapshots and their sequential relationship to greater detail in the end of chapter four.
Material

The empirical study builds on a large material of official documents (legal documents, speeches, press releases), elite interviews with diplomats and communicators at the EEAS, secondary sources, online newsletters and social media observations of the EEAS official account on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. In sum, I studied 23 official documents that were somehow related to this new area of practice. Through the online observations I monitored the social media flows of the EEAS on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and through digital newsletters amounting to more than 2000 instances of tweets, videos and newsletters.30 Through in-depth observations, I studied close to 800 tweets (of these approximately one fourth were concerned with the Ukraine crisis and selected for further analysis). I closely studied online newsletters that amounted to 89 issues published between November 2015 and December 2016. Finally, the social media observations after the launch of the EU Global Strategy in June 2016 led to an in-depth analysis of a campaign consisting of four YouTube videos. This material was further complemented by a total of 23 elite interviews and another 7 accounts from secondary sources. The methods of collecting and analyzing this material and their shortcomings are discussed in chapter four.

Contributions

This thesis engages with the intersection of three main fields of research: the mediatization literature and especially the mediatization of politics, EU studies and the public and digital diplomacy literature. This intersection can loosely be connected to a nexus in the study of IR and political communication, specifically to a new strand of research that pays attention to new media, which is fundamentally concerned with theories and expressions of power and legitimacy. As such this is also a contribution to the understanding of mediatization in IR, a topic that has been widely ignored but is still often implicit in arguments of a communications shift in world politics (Awan, Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2011; Fritsch 2011; Jackson 2018). The fact that this thesis engages with an interdisciplinary body of literature leads to potential contributions across academic disciplines and fields.

First, the main purpose is to suggest a politics-centered approach to mediatization. In effect, the main contribution is directed to the field of mediatization research

30 This number is an informed estimation, see further discussion in chapter four.
in political science. While mediatization may be a limited field within political science, this is also a relevant contribution to the wider field in the study of media - politics interaction, which remains a central theme of political studies. Mediatization departs from the idea that the intensification of media practices has led to increased power sources connected to an overarching logic of the media (Asp 1986; Kepplinger 2002; Lundby 2009; Strömbäck 2008; Hjavard 2013 etc.). The source of power within mediatization is therefore ascribed to the way that the media sector has influence on political logic but, as will be elaborated in this thesis, also the way that the political logic transforms to make use of the power of media logic. It is in this understanding of how media logic may develop the modus operandi of politics that the connection can be made to practices of politics and perhaps especially in the projection of power and legitimacy in foreign policy and diplomacy. Indeed, this connection has previously been made by many others; the use of propaganda and bias in the media during conflict has for instance been explored at great length (e.g. Herman & Chomsky 1988). At the other end of the spectrum, the CNN effect suggested that media could intervene in international politics (Robinson 1999, 2002, 2005). Efforts to understand propaganda or media intervention have however not been sufficiently connected to the overarching macro-process of mediatization. Instead, these are theories that assume mediatization without considering its institutionalization into politics. A result of this is the lack of theorization of how instances of media-politics interaction are repeated over time. The connection of these two fields are therefore promising to the furthering of both the empirical understanding of mediatization and the transformation of political practice as both opportunities and constraints take on new forms. Mediatization is a meta-theoretical framework and the challenge to this contribution is to connect ideas of media omnipresence to an empirical level of political practice. Further, by suggesting a model that considers the mediatization process to be an interaction between logics rather than a strict top-down institutionalization, I contribute to a new understanding of the role of political actors in a mediatization process. This is hence also a study concerned with the classic and challenging topic of structure-agency interaction in international politics.

Secondly, the study of mediatization in an EU context offers contributions to the field of EU studies; at a general level it contributes to the debate surrounding its international role and power. The idea that postmodern power can be generated from social desirability resonates with the mediatization of politics and ideas of media logic that have been conceptualized in, for instance, Peter van Ham’s understanding of the EU’s social power (2010). In an interesting contribution to mediatization literature, Hans-Jörg Trenz (2008, 2013) suggested, drawing on
EU politics, that the relationship between political logic and media logic in the mediatization of politics should be understood in relation to the legitimacy requirements of the modern state based on popular sovereignty and claims for democracy. Trenz thus views the mediatization of politics as concerned with power but also with legitimacy and how they are connected in attempts of reaching the public in the case of EU politics. While power and legitimacy have always been present in attempts to understand political communication, the contribution here is to include political requirements of legitimacy in the theorization of mediatization. Mediatization brings new opportunities of legitimation that can also be actively pursued by political actors. The generation of legitimacy has been essential to the understanding of the EU and its global role. These efforts are well captured in the EU’s public diplomacy that is charged with projecting legitimacy to both internal and external publics simultaneously. It is also in this light that I have argued that the EU emerges as a particularly interesting context. At the empirical level the study therefore engages further with EU studies with specific relevance to the attempts to understand the role of media practices in the democratic deficit debate (see Risse 2001, 2010; Koopmans & Erbe 2004; Sifft, Bruggemann, Kleinen-v. Kongslo, Peters & Wimmel 2007).

Finally, this thesis also engages with the research front on public and digital diplomacy. Public diplomacy refers to the relationship between diplomats and the foreign publics with whom they work. Increasingly, definitions of public diplomacy have begun to include efforts towards understanding cultures, attitudes and behavior and building and managing international relationships (Melissen 2005b, Pamment 2014). The core of public diplomacy is however the ambition to influence thoughts and to mobilize actions, in order to advance political interests and values. Furthermore, public diplomacy illustrates the increasingly important connection between domestic and foreign policy: governments use diplomatic communication to project their foreign affairs agenda to both an external and a domestic audience. The EU’s efforts of public diplomacy have been explored in the academic debate both from institutional and instrumental perspectives (Michalski 2005, Rasmussen 2010, Cross 2013, 2015, 2016, Duke & Courtier 2011, Cross & Melissen 2013, Pamment 2013 etc.). Many of these efforts have studied how the EU Member States project EU public diplomacy. Since the launch of the European External Action Service in 2011, this mandate is now concentrated at the central EU level. These studies collectively suggest that there is a gap between the EU as a normative or civilian power in areas such as humanitarian aid and development and the international visibility of the EU’s policies and actions (Srugies 2016). The EEAS is formally charged with filling this
gap and this study therefore contributes to shed more light on the status of EU public diplomacy.

Further, digital diplomacy or “cyber-diplomacy” (Potter 2002), “media diplomacy” (Gilboa 2002, 2008), “real-time diplomacy” (Seib 2012), “E-diplomacy” (introduced by the US State Department in 2002) are often used interchangeably. While the term digital diplomacy is appropriate to describe a transitioning to the digital sphere, the idea that traditional practices of diplomacy are merely being digitalized is a simplification. Here, mediatization offers a more nuanced approach to the consideration of how digitalization and other processes such as commercialization blend with the longstanding practices of diplomacy (Pamment 2014). Returning to the idea of omnipresent mediatization, mediatization has developed from the intensification of media means and methods of communicating and from the expansion of media actors, but is expected to be more than the mere expansion of the traditional role of mass media. Here, diplomacy stands out as a political institution that is particularly susceptible to the development of communication practices. Efforts of digital diplomacy are thus linked to mediatization as a source of power and legitimacy. It is therefore of central value to include the more general influence in the mediatization of political communication to the understanding of digital diplomacy as a mere digitalization of diplomatic practice. In 2011 when the EEAS was first given its diplomatic mission, Ministries of Foreign Affairs had been “going digital” for some time (Seib 2012). The empirical study thus also captures a historical record of the EEAS’s efforts to consolidate EU public diplomacy through efforts of digital diplomacy. This thesis hence also addresses the emerging field of digital diplomacy studies (Holmes & Bjola 2015, Duncombe 2017 etc.).

The chain of connections I have demonstrated here not only reflects the argument at issue in the relevance of a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of our time but also reveals how this thesis will engage with the current debate about mediatization, EU studies and public and digital diplomacy in IR. An important contribution is therefore also the ability to bring together these strands of scholarship that have previously co-existed with and enlightened this topic independently but rarely together.

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31 I use digital diplomacy as a collective term for approaches to the intersection of the Internet and diplomacy.
Chapter Outline

This thesis is organized around the aim of understanding and illustrating what happens when political practice transforms in the interaction with new media. In this introductory chapter, I have argued that this is best realized through a focus on how political logic and media logic blend in a mediatization process. This interaction is therefore first discussed conceptually within the existing mediatization framework and through engagement with related theoretical contributions and later developed into an original interaction model. This interaction model is then operationalized and studied in the context of EU digital diplomacy and the EEAS.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters and this first chapter has set the scene by introducing and situating the argument at issue. Chapter two reviews and takes stock of relevant literature by tracing the media politics nexus in the three strands of research outlined above. The discussions in chapter two lead me to develop a politics-centered approach to mediatization. In close connection to chapter two, chapter three then outlines an analytical framework and offers an interaction model that builds on the existing scholarship of mediatization but departs from a political approach and accounts for bottom-up dynamics. In so doing it also demonstrates the analytical implications of the connection between institutional logics and political practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the laboratory offered by the context of EU digital diplomacy. chapter four continues the operationalization of the previous chapter and outlines the general methodological approach. Most importantly, it discusses how to connect a theoretical framework with claims of social transformation to the empirical world and specifically how to approach practices of politics in general and in the specific context of EU diplomacy. A practice approach is developed that makes use of evidence in the forms of accounts and observations that are analyzed through qualitative methods of narrative analysis.

The subsequent empirical chapters are structured according to the analytical framework and the methodological strategy as presented in chapters three and four. They illustrate, examine and dissect instances of the mediatization of politics through three phases of interaction described in terms of adaptation (chapter five), amalgamation (chapter six) and consolidation (chapter seven). chapter five considers the EEAS’s use of Twitter in its crisis management communication during the height of the Ukraine crisis between November 2013 and June 2014. It finds that during this period the EEAS Twitter channel was politicized and lifted from its former use as a complementary informational channel which led to
patterns of adaptation and early signs of experimentation with media logic. Chapter six considers the EU’s response to Russian disinformation and specifically the creation and practices of the East StratCom Task Force from early 2015 until the end of 2016. It finds that the role and practices of the task force signaled an interaction with the degree of an amalgamation of media and political logic which led to patterns of experimentation and strategic use of media solutions. Chapter seven considers the EU’s Global Strategy (EUGS) launched in June 2016 and the heightened role of strategic communication as a means of projecting positive narratives. It therefore traces the projection of the EUGS in the EEAS’s practices of digital diplomacy 2016-2017. It finds that the EUGS belonged to a larger development of EU communication that is moving away from input legitimacy towards output legitimacy. Accordingly, practices projected by the EEAS at this time signaled signs of consolidation in the integration of political and media practices of diplomacy. Finally, chapter eight concludes the findings in the previous chapters and discusses the strength and generalizability of the interaction model. To this end, it revisits the purpose and research questions introduced in this chapter. Specifically, it discusses the value of a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics and the lessons learned from the empirical study. I end the chapter, and consequently this thesis by thinking ahead and suggesting avenues for further exploration.
Chapter 2.
The Media-Politics Nexus

This thesis intends to develop the theoretical framework of mediatization in the context of politics by deepening the understanding of what happens to political practices in a mediatization process. This undertaking is concerned with going from abstract theoretical ideas of omnipresent mediatization all the way down to the specific grounds of politics, in this thesis illustrated through activities of diplomacy. In this chapter I therefore take stock of the media-politics nexus in which I trace a politics-centered approach across three interrelated bodies of literature: mediatization, communication in IR and diplomacy. Attempts have been made in these three individual fields to understand the processes and effects of changing communication patterns in politics. Taken together, they point to a nexus in which mediatization is understood as changes both within politics and media where the relationship between institutional logics is dynamic. Mediatization is thus not only about the interaction between two static institutional logics but about multidimensional change where the interaction reflects both the political context in which it occurs and the new media elements of change. This positioning between three bodies of literature also leads me to a focus on the interaction between actors and structures in processes of political change that follows the basic assumptions of Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory (1984). At an operational level this nexus therefore highlights the role of political actors in contexts of new media structures that in different ways illustrates and confronts the relationship between political logic and media logic.

Departing from this nexus, I build the argument that the mediatization of politics is best understood as a blend of institutional logics rather than as an invasion from one into the other and that actors greatly matter in this interaction. This chapter therefore plays a central role in positioning the politics-centered approach within mediatization theory but also in relation to the other strands of research that has furthered the media-politics nexus. The discussions in this chapter will therefore establish the grounds for the analytical framework presented in the following chapter. I build the argument of blending logics and actors in the mediatization
process in three steps. First, I begin this chapter by critically discussing the conceptualization of mediatization and the assumptions of how media intensification facilitates and constrains politics to demonstrate the shortcomings of understanding mediatization as a one-way process. Specifically, I suggest that more attention should be directed to the political context that hosts mediatization processes and the interaction at issue. To this end, I make connections to the study of communication and specifically to social media in IR and suggest insights offered to the mediatization of politics from studies of international politics. This leads me to stress the understanding of mediatization as an inter-institutional and relational process. While others have previously voiced the need to understand mediatization as an inter-institutional relationship (Hjavard 2014; Hepp et al. 2015) and critiqued the overemphasis on the role of the media as agents of change (Deacon & Stanyer 2014), this interaction still remains largely under-theorized. In a second step I assess the status of the institutional logics in mediatization research and trace their assumptions in studies of social media and in theories of foreign policy communication and diplomacy. This leads me to consider new media logic compared with mass media logic and to explain why political logic remains undertheorized and misunderstood. In a third and final step, I discuss the value of bringing actors into the theorization of mediatization.

Mediatization

In the last decade, mediatization has become a popular catch-all phrase for the intensification of media practices in postmodern societies and covers a wide range of attempts to theorize the expansion of media. Mediatization is hence a theoretical framework that contains theories of the everyday influence that media exert on society and on culture through the use of media services or channels or through exposure. It is a framework rather than a theory in its own right because it depends on the assistance of sociological theories (often in combination) such as structuration theory (Giddens), field theory (Bourdieu), or structural functionalism theory (Durkheim); most frequently it is supported by a broad understanding of institutional theory. Mediatization is then referred to as an institutional process “affecting almost all areas of social and cultural life in late modernity” (Lundby 2009, p. 1). These areas of social and cultural life that become mediatized through institutionalization include family, peer group, school, religion, art, science, politics etc. (Hjavard 2008; Krotz 2009). In this regard, mediatization has become a buzz word and paradigm for media and communication studies (Livingstone & Lunt 2014). With such a bold catch-all
label and all-inclusive research agenda, it is not strange that mediatization scholars have been challenged to develop a coherent and precise definition and, perhaps more importantly, a conceptual framework that allows its assumptions to travel across areas of social and cultural life (Hepp et al. 2015).

Interestingly, the original term “mediatization” has no connection with the media; rather the term was used to describe “a process where some parts of society increase their influence at the expense of others” (Strömbäck 2011, p. 368). This definition still has some value but now commonly indicates the specific influence through the omnipresence of media. An important clarification is, however, that mediatization theory does not emphasize the news media sector, rather the intensification of the media refers more broadly to everyday media practices. While traditionally the news media have to some extent monopolized some of these practices, with the rise of the Internet this is no longer the case, a matter which calls for a more open and dynamic understanding of media in mediatization. There is, however, a large body of literature that deals specifically with the mediatization of the news media and its influence on the political sphere which is partly to blame for the dominant consideration of the media sector vis-à-vis politics. As discussed in the introductory chapter, this reflects the fact that mediatization research was long dominated by media and communication scholars and is not necessarily reflective of a news-media centrum inherent in the mediatization framework (see discussion by Hepp et al. 2015). The first important clarification to the conceptualization of mediatization is thus that the inherent term “media” is more related to its original meaning of means or channels of communication in society than to the mass media, the news media or the media sector. The transformation, the "ization" in focus is accordingly concerned with communication and not with the role of the media as a separate social institution. Following this understanding, Friedrich Krotz (2007) has suggested that mediatization is one of the four fundamental meta-processes that have shaped, and continue to shape, modernity – along with globalization, individualization and especially commercialization. Krotz here suggested a broad understanding of mediatization as the metaprocess of all mediated communication. This view represents the rather common sociologist view of mediatization as a broader theory of modernity (Schulz 2004, Schrott 2009, Hjavard 2008). On this note, Gianpietro Mazzoleni (2008b) has argued that mediatization theory must then focus on both the mediatization of society (mediatization as a meta-process) and the mediatization in society (empirical studies of specific institutions and domains). When we speak of mediatization of politics it is important to keep this distinction in mind: mediatization of politics is concerned with the transformative
role of media that is therefore both a process and a condition related to changing communication patterns in society and in politics.

The view of mediatization as a broader theory of mediated communication resonates with how communication has been acknowledged, but rarely analytically specified, in IR-theory. While it is often assumed that “a communications revolution” has occurred, what it actually means and how it happened has rarely been explored beyond vague notions of technology as a new structural condition of international politics (Gilboa 2005). Technological advancements in news-media reporting have for instance been related to a greater public influence in foreign policy since the end of the Cold War (Livingston 1997; Robinson 1999, 2002, 2005; Gilboa 2005 etc.) While the interest in media interventionism subsided, following the War on Terror, renewed interest came with the introduction of social media. More recent attention to media in IR has thus centered on the social dimensions introduced by technological advancements in new media. This shift has moved the focus from the media sector to everyday media practices that are much in line with the sociological assumptions of mediatization theory. Constance Duncombe has suggested that this interest in social media reflects greater agency for the individual in international affairs and the material power of new media (2017, p. 550). Here, agency and power are analytically related in the study of new media, and individuals are empowered by the new ways of engaging with, consuming and creating politics through social media, which has led to an increased status of the public vis-à-vis policy-makers (Castells 2011; Seib 2012). The agency of individuals has also led to an increased emphasis on networks in international relations.

Networks however, empower both individuals and state actors. Anne-Marie Slaughter has argued that in a networked world, a nation’s ability to network is equal in importance to traditional sources of power (2009). Further, on the subject of state actors’ exploration of opportunities in the new media ecology, international political narratives have received increasing attention in IR since their association with new media. Specifically, the framework on “strategic narratives” comprises attempts to conceptualize the battle of narratives to give meaning to the international system (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin & Roselle. 2013). Strategic narratives are, in this understanding, representations of a sequence of

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32 The War on Terror refers to the international military campaign that was initiated by the United States (US) government after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the US. The time period after the Cold War was characterized by uncertainty and humanitarianism, which was believed to lead to more influence of the media. The War on Terror marked an end to this by pushing humanitarian concerns off the agenda (Robinson 2005, p. 346).
events and identities that serves as a communicative tool through which political actors attempt to give determined meaning to past, present, and future in order to achieve political objectives (Miskimmon et al. 2013, p. 5). Following the pattern of increased attention to agency, the strategic narratives framework acknowledges the performative power of making use of media logic in international politics.

Diplomacy stands out as a subfield of politics that has experienced several of these transformations and power transfers through a digitalization that has led to new visibility, new actors and new practices of diplomacy (Bjola 2016). Accordingly, digital diplomacy has become a new field in which to study the interface of media and international politics in everyday media consumption, digital communication, networks and strategic narratives (Natarajan 2014; Pamment 2016b; Duncombe 2017; Miskimmon et al. 2018). While there are thus plenty of contributions that take mediatization into account in IR, a significant shortcoming has been the inability to theorize the shifting media environment (Jackson 2018). Central to the media-politics nexus in which I seek to position the politics-centered approach to mediatization is thus the understanding of mediatization as both a process and a condition, concerned with a transformation of agency and power in world politics.

The Institutional Logics Approach

The institutional logics approach has widely been considered the most promising path to conceptualizing the influence at issue and to the study of mediatization in empirical settings (Strömbäck 2008, 2011; Landerer 2013). It is also largely to blame for the overestimation of the media’s invasive role in the process of mediatization because of the emphasis on media logic at the expense of other institutional logics. In the institutional understanding of mediatization, the concept of media logics carries the assumptions of how means and methods transcend the media to the degree that they can migrate to new spheres. Media logic hence refers to the ways in which media characteristics influence other institutions and culture and society at large. David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow first coined an often-cited definition of media logic:
Media logic consists of a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media. Format consists, in part, of how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus of emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. Format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena (Altheide & Snow 1979: 10).

Media logic in this common understanding is thus chiefly concerned with communication formats in processes through which the media presents and transmits information which follows a tradition within the sociology of journalism (Mazzoleni & Splendore 2015). The key argument of the institutional approach is that media logic, understood as both discursive strategies and performative tactics stemming from the news media, become accepted in other institutional settings. Most commonly, media logic has thus referred to an ideal typical journalistic logic rather than captured the broad assumptions of the everyday transformation of communication. This is in part a reflection of the fact that media logic is a borrowed concept that predated the mediatization agenda. In their original contribution, Altheide and Snow (1979) treated media logic in terms of the social and economic contexts and technological progress that they assumed led to different meanings in the process of communication through mass and news media. They later expanded their framework to codes and rules that define the production routines of media content (1991) but still considered changes in the media sector rather than a transformation of society. In fact, Altheide and Snow had specifically explained that media logic was not a case of the media dictating terms to the rest of society but should be understood as the interactive element of the media in organized institutional behavior (1979, p. 15). Although they later drew on mediation theory and discussed their concept in a broader framework of communication (Altheide 2013), the original limited scope appears to have influenced the way that mediatization studies favor the news media and its production logic which is a mismatch to the broad sociological conceptualization discussed above.

Paradoxically in relation to the criticism of media centrism, it was in the study of politics that mediatization was first suggested, media researcher Kent Asp being the first to speak of the mediatization of political life, by which he meant a process whereby “a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics” (Asp 1986, p. 359). This definition entailed a focus on political communication; the concept of mediatization was not yet developed and it was thus limited to considerations of
influence and adjustment in relation to the mass media. Asp’s argument about a mediatization of politics did however lead to studies of influence and adjustment that were traced in political communication and eventually related to a mediatization in terms of an institutionalization of media influence in politics (Asp 1990; Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999; Kepplinger 2002; Aalberg & Jenssen 2007).

The most cited description of the process of institutionalization through the interaction between political logic and media logic was originally suggested by Jesper Strömbäck (2008). In his influential contribution, he broke down the mediatization process into four phases through which the governing logic of politics (political logic) is gradually complemented or even replaced by media logic. Using media logic as an intervening variable, Strömbäck (2008, 2011) outlined the dimensions of the mediatization of politics in four phases, whereby

1) the media become the most important source of information, 2) the media are independent from political institutions, 3) media content is governed by media logic rather than political logic and 4) political actors assume media logic.

Following Strömbäck’s phases, a common approach is hence to consider media logic in stark contrast to a political logic. In this view, the mediatization of politics is foremost concerned with the adaptation of political narratives to demands from commercial media. During these phases, political institutions and actors realize that in order to influence the media (and in extension the public) they have to adapt to the media’s standards of newsworthiness (Strömbäck 2010, p. 425).

There is truth in such adaptation, this is a trend that has been noted during most of the last century, but the one-way invasion of media logic tends to miss the dynamism and resilience of political logic. In later publications, Strömbäck has developed the phases into dimensions that are less deterministic (2011) and acknowledged that political actors (such as political parties) can also be proactive in a mediatization process (Strömbäck & Van Aelst 2013), but the upper hand of media logic persists in the theorized interaction. Moreover, Strömbäck’s conceptualization of mediatization is a continuation of the media-centered approach that focuses primarily on the news media sector without considering the omnipresent media intensification that among other things has given the political sector new opportunities of political communication. There are thus so far two central lessons from the institutional approach to the mediatization of politics; the acknowledged but still underdeveloped interactive role of political logic and what
would appear to be a gradual rethinking of media logic as less dominant than was first assumed.\textsuperscript{33}

In contrast to the perspective of the institutional logics as opposite ideal types, Hans-Jörg Trenz (2013) has suggested an institutional approach that considers the logics to be correlates in the function of political communication in modern democracy. Trenz assumes mediatization to have a co-constitutive relationship with democratization. While still departing from the omnipresent notion of mediatization he thereby suggested a contextual approach to politics that is understood in relation to the legitimacy requirements of the modern state based on popular sovereignty and claims for democracy. Trenz based this hypothesis on a supposed correlation between mediatization and democratization following the communication research of Frank Marcinkowski (2005). Trenz and Marcinkowski hence attempted to grasp the inter-institutional interaction in mediatization by pointing to a correlation between two ongoing processes in their respective institutional settings. In suggesting a correlation, Marcinkowski considered mediatization to be a functional requirement of social subsystems that greatly depend on the generation of publicity. These social subsystems, he claimed, depend on publicity to different degrees which also correlate with their degree of inclusiveness (Marcinkowski 2005). The concept of inclusiveness here derives from the idea that some political institutions have a higher pressure to generate visibility for their operations than others creating a demand for public attention.\textsuperscript{34} Trenz and Marcinkowski hence linked mediatization to modern democracy and suggested that it is in their constitutive relationship that the understanding of how politics is being mediatized can be found.

Linking mediatization to democracy requirements is not an entirely new idea; among others both Habermas (1984) and Bourdieu (1998) have theorized the presence of media and communication patterns in modern society entangled in models of democracy. What is refreshing in Trenz’s account of the mediatization process in correlation to democracy is, however, the promise of developing contextual understanding of the inter-institutional relationship at issue within a mediatization process. Moreover, Trenz envisions mediatization in line with an interactive motion rather than the one-way process suggested by Strömbäck (2008). In a less deterministic view, mediatization can thus be approached as a relational process partly driven by a political communication demand, which

\textsuperscript{33} It was for instance after 2014 more common to describe media logic as a \textit{guiding} logic rather than a \textit{governing} logic in mediatization studies.

\textsuperscript{34} This is an understanding of inclusiveness that I will argue is relevant to new demands of visibility in world politics and the new role of publics in IR.
engages both normative and market dimensions of political logic. In addition, such a view can also account for the transformation within media logic (the mediatization of the media) and the evolution of politics involved in the mediatization of politics. Finally, Trenz’ conceptualization provides opportunities to answer the call for explorations of mediatization that are sensitive to context and recognize interactions and interdependencies of the inter-institutional relationship between political and media logic without abandoning the claims of omnipresence.

Thus, it is important to keep in mind that mediatization is a relational term and although it is assumed to be omnipresent it is only possible to speak of the mediatization of or in something. The challenge thus lies in how to include both a general development and its contextual interactions in fruitful analyses. Despite the shortcomings with regard to the inter-institutional relationship, the institutional perspective has therefore made significant contributions to the mediatization framework by attempting to break down the institutional logics. The problem is, however, that the logic stemming from the political domain is both under-theorized in its own right as a host context and under-conceptualized in the mediatization process. This fact has also been noted in the debate (see Strömbäck 2008; Lundby 2009; Landerer 2013) but efforts to correct this error have often ended in static and excessively broad understandings of political logic in terms of normative ideals of the distribution of power and decision-making processes. In contrast, media logic is more developed and therefore a more analytical construct, but instead inflated either in its excessively broad understanding of the media’s modus operandi or in its restricted focus on the production logic of the news media. It would appear that rethinking media logic is a question both of understanding its relationship to the contrasting political logic and the role of the wider context of the new media ecology (Altheide 2013; Merrin 2014; Jackson 2018). There is an apparent need to develop and to nuance the concepts of political logic and media logic which has to some degree been confronted in recent research.

### Developing the Institutional Logics

In the above sections I have discussed how mediatization has been conceptualized in previous research and specifically focused on the dominant institutional approach. I have argued that there are both benefits and shortcomings at issue in the institutional approach and that they are related to the escape of media-centric bias in the inter-institutional interaction between political logic and media logic. In the sections that follow, I therefore seek a developed institutional approach,
first by considering how social media may challenge traditional assumptions of media logic. I then turn to political logic that I argue must be better understood in relation to political context. Accordingly, there are multiple dimensions of political logic, which I demonstrate by considering its analytical promise in the field of diplomacy.

**From Mass Media Logic to Social Media Logic**

In attempts to come to terms with the changing media climate in media studies it has become increasingly common to speak of media intensification in terms of changes in the media environment or indeed by emphasizing the emergence of a “new media ecology”. The idea of a media ecology suggests an inclusion of environments, actors and technology together in a set of interrelationships that allude to an organic life form (Merrin 2014). In this sense, media ecology is a concept well in line with the understanding of mediatization as more than media actors and more than technology. The connection between mediatization and media ecology has been made: specifically, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin speak of the decades since 1990 as three phases of media ecology, which they equate to three phases of mediatization (2015). They consider the first phase to have been the last era of the broadcasting: the 1990s that saw the rise of real-time news reporting but when national and satellite television and the press still controlled what mass audiences witnessed. The turn of the millennium marked the second phase when embedding digital content enabled new dimensions of recording, archiving, searching and sharing mediated communication. It was during this phase that the news media lost its monopoly on reporting. Finally, the third phase is related to the rise of social media and user-generated media content but still marks greater control by mainstream media actors who have adopted strategies to cope with the new conditions of the media ecology (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2015 pp. 1320-1322). A very important aspect of this understanding of a third phase, which has introduced a new media ecology, is that it emphasizes variation of mediatization expressions much more than in previous phases. The regained control by media actors refers to the realization and acceptance of this new plethora of media opportunities. Accordingly, patterns of use, habits and behaviors will also increasingly vary as expressions of mediatization once we consider developments in the media ecology (Merrin 2014).

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35 It is the understanding of a new media ecology that leads them to speak of these three phases. Others that do not depart from a media ecology in this sense speak of phases of mediatization dating back to the printing press (Hjavard 2008).
With the introduction of the idea of a new media ecology as a point of departure in attempts to understand mediatization, it is reasonable to consider how the concept of media logic can still carry the claims of influence. The concept of media logic derives from a mass media focus that does not necessarily reflect the new media ecology. This latest phase of media ecology is closely connected to digitalization and the way in which mass media has been complemented by new channels and techniques for mediated communication. Most importantly, social media refers to the group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the developed Internet and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (van Dijck 2013). The rise of social media networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are also a part of a more general networked culture where information and communication have increasingly been defined by the possibilities afforded by web technologies such as browsers and search engines and by speed (Slaughter 2009; van Dijck & Poell 2013). The question is then whether and how the concept of media logic is still relevant for this new dimension of mediated communication? Before answering this question, I here recollect the initial understanding of media logic as suggested by Altheide and Snow in 1979, whereby media logic concerns discursive strategies and performative tactics that carry mediatization by becoming natural or neutral in new institutional settings. This original understanding of the concept is important to keep in mind to evaluate its validity in a new media ecology that is not to be confused with the commercialization and changes in international media ownership in which it has sometimes been entangled (e.g. Murdock 2017).

In a contribution on the subject of social media logic, José van Dijck and Thomas Poell (2013) contended that it refers to the processes, principles, and practices through which these platforms process information, news, and communication, and, more generally, how they channel social traffic. They concluded that social media has four central elements of programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication but they maintain that social media logic remains entangled with traditional mass media logic. Programmability, which is an over-technical term according to its meaning, refers to the ability to curate and to time content, thus the process of selection. This aspect is also inherent in mass media logic, but social media logic has furthered the understanding of content control by technology such as algorithms (coded instructions that can shape relational activities such as liking, sharing etc.), by suggesting friends, posts or by selecting the order of presentation in a flow of information. Still, users retain agency over programmability because of their role in developing algorithms but also because users can resist them, users are not forced to accept the presentation that is
suggested on social media but can change settings and preferences. The understanding of agency inherent in the element of programmability is important not only for the conceptualization of social media logic but also for the broader concept of media logic where users (consumers or readers) are often neglected in research focused on mass media. Regardless of the commercial force of media selection, citizens in democracies can resist what is presented to them just as politicians and political organizations can resist the interference of media logic. Resistance is not always successful but still not to be overlooked in social processes.

Secondly, popularity more directly stems from mass media logic and its commercial link to popular culture. Mazzoleni, for instance, considered media logic in relation to the media’s ability to make politics spectacular and personalized (2008a). Politicians adopt media logic in order to communicate with the masses and adapt their messages to suit “the most preferred and most popular language schemes of the mass media, especially those of entertainment, showbiz, and advertising” (Mazzoleni 2008a, p. 379). Popularity in mass media logic can then be understood as media congeniality and its increasing importance in politics is linked to media logic invasion. Social media logic, which has further sophisticated media congeniality, online attention and likeability, is naturally more complex than traditional mass media because the audience is more diverse and often transnational. In addition, popularity is also conditioned by technology, algorithms for instance, have a role in boosting popularity online. Further, social media platforms have different socio-economic components: they favor visibility based on different understandings of capital in terms of results of social buttons (such as following or liking) activity, views and importantly also by opportunities of paying the owning companies for promoted tweets or boosted Facebook posts etc. Social media logic is in this sense also more tactical than the understanding of media congeniality in mass media logic that largely depends on adaptation to popular preferences (van Dijck & Poell 2013, p.7; Scherpereel, Wohlgemuth & Schmelzinger 2017). While the media congeniality of politicians, for instance, could previously be influenced through media training or public relations strategies, social media logic suggests another dimension of strategic influence where the discursive strategies and tactic performances are more entangled.

The third and fourth elements of social media logic, according to Van Dijk and Poell, are connectivity and datafication. Social media thrives on global connectivity between users, as opposed to mass media’s connection through national or regional audiences. Connectivity here is different from the connectedness of mass media connection of audiences, precisely because of the new media ecology: it represents the socio-technical connection of mediation that
now encompasses a large proportion of the mediated communication on a global scale (2013, p. 7). This entails that connectivity moves beyond actual connections made, to include the opportunities of connections. Again, technology can further connectivity by making connections visible to users of social media, by suggesting connections, automated group suggestions and personalized recommendations etc. Connectivity therefore both empowers and governs users by both opportunities of tactical connections and automated connections. This understanding resonates with the logic of connective action that Lance W. Bennet and Alexandra Segerberg (2012) introduced to explain how collective action has developed in digital media. The logic of connective action, they claimed, has complemented the offline logic of collective action that depends on the formative element of sharing. Finally, datafication refers to the real-time communication made possible through social media. Datafication here therefore serves to progress the media logic associated with Hoskins and O’Loughlin’s (2015) first phase of media ecology that they claimed marked the revolutionary ability of real-time news media reporting in the early 1990s. Datafication through social media thus depends on the same anticipation of real-time communication but is a two-way interaction. Social media platforms allow real-time interaction in numerous ways that let audiences interact with content producers. This leads to another aspect of social media datafication, namely that social media communication is mediated but raw. While the mass media logic has traditionally to some degree been a formatting logic, the curation of social media follows a different logic, of both self-editing and formatting (cf. Altheide & Snow 1979; Landerer 2013). In this sense, social media communication is “raw” in comparison with mass media communication.

I consider the four elements of social media logic, namely programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication, suggested here by van Dijck and Poell (2013), to be a useful point of departure to nuance and further the understanding of media logic. An important clarification is that these elements condition each other and are therefore to be understood as elements rather than separate characteristics. In an attempt to connect these elements more closely with the previous debate surrounding the concept of media logic I therefore present table 1: this considers the norms, aims, strategies, characteristics and effects of media logic compared with social media logic.
Table 1. The Transformation of Media Logic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Media logic</th>
<th>Social media logic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>commercialism and entertainment</td>
<td>popularity and networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>connection, sense-making, timing, filtering and framing</td>
<td>connectivity, sense-making, timing, filtering and framing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>selection of representation, editing and spinning</td>
<td>curation, visibility, intensity and boosting tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>expensive production of content, attention-grabbing, likability, formatting and real-time reporting (speed)</td>
<td>inexpensive self-production of content (raw data), updating, visuality, activity, cognitive shortcuts, accessibility and real-time interaction (unfiltered speed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>polarization, personification, personalization, leaderization, spectacularization, simplification, visualization</td>
<td>polarization, personalization, simplification, multiplication, impulsivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table draws on previous research by Altheide & Snow 1979; Mazzoleni 2008a; Bennett & Segerberg 2012; Landerer 2013; van Dijck 2013; van Dijck and Poell 2013; Ott 2017; Klinger and Svensson 2015; Scherpereel et al. 2017).

In this table, I consider how the concept of media logic can be developed in relation to a new media ecology by tracing the four elements in relation to the norms, aims, strategies, characteristics and effects that have been emphasized in the invasion of media logic into politics. While Nino Landerer (2013) has suggested that media logic is contrasted with political logic through market norms, social media logic clarifies that these norms further change from commercialism and entertainment to popularity and networking. The entertainment norm is also developed to networking which may have entertainment purposes but expands this dimension also to include the progression from connection to connectivity and a new understanding of datafication. The aims of media logic and social media logic are similar but differ in the more dynamic understanding of connectivity; through connection or connectivity the logics aim to make sense of communication and to time, filter and frame communication. While the aims are similar they lead to different strategies. While mass media logic concerns strategies of selection, editing and spinning, social media strategies concern curation, intensity and boosting communication.

These strategies lead to communication patterns that are characterized by attention-grabbing, likability, formatting and real-time reporting in traditional media logic. In addition, Ulrike Klinger and Jakob Svensson (2015) stress the difference in production costs, arguing that mass media logic leads to expensive production costs in comparison with social media logic, which can lead to cost-free content. The low costs are a reflection both of the online format that avoids
printing costs and also of the fact that social media users share content and labor collectively and without cost (Bennett & Segerberg 2012). Furthermore, the content is easily accessed in the openness of the Internet (Logan 2010). Social media logic then instead leads to communication patterns that are characterized by the low-cost self-production of content, visuality, activity, cognitive shortcuts, accessibility and real-time interaction which is faster because of its unfiltered projection. Finally, media logic and social media logic can be expected to have different effects on communication. This is where the limited research on social media logic as yet falls short of determining which effects correspond to or differ from the effects of traditional media logic that have been described in terms of polarization, personification, personalization, leaderization, spectacularization, simplification and visualization. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) have found that the logic of connective action leads to personalization of contentious politics. This is an interesting result, as it differs from the personalization to be found in mass media representation of politics. The personalization that occurs in the digital arena instead concerns personalized content sharing across media networks. Further, in relation specifically to Twitter, Brian L. Ott (2017) has concluded that Twitter privileges discourse that is simple, impulsive and at times even uncivil (which to a large extent resonates with the common view of polarization as an effect of mass media logic). These effects also speak of the changes in the audiences, involved: while mass media logic has been argued to lead to a fragmentation of audiences, social media logic has been considered both to expand and to limit audiences through transnational networks and a high-choice media environment leading to “echo chambers” (Dubois & Grant 2018). A known effect of social media logic is thus the difficulty in determining the actual audience (compared with the intended audience) of content (Litt 2012).

This overview allows me to conclude that media logic and social media logic are not necessarily fundamentally different and that the clarification of a new media ecology could be enough to develop the concept of media logic. Social media logic can equally be considered as being concerned with discursive strategies and performative tactics that travel into new institutional settings where they gradually become practices that are taken for granted. Even so, the linguistically subtle difference between connection and connectivity is in fact a significant change in

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36 Echo chamber is a metaphor used to describe how the wide choice of information available through the Internet has led individuals to select media and content that reinforce their existing beliefs and led to segregation based on interest and/or partisanship. Echo chambers became a common term after the Brexit referendum and the US presidential election in 2016 but at the time of writing we still know very little of the political effects of this tendency (Dubois & Grant 2018).
the aim of media logic, from enabling a connection to fostering connections. In addition, the shift in norms from commercialism and entertainment to popularity and networking also suggests fundamentally different underpinnings of social media use. These shifts stem from the new media ecology and the unprecedented speed and reach of the functioning of social media. While these are important changes in the norms and aims of media logic, the resulting strategies, characterizations and effects, in terms of discursive strategies and performative tactics, remain largely intact. Moreover, the similarities support the understanding of a social media infrastructure that also includes the former media system and the formerly existing media (Krotz 2017). For these reasons I refrain from considering social media logic as analytically distinct from media logic. That said, there are two conclusions that can be drawn from this discussion that are significant as regards the use of media logic and an institutional approach that departs from the new media ecology.

The first conclusion I have in mind is the need to consider the binary institutional logic that has emerged from a new media ecology: media logic now essentially consists of both online and offline institutional logics. This is where the technological modus operandi becomes evident but the online dimension is more than its technological roots, it is also social in its central characteristics and has led to a new hierarchical structuring of communication. It is nonetheless clear that the institutional logics of the mass media continue to matter both in regard to the organization and the purpose of communication. This binary is therefore central to an enhanced understanding of how mediatization occurs. Secondly, when considered in relation to the new media ecology, media logic emphasizes agency to a greater extent than transpires in traditional accounts of media logic as a structural force of institutional logic. Social media through connectivity gives agency to both users and audiences (users and audiences are of course the same group but they differ depending on the direction of communication) and the strategies suggest the influence of more tactical agency. Bearing in mind how Hoskins and O’Loughlin distinguished the phases of media ecology, this reflects the bygone monopoly of the news media of international reporting (2013). Moreover, the new understanding of how contentious politics are personalized online further stresses the agency at stake in the logic of connectivity (Bennett & Segerberg 2012). Considerations of media logic in a new media ecology should therefore give greater analytical attention to the agency at issue.

In sum, media logic, which was traditionally understood as the modus operandi of the mass media and referred to as principles or common-sense rationality that were cultivated in and by media institutions, have both transferred into society at
large and been transformed through a new media ecology. Media logic therefore remains a concept central to the operationalization of mediatization although it will depend on understanding both how it has transformed and how it has transferred, specifically in the interaction with other institutional contexts such as politics.

From Political Logic to Diplomatic Logic

Political logic has a conceptually equal status with media logic in the institutional approach to the mediatization of politics. Even so, while media logic is always involved in processes of mediatization the host institution varies, which is why it is not entirely unexpected that political logic is the less developed concept. Although the literature has at times mentioned the inter-institutional relationship inherent in mediatization, it has unfortunately rarely been the focus of contributions and has remained a marginal topic in the mediatization debate. In addition, since a majority of empirical studies have focused on political communication, especially the relationship between politicians and journalists rather than politics in a broader (or better defined) understanding, no evidence has been found that reinforces its analytical assumptions. This combination has had the result that political logic remains a vague concept in mediatization research.

There have, however, been attempts to develop the concept. In 2009, Jesper Strömbäck and Frank Esser suggested that future definitions of political logic should consider at least six dimensions: power allocation, partisanship, policy, deliberation, implementation, and accountability (p. 213 – 214). In this view, political logic is still the opposite of media logic following Strömbäck’s conceptualization of mediatization as a process of media logic invasion (2008) and offers relatively little grounds on which to understand the inter-institutional relationship with media logic. In addition, politics in this view is strictly about the organization of political order. The six dimensions here are largely concerned with the sub-field of public administration rather than politics as a broader social institution. In his contribution to the debate, Landerer (2013) suggested that rather than speaking of a political logic we should turn to normative logic with the ultimate goal of addressing societal problems. In order to do so successfully (through policy changes) political actors in a parliamentarian system must gain the support of the majority. Normative logic is thus concerned with substance and policy issues. Market logic (his substitute for media logic), on the other hand, seeks to maximize news circulation (for media actors) or office (for political actors). Normative logic is supply-driven while market logic is demand-driven. It is widely asserted that in the past two decades, politics has to an increasing degree
become market-driven, while media have become increasingly commercialized (Hjavor 2013, p. 77). These developments are perhaps more suitably captured in Lander’s logics and are at risk of being understated in the polarity between political logic and media logic. I do not, however, agree about the need to abandon the more collective terms of separate logics at the expense of more specific but simplistic logics. Even so, Landerer makes a valuable point as regards the need to consider the motivations of normative ideals and market drive and how they may either be in stark contrast or, at times, form a harmonious combination.

Bearing in mind the correlation between democratization and mediatization made by Trenz (2008), it also suggests that a more fruitful way to conceptualize political logic is to focus more on areas of convergence with, rather than divergence from, media logic. In some ways this idea is better supported by the finding in studies of political communication that suggests changing communication patterns rather than changes in political practice (which is supposedly still guided by political logic). Thus, while characteristics related to political practices and media practices may differ, they are also integrated in each other’s logics. Communication practices are instrumental to politics. Some of the characteristics typically ascribed to media logic, such as attempts to achieve reach and engagement, also resonate with the very essence of popular democracy. It is then more reasonable to believe that the mediatization of politics occurs when political logic and media logic are in harmony than when they are in stark contrast. Focusing on areas of convergence would also provide a way of studying the mediatization as an inter-institutional relationship, in which political logic is not necessarily replaced or outmaneuvered, for a mediatization process to be realized. This is where changing communication patterns in IR are relevant for furthering the understanding of the mediatization of politics. Although studies of the media as a structural condition in IR rarely follow the institutional logics approach, there are evident clues as to how political logic plays the role of an equal partner. Specifically, there is an evident increase in studies of how and why political actors (state actors, networks of actors, organizations and individuals) engage in media practices (Jackson 2018). In her studies of military media management, Sarah Maltby has for instance argued that contemporary military persuasion practices stem from a mediatized world but have become rationalized by the actors who engage in them (2012a, 2012b). This entails that she acknowledges the fact that persuasion is a longstanding military practice that has been accentuated and transformed through mediatization. This emphasis on the guiding logic of persuasion embedded in military strategy rather than a new influence of media logic situates her analysis within the political (in this case military) context that conditions the enactment of such practices.
Although Maltby’s conceptualization therefore contributes to a more politics-centered approach, her studies focus on the tactical level where the imagined mediatization among practitioners contributes to its enactment, hence still a media-centered understanding of the interaction between institutional logics. In their study of the third phase of mediatization, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin also consider the specific institution of war and suggest that the final phase of mediatization has led to a stage of “arrested war” when to plan, wage, legitimate, assuage, historicize, remember and imagine war requires attention to the media and its uses (2015, p. 1323). Again, attention to the media and its uses does not suggest a replaced logic but a transformed or developed logic of war. The political sub-field of war also demonstrates how Strömbäck and Esser’s six dimensions fall short of offering enough substance to political logic.

Mediatization is a theoretical approach not often used in the study of diplomacy, although there are exceptions (Archetti 2012; Pamment 2014). This fact is unfortunate because it presents another strong case for why political logic should not be conceptualized as the opposite of media logic. Diplomacy is concerned with communication and, as such, the overarching institutional logic of diplomacy is one of communication, in which one can expect the modi operandi of politics and media to interact. Considering diplomacy, it again becomes clear that Strömbäck and Esser’s six dimensions of political logic are better described as a logic of public administration rather than as an overarching governing logic of all politics. Diplomatic communication is for instance not necessarily concerned with accountability, and can instead be motivated by strategic advantage. This is also where the new media ecology is relevant for diplomatic strategy and public diplomacy has increasingly become concerned with managing the international agenda in a more competitive media climate (Sheafer & Gabay 2009). Keeping in mind how the concept of media logic as the guiding logic of mediated communication could travel from mass media to social media without undermining its basic assumptions in the above discussion, the six dimensions are therefore ill suited to being brought into different contexts of politics and, more importantly, to being compared with media logic. A problem thus seems to be that while media logic is conceptualized at an operational level where norms, formats, channels and effects can be specified within reach, political logic is too vague and general to provide analytical strength as the equal partner.

Considering instead the dimensions involved in diplomatic logic, one can think of different diplomatic activities concerned with communication, such as negotiations, mediation, representation, prevention, containment, crisis-management, influence and engagement. These are activities that to different
extents have traditionally depended on mediated communication but also have been associated with a transformation in the digitalization of diplomacy (Seib 2012; Bjola 2016). The most common approach to digital diplomacy is the focus on how states employ social media to interact and engage foreign publics. While there are other contributions to state-to-state diplomatic engagement (e.g. Duncombe 2017) and crisis management (e.g. Cassidy 2018), the engagement of foreign publics which corresponds to public diplomacy, can be considered most relevant to the mediatization of politics. It is most relevant because the engagement of publics has traditionally depended on news media and the use of media logic but it is now increasingly pursued through social media.

This discussion of political logic does not lead me to specify political logic or even diplomatic logic, rather it leads me to place more emphasis on the political context in which mediatization occurs. The norms, aims, strategies, characterization and effects of a political logic do not translate in the same way as media logic because politics needs to be considered in its specific context. I have however identified the communicative aspects of politics as fruitful grounds on which to consider political logic and its relationship to media logic in a mediatization process. In effect, the harmony between the logics depends both on the political setting, the specific political rationale of action and on the media ecology that is present. The political logic in a given situation may for instance be characterized by problem-solving, crisis management or negotiation that converges with media logic in different ways. This context of convergence that is shaped by both political and media context thus shapes the conditions for a mediatization of politics.

A final unsettled dimension in the institutional approach to mediatization that concerns both institutional logics, is the assumptions of omnipresence and the role of context. While media permeance to the degree of omnipresence is the central argument within mediatization, the research front has continuously emphasized the importance of contextual understanding (Livingstone 2009, p. 9; Hjavard 2013). What contextual understanding actually means and how it contributes to further the mediatization agenda remains vague, however. Sometimes the role of context is understood as a strictly pragmatic strategy, a way of deciding where to begin and end analysis. Other times, contextual explorations are described as a way of moving the research agenda further and hence are treated as grounds for deductive empiricism. Finally, there is the argument that I have already emphasized in this chapter: that mediatization is an inter-institutional process which therefore links together the assumptions of omnipresence and a hosting context as both facilitating and conditioning mediatization. This idea thus adds another dimension to the above discussion of the transformation process of
media logic in a new media ecology. Media logic transforms as a result of a new media ecology (a mediatization of media) but it both transgresses and transforms further in a mediatization of politics. Hence, the omnipresence of mediatization is not necessarily a contradiction of the pragmatic promise of a contextual approach.

**Bringing in the Actors**

I have already touched upon the greater role ascribed to agency when approaching mediatization with a focus on new media and international politics. A more actor-centered framework of mediatization has also been called for in studies that depart from the news media for reasons that it is of interest to consider. Michael Meyen, Marcus Thieroff and Steffi Strenger (2014) have offered arguments why mediatization research ought to pay more attention to the micro-level of individual actors. First, they point to the fact that individuals are accessible to empirical research and that focusing on their experiences also provides a bridge to previous research on media effects. While this argument is practical rather than theoretically motivated it is relevant to consider for a politics-centered approach to mediatization. Who are better to speak of a transformation of politics than the actors who will have experienced it? However, rather than being merely a source of empirical material, actors are central in any transformation of politics and here Meyen, Thieroff and Strenger’s other argument is that mediatization is a “complex construct that is influenced by constellations of actors and structures”. Hence, the understanding of mediatization here follows structuration theory, which would suggest that the actors are brought into theorization and are not merely conceptualized as agents of adaptation.

While few studies within the institutional logics approach to mediatization have made the connection, neo-institutionalist theories have remedied their relative lack of attention to actors, by introducing the concept of “institutional entrepreneurs” (DiMaggio 1988; Fligstein 2001; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence 2004). These institutional entrepreneurs influence, through different forms of resources, the way in which ideas and practices are institutionalized. The argument is thus that there is embedded agency in structural processes of change. Recent studies of organizational mediatization have suggested that individuals in a leading role, such as managers, may exercise such influence over when and to what extent organizations become mediatized (Fredriksson, et al. 2015). In addition, increased demands for transparency and accountability in politics have supposedly led actors (here understood as individual politicians) to “self-mediatize” by professionalizing their self-presentation skills (Esser 2013, p. 162).
The importance of individual actors is further stressed by the way in which new media grant actors a more central role. Actors have the capacity to generate media content, to interact with others and the ability to demonstrate network connections (DeNardis & Hackl 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein 2011; Slaughter 2009; Jackson 2018). While the increased influence of public opinion has already been discussed to explain a similar new focus on actors in IR, there are other factors involved in this shift. While the study of IR in world politics has traditionally focused on states, individual actors have been approached in the study of dimensions such as rationality, emotions, identities and cultures. Even so, agency that ascribes choice to social change has often been restricted to state actors or decision-making elites. Communications technology has here led to a new opportunity to study the politics of everyday IR (De Silva & Crilley 2017) and to shifting power relations in the way that individuals participate in international politics (Jackson 2018 p. 4). The fact that, previously, actors were often left out can thus also be understood in relation to the former absence or visibility of these practices.

**Summing up the Chapter**

In this chapter I have confronted the research front on mediatization and specifically the literature on the mediatization of politics. In so doing I have indicated two main areas of unresolved questions and, in effect, of weak conceptualization: the link to the mass media sector and the conflicting roles ascribed to omnipresence and context. The critical discussion allowed me to conclude that mediatization is not inherently a media-centered theory and that the all–encompassing influence on politics occurs in society but may be institutionalized differently across time and space. This led me to consider mediatization to be an inter-institutional and relational process.

I then went on to point out the shortcomings of the institutional approach that has remained under-developed and restricted to a focus on media invasion or influence rather than a true transformation. I therefore turned to suggest that media logic might be better understood in relation to the new media ecology. I further linked this argument to the increasing role of agency in the understanding of mediatization through phases of a new media ecology. I then turned to discuss political logic as an underdeveloped concept and suggested a more nuanced understanding of political logic at issue in specific situations. This rethinking of political logic along with the transformation within and through media logic led me to conclude that convergence rather than divergence should be considered the conditionalizing grounds of the mediatization of politics. I then turned to revisit the argument of omnipresence which, I argued, is not a contradiction of a focus
on context. Finally, I summarized the implications for the increase emphasis on agency that I have argued for in this chapter.

In effect, what this chapter has shown is that there is a need for more politics-centered explorations of what the mediatization of politics entails, which allow for deeper contextual understanding. The perspective I have developed in this chapter will therefore be furthered though an analytical framework that aims to allow such explorations and thus to advance a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics.
Chapter 3.
An Analytical Framework of Blending Logics

This chapter builds on the discussions in the previous chapter and moves, to an analytical framework, the conclusions which were drawn in the politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics. This chapter therefore furthers the argument that it is reasonable to think of mediatization as a process whereby the institutional logics in focus, media logic and political logic blends to different degrees which are reflected in mediatized practices. While the idea of blending has already been introduced, I have not yet adequately confronted the indication that there will be variation at issue in such a mediatization process. In addition to the theorized blending process, I will further argue that the interaction between logics can result in different phases of blending which reflect a gradual mediatization process. To this end, this chapter will set out to develop an original interaction model of the mediatization of politics. The main contribution of this interaction model is not to revolutionize the way that we think about mediatization but to contextualize mediatization within politics. I depart from the understanding that when mediatization occurs, the territory is by no means uncharted. There has always been some level of entanglement between political practices and media practices but this model seeks to offer a way of analyzing that entanglement and how it may intensify within the process of mediatization.

The theory-developing aim of this thesis and the research design described in the introductory chapter have suggested that this analytical framework is a key contribution of this study. It stems from the discussions in the previous theoretical chapter but has also been informed by the empirical study of EU digital diplomacy at the EEAS. The chapter is thus a result of using EU digital diplomacy as a “laboratory” in which to develop a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics. This entails that the interaction model was developed through both deductive reasoning and the lessons learned from the empirical study. Accordingly, the empirical chapters (chapters five, six and seven) serve as
illustrations of this analytical framework rather than exercises in theory-testing. I do however stress the generalizability of this analytical framework: it has been developed from a single case study but the aim is that it should be able to migrate to other contexts of the mediatization of politics. Therefore, while the analytical insights in part stem specifically from the case study, I also relate them to more general patterns and characteristics found in previous research in this chapter. These patterns will be further illustrated, elaborated and discussed in the empirical chapters and in the conclusions of this thesis.

This chapter first addresses the idea of blending logics, which leads me to present and interaction model for the mediatization of politics. The central element in the interaction model is the view of mediatization as a process of political and media logics blending through phases of adaptation, amalgamation and saturation. After unpacking the interaction mode, I turn to consider the implications of linking institutional logics to practices. Finally, I return to the role of the political context in a mediatization process and discuss how the context of EU digital diplomacy offered a laboratory for this purpose. This discussion will be developed for the purpose of the empirical study in the methodological chapter and the subsequent illustrative chapters but this first step here serves to exemplify how the analytical framework can travel to a context of politics.

Blending Logics of Mediatization

In order to clarify the rather complex idea of multiple transformations in an inter-institutional relationship, I suggest that we think of mediatization as a process of blending. To illustrate this, we can think about the way in which ingredients blend when baking. To use a very clear example, eggs and sugar are a common base in pastry and their blend will intensify in the mixing process. At first, we can still distinguish the eggs from the sugar but they have started interacting in terms of a blend. The more we blend, the more mixed they become, leading to entirely different results than those in their first encounter (a transformation). To think of mediatization in terms of a blending process is then to consider political logic and media logic to blend to different results, depending on the intensity of the mixture. When they blend, something happens to the media logic, something happens to the political logic and something happens to the mixture. As this mixture becomes more blended, the logics become more integrated.

This baking metaphor also says something about the linearity of mediatization and the roles of time and speed in a new media ecology. There is linearity at a
blend that becomes more integrated: the more we blend, the deeper integration between the ingredients. Nonetheless the process of blending does not predetermine how the mixture will be used. While the blend intensifies with the mixture, to the point where we cannot go back to separate the ingredients, we can stop mixing, we can fail to mix or we can simply abandon the attempt to bake if we are unhappy with the result. Hence, while mediatization intensifies through increased interaction between political logic and media logic, the practices that result in politics can be abandoned. Moreover, in order to reach the stage where the blend is fulfilled, we need speed in order to mix the ingredients thoroughly. This therefore entails that there must be some linearity, in the sense that the first stage of mixing leads to a second stage and cannot be reached without the first, but it is not a deterministic linearity and the blend can be thrown out. Further, time matters, because speed can accelerate the process of blending and in the absence of speed the mixture may fail. Here, technological assistance, such as an electric mixer can both speed up the process of baking and increase the chances of success.

This baking metaphor hence serves to position my argument of blending in the politics-centered approach to mediatization. To think of mediatization as a process whereby political logic and media logic blend is to accept a sociological perspective on the interactions between structure and actors in social change, where the interaction between institutional logic is a relational process (Giddens 1984; Hjavard 2014, p. 203). Here, the eggs do not invade the sugar, just as media logic does not invade political logic – the two interact and change together. This is why it is important to pay attention both to the ingredient that was first put into the mixing bowl and to the second. The increasing role of media and particularly new media asserts the assumptions that this changing relationship is a result of transformation in both international politics and in the new media ecology (Duncombe 2017; Jackson 2018). Further, to think of blending in different phases is not to accept structural determinism but to think of mediatization as a relational process, while still allowing agency to change or abandon the process. Finally, the role of time and speed supports both the arguments of an omnipresent media ecology that has led to increased speed in mediatization processes but yet grants some level of control to the actors, who may or may not use that speed.

The idea of blending processes is not novel in the social sciences. For political sociologists, the increasing complexity of the social world is a result of processes of blending and melding of social and political developments (van Deth 2010 p.112).
At more operational levels of political science, this notion of blending can be traced to institutionalization, socialization or integration, all processes that speak of gradual change though an intensifying mixture of something. Despite the inherent role of blending in these processes, attention is often focused on the resulting change or the dominance of a changing influence. Theories of norm diffusion in IR are for instance interesting examples of assumed blending where certain ideas and norms travel from one political context to another. A common weakness in attempts to explain norm diffusion is, however, the difficulty of accounting for how this happens differently in a variety of contexts (Hofferberth & Weber 2015). The challenge of accounting for variety is linked to the view of the new norms as pervasive when in reality successful norm diffusion is often dependent upon a blend with pre-existing norms and ideas (Börzel & Risse 2003, p. 60). The way in which a new context, such as an international organization, internalizes norms thus matters greatly (Park 2006; Michalski & Danielson 2018). The tendency to overestimate the influence of new elements and presume that the receiving element is static in its openness to change is likely often a reflection of the difficulties of establishing causal relations in blending processes. Despite such difficulties, it is valuable to consider blending without the necessity of establishing stimuli and change. For instance, rather than thinking of the direct link from blend to result, it can be useful to think of the integration of ingredients to different degrees, when they first meet they are blended in the same bowl but may yet be separated, only to become an intermixture and finally, after having first been blended, become truly fused together. Hence, rather than focusing on how the different ingredients individually influenced particular results, it is interesting to consider the state of the blend in relation to its results.

This is where I consider the contextual approach suggested by Hans-Jörg Trenz (2008, 2013) to be useful as a way of analytically focusing on the blending process of mediatization. The idea of a correlation between mediatization and democratization is a way of breaking down omnipresence into a tangible blending process that can be indicated by correlation through, for instance, Marcinkowski’s concept of inclusiveness (2005). In addition, Magnus Fredriksson, Thomas Shillemans & Josef Pallas (2015) have studied the determinants of what they call “organizational mediatization” and conclude that organizations have agency in the process whereby they become mediatized. Specifically, they found that the management structure determines how an organization interacts with its external media environment, which offers more support for the argument of blending the logics at work in mediatization.
Thus, the focus on blending between political logic and media logic is a way of analyzing what happens to politics in a mediatization process in a more politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics.

**An Interaction Model for the Mediatization of Politics**

The ambition to understand the mediatization of politics is in this thesis realized through a model of the assumed blend between political logic and media logic. That is to say, that I consider the mediatization of politics to be equally concerned with politicization and its confrontation with the contemporary opportunities and constraints of media expansion. I consider politicization here to be a process of internalizing media logic into politics, when media means or channels are raised to a higher degree of political urgency. Rather than abandoning the concept of media logic, I have argued for ways of developing it in relation to a new media ecology and, in addition, to empower the concept of political logic. I thus make use of the analytical separation of logics and functions while moving beyond the isolating application and the constraining character of media logic. By taking stock of previous contributions to the media-politics nexus, I further argue that the mediatization of politics is best understood as both a new condition of media means and methods and as new opportunities and constraints that generally accompany all societal development. Because of this duality of mediatization, as both a structural transformation and a new means of communication that blends with pre-existing conditions, the interaction between political logic and media logic goes in different directions and is both a top-down and a bottom-up process. According to this view, politics and hence political practice both adapt to and influence the mediatization of politics. Against this backdrop, I suggest an interaction model between the institutional logics that can allow a context-sensitive approach, at the same time as concepts are operationalized within a more general analytical frame of mediatization.

Model 1 below illustrates the interaction model, where the central element is the view of mediatization of politics as a process of political and media logics blending

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37 This is a broad and basic understanding of politicization (or politicization) as the process of something (or someone) becoming more “political” than a previous state. Commonly, politicization is concerned with an issue becoming more contentious. In the present context of mediatization, it is about something (or someone) previously perceived as a belonging to “media” becoming “politics”. In other studies, mediatization and politicization in the news media have been associated as interacting processes or as effects of one another (Fredriksson et al. 2015).
through phases of adaptation, amalgamation and saturation, which results in mediatized practices in politics.38

Model 1. The mediatization of politics

Adaptation

In a first phase, the blending is characterized by adaptation, whereby the normative dimensions of political logic (which are determined by context) blend with demands of media logic through strategies of visibility, reach and engaging format, for example, when diplomats start using social media. This phase shares the characteristics of Strömbäck’s conceptualization of the four phases of mediatization (2008) as it concerns a reaction from the political sphere that relates to the traditional frames of mass media logic. The demands guided by media logic are here, however, met by normative interpretations from the political sphere and not necessarily initiated or driven by commercial demands from a media sphere. This is where mediatization is equally concerned with politicization. For instance,

38 This interaction model does not explicitly conceptualize the role of audiences in the mediatization of politics. It does however implicitly account for audiences in the understanding of mediatization as a reciprocal process that is related to political strategy which will be illustrated in the empirical chapters. I mention this here because increased awareness and navigation of audiences stood out as a finding in the empirical study that will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.
when a political narrative is communicated by a political institution, the compulsion inherent in a message may need to be lifted to a higher level of political urgency or communicated through a new media channel so that the desired levels of public attention are reached and the message is correctly understood. Such compulsion can also result from the internal or external expectations of political adaptation to new communication strategies or to expectations of political opportunities identified through communicative efforts. Processes of politicization are constantly ongoing and are examples of discursive contestation in politics but also of the strategic and dynamic characteristics of political practice involved in the evolution of politics. While politicization may thus occur for a number of reasons, here I am speaking of adaptation as a response to a new media ecology but not necessarily as a result of demands from the media sector. The idea of adaptation here builds on literature on media-framing (Entman 1993) that suggests that communicative techniques associated with media logic are imperative to political agenda-setting. In a mediatization process, adaptation however goes further within the political process than framing theory would suggest. Whereas frames have foremost been considered to follow the policy process, which would suggest that media logic comes into play only after political logic has guided the political process, adaptation here suggests an initial blend between the logics within the institution of politics. What this entails is that adaptation is not just a matter of framing political issues but can equally be about raising the political urgency of a certain media format or a communications channel in the policy process or within a political culture, thus when a political sphere begins to internalize media logic.

One illustrative example can be found within the modern history of political debates or election campaigns. In democratic societies, political debates and election campaigns have been a crucial part of different processes governed by political logic i.e. both to obtaining and retaining political power (e.g. Baker 2001). Since political debates have been televised, as a wave of mediatization that predates the notion of a new media ecology, they have significantly changed the format of political campaigning practice. Some argue that the formats of political debates since the introduction of television now suit the demands of the media rather than the demands of the political actors or even the electorate (e.g.

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39 I clarify here that communication techniques are not only verbal but may allude to different senses. Framing politics can therefore also be a visual practice (Entman 2004). I discuss the meaning of non-verbal communication in the discussion on mediatized practices later in this chapter.
Buchanan 2001; Strömbäck & Esser 2009).\textsuperscript{40} Rather than thinking of this phenomenon along the lines of enforced adaptation to the media’s standards of newsworthiness (Strömbäck 2010, p. 425), it is interesting to consider the political entrepreneurship involved and how it transformed the political process of campaigning. For instance, the first televised US presidential debate depicted John F. Kennedy’s political use of (at the time) a new media opportunity and Richard Nixon’s reluctant agreement to do what was to him conceived as “just another campaign appearance”.\textsuperscript{41} Kennedy and Nixon did not adapt to media logic in a similar manner, rather it was the political interests and the opportunities at stake that, when blended with media logic, led to different results. While televised debates where indeed symptomatic of a new media climate, what they became and the influence they had were reflections of a blend with the political conditions which led to different outcomes in the Kennedy-Nixon case.

More contemporary examples of politicization through adaptation to the new media ecology are the use of political bots\textsuperscript{42} in the Brexit campaign 2016 (Howard & Kollanyi 2016) or the US President, Donald Trump’s, unprecedented use of Twitter during his election campaign that same year (Ott 2017). These examples further illustrate how the political context or contender matters to how media logic is internalized. Accordingly, it is problematic to think of the mediatization of politics as a constant adaptation by a uniform group of political actors or organizations. Rather an adaptation here is a blend between the logics that can be driven by political conditions: by interests at issue or by expectations from other political actors, the public or from the news media sector. Rather than media demands, these are demands for mediatization that can be considered along the

\textsuperscript{40} This development is also related to what in US politics has been described as a state of “permanent campaign”, in which the modern technology of computer-driven polling and media has replaced the role of old-style patronage and party organization during the tenure in office of Presidents. The result is thus that politics is dominated by constant campaigning in search of vote-winning (Blumenthal 1980). The concept of a permanent campaign has also been revisited in relation to the demands for constant readiness among political actors in the new media ecology (Elmer, Langlois & McKelvey 2012).

\textsuperscript{41} The first televised US presidential debate took place on 26-09-1960, between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy and is considered to have had significant outcome on the election. Kennedy was reported to have anticipated the event as “momentous” and prepared both content and appearance in great detail whereas Nixon was reported as being negative to the idea and reluctant to adapt to such modernities. (Among his failures to prepare, he is known to have refused the assistance of a makeup artist) (Druckman 2003).

\textsuperscript{42} I will return to the subject of “bots” in chapter six: they are social media accounts that automate interaction with other users, while political bots are automated accounts that are particularly active on public policy issues, elections and political crises.
lines of the relationship between demand and supply in a market economy. When there is a political demand for public attention (e.g. a presidential campaign) it is best met with an equal level of media supply and, when the demand and the supply are matched, (e.g. Kennedy in his telegenic appearance in 1960) an equilibrium can be achieved. If, on the other hand, supply exceeds demand or vice versa, an adaptation driven by media expectations or by political interests can drive a mediatisation process of blending. In relation to this, departing from his argument of a correlation between mediatisation and democratization, Trenz has suggested that the EU is a case of mediatisation driven by political demands of reach and legitimation but charged with a deficit in the news media attention on the supply side (2013, p. 41). Hence, one can postulate that the EU could be “a Kennedy” in search of its optimal televised debate. This situation can thus be expected to lead to a politicization of media relations, or indeed new media channels as a means of improving the outlook. As will be discussed in chapter five, the anticipation, expectations and abundance of social media opportunities can therefore also lead to an adaptation of communication channels and their specific techniques such as Twitter.

In sum, what we can expect from a blending process in the initial stages is a phase of adaptation where the first signs of use and common purpose of the institutional logics moves beyond the basic convergence. While, as I have discussed above, such processes have occurred in previous waves of mediatisation, here it is important to keep in mind that the new media ecology has been suggested as having been likely to have amplified the process (through the abundance of media opportunities and speed). While television in the 1960s was by some identified as a monumental political opportunity, the new media opportunities and in extension the reach of new political audiences has expanded significantly in the new media ecology (Jackson 2018). What I mean by the use and common purpose of the institutional logics is thus rooted in the traditional understanding of a politicization, whereby something that was not initially understood as being political (such as social media use) is raised to the level of a political practice, though here still in an initial blend of adaptation between the institutional logics.

**Amalgamation**

In a second phase of mediatisation, the blending can be understood in terms of an amalgamation of the logics. While adaptation is often a conscious process it may not always be a voluntary act (as demonstrated by Nixon’s reluctance to go on television). Political actors are often compelled to adapt to media characteristics in order to play the political game. There are, however, times when media logic is well in line with political logic, beyond the normative
representation illustrated in the discussion of adaptation. These are moments when the normative goals and the market-driven goals are complementary and political actors may strategically use media opportunities not only to represent politics but in order to pursue political goals, when political problems meet media solutions. This process can be compared with “the garbage can model” and the idea of solutions looking for problems rather than the vice versa (Cohen, March & Olsen 1972). There are numerous media opportunities available to the political sphere but rather than complying with media requirements, political institutions may make use of the many media solutions flying around when a political problem emerges and a match may have a strategic value.

An amalgamation of logics may also occur through a “window of opportunity” when political interests suddenly chime with media opportunities. The understanding of amalgamation here thus builds on traditional literature of organizational choice (Cohen et al. 1972), mediatization as a democratic requirement (Marcinkowski 2005, Trenz 2013) and strategic media management (e.g. Maltby 2012a, 2012b). This body of literature supports the claim that the new media ecology has led to both opportunities and constraints, in regard to political practice, that can be solved or managed using the available solutions. An important separation from the previous phase of adaptation here lies in the difference between opportunity and solution. For instance, while televised political debates presented an opportunity for John F. Kennedy, it was not necessarily a solution in relation to a tangible political problem. An amalgamation process thus differs from adaptation through further internalization in the blending process in relation to actual solutions in political practice. This understanding is highly relevant to the emergence of a new media ecology, to the new role ascribed to strategic narratives and the binary of offline/online media logic, as discussed in the previous chapter. It can, however, also be related to previous waves of mediatization, for instance to the increased intensity and role of propaganda during certain episodes of international politics, most notably the Cold War.43

43 Propaganda is defined as a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist. Persuasion is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both persuader and persuaded (Jowett & O’Donnell 2006, p.1). Supposedly, one of the first known uses of war propaganda was by Alexander the Great to solve the problem of having to retreat in a battle that would signal weakness to his enemy. He solved the problem by producing oversized armor and helmets that were left behind them as they retreated making the enemy believe his army looked like giants (DeGirolamo & Beech 2011). Although this strategy did not depend on media opportunities it was based on representational opportunities that have amplified the influence of propaganda to reach broader audiences with each mediatization wave.
Propaganda is an evident result of a politicization of media use but was during the Cold War a direct tool of both antagonistic psychological warfare and of alliance-seeking (Cull 1995, 2008). Hence propaganda does not necessarily stem from a mediatization process that has gone beyond adaptation, and is no longer a complimentary practice, but is rather a solution to political problems in its own right and signals amalgamation. In this category of practices, “softer” public relations strategies, such as state branding, are primarily reflections of adaptation. However, when the soft power that is expressed becomes a principal political strategy or the essence of the representation of power, the blending has intensified to amalgamation. Alternatively, as we will see in chapter seven, it may even shift to the final phase of consolidation.

The rise of social media has led both to a new set of political opportunities and to new political constraints and further, new political problems. Rather than balancing each other out, problems that have emerged from this new media ecology are partly managed through solutions within that new media ecology which has led to new areas of political practice. For instance, the rise of false news stories and online harassment in the Brexit campaign and the US election campaign during 2016 led to a new movement of online fact-checking in liberal democracies. Numerous international organizations, campaigns, training strategies and even new professional roles have emerged in the political sphere around the world, to address the problem of the lack of quality control and fact-checking on the Internet in the pursuit of political legitimacy (Lowrey 2017). Adding to this development in the political sphere, fact-checking is a traditional journalistic practice that has become politicized as a result of the new media ecology. Fact-checking is no longer a neutral journalistic practice but a politicized democratic ideal. In a similar development, the realization that terrorist organizations were using the Internet and social media opportunities for recruitment purposes led governments to pursue new strategies of public diplomacy as way of delegitimizing these efforts and to engage with foreign publics on contested issues (Seib 2012; Aistrope 2016). Taken together, these new patterns of strategic narratives, as performative power in the social media sphere, cannot be characterized as the result of invasive media logic or a strict adaptation but exemplify rather well amalgamation within the mediatization of politics.

In addition, bearing in mind that I have argued that the mediatization of the media (the transformation of media logic) emphasizes the role of agency more than the conceptualization of mass media logic, political solutions are sought in a strategic manner by political actors. Whereas the normative dimensions of politics still subsist when facing a political problem, they tend to have less guiding force
when facing a problem rather than an opportunity. Thus, amalgamation depends on the strategic and dynamic characteristics of politics that drives the convergence to a blend when a match between problem and solution can be reached. The political urgency to manage the information flow suggests an amalgamation where the political essence or strategy can still be detached from the engagement with media logic, when the practices have become entangled. As exemplified by propaganda understood as psychological warfare, without the entanglement these practices carry neither political logic nor media logic and their essence is dependent on the blend.

In sum, what we can expect from a blending process in the phase of amalgamation is an integration of the logics, to the point where a solution to a political problem can be reached. This phase ascribes more emphasis to agency in the process of mediatization, since this blending entails a more conscious transformation of political practice, in order to attain certain goals.

**Consolidation**

Finally, in a third phase the blending can be understood in terms of a consolidation between the institutional logics. I have previously discussed how mediatization refers to the ways in which communication technologies have become so integrated with everyday activities that our knowledge and experience of the world is significantly altered. This often happens in ways that appear banal and taken for granted. Consolidation here supposes more or less unconscious use of media characteristics, services and opportunities in the formulation, practice and communication of politics; when the logics are entangled beyond separation and the blend can be traced in practices of politics that are taken for granted. This idea hence moves beyond the banality of everyday media practices to consider how both the medium and the message have changed the practice of politics. Again, a separation from previous phases can be illustrated through the different meanings of political opportunity, solution to a political problem and a practice of politics that is taken for granted. Whereas the previous phases can at least to some extent separate the ingredients that went into the blend, once they have been consolidated it suggests that they can no longer be traced without one of them involving another.

Consolidation in this view corresponds to the way in which the idea of digitalization suggests that the use of digital tools have an impact on the overall practice of politics. For example, the establishment of the two-way communication which social media grants political institutions to interact with its followers could potentially lead to an evolution in the practice of politics in
ways that transgress the digital medium. For instance, when citizens become used to being able to access social services online it may also influence the expectations and practices of offline communications with the public sector. Or when career networks such as LinkedIn\(^{44}\) become so established that recruitment processes will not consider candidates without online visibility or when diplomats become accustomed to managing diplomatic relations online to such an extent that it also influences behavior in offline settings. The repetition of these instances of practices which are taken for granted stems from a mediatization process that gradually leads to a consolidation of the blend whereby the media logic is as equally inherent as the political logic in the political practice. Efforts to (analytically) remove the media logic of such practices would result not only in the absence of a mediatization process but also in the absence of its political essence which hence depends on the blend. Here, the developing norms and the transformation of media logic in a new media ecology have been internalized and consolidated in a political sphere.

The consolidation here thus relates to the blurred lines between policy and communication and the way in which digital tools or media channels become part of the agency of political practice. The idea of a consolidation of logics thus builds on the understandings of media performativity (Cottle 2006; van Ham 2010), whereby media logic is essential to the performance of political practice and to ideas such as diplomatic agency (Adler-Nissen 2016a) as key to understanding how political practice evolves in a new media ecology. While again, the new media ecology can be assumed to have both amplified this process and led to more areas where such consolidation can be found, one can imagine that consolidation processes could also be found in previous waves of mediatization. Celebrity politics for instance depends on a consolidation to the degree that the political agency stems from celebrity and is accepted by the public (thus, celebrity as basis of political representation).\(^{45}\)

In sum, what we can expect from a blending process in the phase of consolidation is a true mix of the logics to the point where they can no longer be separated but can be traced to practices of politics that are taken for granted. This phase thus depends on the transference of media logic to a new media ecology and in its

\(^{44}\) LinkedIn, a professional networking site, was launched in 2003 and by 2018 was reported to have more than 562 million users in 200 countries.

\(^{45}\) I mention celebrity politics (when celebrities become political actors) here because although this is intuitively considered to be a contemporary phenomenon, it has occurred throughout modern history (Corner & Pels 2003, Marshall 1997, Cooper 2008, Wheeler 2013).
purest form is no longer a conscious act by actors but shapes a new structural prerequisite of political practice.

**Clarifications**

Before discussing the role of mediatized practices in the interaction model, I briefly summarize the implications of the arguments I have put forward thus far in the thesis. In the sections that follow I offer clarifications about possible misunderstandings of the analytical framework I outline in this chapter and how they influence the understanding of the interaction model.

**Actors in Social Groups**

First and importantly, as discussed in chapters one and two, institutional logics reside at the field level, they organize and guide collective action and must therefore be traced in practice through a social context, that is to say in social groups, not through individual actors (Friedland & Alford, 1991). This matters because, although I speak of individuals such as political leaders or diplomats and the value of “bringing in the actors”, I discuss their actions in their political context and hence in relation to social groups such as politicians or diplomats (this discussion is elaborated in chapter four in relation to the differences between action, behavior and practices).

**Linearity and Time**

Based on previous discussions, I conceptualize linearity and time by distinguishing phases of mediatization in a political context from the often assumed overall mediatization of politics (or of society). This means that although there is linearity present in the process of mediatization, in the interaction model this does not imply that such mediatization necessarily spills over into other contexts or is symptomatic of a more general mediatization. The claims that the interaction model makes will be limited to a political context, and they are thus partial and contingent. Further, consolidation suggests blending beyond the point of return but such practices may still be abandoned in favor of a return to less mediatized practices. This entails that I consider the phases linear but the resulting practices are not bound by this linearity. In addition, the practices will often co-exist in a political context, where multiple processes of mediatization may be in play. Thus, the mediatization process is not linear in the strictest sense, since the process can go in different directions and, most importantly, it is not deterministic.
**Media or New Media Only?**

In chapter two, I concluded that although new media differs from the traditional understandings of the media’s role vis-à-vis politics, the concept of media logic works with some minor adjustments in the new media ecology. This argument will also be furthered by the discussion of mediatized practices that in the first phase of adaptation follows traditional patterns of mediatized political communication. In this thesis, I study new media but the theoretical aim of developing mediatization theory is not limited to the new media ecology. Hence, the interaction model is developed by tacking stock both of mediatization research and of the original case study. I therefore imagine that the interaction model is not limited to new media contexts.

**Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication**

The practices that emerge from the three phases of mediatization are essentially communication practices and here understood as both verbal and non-verbal expressions. This is an important clarification because, as we will see, new media communication techniques are often visual and symbolic. I emphasize here that this is not a framework developed to study the visuality present in the mediatization of politics specifically but instead treats verbal and non-verbal communication as being in the same class of mediatized practices. This is also a central benefit of using a practice approach which was a reaction to linguistic analysis that would exclude non-textual elements (Neumann 2002). In addition, diplomacy, which is the focus of the empirical study, is both a verbal and non-verbal practice (Jönsson & Hall 2005, p. 84). As the methodological discussions will explain better, I focus, however, more on mediatized practices of diplomacy that are talked about rather than on their materiality. On this subject I also clarify that diplomacy is one political context I have chosen to study among others and that the interaction model is not developed specifically for the study of digital diplomacy.46

**Level of Consciousness**

A final important point in need of clarification is the level of consciousness of the actors involved in a mediatization process. While the roots within structuration in the perspective I have developed emphasize the interplay between agency and

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46 I clarify this because there is increasing interest in visual images of diplomacy that in some ways resonates with the assumptions of omnipresent mediatization and the role of new media (cf. Hansen 2017, Bleiker 2015, Bleiker (Ed.) 2018). If the theoretical aim was more directed specifically to the study of diplomacy, one might expect that the theorization would focus to a greater extent on non-verbal communication.
structure it has not necessarily been clear enough about the level of consciousness involved. This is an important clarification to make because it relates to the rationalist–constructivist debate within international relations theory and motivates some of the methodological choices I make in the subsequent chapter. I consider the mediatization process to consist of both conscious and unconscious processes through practices that are sometimes driven by actors and sometimes not. Here I turn to the case study to explain what I mean: the anticipation of digital diplomacy as a set of new opportunities for the EU and the new mandate of the EEAS, was driven by EU institutions, both their leaders and their practitioners, but it was also a result of expectations from an external environment. While the increasing importance of digital diplomacy and the changes it brought about was a conscious process, it also resulted in new practices, taken for granted, of which practitioners were less aware. For instance, the gradual institutionalization of strategic communication highlights how practices that were considered controversial at the time of their introduction became normalized. The gradual mediatization of EU diplomacy has therefore at times been furthered by external expectations or threats and at times by internal interests and conditions. The mediatization thus occurs in the interplay between structure and agency where actors are sometimes aware of their practices and sometimes not.

**Mediatized Practices**

I have introduced the concepts of political logic and media logic in chapters one and two and I have discussed using political practice as a way of tracing the interaction between them. While I have already argued for this connection and discussed the epistemological consequences that follow from this choice, I here consider the specific implications that the link between institutional logics and practices have for the analytical framework that I develop in this chapter. Having dealt with the three phases of blending I first turn to the mediatized practices that can be expected to result from this process of mediatization. When I speak of the emerging patterns of mediatized practices in politics I am considering the characteristic expressions that stem from the repetition of these practices (that reflects the phases). Hence, rather than explaining how mediatization happens, the interaction model seeks to capture how the blending of political logic and media logic in mediatization processes may lead to different expressions that depend on these different phases of mediatization.

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47 The subsequent methodological chapter four will discuss to greater length what I mean by “practices”.
In the first phase of blending through adaptation, the characteristic expressions refer to the effects of media logic that are concerned with the presentation of politics, personalization, leaderization, spectacularization and simplification as communicative techniques (Mazzoleni 2008a). With a focus on diplomatic practice, this first pattern encompasses adaptation where political actors (in this field often MFAs) engage in attempts to respond to expectations of digitalization and may even experiment with new communicative opportunities. At this time, practically all ministries of foreign affairs engage in these practices of adaptation (Bjola 2016). Adaptation can thus be linked to a general understanding of what constitutes digital diplomacy but also considers the more specific processes of internalization of media logic that takes place in diplomatic organizations.

The second pattern of practices that result from amalgamation is characterized by containment and strategic communication that depend on the new media ecology. Here the match between political problems and solutions in the new media ecology leads to strategies for grasping the opportunities and containing the constraints of a new media ecology in relation to a clear set of political objectives. This pattern resonates with much in the research previously conducted through the strategic narrative framework. Specifically, international actors make use of the new media ecology to project narratives that give meaning to the international system in the twenty-first century (Miskimmon, et al. 2013). As such, the strategic narrative framework illustrates how the new media ecology has given rise to new opportunities towards solving both new problems (that themselves stem from the new media ecology) but also longstanding problems in international affairs. Among these opportunities and constraints is the need to navigate multiple audiences. The fact that this is a relatively new opportunity leads to creativity and experimentation by the actors who drive these efforts. This has led to number of new political practices, such as an increased use of visual symbols and representation of politics (which alludes to the cognitive shortcuts occurring in transformed media logic) and activities of fact-checking or, as will be illustrated in chapter six, myth-busting. With a focus on diplomatic practice this pattern is apparent when diplomatic actors engage with digital tools in the pursuit of specific political objectives. Here the U.S. State Department has taken the lead through its introduction of 21st Century Statecraft in 2009, a strategy for using the Internet to promote U.S. foreign policy goals. The 21st century statecraft initiatives marked an example of an opportunity, grasped in the new media ecology, that was specifically linked to policy objectives. Hence rather than being an evolution of foreign policy communication practices, the 21st Century Statecraft initiative suggests a mediatization of politics in terms of a transformation of political
practice (through an integration of policy and communication) in response to a new media ecology.

Finally, the third pattern encompasses a further integration of policy and communication in practices of digital diplomacy that reflects blending to the phase of consolidation. This pattern has been less developed in the findings of previous research, since it departs from both diplomatic creativity and the influences of everyday mediatization. For instance, in 2007 the Maldives and Sweden launched virtual embassies in Second Life. The Swedish virtual embassy launched by the Swedish Institute (a key institution of Swedish public diplomacy) was named a Second House of Sweden and was a virtual reproduction of the HoS which houses, among other embassies and representatives of Swedish commerce, the embassy of Sweden in Washington D.C.). The virtual embassies were first created in a phase of adaptation, and were the outcome of the Swedish MFA’s efforts to keep up with digitalization. Although intended to draw attention to the physical HoS and Swedish international interests, the virtual space became an experience in its own right and exceeded its original role as a mere communication channel (Bengtsson 2011; Pamment 2012). This development beyond the initial intent signals consolidation because the virtual embassies became political in their own right. The political essence of the virtual embassy was entirely dependent on the blend between political logic and media logic and would hence lose its political meaning if detached from the new media ecology. Thus, the fact that the virtual embassy gained a life of its own beyond the intended purpose demonstrates how the blend between logics can continue beyond the consciousness and control of the initiating actors. I mention the virtual embassy as a characteristic expression here because it has since become a pattern. In 2011, the US State Department launched the website Virtual Embassy Teheran and in 2013, with a similar aim, Israel launched its first virtual embassy on Twitter, with the intention to promote dialogue between Israel and the population of six gulf countries. Before the virtual embassy on Twitter, Israel had no official diplomatic relations with these countries and hence this mediatized practice acquired a political meaning beyond complementary digitalization of diplomatic practice. Thus, although the virtual embassies not necessarily signal a consolidation of the digital diplomacy practiced

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48 Second Life is a computer-generated digital environment in which people can interact with one another. A person is represented by a 3-dimensional graphical image or “avatar”, which results in a world that imitates the real world and gives users a strong feeling of “being there” and offers new opportunities for exchanging information (www.secondlife.com). Since 2007, other countries have launched virtual embassies in Second Life including Serbia, Estonia, Colombia, Macedonia, Philippines, Malta, Albania and Djibouti.
at these respective MFAs, they signal a consolidation in the mediatization inherent in the digital representation of the embassies (from website to virtual embassy).

Mediatization in a Political Context

The theoretical perspective that I developed in the previous chapter established the important role of a contextual approach and understanding of the hosting context of a mediatization of politics. For the purpose of this thesis, I have studied mediatization through EU digital diplomacy at the EEAS and in this section I will briefly demonstrate how the analytical framework transfers to this context. A central argument that I have made is that political logic and media logic are more convergent than previously conceptualized and that it is in this attraction between logics that we can study the mediatization of politics. Hence, the convergence between the logics is a prerequisite of moving the model into context but it will further depend on the hosting conditions for blending. The initial convergence is thus the point of departure through which to identify a field level that can allow analysis through a practice approach that will be developed in the next chapter. Table 2 summarizes the steps by which the analytical framework migrates to the context of EU foreign policy and digital diplomacy at the EEAS. The following discussion will further develop how the theoretical assumptions made on the left-hand side of the table transfer to the empirical context the right-hand column.

Table 2. Mediatization in the Context of EU Digital Diplomacy

| Convergence between logics                                                   | Legitimacy requirements and a known information gap meet new media opportunities. EU soft power and common foreign policy as a legitimizing flagship project – anticipation in the EEAS’s practice of digital diplomacy. |
| Phases of blending logics                                                    | The increasing role of strategic communication and the new mandate of common EU public diplomacy, both dependent on communication strategies. |
| Mediatized practices                                                         | Adaptation to new media strategies and the promise of digital diplomacy in the fulfillment of the EU projection of norms. |
|                                                                              | Strategic use of new media opportunities to confront “old” problems of disconnected citizens and international misconceptions and new problems of disinformation and uncertainty. |
|                                                                              | Consolidation in the evolvement of EU diplomacy through strategic narratives and successful branding through recognition. |
In the first stage, EU politics is considered a fertile ground of mediatization, based on the suggestion by Trenz that when related to legitimacy requirements, the EU is charged with a mediatization demand and that it is likely within the correlation with democratization that we can understand the mediatization of politics (2006, 2008, 2013). Although Trenz’s argument is directly related to the news media sector as the means of reaching the public sphere (and democratization is understood as successful contact with the public), I consider this argument further valid in relation to a new media ecology, perhaps even more so. While this is not a common way of approaching mediatization or the challenges to EU’s legitimacy, it largely resonates with previous research on EU legitimacy, the EU public sphere and EU soft power. It resonates in the sense that it builds on the essential relationship between the EU’s democratic legitimacy, its existence and its projection of power in the world.

In the second step, inclusiveness can therefore be traced to the EU’s continuous efforts to overcome the challenge of the information gap and also to the way in which the EU’s soft power is dependent on communication. EU foreign policy is in this sense an unexpected area of foreign policy in need of high levels of what Marcinkowski would label “inclusiveness” (2005). It is unexpected because of the EU’s unique political role: traditionally foreign policy does not suggest high levels of inclusiveness but is a long-term and secretive practice. The EU however originated as a peace project and, as political integration has followed, the EU has emerged as a global actor which has been contrasted to others through what was commonly described as “normative power” (Manners 2002). The projection of EU norms and its social desirability depend on successful communication and showcasing of success. Furthermore, despite the difficulties in coordinating EU foreign policy it is an area of cooperation that has continuously been supported by EU citizens. In times of crisis it can therefore be assumed that EU foreign policy may have a high strategic value in regaining public support, can be a facilitator of European identity, a guarantor of European security and paired with its traditional role as a peace project, hence a “flagship project”. In addition, the Lisbon Treaty intended that the EU should become a more visible and coherent foreign policy actor. Inclusiveness in this regard also resonates with how visibility and coherence are a response to the increased role of the public in international politics.

49 The results of the Eurobarometer, the public opinion surveys conducted by the European Commission, indicate majority support for common EU foreign policy since the question was first introduced in 1992.
These initial steps lead to the field level of EU foreign policy. This is still a broad policy area and although several practices could have been instructive here, I focus on EU digital diplomacy because the introduction of the EEAS as a common diplomatic service and the instrumental role of communication in diplomatic practices have both served as a laboratory. Accordingly, we can expect that this is an area of foreign policy practice where political logic and media logic will converge for communication purposes. The new mandate of the EEAS relied on an increased role for strategic communication and common public diplomacy which also corresponded well with the developments in international politics during this period. It is within these efforts of strategic communication and public diplomacy that I suggest we can trace blending processes in mediatized practices of timely adaptations to global practices of digital diplomacy, in strategic use of perceived media opportunities and constraints and in the general evolution of EU diplomatic practice by means of which strategic communication practices have gained ground.

This approach will be developed and illustrated in the chapters that follow but here it serves primarily to exemplify how the analytical framework can be used to study the mediatization of politics. It also serves to clarify further the structure of this thesis by making the connections between the theoretical aim and the empirical study visible. Thus, I suggest that, if initial convergence between the logics is achieved, a similar strategy can be used to approach other contexts of the mediatization of politics and reach a field level of political practice that allows for in-depth empirical explorations of what happens to politics in a mediatization process.\(^{50}\)

**Summing up the Chapter**

In this chapter I have moved the theoretical perspective developed in the previous chapter to an analytical framework. I developed my argument of mediatization as the result of blending institutional logics. I then presented an interaction model for the mediatization of politics that envisages the blending of institutional logics through three phases of adaptation, amalgamation and consolidation. These phases represent different stages of mediatization and hence blending, in which adaptation is the first stage of blending and consolidation is the last. In order to trace the process, these phases can be found at a field level of political practices and are carried out by social groups. I also suggested that these phases lead to different patterns of mediatized practices. In relation to the interaction model, I

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\(^{50}\) This discussion is further developed in the concluding chapter eight in which I develop the more specific scope conditions for the theoretical model by learning from the case study.
offered a number of clarifications of the dynamics at issue. Finally, I illustrated how the analytical framework can approach the mediatization of politics by moving the interaction model to the context of EU foreign policy. These first steps of operationalization will be further developed in a methodological framework in the following chapter.

In effect, what this chapter has offered is an original politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics that will be illustrated and finally discussed in the remainder of this thesis.
Chapter 4.

A Practice Approach to The Mediatization of Politics

This chapter sets out to develop a methodology for the politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics and thus to explain the rationale of the empirical study of EU digital diplomacy at the EEAS 2011-2017. The case study, its snapshots and the laboratory metaphor have already been presented and discussed in the introductory chapter. Here, I instead deal with the methodological questions of analysis and material that resulted from the aim of this thesis. The central aim of understanding what happens to political practice in a mediatization process depends on being able to study the inter-institutional relationship between political logic and media logic and to capture its resulting mediatized practices. In the previous two theoretical chapters I have attempted both to develop and to complement the top-down institutionalization ideas inherent in the traditional mediatization framework, with a more politics-centered approach that also can account for the role of bottom-up processes and actors. In relation to this rethinking of how the mediatization of politics is best approached, I have suggested a focus on practices at a field level as a way to trace the blend of institutional logics. In addition, based on the discussions in the previous chapters, there are two central tasks in this methodological chapter. First, to escape the media centrism closely connected to the view of mediatization as an influential structural force in dominant approaches and further to facilitate theory development through theoretically generalizable insights. Against this background, the empirical interest in this study is focused on social groups in political contexts that adapt to, engage with and participate in mediatization through ways of “doing politics”. I further believe that these practices of doing politics are best traced through the experience of practitioners, both through observation of these practices and through their own accounts of them. This focus on mediatized practices as the empirical grounds of the mediatization process
follows the promise of practice approaches in IR (Pouliot 2008; Adler & Pouliot 2015; Acuto & Curtis 2013; Adler-Nissen 2016b; Bueger & Gadinger 2014). I have previously relied on structuration theory, which is an established point of departure for mediatization, and this framework is thus not predestined to favor social structures over agency (Giddens 1984; Hjavard 2009). Despite this well-known assumption of structure-agency interaction and arguments of an inter-institutional relationship, mediatization has commonly been understood as a force of media influence that happens to (not in or through) politics. In previous empirical explorations, the institutional perspective rarely reaches beyond top-down interpretations of the media’s colonization of politics. The preferred method has accordingly been to consider the relationship of politicians to the mass media through systematic analysis of political communication or media representation, using methods such as quantitative content analysis of media outlets (see for example Kepplinger 2002; van Aelst et al. 2008; Strömbäck 2010). In effect, studies of the mediatization of politics have been restricted to the communication and representation of politics rather than the practice of politics (that can include but is not restricted to practices of communication with or through the news media). In order to rebut the challenge of media centrism, I will argue that a practice approach is therefore a pragmatic solution to capture the process of mediatization within politics through its promises of an ability to study how micro-instances underpin macro-pictures (Bicchi & Bremberg 2016). In addition, the rise of social media has led to numerous “media practices” occurring within political organizations where media logic inevitably blends with political logic. When, for instance, an MFA decides to launch and manage an official social media account, it becomes a practice of doing politics that will reflect both a media logic (inherent in the social media practice) and a political logic (that guides the staff and the operations of the MFA). As the practice becomes recognized in the social group of practitioners involved in it, these logics will interact. The focus on practices is thus a way of being able to see what happens to politics, here illustrated by the operations of an MFA when a mediatization process occurs.\footnote{I clarify here that although social media is a “media practice” I consider this example, which will be demonstrated further in chapter five, to be a non-media centered practice because it takes place within politics and is thus more reflective of the political core than is, for instance, political communication in the news media.} The focus on practice is hence motivated by the aim to avoid what I have argued are shortcomings in previous research and to offer a more contextual understanding of the hosting political context of a mediatization process. The purpose of approaching practices of politics is therefore to understand and to
illustrate these interactions of blending logics in a specific political context, as well as to be able to see analytical patterns in the variations of mediatization of politics as a more general phenomenon (the phases of blending). The empirical exploration in this study therefore served to inform, encourage and challenge the process of developing a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics. At a more practical level, the aim has been to provide thick descriptions of practices of digital diplomacy in the EEAS. To this end, I study practices through narratives about them and the narratives within them that I collected through a combined material of documents, online observations, interviews and secondary sources.

The first part of this chapter introduces the practice approach and argues for its contribution to the study of mediatization of politics. It does so by linking the methodological middle ground of the practice approach to the role of a field level analysis and the relationship between institutional logics and practices in this study. Setting the methodological grounds of this approach leads to a second part of the chapter that presents the analytical methods of narrative analyses. I use two different forms of narrative analysis to include both the talked about experiences of digital diplomacy and the narrative practices of digital diplomacy that I have observed. I speak of these as different forms of analyses because they study practices in two different ways. From the discussions of the value of studying both narratives of practice and narrative practices, I move to discuss the empirical material that consists of observations and accounts. This order of presenting the methods of analysis before the empirical material reflects the way in which the methodology connects to the politics-centered approach to mediatization. The methodology developed in this chapter is thus intended to be able to travel to other contexts. The empirical material then continues the discussions in this chapter in the specific context of EEAS practices of digital diplomacy 2011-2017. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the study as well as the more general challenges of studying the mediatization of politics through this approach.

The Practice Approach

In the broadest sense, practices are ways of doing things and political practice is ways of doing politics. This includes a large spectrum of political practices from handshaking to decision-making or voting etc. (Pouliot 2014). Practices are argued to be distinct from behavior and action through the notion that they capture the material aspect of doing. In this sense, they reach beyond behavior
and actions because they are organized and patterned. While behavior and actions can be organized and patterned, practices depend on these characteristics and are thus carried out by a social group who recognize this rationale. In a given social context, these organized and patterned practices tend to become mutually recognizable for communities of practitioners and as such become constitutive processes of politics (Pouliot 2014). Thus, practices are more than habits and can be collectively evaluated, they can be done well or badly and this evaluation can change over time (Barnes 2001, p. 31-33). There is little agreement on the theoretical underpinnings of the practice approach, which has roots in pragmatism, phenomenology and critical theory and can therefore lead to a different emphasis at these levels of interplay. A broad interpretation, which appears to be the common approach, opens for analyses that develop an account of practices and treat practices as the place in which to study human activities (Bicchi & Bremberg 2016).53

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the practice approach holds the promise of reaching beyond the mediatization of politics in terms of linguistic output, changing media channels, and forms and tones of political communication to include also the suggested transformation of the way politics is done at a political organizational level. This is an important contribution to mediatization methodology that previously has relied on communication research and, in this regard, has often been restricted by linguistic analysis of one-time instances that struggle to reach the repetitive dynamics of influence. Considering the guiding assumption that every-day practices have to a large extent become mediatized, it is fair to assume that the resulting sayings (discourse) and doings (behavior) have become interrelated. This may be especially true for practices that rely heavily on communication and have been influenced by technological change, such as the practices of diplomacy. This has also been an argument for the many voiced synergies between practice theory and the study of diplomacy (Pouliot & Cornut; Adler-Nissen; Bicchi & Bremberg). Diplomacy is well suited for studying political

52 In this study, I do not engage with practice theory and will therefore not expand this discussion.

53 This theoretical eclecticism through the growth of practice-based based accounts has also been subject to criticism. Erik Ringmar claims they have created an academic terrain that is “hopelessly fragmented and distinctly non-cumulative” (2014, p. 3). This criticism is however primarily directed at theoretical claims of practice theory and is thus a marginal concern in this thesis.

54 This is indeed a broad generalization of mediatization research and there are examples of behavioral approaches that use other types of insights from, for example, interviews or speeches. The problem is, however, that these approaches have not succeeded in triangulating their collective findings, in order to say something about the interplay of discourse and behavior that would seem an evident characteristic of the mediatization of politics.
practices precisely because it combines path-dependent rituals of communication with adaptive responses in behavior to societal change such as media and technological developments. In the context of EU foreign policy, practice theory is further considered to hold the promise of approaching EU foreign policy in ways that can overcome the dualism between interests and ideas, by focusing on actors’ performance of norms. This is of particular relevance in the post-Lisbon structure that has led to a number of new organizational areas of practice that clearly need analysis of the interaction between discourse and behavior. These discussions of the general and specific value of the practice approach motivated its value in the methodology of this study. I now turn to outline the steps taken to incorporate a practice approach in the politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics.

_A Methodological Middle Ground of Mediatization_

Practices are distinguished from mechanisms in the sense that they describe ways of doing things that are known to practitioners (Pouliot 2014). Despite the fact that they both describe social processes, this is an important difference to stress as it has two consequences for the methodological strategies in this study. First, actors are central to the understanding of practices: while discourse can tell us of the preconditions of actions, we need to study actors to understand the action itself. Secondly, practices are both general and contextually embedded. This entails that a key methodological objective is to understand practices within a social context. Vincent Pouliot describes this epistemological ambition as a “methodological middle ground” that can establish social causality in a local context but with an eye towards analytically general insights (Pouliot 2014, p. 237). These epistemological consequences thus lead this study to focus on actors in a given context where insights may establish social causality of the practices in focus but where the generalizable insights are limited to patterns reflecting the phases of mediatization.

The interest in micro-sociological interaction also signals that practice theory generally leads to an inductive approach which starts from the micro to explain the macro. This is therefore where some clarifications are called for in the operationalization of this study. Here, I depart from theoretically driven research questions about how mediatization of politics happens and how it varies and the aim of developing an analytical framework which would suggest a deductive research design. Nevertheless, the contextual approach to the mediatization of politics, which I have argued for in the previous chapters, and the emphasis on blending processes “from below” allows for inductive empiricism. I am interested in understanding the blending processes at work in the analytical framework
which can be traced in political practices where they are both constituted and recreated. It is through contextual understanding of micro instances of practice that we can understand these processes and in effect keep an eye on analytically general insights into mediatization. I thus consider this methodological approach truly abductive, combining the strengths of theory-driven deduction and inductive contextual understanding. I therefore see no conflict with the inherent inductive reasoning in the practice approach when related to the view of mediatization as a field level analysis that desires contextual approaches to the empirical ground.55

While the first part of the methodological middle ground that seeks to establish social causality in a local context is relatively straightforward, the second part of abstracting practices towards analytical generality is more complex. Establishing interpretative boundaries of the social context is crucial to this task. This entails that although social causality may be limited to a context, practices are patterned and repeated and may therefore travel to other contexts but within the same interpretive boundaries. In this way, practices may be abstracted and have heuristic usefulness across cases, which is central to the value of the approach (Pouliot 2014). This view of the role of generalization goes well with the research ambitions in this study. While the analytical framework was intended to be generalizable, the understanding of how logics actually blend in practice will always be sensitive to context at some level. The main purpose of the methodological strategy was therefore to outline how practices within a mediatization process can be approached and to provide general analytical categories which resulted in the interaction model. There was, however, also a level of empirical abstraction, limiting the interpretive boundaries to practices of digital diplomacy in the EEAS, which also lead to valuable lessons from this emerging field of political practices at a more general level.

Finally, the practice approach is to a large extent both a theoretical and methodological framework departing from practice theory. While not contradicting the guiding assumptions of practice theory, it is here used as a pragmatic strategy to reach the empirical level. I therefore do not offer significant contributions to the development of the practice approach, beyond empirical

55 Adding to this fusion, Giddens conceptualization of practices as “rules and resources” are central to his argument of structuration where they are both outcome and medium (the interplay) of structural properties (Giddens 1984, p. 25). Although Giddens’ view of practices is narrower than the approach I develop here there are no severe tensions with the inter-institutional view of mediatization along the lines of structuration.
exploration. Instead I make use of the advantages of the practice approach in this study of mediatization. Most importantly, I follow the advice to reach practices through observations in combination with accounts from practitioners (see Pouliot 2012). This strategy informed the generation of material and the analysis which differs from previous attempts to capture mediatization “in practice”, by focusing on practices that take place in the political core.

Narratives of Practice and Narrative Practices

I study practices of digital diplomacy to learn about them, how they came about, how they are valued, how they are challenged and how they have changed etc. I study these practices through narratives about them and narratives within them. The main argument for focusing on narratives to study practices here is to include elements of time and change in the analysis. Whereas practices can be analyzed using a variety of analytical methods, I here study mediatization over time and thus interpret practices in a process that also allows for changes. Thus, while the empirical snapshots focus on different moments in time, the interpretation of narratives allows for a continuous analysis of mediatized practices.

In this study I make an important distinction between two narrative sources of practice: narratives of practice and narrative practices. This reflects using narrative analysis to analyze both documents and talked-about experiences of digital diplomacy that my informants have shared with me and to analyze the observations of their practices of digital diplomacy that are narrative practices in their own right. Hence, in the first form, narratives of practices are understood as the stories of practices told by the members of a social group (practitioners). These stories position practices in space and time and give order to and make sense of them, they reflect the practitioners’ experiences. In the second form, narrative practices are a means used to make sense to others in communicative and interactive settings, they represent practices. For instance, while a practitioner’s recollection of why using “infographs” became a trend in digital diplomacy during 2014 is a narrative of practice, the infograph itself is a narrative practice. I therefore emphasize that narrative analysis is a single method of analysis only in

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56 I clarify here that I use a practice approach to contribute to mediatization theory and not vice versa, thus I use the methodological strengths of the practice approach to develop a politics centered approach to the mediatization of politics.

57 For a distinction between the two and a discussion of its implications, see Hyvärinen 2008 and Bamberg 2012.
the broadest sense. The shared point of departure is, however, the view of storytelling as a natural part of social life, that individuals and collectives make sense of reality through the recounting of stories about themselves, each other and others. In this understanding, narratives refer to “ways in which we construct disparate facts in our own worlds and weave them together cognitively in order to make sense of our reality” (Patterson & Monroe 1998, p. 315). Narrative analysis thus serves to explore the different ways in which both the production and the analysis of qualitative data can be understood as processes whereby different groups of people produce narrative accounts of their collective lives and practices. The stories, or thus narratives, of members in a social group take place, however, on different but interrelated levels. Individuals tell their own stories, societies construct public narratives that can range from small communities to states and meta-narratives are fundamental stories of the world order of social life (Somers 1992; Somers & Gibson 1994). It is the interrelation between these levels that holds the promise of capturing practices, narratives that are held by collectives serve as shared interpretations of practice (Andrews, Kinnvall & Monroe 2015).

In this thesis, the observations and accounts collected were analyzed according to this general understanding of narratives as interrelated levels of shared interpretations of practice but also specifically considered in relation to narrative practices of conscious and strategic storytelling that are essential to digital diplomacy. Narratives are here thus both understood as groups’ stories that collectively make sense of their practices of digital diplomacy and the narrative practices that constitute digital diplomacy.

**Narratives of Practice**

Keeping in mind that practices are analytically distinct from behaviors and actions because they are socially organized and recognizable by the communities that coalesce around them, narratives play a central role in identifying practices. It is through narratives that we can understand why, how and when, behaviors and actions are competent performances.\(^{58}\) Narratives of practice are thus either talked about experiences of practice or discourse that may reveal how actors both interpret and perform their practice through the shared understandings that govern their actions. Thus, in accounts from practitioners, the narrative analysis is concerned with understanding how and why practices are performed by tracing

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\(^{58}\) Here it is important to keep in mind that from a processual perspective, stability is not the opposite of change but an orderly pattern within a process of flux (Jackson & Nexon 1999). Changing practices within a community are thus patterned in the same way as reproduced practices but may in time change the evaluation of “good” or “bad” practice.
sense-making through narratives. In discourse, official documents may for instance reveal stories of the background, the role and the aim of certain practices. A narrative analysis of narratives of practice thus serves to capture practices by revealing an individual’s (within a community of practice) understanding and interpretation of the ordinary and right in the taken for granted and the extraordinary, unusual and wrong in what is remarked on. In this sense, narratives are also present in the unsaid, in spaces or silences (Patterson & Monroe 1998, p. 316). Further, narratives have a sequential order that does not necessarily reflect the way that events unfolded in reality but reveals something of how the individual and the collective organize events to make sense of them (for instance through hierarchies of importance in a storyline). In this sense, narratives are contextually thick and will always depend on the narrators’ understanding of themselves and others in a given context of the practices described. While narrative analysis can sometimes lead to linguistic analysis similar to discourse analysis, the focus here is on how narratives reflect practitioners’ experiences and how they conceive of themselves and their practices in relation to others.

In the analysis of narratives of practice, I follow Somers and Gibson (1994) who differentiate between four types of narratives: ontological narratives, public narratives, conceptual narratives and meta-narratives. The ontological narratives are in this study the practitioners’ individual interpretations of their role and the role of their group in this practice. These narratives served to enable an understanding of the group of practitioners, their individual past experiences and how they were introduced and conceived of the practice of digital diplomacy in the EEAS. This is also where differences in the group could be discovered and where the initial unsettled questions of digital diplomacy as an emerging practice could be revealed. The public narratives are found in both discourse and in the accounts of the practitioners in terms of sense-making of the community of practice, hence the collective sum of their practices. The public narratives were central to understanding the overarching structure of digital diplomacy, how it changed and was situated in relation to events over time. Conceptual narratives are generally created by the researcher, at a broad level they were here concerned with the theorized blending between institutional logics but recognized through the collective understanding of the integration of politics and media in practices of digital diplomacy and strategic communication. For instance, I traced narratives about a political logic at issue during an event and how it was confronted by media logic in the use of social media to communicate the event. Finally, the meta-narratives or master narratives are the grand narratives of the time and space in which practices are embedded, in this study charged with technological advancements, the future of EU foreign policy, international crisis
and most notably a confrontation with Russia. It was also central to draw links between the narratives, for instance when the ontological narratives aligned with the public narratives and the meta-narratives and equally when there was dissonance between them. These four different types of narratives guided the interpretation of digital diplomacy practice both in the discourse of official documents and the accounts discussed.

This part of the narrative analysis was thus conducted through questions about why a discourse or an informant was narrating an incident in a particular way or aimed to disentangle the purpose of a story told by uncovering the underlying collective interpretation. Here, attention to timing was central to grasping why certain narratives emerged at a given point in a policy process, in a conversation, in social media use or indeed how anticipation or expectations from others might have influenced the narration. In the empirical chapters that follow, the results of this narrative analysis are demonstrated in relation to the four types of narratives but for the sake of the chapters’ readability, are not explicitly flagged as such.

**Narrative Practices**

While in the previous section I have discussed how narratives can lead to insights of digital diplomacy practice, digital diplomacy is also essentially a narrative practice. It is a political practice that depends on projecting stories to audiences and here I am thus referring to the ways in which narratives are used in a digital sphere to achieve diplomatic goals. Narratives in this understanding, are a practice which international actors use, in order to seek to establish and maintain influence in the world (Miskimmon et al. 2018, p.3). Narrative practices thus refer to processes of narrative-building, management and performance, here in the context of international politics (see Faizullaev & Cornut 2017). The purpose of interpreting narrative practices of digital diplomacy thus leads to a second approach to narratives that in this study was inspired by ideas of framing theory and mediatization (Entman 1993; Mazzoleni 2008a) and the strategic narrative framework (Miskimmon et al. 2013) which has been touched upon in chapters two and three. While the idea of narratives linked to foreign policy strategy has always been of interest in international politics, this framework departs from a new media ecology and suggests that their own form of narrative analysis can reveal how actors engage in shaping narratives rather than being shaped by them (Miskimmon et al. 2013). Thus, here I am not approaching narratives in the constitution of the social world but as very explicit and talked about practices of

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59 Diplomacy in general is a narrative practice as it builds on presenting, motivating and negotiating governments’ foreign policies.
communication such as “positive narrative projection” or “narrative management” in digital diplomacy.60 This understanding of narrative practices resonates with the idea of “strategic social construction” (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998), which focuses on how political actors strategically manipulate shared narrative frames for political purposes (Payne 2001). Here narrative practices thus result from rational political calculations but still take place in a normative social environment of agreed upon practices.

Approaching narrative practices leads to a number of unsettled questions about what narratives imply in this more unorthodox understanding. Strategic narratives represent a confrontation with constructivist thought as it emphasizes rationalist agency and strategic usage. This is however a confrontation only to some degree, while strategic narratives are conscious and controlled practices, they are in this study related to a socialization process that results from the blend of institutional logics. Strategic narratives are therefore not equated with practices in their own right but are one way of tracing practices through the projection of narratives in digital diplomacy. For instance, digital storytelling is a practice of digital diplomacy that can be recognized through strategic narratives (cf. Pamment 2016b). A central question is therefore to ask questions about what actors are trying to achieve with narratives, the role of audience awareness and the actual techniques used to project or perform strategic narratives. This view of narratives hence leads to a focus on agency and intentionality in an integration of interests and goals (Miskimmon et al. 2013). In addition, the media environment in which narratives are projected and received is essential to the understanding of how actors can and will use narratives strategically.

To approach strategic narratives, a narrative analysis focuses on how actors project narratives that connect interests and goals, here within the frame of digital diplomacy. The task of a strategic narrative is to give narrativity to events as they unfold. In international politics, actors hold long-time narratives about themselves and others and about specific political issues but strategic narratives can also be found in short-term episodes of international politics. Strategic narratives can therefore be traced to a number of communicative goals such as legitimation, agenda-setting, diverting attention etc. (Miskimmon et al. 2013, p. 184). Understanding the formation of strategic narratives is a question of uncovering the actor’s strategic aim which is often related to a policy process.

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60 I study how they are talked about through the analysis of narratives of practice but here their expressions through analysis of narrative practices.
In the approach suggested by the strategic narratives framework, a narrative analysis seeks to assess to what degree and how political actors use narratives to change perceptions. Miskimmon and colleagues suggest that strategic narratives can be traced in three types of narratives: system narratives, identity narratives, and issue narratives (2013, p.7). System narratives describe how the world is organized (alliances, actors, governing values etc.), examples are narratives that allude to the Cold War, the War on Terror, and the Liberal International Order. Identity narratives center on the identity of a political actor, what values it has and what goals it has, an example is the portrayal of the EU as a normative power committed to democracy promotion. Finally, issue narratives set policies or actions in a context and explain and offer an interpretation of policy. An example is the framing of international aid as a security issue (rather than a humanitarian one). The relationship between the different levels of narratives also matters, resonance between narratives will strengthen them collectively. In this study, I have used this approach to study specific examples of strategic narratives that thus exemplify narrative practices of digital diplomacy.

A Note on Narratives and Visuality

I have already clarified in chapter three that I consider mediatized practices to be both verbal and non-verbal expressions and narratives can thus come in many different shapes and forms, especially within the category of narrative practices. The empirical material that I will discuss in the following section included photographs, cartoons, videos (both filmed and animated) infographs and memes. The narrative practices were thus not strictly verbal or textual. In this study I analyze this material in the same way as I analyze the textual material, by asking the same questions about the narratives they reflect or represent. I emphasize here the focus on practices rather than discourse, and non-textual elements are in this study considered reflections of practices, which is why a more specific discourse analysis or visual analysis was not deemed relevant. Since the analyses of these different narrative sources were conducted using the same strategy I therefore refrain from overstating the role of the visual analysis here. I will however mention that in agreement with the research front on visual politics, the inclusion of multimedia in digital diplomacy practice reflects their increased use and role in

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61 Clearly these types of narratives are closely connected and draw on the ontological, public, conceptual and meta-narratives suggested by Patterson and Monroe (1994). Still, I consider it useful to make a distinction to maintain the different purposes of narrative interpretation of how narratives both reflect practice and constitute practice.
international politics, as will be elaborated on to some extent in chapter seven and in the concluding chapter.

**Empirical Materials**

Practices can be reached through multiple methods of data generation, they can be seen, talked about or read which encourages a combination of or mixed methods of collecting empirical material. The favored method that researchers adhering to the practice approach have used thus far is qualitative interviewing (Pouliot & Cornut 2012; Adler-Nissen 2016b; Bicchi & Bremerberg 2016). These interviews are unstructured or semi-structured to account for the informant’s descriptions (here narratives) of how they go about their business, their ways of doing politics. Although elite interviews appear to be the common approach, Pouliot considers ethnographic participant observations to be the best method to embed practices in their social context (2014, p.245). Indeed, ethnography has been conceived as the holy grail of studying practices of diplomacy (Neumann 2012; Kuus 2013; Marsden, Ibáñez-Tirado & Henig 2016 etc.). The assumption is that observations of how practitioners do politics, preferably in combination with direct and unfiltered accounts, would ideally enable the researcher to understand how and why agents act, behave, think and feel (see Pouliot 2012). In reality, such access is rarely possible and a research strategy must therefore seek to get close to similar insights through methodological proxies. Accordingly, interviews are often used as a proxy for participant observations. In this study, the methodological strategy was guided by the aim of capturing practices by including both observations and accounts. To this end, I employed a combination of observations of digital diplomacy practices through elements of discourse (official documents) accounts (narratives of practice) from semi-structured elite interviews and secondary sources and online observations (narrative practices). I thus divide the empirical material into two categories of observations and accounts.

**Observations**

The observations led to the collection of two types of empirical material: official documents and new media data (social media content and online news letters). In a first step, observations were made of the official organization and initiation of EEAS digital diplomacy practice. To this end, I collected official documents: statements, discussion papers and meeting conclusions that were related to the EEAS digital diplomacy practices. Although somewhat distanced from the
practices in focus, this step was central because of the emerging character of digital diplomacy practice. In comparison to more established diplomatic practices, such as EU Council meetings, digital diplomacy practice can be assumed to have closer ties to its formal guiding discourse.

Further, as in previous research projects, ethnography would be difficult if not impossible to achieve in this study. Direct and unfiltered access to diplomatic practice goes against its nature and thus even if access to such observations were possible it would likely be censored, time-consuming and restricted to only certain areas of practice. In this study, the interest in digital diplomacy however opened for new opportunities of non-traditional observations rather than the use of proxies. Digital diplomacy in contrast to many other diplomatic practices can to some extent be observed as it takes place in the openness of the Internet. An integral part of the research strategy has therefore been online observations of the digital diplomacy practices by the EEAS. Specifically, I have observed practices of Twitter use, “myth-busting” (a talked about practice of countering disinformation) through online newsletters and video campaign content in social media (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube). I consider these observations of narrative practices rather than a textual analysis of the content they produce because emphasis has been put on understanding how digital diplomacy is conducted by the EEAS through these instances. An important distinction to make here is, however, from the strategic vision of the EEAS’s digital diplomacy or the actual influence, effectiveness or reach of the EEAS’s digital diplomacy. I have observed these instances as practices rather than evaluated them. Further, because of the focus on the EEAS’s practices in this domain, I have focused only on the EEAS official channels and not on those of its leaders or diplomats nor have I compared the practices with other diplomatic actors. In the observation of online practices, I leaned on certain elements of netnography, a method developed to conduct ethnographic research in an online environment. I say certain elements because I did not conduct a netnography in a true sense since I only collected observations of official content and only marginally engaged with online interactions.  

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62 In short, netnography is the adaptation of ethnography for the digital world. Despite of this obvious connection to ethnography the adaptation is more than a mere transfer to the digital world. Most importantly, netnography has been argued to offer unobtrusive and non-influencing monitoring of the communication and interaction of online usage behavior which to some extent is a contradiction to its ethnographic roots (Kozinets 2010). The netnographic elements that I leaned on was monitoring strategy and to code the online observations according to categories of behavior, timing and content.
The online observations were conducted through a strategic data collection process followed by an open-ended form of inquiry. This led to a process of online monitoring of the EEAS social media channels (and newsletters that I subscribed to) in real-time leading to an analysis of broad social media behavior within this practice. These observations were systematic but did not account for changes and events that took place after monitoring (for instance sometimes tweets or posts were removed) since the observations were conducted on a weekly or at times monthly basis. Active social media feeds are very productive and a large number of posts (and references such as retweets) were produced by the EEAS during the time in focus. It was however very common to cross-post the same message or content in the various social media channels so the amount of data was significantly lower than what could be expected from monitoring several channels. While Twitter was the most active feed, content on Facebook and YouTube was almost exclusively content or a positioning that had already been posted on Twitter. The content in the newsletters were often summarized and repackaged and then at times projected in the official social media feeds. Moreover, the EEAS social media accounts were not very active in terms of two-way engagement. There was rarely dialogue or clarification by the official accounts (much more so in the personal accounts of the HR/VP or spokespersons which I kept an eye on to deepen my understanding of social media use in the EEAS).

The aim was never to quantify these observations and rather than recording the data for measurements, I looked for general patterns and trends such as format, tone in introduction, content, timing and use of hashtags that I documented in field notes. The benefit of netnographic research is the access to automatic transcription of data online, data is plentiful and easy to obtain. This however also leads to difficulties in selecting which data to save, in addition to field notes I have continuously extracted communication flows that exemplify the general patterns that I have observed but some of them desired more specific attention due to the focus of my analysis (the Twitter crisis management communication during the Ukraine crisis and the online newsletters required more systematic analysis).63 All these extracts were coded and analyzed using a software assistance package for qualitative analysis, Atlas.ti.

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63 In addition to these observations I also actively used Twitter and participated and engaged in diplomatic networks and discussions during the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018. This was not an ethnographic approach per se and I did not use this strategy to generate new findings but it served to improve my understanding of the logic of Twitter and the contemporary Twittersphere surrounding matters of diplomacy. In addition, it also helped me secure additional interviews with the targeted group of practitioners.
The observations revealed communicative patterns and trends in the combined use of tone, form, content and timing. For instance, during the first observations in 2013-2014, I discovered experimental use of infographs, in the second observations 2015 - 2016 I observed new patterns of sarcasm and irony as a way to introduce diplomatic content and in the final round of observations 2016-2017 I encountered an evident trend of storytelling techniques and thus very explicit instances of strategic narratives.

Accounts

The most common strategy used to reach the goal of unfiltered accounts is through unstructured or semi-structured interviews, to capture talked about practices. Keeping in mind that practices are considered competent actions, practices are not unconscious behavior. When we shake hands in a professional setting we are aware of what we are doing even though it has become a taken for granted routine. This means that interviews and other secondary sources of accounts are useful to capture practices and especially so in combination with observation inspired questions that can uncover when practices become taken for granted. In this study, I therefore relied on semi-structured interviews and other first-hand accounts: interviews in media or self-published accounts such as blog posts. A central task here was to identify a group of practitioners that represented the larger social group in focus. With a focus on the EEAS, the social group in focus was all those involved in the practice of EEAS digital diplomacy. This is a large group, depending on the scope of digital diplomacy. To some extent all employees or even those that are somehow connected to the EEAS could be considered practitioners in this social group. I have limited the scope to the group of actors who were particularly involved in the development of a common practice of digital diplomacy.

Interviews were conducted with practitioners of digital diplomacy in the EEAS. In addition I interviewed one digital strategists from another EU institution (Commission DG DEVCO) that was at the time involved with practices of safeguarding the coherence of the EU’s international narrative in cooperation with the EEAS. This person also had significant insights into the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS.

64 In addition I interviewed one digital strategists from another EU institution (Commission DG DEVCO) that was at the time involved with practices of safeguarding the coherence of the EU’s international narrative in cooperation with the EEAS. This person also had significant insights into the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS.
groups are both involved in the practice of diplomacy and work for a diplomatic institutional body, it could be argued that all informants were in some sense diplomats or at least diplomatic actors. In addition, the majority of the strategic communications officers (who were the biggest group of informants) had experience in previous diplomatic roles. I make a distinction between diplomats and communicators, however, based on the core expertise (of some) and at the at the time, function (of all) that they brought to the practice of digital diplomacy.

These two groups were still varied within and included different professional backgrounds, skills and likely also loyalties (some were seconded from their national governments while others were employed directly by EU institutions and their contracts varied in time). The selection of this varied group was intentional because this is a dynamic community of practice that encompasses several professional groups which is also likely to characterize the practice. While research and debates on digital diplomacy is often restricted to consider the digital behavior of diplomats, communicators play a big role in the management of digital channels and in the creation of content to project. This is especially true for the organizational channels (such as ministries of foreign affairs’ official accounts or here the EEAS’s official channels) where the digital diplomacy is not managed by one individual but indeed by multiple actors. Moreover, digital diplomacy is an emerging practice and while in the future it is likely that diplomats will be better trained in this area, there has been a skills gap and social media illiteracy that has led to a more prominent role for communicators in this field. As I will discuss to more depth in chapter seven, the institutionalization of strategic communication in diplomatic capacity is a further sign of the gradual professionalization of the practitioners of digital diplomacy. At the time this research was conducted, digital diplomacy was thus only an emerging community of practice and that said, the different professional roles and backgrounds did influence the accounts. Rather than presenting a reliability problem, these disparities were used to confirm narratives (when there was consensus across the groups within the community) or on the other side, to problematize narratives. Hence, this was a strategy for obtaining “multiperspectival orientation” of the interactive narratives that could shed light on this emerging set of practices (Snow & Trom 2002).
Table 3 below presents the identified professional sub-groups within the group of practitioners of EEAS digital diplomacy.65

Table 3. Practitioners of EEAS Digital Diplomacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioners of EEAS digital diplomacy</th>
<th>Diplomats</th>
<th>Communicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior diplomats</td>
<td>Junior diplomats</td>
<td>Spokespersons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two main groups were divided between diplomats and communicators. I make a distinction between senior diplomats and junior diplomats because new media literacy has widely been conceived of as a generational factor of digital diplomacy (Seib 2012, p.19). What I found among these practitioners was that generation did not really matter in terms of digital skills or online presence but it did influence how digital diplomacy was generally conceived of and to what purpose it was developed. As we will see in the coming chapters, senior diplomats considered digital diplomacy a strategic engagement towards reaching a younger audience (following the understanding of a digitalization of public diplomacy). Junior diplomats on the other hand, viewed digital diplomacy as a necessary adaptation or at times even a taken for granted practice that had little to do with age appropriation. Interestingly, it was also to a large extent the younger diplomats who pointed out constraints and the inherent dangers of digital diplomacy. In addition, another interesting reflection of this division was that seniority in the diplomatic corps also at times led to more risk-taking in practices of digital diplomacy as the fear of repercussions was lower in this group.66 Apart from the generational difference, the group of diplomats had similar professional and educational background and represented different Member States.

The second group of communicators was more disparate. The table above does not necessarily represent the official titles but are attempts of summarizing the

65 I clarify here that I treat this as one social group but make these categories for the sake of clarity. I assigned the informants to the categories according to their role at the time of the interview. Several of my informants had previous experience in other roles or changed roles during the time of this study. For instance, I interviewed diplomats that had previously held roles as spokespersons or strategic communications officers but were now in senior diplomatic positions such as ambassadors of delegations or managing directors at the EEAS.

66 The number of interviews and secondary accounts does not allow me to make generalizations about the generational factor, this is a reflection in the narratives and thus not necessarily true in a more general sense. This is why I do not consider these tendencies result in the conclusions to this thesis but mention them here to illustrate the value of considering the internal categories of this social group.
roles in relation to digital diplomacy. Communicators had different roles that included digital diplomacy practice in different ways, while social media managers managed the content on EEAS digital channels. Strategic communications officers worked with positive narrative projection from the EEAS and through the EEAS delegations. Digital strategists worked on the coherence of the EU’s digital narrative and the spokespersons dealt with the press and communicated the political positions of the EEAS through digital channels among others. The communicators had very different professional and educational backgrounds and represented a true mix of political and media expertise. Some had clear cut communications backgrounds but many had experience of going between political and media practices. For instance, there were academics (PhD’s), journalists, career diplomats and ex-politicians (from member-state level) represented in the group of communicators. In some ways, the identification of this group was therefore also an interesting result in its own right.

The composition of this group of practitioners of EEAS digital diplomacy signaled that a mediatization of this area of political practice had indeed occurred. That is to say, even in appearance, the group of practitioners involved in shaping this practice represented a blend of political logic and media logic. This change in the habitus of diplomacy is interesting because it has been sparsely reflected in the research front on digital diplomacy that predominantly focuses on uses and effects of new media influence on diplomacy rather than practices and therefore tends to miss conceptualizing this dimension of change (see for instance Seib 2012). Discussions about changes in the agency of diplomacy have instead been directed to the emergence of new actors of diplomacy alongside state actors exemplified by WikiLeaks (e.g. Owen 2016). Meanwhile the composition of this group also reflected the transformation of EU diplomacy through the EEAS that drew on experience from several professional fields. The strategic communication practices

67 It is important to mention that the spokesperson’s services are separated from the Strategic Communications Division and located in the Berlaymont building that houses the headquarters of the Commission. Although the EEAS building is just across the street, this separation was often brought up to matter in the interviews especially since they were integrated and sat together the first years.

68 In the first empirical chapter, chapter five that follows, I make further distinctions within these groups based on when the informants started working at the EEAS or in the targeted group. As the chapter will outline, this mattered only in relation to the first illustration that focus on the Ukraine crisis which served as an awakening to the new media ecology to the EEAS and therefore led to the recruitment of new professionals to this group after the crisis. In the remainder of the thesis, I use accounts from practitioners that had experienced the process of change. I have thus not interviewed anyone who joined the EEAS later than 2016 which also limited the group in focus.
of the East StratCom Task Force explored in chapter six, for instance, was to a large extent developed through the interaction between these two groups both in phases of planning and organization and through different measures of control exercised over each other. The political content originally came from diplomats but was creatively changed and appropriated by communicators guided by media logic that then had to go through levels of political clearance guided by diplomatic logic before it could be projected (differently) by both diplomats and communicators.69

The interviews were conducted between 2015-2018, 18 took place face-to-face in Brussels and four via phone or video call.70 In addition, one pilot interview was conducted in Stockholm in November 2015. The number of interviews amounted to 23 and represented the two main groups close to evenly (when accounting for the fact that about one third of the communicators had primarily diplomatic backgrounds). The communicators group was more represented by social media managers and strategic communications officers because they had more instrumental roles in the practice of EEAS digital diplomacy. The digital strategists and the spokespersons had more traditional communications roles that were only in part related to the practice of digital diplomacy. It is important to mention here that these first-hand accounts were complemented by secondary accounts and that it should be considered a collective material. In addition to the 23 interviews I included 7 additional sources of accounts from this group with a higher representation in the diplomatic sub-group that is further developed below. Three of the informants were interviewed twice on different occasions motivated by questions related to their role in practices that took place after the initial interview, I therefore consider the second interviews a new interview occasion (hence the 23 interviews were conducted with 20 persons on 23 occasions). The interviews were semi-structured, followed a thematic interview guide (where some sections were not relevant for all interviews) and lasted 30 minutes to 1,5 hours.71.

The informants were assured anonymity (by name and title) in exchange for greater openness and frankness and the interviews were not recorded. The reason for this choice was the fact that the empirical context here was of timely nature in

69 In this regard, this is a result that resonates with conclusions in previous research that the professional role matters to the conceived influence of media logic (van Aelst et al. 2008). In previous studies the different professional roles have however compared different sectors (e.g. journalists and politicians), it is thus interesting to see this reflection of difference across roles in the same organization.

70 I conducted the final interviews in April 2018 but I did not include events and activities that took place in 2018 in the analysis.

71 The interview guide can be found in appendix 2.
the beginning of this process and at times concerned politically contested subjects and some of the informants therefore expressed a concern that they would be quoted in the news media. All the identifiers have therefore been removed from the interview excerpts in the following chapters and the informants are instead referred to as their sub-group in table 3. The fact that no recording took place implied extensive note taking during the interview and immediate transcription after they were finished. This entails that the quotes from the interviews are not always recollected correctly word by word but are correct in essence. Moreover, this did not pose a problem to the rigor of the study since these interviews were of informant character, analyzed according to broad and common narratives in semi-structured reflections and other methods were used to strengthen and control the results.\(^{72}\) I interviewed representatives in the EEAS from the following Member States: Czech Republic, Estonia, Denmark, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy, Ireland, Germany, United Kingdom, France. Some of these nationalities were represented more than once but this fact had no significance in the analysis and the sample can thus not be considered to reflect member-state biases.\(^{73}\) The informants are listed according to their in-group in appendix 1.

In the interview guide, apart from the background questions, a first theme sought to capture the experienced role of communication to EU foreign policy and how it was translated to digital diplomacy practice, a second theme focused on how policy was projected through digital diplomacy and a third theme sought to understand patterns of practices of digital diplomacy. The interviews served two purposes, first to give descriptive accounts of the practices that I had been observing and secondly to reflect on the practices that the informants were participating in. The element of reflection was a way of challenging taken for granted practices and proved a valuable way for me to further the research process by pointing to interesting phenomena or inconsistencies. For instance, in the course of the interview the informants sometimes developed insightful reflections on the analogies to a cold war climate and changing media ecology that led them to problematize some of their taken for granted practices of strategic communication.

\(^{72}\) I consider the interviewees informants rather than respondents although I use their narratives as factual resources because they informed me of their practices rather than responded to structured questions that would allow for measurement.

\(^{73}\) I consider the fact that nationality did not appear to matter in the accounts is a reflection on the focus on practice rather than skills in this study. Some Member States are considered more advanced in the use of digital diplomacy (United Kingdom, France, Sweden, Denmark) and this was brought up by all informants but did not reflect the way that they talked about digital diplomacy practice at the EEAS.
Finally, a number of secondary sources were used to strengthen the accounts from practitioners. Digital diplomacy is a relatively new endeavor which foreign policy actors have been eager to explore and usually, at least from a management perspective, proud to project. In the case of the EEAS this was particularly true since Federica Mogherini assumed leadership in 2014, as will be further discussed in chapter seven when her leadership emerges as pattern in the consolidation of mediatization. Mogherini has often explicitly stated that digital diplomacy is an integral part of the EEAS practices (see Twiplomacy report 2015). Thanks to this, the EEAS digital diplomacy practice has been showcased in the media, described in speeches, debated on panels on the theme and through online publications on blogs by some of the key EEAS spokespersons and diplomats. Many of these accounts focus on the potential of digital diplomacy but in so doing also speak of its current state of practice or of experiences related to specific events.

These accounts of experiences of practice were therefore used to complement the interviews. They are different from the accounts collected through first-hand interviews and were often given in a formal setting or published. Since I use these accounts to give further support to insights about practices of digital diplomacy, this did not pose a reliability problem but it is important to mention that the secondary accounts were treated as supporting rather than leading evidence of collective narratives. In this capacity, using additional accounts served to confirm the patterns that emerged from the other material and gave me an opportunity to include the narratives of key persons to whom I could not gain interview access (e.g. the HR/VP’s Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini). Although I could not capture the conversational reflection that the interview situation generated, the accounts touched on similar themes as the interview guide and since this is an emerging practice, the narratives also often included some level of reflection. Through this strategy I was able to add 7 more sources of accounts to the material.

On the Integrated Value: Triangulation and Sequence

This methodological strategy led to a rich empirical material and analysis of the EEAS digital diplomacy practice. In sum, I studied 23 official documents

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The informants here were not anonymized since their accounts had already been made public. I still distinguish between secondary accounts and official documents because they include reflections of digital diplomacy practice as compared with speeches and regulating documents.
(speeches, remarks and EU documents in the reference list) that were somehow related to this new area of practice. Through the online observations I monitored the social media flows of the EEAS on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and through digital newsletters amounting to more than 2000 instances of tweets, videos and letters.75 In the in-depth observations, I studied close to 800 tweets during the Ukraine crisis (of these, approximately one fourth were concerned with the Ukraine crisis and selected for further analysis). I closely studied online newsletters that amounted to 52 issues of the Disinformation Review and 36 issues of the Disinformation Digest that were published between November 2015 and December 2016. Finally, the social media observations after the launch of the EU Global Strategy in June 2016 led to an in-depth analysis of a campaign consisting of four YouTube videos. This material was further complemented by a total of 23 elite interviews and 7 secondary accounts.

The integrated value of the strategies for collecting and analyzing the empirical material I have suggested here resonates with ideas of triangulation. Traditionally, triangulation implies applying both quantitative and qualitative approaches independently and combining the interpretation of results (Denzin 1978). Here, I instead use a combination of qualitative material through a combination of narrative analyses of practice and of narrative practices according to the strategic narratives framework. This is a pragmatic solution to the complexity of mediatization understood in terms of structuration. In this study, I wished to move beyond the observation of media influence to consider the central claim of mediatization that assumes an inter-institutional relationship between logics and this led me to consider political practices as the most likely level where I can detect and trace how such blending takes place. In accordance with the view of practices that I have outlined in this chapter, I therefore sought to trace practices that could illustrate how the mediatization of politics works on the ground, thus to include analysis of both discourse and behavior to overcome the common shortcomings of mediatization research. In sum, the empirical material therefore served to inform and construct rather than to verify.

75 This number is an informed estimation. I do not know the exact number of social media posts that I monitored since monitoring was intended to capture patterns (and not frequencies) that I later explored in more depths. Furthermore, while some monitoring often took place in real-time and was recorded if the analysis desired it, other parts entailed looking back in social media flows through tools like Twitter Advanced Search. When you use these tools to look back, some information can be lost or posts may have been removed by the users. Since the monitoring did not serve for a systematic study this was not a problem and the exact number of the material not relevant but for the sense of understanding the great amount of information that pass through these channels I use this estimation.
As the purpose of the empirical material here was to serve a theoretical aim, the research process has been open-ended to allow me to see what would emerge and to remain open to follow unexpected results (Alvesson & Kärreman 2011). Rather than using mixed methods as a predefined methodological approach, I would say that this is an approach that combined the use of different data collection techniques and analyses in order to benefit from of a sequential research process. Sequence here refers to the research design as a follow-up process. Sequential designs of mixed methods are generally not appropriate for triangulation since they normally depend on either qualitative or quantitative data that are gathered first, hence the findings from the first approach might influence those from the second approach, thereby positively biasing any comparisons (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007). In this case, however, the sequence is not a matter of going from small N to large N or vice versa but going between observations and accounts to trace and understand the narratives of practice and narrative practices. The sequential design here therefore refers to an iterative process where the data collected in one phase contributed to the data collected in the next. Moreover, these sequences varied in the three empirical snapshots. In chapter five, I study the EEAS’s use of Twitter during the height of the Ukraine crisis in 2013-2014. The data collection sequence moved from observations to accounts and were begun through real-time observations of the EEAS official Twitter account. The initial patterns of Twitter behavior led me to consider the strategic narratives at issue in the tweets I had collected. In a third and final step, I interviewed practitioners about the use of Twitter in digital diplomacy and on the role of social media during the Ukraine crisis. In chapter six the data collection also moved from observations to accounts, beginning with narrative analysis of the official documents leading to the formation of the East StratCom Task Force in 2015. In a second step, I conducted observations of the task force’s myth-busting activities, among which the online newsletters were further analyzed in relation to strategic narratives. In a final step, I conducted interviews with communications experts in the task force and diplomats who were involved in the formation and management of the group. In chapter seven, the data collection process went in another direction. I analyzed the collected accounts from the entire group of practitioners on the opportunities and constraints surrounding the digital diplomacy of the EEAS. This led me to consider the EUGS as central to the consolidation of mediatization that I had studied in the previous two snapshots. In a second step, I conducted a narrative analysis of the EUGS that sought to understand the overarching narratives at issue. I then moved to conduct observations to trace the EUGS to digital diplomacy practice which led me to discover the emerging pattern of storytelling techniques. I then conducted follow-up interviews on this
particular practice of digital diplomacy. Finally, I studied the strategic narratives of the EUGS in a campaign of four YouTube videos that were projected in the EEAS’s digital channels and complemented with additional interviews with the practitioners that had developed the campaign.

It is important to highlight here that the sequential process also facilitated the move between these illustrative snapshots. While the first focus on the Ukraine crisis was a more strategic selection, because it in many mays captured the challenges facing the EEAS and the new role of social media at the time, the second and third illustrations evolved from the research process. This is not to say that this was a strictly chronological process, rather the data collection process within the three snapshots spilled over to each other in the process of analysis. For instance, while I was studying the formation of the East StratCom Task Force I gained many insights into the experienced lessons learned from the Ukraine crisis and the anticipation for clarification in the EUGS.

Finally, in sum this methodological design proved useful and led to both a familiarity with these practices and to insights into how the mediatization of politics happens and plays out. While the results of the different methodological strategies are not always given equal level of attention in the empirical chapters, they served an integrated purpose of drawing analytical insights from observations and accounts through narratives of practice and narrative practices of digital diplomacy.

Limitations

All studies have limitations and, in addition to the delimitations discussed in chapter one, I here consider the inherent methodological shortcomings. First, the empirical study in this thesis reflects the state of international politics that has developed in the period 2013-2017. This has been a time characterized by crises and turmoil which is highly reflected in the empirical chapters that follow. When I started this PhD project in 2013, these events were not anticipated and this case has since led to challenges in relation to the classic dilemma of studying a moving target (Tarrow 1991, p.12). In this study, I found however that this did not pose a problem as regards the theoretical argument - if anything, it strengthened the laboratory metaphor and argument of studying EU foreign policy and the EEAS. It was strengthened because the international events that took place during this time led to more attention to the new media ecology in the EU through new and “hybrid” threats such as disinformation. A limitation here is rather that the empirical illustrations became timely illustrations of events in their own right.
which may at times divert the reader from a focus on the theoretical argument at issue. In effect, this thesis is filled with buzzwords that reflect this time period, such as “disinformation”, “StratCom”, “digital diplomacy” and “resilience”, which are likely to become outdated in the future. I therefore remind the reader that this thesis is not intended to be read as an exploration of EEAS digital diplomacy during these years through a mediatization lens, but rather as an exploration of the mediatization of politics through an illustrative study of the EEAS digital diplomacy.

I have already discussed the controversy surrounding the practice approach and its questioned added value and here I believe I have demonstrated its value in relation to the mediatization agenda. A challenge in this study has however been the speedy expansion of the social group in focus. As described in the introduction chapter, during this period the group of practitioners that I study grew exponentially from a handful of people to a large division. I have handled this challenge in two ways. First, the focus on digital diplomacy has led me to a focus on a broader group than those involved in the strategic communication of the EEAS. Although digital diplomacy became increasingly associated with strategic communication, this has led me to include informants who were actively engaged in the practice throughout the period of inquiry. Secondly, I have included the accounts of practitioners who joined the EEAS during the early stage of this expansion but not after 2016 (the big expansion of this group happened after that).

Furthermore, using narrative analysis to study social groups sometimes poses the danger of privileging some stories over others. Here the understanding of practice helped counter this common tendency, as a practice is recognized by the group, and although there were sometimes diverging understandings over certain practices, the fact that the practitioners were aware of other interpretations still allowed me to consider and analyze competing stories. A greater concern was however that some of the stories changed over time. While there was agreement about certain practices in 2016, it was not necessarily so in 2018. This was especially prominent in areas of challenges and controversy, for instance while in 2016 practitioners were terrified of falling into practices of counter-propaganda, this was no longer a concern in 2018. This change in narratives even contradicted previous narratives with practitioners describing how this was never a concern before. In this study I interpret these changes as the internalization of media logic and thus how mediatized practices became taken for granted. Although I consider this temporal dimension a strength in this regard, it also posed challenges in analyzing the narratives, for instance in relation to scope conditions. I discuss
scope conditions in the final chapter of the thesis but I will say here that the condition of leadership was the most difficult to interpret due to competing narratives in the social group (which I discuss in the chapters that follow).

By treating non-textual material in the same way as I treat other narrative practices, this study falls short of accounting for the deeper elements of intertextuality and inter-visuality (Hansen 2011). While this is a result of the focus on practices developed for this study, it is a shortcoming in the understanding of the unconscious dimensions of practices and of diplomatic signaling. For instance, as the following chapters will show, the practitioners did not always take note of the intertextuality and symbolism in images they choose to project. Although in these instances the narratives in the image had much more to offer an analysis, my interpretation could not account for meaning beyond narratives of practice and narrative practices. I therefore consider visual analysis promising to the furthered understanding of digital diplomacy as an increasingly visual practice and its role in international politics.

Further, the empirical exploration of the EEAS’s practices of digital diplomacy here focuses on the Brussels-based headquarters and does not include EU delegations around the world. This is a shortcoming because the public and digital diplomacy mandate of the EEAS is to a large extent projected by the delegations to fit the local contexts. In a more empirically driven project it would have been interesting to include at least some of these delegations, perhaps in a comparative design. A major difficulty would, however, have been the need for extensive language skills to conduct a similar analysis. An important part of the digital diplomacy of the delegations is the translation to national context, in which language is an important part. Furthermore, including the delegations would have led to much more empirical work. The main reason why the delegations were not included was, however, the need to limit the context for analytical rather than practical purposes, in order to capture the originality of the EEAS as a new institutional body. While public diplomacy is generally conceived as being a diplomatic practice aimed to engage with foreign publics, the EEAS mandate is equally concerned with communicating the EU’s external action to its own public. This reflects the hybrid nature of the EU’s foreign policy but also a strategy that stems from the Lisbon Treaty and efforts to address Euro-scepticism.76 In effect, the EEAS headquarters in Brussels mainly deals with public and digital diplomacy practice which is directed towards an internal EU public (interviews #3, 8, 9, 12,

15, 16, 17 and 23, EEAS 2016-2017). Rather than a practical choice this was thus an important delimitation to guarantee the characteristics of EU foreign policy. Nevertheless, a truthful evaluation of the digital diplomacy of the EEAS should include the practices that are carried out by the delegations. These practices are still partly accounted for in this study as many of the practices by the headquarters serve to support the delegations and many of the practitioners I interviewed had experience from the delegations, but do not provide a full picture. Hence, when I speak of the EEAS digital diplomacy the context is limited to headquarter practices.

In some relation to this limited scope in terms of practices, this study also falls short of an adequate analysis of the role of the audience of digital diplomacy as targets, receptors and co-producers of strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al. 2013). I have previously argued that the understanding of a new media ecology leads to an empowered role of audiences in processes of strategic narratives and of the mediatization of politics when approached through communication practices. In this regard, this study does account for this development in the analysis but only through the observations by and accounts from practitioners facing those audiences. With a more extensive research agenda, it would have been fruitful to include more specific analysis of the audience dimension but this was for several reasons not possible in this project. One reason was a reluctance to divert the focus from the political center effective in this argument. Although audiences are political, and engage in politics, such analysis could not be well integrated in the practice approach. Furthermore, social media audiences are elusive and known to be difficult to study (Litt 2012). In addition, the focus on the EU complicates the identification and the study of audiences; they are multiple, transnational and multilingual even before the entanglement with a new media ecology. Apart from the increased role of audiences that became obvious in the EEAS practices of digital diplomacy, this study thus also leaves this important dimension to future research.

**Summing up the Chapter**

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological framework that was developed for the purpose of this study and builds on a practice approach. In arguing for the relevance of a practice approach I have pointed to the need to reach beyond media centrism in linguistic methods, in order to account for the interplay of structure and agency that is central to the theoretical perspective. In addition, I have suggested that the status of the practice approach as a middle ground methodology, in the sense that it allows an analysis of a social context while searching for analytically general insights, can match the understanding of
mediatization as a field level theory. The main strategy of analysis was described through a focus on narratives both as experiences of practice and narratives as practices of digital diplomacy. Further, the practice approach led me to methods that seek to capture observations and accounts of practices of digital diplomacy. Observations were obtained through textual and semiotic elements in official documents, in social media feeds, in online newsletters and in campaign videos. Accounts were obtained through semi-structured interviews with an identified group of practitioners of EEAS digital diplomacy. In the last sections of the chapter I turned to the integrated value of this strategy of mixing methods of data collection and analysis. I argued that this strategy led to a rich empirical material of the practices in focus. Specifically, moving between observations and accounts (and in the other direction) allowed me to keep the research process open-ended until sufficient empirical insight had been reached.

Finally, I confronted the limitations of this methodological approach and thus some of the shortcomings of this research. Specifically, I pointed to the fact that digital diplomacy and strategic communication became a trending subject during the time when this research was conducted. In consequence, it is a more contemporary reflection than was originally intended. I discussed some of the more general shortcomings of the practice approach and narrative analysis that in this study lead to a somewhat underestimated role of visuality and multi-media. I also pointed to the limitations that this study only accounts for the EEAS headquarters’ practices of digital diplomacy and that I do not include an in-depth analysis of the audiences’ role in the mediatization process involved.

In effect, this chapter has suggested that the practice approach can be used to further the understanding of mediatization in the context of politics. It can do so by considering the narratives of transformation in political practice and the focus on digital diplomacy open the way to opportunities to reach observations and accounts to this end.
Chapter 5.

Anticipation, Shock and Adaptation during the Ukraine Crisis

Introduction

The story of digital diplomacy at the EEAS is intertwined in the anticipation and promise of a common European diplomatic service. The story truly began to spin from anticipation though shock to adaptation when the newly established EEAS faced troubles in the Eastern neighborhood in the end of 2013. As the first of three empirical chapters, this one describes and discusses how digital diplomacy initially became a practice in the EEAS. Diplomacy, like other institutions, is evolved through the development of practices and rules in the context of using them (March & Olsen 1998 p. 948). In this particular context of developing new practices, media logic was instrumental. Because this is the first empirical chapter, much attention is devoted to the understanding of the political context in which these practices emerged. Further, this chapter specifically considers the EEAS’s communication efforts on Twitter during the height of the Ukraine crisis in November 2013 to June 2014. The political logic and media logic at issue in this chapter were characterized by crisis management communication and by Twitter. I begin the empirical exploration by tracing the interaction between the two logics, in what became a new pattern of mediatized practices in the EEAS. This pattern, I will argue, reflects the phase of adaptation that I have suggested in the interaction model and became the starting point of a quickly accelerating internalization of media logic in the EEAS.

The snapshot in focus thus tells the story of how Twitter was perceived as an anticipated opportunity that would contribute to the fulfilment of the EEAS’s new diplomatic mandate and how the Ukraine crisis led to heightened expectations of crisis management communication on social media. The practices within this new paradigm of digital diplomacy therefore reflected a politicization
through growing awareness and expectations of the urgency of new communication practices. This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I set the scene of the diplomatic promise of the EEAS, the role of a new media ecology and the early attempts to practice digital diplomacy. In setting the scene, I thus develop a contextual understanding of the attraction between political logic and media logic that is central to my argument in this thesis. The early age of the EEAS coincided with turmoil in the Eastern neighborhood which led the new opportunities for digital diplomacy to be put to the test almost immediately. Against this background, I argue that social media were already politicized at the launch of the EEAS but that this politicization intensified during the Ukraine crisis. The second section of the chapter then moves to consider the specific diplomatic logic at work in the Ukraine crisis, namely one of crisis management communication, and how the blend with media logic led to a further politicization of Twitter and to adaptation to expectations of digital diplomacy practice. I discuss this interaction between crisis management communication and media logic in relation to the results of my observations of the EEAS Twitter feed during the Ukraine crisis. In the third section of the paper I further analyze the EEAS Twitter feed and the practitioners’ narratives by considering well-known phases of crisis management communication: sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making and termination. The practices that emerged during these phases were characterized by the adoption of media logic following expectations to adapt and by early experimentation with new opportunities. The adaptation was thus driven by both internal and external factors. These practices were however constrained by the lack of a consensus in terms of sense-making narratives in the collective group. Of particular importance here, was the dissonance in the practitioners’ self-perception as competent but constrained performers of digital diplomacy.

This chapter and the time period it recalls thus also serve as a starting point in the empirical exploration of an internalization process, where these practices gradually grew in importance in the EEAS and in the manifestations of EU foreign policy. In the final section of this chapter, I therefore discuss what can be learnt from this illustration of adaptation as a phase within the mediatization of politics, with an eye towards analytically general insights.

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77 A clarification here is that this “paradigm of digital diplomacy practice” involved a range of diplomatic practices in the digital sphere that also evolved over time. When I speak of digital diplomacy in the empirical chapters I am referring to it as a general concept of collective practices that have been associated with digital diplomacy such as crisis communication, public diplomacy or strategic communication using online channels. A result of this case study was a deeper understanding of this group of practices.
Setting the Scene

In December 2010, when the EEAS was first launched, diplomatic use of Twitter or “twiplomacy” was a practice already talked about among MFAs and the international community of diplomats (Seib 2012). The EEAS therefore emerged as a diplomatic institution at a time when presence on Twitter was, at least to some degree, expected. The events that followed the Ukraine crisis was the first time that practitioners in the EEAS felt they were expected not only to talk about digital diplomacy but also to conduct digital diplomacy (interviews #3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21, EEAS 2015-2018). This anticipation of Twitter use also coincided with new expectations of the EEAS as a crisis management actor. The development of the EEAS crisis management capacity was an ambition that had been both anticipated and voiced (Juncos & Pomorska 2013; Ashton, speech on October 4th 2012; Mogherini 2015). In this first section, I commence by setting the scene that ultimately intensified the politicization of Twitter in the end of 2013 when the EEAS faced the crisis in Ukraine. Most notably, the recollection of this time in the EEAS was characterized by a general consensus that the Ukraine crisis was the starting point and a wake-up call that led to the intensification of digital diplomacy efforts that followed.

Twitter and Twiplomacy

Twitter and the anticipation of twiplomacy is essential to the expectation of digital diplomacy at this time. During this time (and still to the present day of writing), Twitter was the favored social media of digital diplomacy. Apart from being derived from a transformation of a more general media logic that was discussed in chapter two, the use of Twitter comes with a very specific formatting logic. Twitter is often referred to as a form of microblogging, blogging but consisting of short messages with instantaneous delivery and subscriptions to receive updates. Twitter users could during the time of this study, only write a 140-character status update (a “tweet”) responding to the question: What is happening? Central to the organizing of the massive flow of tweets were hashtags, keywords designated by a “hash” symbol (#). Bearing in mind that simplification is a general characteristic of media logic, Twitter further amplifies the simplification of a message through the character limit and use of hashtags as cognitive shortcuts and mapping system. The characteristics that are associated with Twitter, such as immediacy, interactivity, spontaneity, personality and informality thus resonate with how the

78 To clarify, the Ukraine crisis has been called the first test of the EEAS digital diplomacy capacity. By the time the crisis unfolded the EEAS had already been through the challenges of the Arab Spring and of economic crisis.
overarching media logic can tend to equate speed with quality (Scherpereel et al. 2017). Furthermore, Twitter is a social network, but at this time one did not have to be a Twitter user to follow hashtags; they were available and searchable through search engines. The rise of Twitter and its unchallenged status among microblogging services had by 2013 enticed many political organizations, institutions and politicians to create accounts. These political actors used Twitter to communicate, inform and engage with other actors. It is understandable that the direct and unmediated link between political actors and the public which Twitter provided was attractive, both as an opportunity to influence news media and as an opportunity to bypass media actors and to report news directly to the constituencies. A similar development had been observed among media actors, and well established media houses and journalists were at the time increasingly engaging with Twitter. Twitter in this sense, was both a new form of traditional journalism and of alternative journalism, where ordinary people or political actors were participating in the reporting of real-time news.

The expectations of twiplomacy during this time reflected this formatting logic of Twitter, the perceived political opportunities and the new ways of managing relationships with the news media in diplomacy. In addition, it was internationally recognized as a means to evolve (new) public diplomacy in relation to a new media ecology that had led to a fragmentation of audiences towards networks of selective exposure (Hayden 2012, 2017). In this respect, this was a way of shifting the focus on information practices towards building relationships with multiple international publics. In relation to this aim of managing relationships, listening was elevated, to be an equal part in conversing. Most importantly to the promise of a “revolutionary” twiplomacy was hence the perceived value and opportunity of stimulating two-way engagement with international publics. I mention this here because, as the following two chapters will show, the belief in digital diplomacy as a revolutionary force gradually weakened.

Finally, by 2013, the understanding of twiplomacy was influenced by the 21st Century Statecraft initiative launched by the US Secretary of State, Hillary

79 Since its introduction an increasing numbers of world leaders have turned to Twitter, in fact in June 2014 when this analysis was conducted it was estimated that more than two-thirds of all heads of state and heads of government in the world had personal Twitter accounts (Twiplomacy report 2014).

80 Apart from the promise of two-way engagement, digital diplomacy was internationally anticipated as a cost-effective way of doing diplomacy. Although this was not explicitly stated in the anticipation surrounding the EEAS, it later became a factor relevant to the activities of the East StratCom Task Force which will be discussed in chapter six.
Clinton in 2009. The initiative included using social media to improve the reach and effectiveness of US public diplomacy and was at the time considered to lead the way in digital diplomacy practice. While at this time this was still an emerging practice, the US State Department were actively (and proudly) projecting it as a new capacity in international politics (Cull 2013).

**Anticipation and Change**

The fact that the launch of the EEAS was accompanied by ambitions of digital diplomacy was for instance reflected by the EEAS’s official Twitter account titled “EU External Action” (account name @eu_eeas) created in October 2009. This was before the Lisbon Treaty had entered into force and in effect predated the launch of the EEAS by more than a year. In fact, social media was an identified and anticipated tool in the ambition of the EEAS’s task of strengthening the EU’s public diplomacy, from the very beginning (Ashton 2010). Moreover, HR/VP Catherine Ashton had described social media as an opportunity for digital diplomacy “that should be mobilized” (Ashton 2010). The new consolidated mandate of the EEAS and the new channels of reach and engagement through social media were framed as an opportunity to unite external representation and develop dialogues with both the internal EU public and foreign publics in ways that would greatly exceed previous attempts (Interview #8 senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016). Enthusiasm about the promise of digital diplomacy also reflected the contemporary belief that twiplomacy would transform the practice of diplomacy through real-time reactions and information-sharing, ideas that had gained ground through the early events during the Arab spring, when social media was believed to be a revolutionary force (Seib 2012; Cull 2013). The first social media director in the EEAS described this time as “an age of innocence”, a time when the promises of social media were still free of the complexity and problems that were later discovered (Interview #24 senior diplomat, EEAS, April 2018). At the dawn of EU digital diplomacy, not only did the EEAS hold an empowered mandate in terms of EU diplomatic practice, but there was also high expectation of new tools available to pursue diplomatic goals.

The expectations of digital diplomacy and crisis management communication also fed into ongoing attempts to strengthen the public diplomacy dimension of the EU’s external action, as outlined in the Lisbon Treaty. The introduction of the EEAS as a core facilitator of EU external relations had been considered to have increased the role of public diplomacy in the EU. The practice of EU public diplomacy had previously been bound by the pillarization of the pre-Lisbon structure and hence divided in conduct between the Council Secretariat and the European Commission, with varying results as regards coherence. Furthermore,
previous practices of public diplomacy were primarily directed inwards, promoting EU identity and foreign policy narratives to the internal publics (Duke 2013). One of the main tasks for the EEAS was therefore to link together public diplomacy and EU external representation more clearly. With the mandate of EU external relations, this entailed improving stakeholder engagement with the ambition of fostering an overall communication culture extending across the EU institutions involved in external actions. Moreover, Ashton had declared that the EEAS should deliver the promise of the Lisbon Treaty in her Step Change document by “above all”, developing a “strong and substantive media operation, in order to deal effectively with a global, 24-hour news culture that requires information and comment” (Ashton 2010).81 This emphasis on media operations as central to EU diplomatic practice marked a significant change to traditional EU diplomacy that will be discussed at greater length in the coming chapters. Another important change brought about by the Lisbon Treaty was the new legal personality of the EU and its effect on the EU delegations around the world. The delegations had previously represented only the area of external relations represented by the Commission but were now representing the EEAS and the combined interest of EU external relations. This also moved their diplomatic efforts from mere informational practices towards more active practices of public diplomacy.

Accordingly, since 2011, the EEAS had been the main actor engaged in public diplomacy on behalf of the EU (Cross 2015). In effect, the EEAS was expected to strengthen the EU’s foreign policy coherence and hence to project the EU’s soft power in a more convincing and effective manner. That is why the introduction of the EEAS signaled the elevated role of public diplomacy and it is also why the EEAS had put the notion of digital diplomacy on the map of EU foreign policy.

Finally, of importance to the expectation of digital diplomacy during this time was the leadership of Catherine Ashton whose personal relationships were put to use in the inspiration of digital diplomacy. Specifically, Ashton and Hillary Clinton were “good friends”, which led to access to Alec Ross, the digital advisor in her 21st Century Statecraft initiative. Ross therefore served to advise the first social media team at the EEAS.82 Other key persons who encouraged the

81 In contrast, there was a general understanding at the EEAS that Catherine Ashton was evasive about media (interviews #2, 3, 4, 8, 14, 15, 16, 23, EEAS 2016-2018).

82 In addition, one of the practitioners in the Strategic Communications Division at the EEAS had previously worked in the EU’s delegation in the US and had first-hand experience of working with “the Americans” on these matters. The practitioners spoke of this person’s experience as highly valued and influential.
development of a digital diplomacy capacity at the EEAS through a personal relationship with Ashton were the Swedish and Polish foreign ministers, Carl Bildt and Radek Sikorski who had themselves been pioneering digital diplomacy practice (Interview senior diplomat, EEAS, April 2018). In addition, Ashton was described as having bad experiences with the British press, which was why some believed she initially favored the idea of greater control of media communication through social media.

New Challenges

The aim of a common diplomatic voice for the EU was also a response to a shifting diplomatic climate and the need to bring greater continuity and impact to the EU’s international relations (Balfour, Carta & Raik 2015). In this regard, the EEAS was put to the test almost immediately. In fact, it was during the time of launching the EEAS that the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) had begun to stir the pot in the Eastern partner countries with the result of Russian alertness. The ENP was introduced in 2004 with the purpose of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the newly enlarged EU and the new neighbor countries and instead to strengthen prosperity, stability and security (Commission 2004). The fulfillment of these high-stake ambitions relied on the idea of promoting EU values, specifically democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The ENP had later developed into two dimensions, a southern dimension through the European Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED) and an Eastern dimension through the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Ukraine was one of the six partner countries in the EaP. The first Action Plan for Ukraine had been agreed in 2005 but since 2009 negotiations had been in progress to replace the Action Plan by an Association Agreement. 2011 saw the second revision of the ENP, which reconfirmed the importance of good relationships with the Eastern neighborhood and strengthened the notion of “more for more” (more funds for more reform).

During this time, Ukraine was ambivalent in its relationship with the EU. Despite having committed to democratic reform, Ukraine had actively voiced discontent about the fact that EU membership was not articulated as a potential goal for Ukraine. Furthermore, the pro-EU movement (which later developed into

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83 Bildt and Sikorski were also strong advocates of the EaP and were among the first to voice the need for increased efforts of strategic communication in the Eastern neighborhood following the Ukraine crisis (Hedling & Brommesson 2018).

84 Among other things, upon her appointment to HR/VP in 2009 Ashton was ridiculed in the British tabloid press as not being qualified.
Euromaidan) in Ukraine was opposed by pro-Russian nationalist sentiment (primarily among the Russophone population). During the years following 2011 Ukrainian foreign policy was therefore portrayed as being ambivalent, balancing reform towards EU association with economic relations with Russia. In November 2013, demonstrations began after the Ukrainian government had suspended the preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the EU, leading to clashes between protesters and police. Instead, the government had turned towards closer cooperation with Russia (encouraged by a $15 billion loan and cost beneficial energy supplies) (Freedman 2014). In the following weeks, violent protests took place on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) hence the name “Euromaidan”, causing members of President Victor Yanukovych’s government to flee the country. Finally, President Yanukovych was ousted by the protesters on 22nd of February 2014 and fled the capital. On February 23rd, pro-Russian demonstrations were held in Sevastopol and on the 27th of February, masked Russian troops occupied the Supreme Court of Crimea and other strategic sites, leading to the installation of the Aksyonov-led government and the declaration of Crimea’s independence. The military takeover of Crimea by Russian forces in February 2014 was a shock to Western leaders and diplomats (Bjola 2015). Despite the knowledge that the Association Agreement was a geopolitical challenge, the EU had not calculated that Russia would act with such force. Moreover, the Euromaidan demonstrations have been considered one of the largest pro-European demonstrations in the history of the European Union.85

This conundrum thus put the newly formed EEAS at the center of a diplomatic crisis. Charged with the task of coordinating a coherent, visible and effective EU diplomacy and the EU’s involvement in the acceleration of the political crises in Ukraine, pressure was put on the EEAS to respond through the anticipated digital diplomacy practice. The EU’s political response to the Russian annexation of Crimea was sanctions enforced in July 2014 in cooperation with the US, paired with continued support for Ukrainian reform. Before the Member States could agree on sanctions and before the efforts to further the cooperation with Ukraine were put in place, the crisis largely depended, however, on public diplomacy. While the world waited to see if the EU would once again project diverging

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85 This statement is based on the recollections of my informants and this was a common understanding during 2014. Among others, Guy Verhofstad, Member of the European Parliament and leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group in the European Parliament claimed it was the largest pro-European demonstration ever to have taken place during a speech. To my knowledge there is no published study that has confirmed this as a fact.
foreign policy positions or produce a coherent response, the EEAS social media accounts became one of the most analyzed sources of EU diplomacy.86

The time between the launch of the EEAS and 2014 thus reflected a period of attraction between political logic and media logic in the anticipation of digital diplomacy. The political context was characterized by the ambition to consolidate and strengthen EU diplomacy, and media logic served purposes of communication coherence in the traditional sense on the one hand, and new opportunities of digital diplomacy on the other hand. One of the practitioners described this context of the increased role of social media in international politics at the same time as the establishment of the EEAS as “a perfect storm – a new positive force of influence and we were there and could use it” (Interview #18 strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018). In November 2013, when the Ukraine crisis further stressed the urgency of using and adapting to the new media ecology in the practice of EU diplomacy, this convergence led to what in the analytical framework I have described as a process of mediatization through blending logics.

Waking Up to a New Media Ecology

Sometime after the Ukraine crisis unfolded the first scholarly analyses described it in terms of a “diplomatic shock” (Freedman 2014; Bjola 2015). It was a shock in the sense that it marked a return to foreign policy inspired by geopolitics and a revival of some of the classic concerns of European security (Freedman 2014; Auer 2015). Furthermore, realist voices argued that the situation had caught the EU Member States off guard, through their underestimation of Russian security concerns (Mearsheimer 2014). In the aftermath of the initial shock, the EU unsurprisingly struggled to reach consensus in a coherent response. In fact, the EU’s ability to agree on a final response to the crises in Ukraine has been called unexpected (Sjursen & Rosén 2017). Nevertheless, the new expectations of digital diplomacy called for immediate reactions and, as heads turned to the EU as a stakeholder in the conflict after having offered Ukraine the Association Agreement, diplomatic efforts were needed to manage the crisis. These expectations, paired with the promises of the new role of the EEAS, thus

86 This statement is based on the recollections of my informants and the observations I made in real-time during the Ukraine crisis when most media outlets resorted to quoting Twitter for updates on the stakeholders. To my knowledge there is no published study that has confirmed this as a fact.
intensified the convergence between political logic and media logic in this field of EU diplomatic practice. Practitioners reflected on this time as a period of growing awareness:

In retrospect, there were a lot of signs that EU communication in the neighborhood was failing and that the narratives were controlled by others. At that time EU diplomacy was a completely elite driven process and all about high-level visits, posing with flags and pouring money into projects that no one understood (Interview #10 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, December 2016).

Strategic communication was not even a matter before the Vilnius summit in 2013, when Ukraine did not sign the Association Agreement. That is when all this really took off and we soon realized that active use of social media was a key component in managing the negative perception about the EU that was spreading in the neighborhood (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

Everything changed after Ukraine, everything. It was a whole new experience. (Interview #16 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

These statements represent the common view that the Ukraine crisis marked the beginning of a new awareness of the need to prioritize communication at the EEAS under a common broad understanding of “digital diplomacy”. In addition, the first statement here represents the shared interpretation among the practitioners who had joined the EEAS after the Ukraine crisis that “old school” EU public diplomacy was considered a failure. The group of practitioners who were involved during the Ukraine crisis instead referred to this as a new dimension or a new urgency of the need to adapt to the new media ecology, rather than as a failure of the old ways. These narratives were in part ways of legitimizing the personal role in the emergence of digital diplomacy practice and also reflected patterns of sense-making of how and why the EUs international narrative had failed in the Eastern neighborhood. Rather than managing the situation in Ukraine, practitioners described the first reaction in the EEAS as a collective need to understand what had gone wrong.  

87 In the discussions that follow, the accounts from these two different groups are made clear in the quote or in the commentary of the quote but although they carry different analytical weight, I consider them of equal importance. This is because the practitioners that were not actively involved in some measures of crisis management during this time (7 persons out of the 23 informants), were recruited or seconded by their national government partly as a response to the events of the Ukraine crisis and its aftermaths. The reflections from those non-active during this period therefore also served as an important stage in making sense of the practices they later participated in and contributed to.
Faced with expectations of conducting digital diplomacy (rather than merely talking about its promise), tension with the traditional ways arose. While in some ways the diplomatic promise of the EEAS appeared to go hand in hand with the new opportunities of digital diplomacy, in other ways the hybridity of EU diplomacy constrained the opportunities to develop good practice. This was also reflected in the fact that, despite expectations, there was no formalized digital diplomacy strategy in the EEAS at that time. There was some initial digital diplomacy practice (a Twitter and a Facebook account) and there was a loose structure that delegated such tasks but it was not routinized or professionalized. Although it was a moment of growing awareness, this time was therefore also associated with frustration and all practitioners made statements along the lines of: “we did not know what we were doing back then” (Interviews #1, 2, 4, 5, 6,7, 14, 17, 18 and 23, EEAS 2015-2018). Among the communicators it was, however, clear that this was not a skills gap but a mismatch between the expectation of clarity and the context of uncertainty. Practitioners reflected on some of the initial frustrations at the time when the expectations were suddenly on the rise:

The thing is that in a way traditional diplomacy and digital diplomacy are almost perfect opposites. The way that we practice diplomacy builds on a 200-year-old institution of long-term processes where the informal becomes formalized. Digital diplomacy is about speed and making the formal practice informal. It became clear that this tension may be especially true in the case of EU diplomacy because we could not really use the momentum. Rather than using timing we must be careful not because we do not have the resources, the skills or the reach but because it is not our role (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

One of the things we discussed in the beginning was how we could be a consensual organization but still communicate clearly. The tension between traditional diplomacy and digital diplomacy was another layer of that difficulty (Interview #23 Senior diplomat, EEAS, April 2018).

The practitioners here were reflecting on how digital diplomacy could be used to further foreign policy but in the case of EU diplomacy there was a sentiment of an inherent danger in furthering something beyond the at times blurred lines of

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88 These narratives of frustration and failure were also likely connected with the more general obstacles of changing and merging EU diplomacy practice to organize the EEAS. Ana E. Juncos and Karolina Pomorska (2013) have, for instance, showed that while positive to the idea of the EEAS and its officials held negative attitudes towards the early organization of the EEAS and its practices of reacting to international politics rather than being proactive.
common foreign policy. This narrative of having to refrain from using the momentum or instances of opportunity given by the timing of events is a pattern that recurs in the next chapters’ illustrations, but it was particularly strong in relation to the Ukraine crisis. It is also part of the explanation why the blend between political logic and media logic never appeared to surpass the process of adaptation.

**Mediatized Practices of Crisis Management**

The adaptation at the EEAS during the Ukraine crisis was essentially concerned with the internalization of media logic in crisis management communication. Specifically, Twitter became a politicized channel of communication that led to new mediatized practices. Crisis management is an integral practice of diplomacy charged with protecting political interests while avoiding war. It differs from other areas of diplomacy in its tendency towards coercion and the use, at times, of actual threats to persuade an opponent to change policies (Freedman 2014). Moreover, it is embedded in situations of uncertainty and dependent upon communication. Crisis management is a communicative process but it is not dependent on commercial media to the same degree as other areas of political communication. At times of crisis, publics turn to political authorities for information to a much higher degree than at other times (Bennett, Lawrence & Livingston 2007). Hence, an adaptation to media logic, in terms of mass media demands, is thus not necessarily a given assumption in a crisis scenario.

Crisis management literature generally breaks down the event of a crisis in terms of categories of before (pre-crisis), during (crisis) and after (post-crisis). For the purpose of exploring the EEAS adaptation through Twitter as a channel of digital diplomacy, these categories lend themselves to the construction of a timeline of phases in terms of categories of expected communication patterns. These different categories also lead to different expectations of the EU’s diplomatic objectives at stake, hence the guiding role of political logic. Specifically, it has been suggested

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89 Crisis management and crisis management communication is a field that has received much scholarly interest in the aftermath of the high stakes political crises over Berlin and Cuba during the Cold War. Although there are prominent theories of crisis management, I here consider it a “mere” practice and the crisis phases are treated as ways of breaking down communication patterns rather than offering analysis in their own right. This also means that I do not consider Twitter to have a single coherent role in crisis management communication and thus I do not aim for the results of this analysis to be generalizable patterns of crisis management communication.
by Arjen Boin, Paul t’Hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius (2005) that public leadership during times of crisis is concerned with four distinct stages of challenges: sense-making, making sense of the nature, severity, and potential consequences of the unfolding crisis; decision-making, when the reaction to the crisis has to be agreed upon; meaning-making, during which public expectations are weighed and managed; and finally termination, which covers political and operational responses to the crisis. While these stages have chiefly been used to analyze traditional efforts of crisis management it has been suggested that they also provide a useful point of departure for understanding the management of crises through digital diplomacy (Bjola 2017).

Table 4 outlines the three stages of the Ukraine crisis in relation to what could be expected as the guiding political logic of crisis management starting from the escalation of the Euromaidan demonstration on November 21st 2013 and ending with the Member States’ decision in the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) on June 24th 2014 to strengthen sanctions on Russia. During these 216 days of crisis it could thus be expected that the EEAS Twitter feed would reflect communication practices that signaled phases of sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making and finally termination.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Crisis Management during the Ukraine Crisis</th>
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<td><strong>Events</strong></td>
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<td>Euromaidan and pro-Russian protests</td>
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<td>Expected crisis management behavior</td>
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(The table draws on previous research by Boin, t’Hart, Stern & Sundelius 2005 and Bjola 2017).

The four stages of expected crisis management behavior are driven by normative interests of de-escalation and successful political management of an uncertain situation. In addition, crises are assumed to produce a strategic demand for symbolic and emotional leadership (Boin et al. 2005). This is exemplified by the fact that political information in a crisis situation is expected to be simplified and coherent and leadership to be visual and present rather than fulfilling the everyday

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90 I clarify here that the EEAS does not engage in crisis management in the way that states do, the EU Member States still independently manage crises. Here crisis management communication is situated in the context of common EU diplomacy and the EEAS’s special role rather than comparable with state’s practices of crisis management. Still, communication patterns directed to publics can be expected to follow the general trends of crisis management communication.
democratic norms of transparency. Another important characteristic of a crisis situation that aligns with media logic, but poses a challenge to political logic, is time limitation and the urgency of the information demand. Political crisis management is known to be constrained by time and the political desirability of credibility and accuracy can at times be lost in the tradeoff with demands for frequent updates and speed of general information. These constraints are, however, constant in environments guided by media logic, where commercial demands may at times be fulfilled at the expense of such normative ideals.

This discussion also brings to light the transformation of media logic in the new media ecology. Social media logic in many ways provides an even better match with political logic in the context of crisis (cf. table 1. The transformation of media logic). The norms of social media are more in line with popularity and networking (inclusiveness) than commercialism and entertainment, crisis management communication should aim for connectivity rather than connection (both to inform and be informed by a network). Furthermore, visibility and intensity are central strategies of the communication flow. In addition, the self-production of content, visuality, activity and real-time interaction are new characteristics that have been observed during crisis management communication in a new media ecology (e.g. during the Arab Spring, the earthquake in Haiti 2010, the earthquake in Nepal 2015 etc.). Finally, the effects of media logic can be expected to be more in line with the social media dimension than traditional news media logic: we know that crisis situations lead to demands for simplification and leaderization that are more concerned with performance than with media representation. In addition, although not a norm, the urgency of crisis management often leads to impulsiveness (i.e. the human factor) (Ansell, Boin & t’Hart 2014). Hence, a political crisis situation is both charged with an inherent attraction between the political logic and media logic and with both demands and opportunities for political logic to overcome constraints by blending better with media logic. The analysis that follows thus traced these practices in the EEAS Twitter feed and in the accounts from practitioners and in effect captured the mediatized practice that emerged.

91 These characteristics can be found in research findings on the use of social media in crisis management (e.g. Yates & Paquette 2011; Seib 2012; Holmes & Bjola 2015 etc.).
The Politicization of eu_EEAS

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss how Twitter as a communication channel and specifically the official account of the EEAS, became politicized during the Ukraine crisis. I link this politicization with an adaptation phase within mediatization in which the practices of digital diplomacy (here crisis management communication on Twitter) reflected an initial blend between the political logic and media logic. The politicization that I speak of here thus concerns an opportunity in the new media ecology, a social media channel (in this case Twitter), that itself became politicized (rather than the communication content) as a result of internal and external expectations during the Ukraine crisis.

The EEAS Twitter account was put to use immediately after its creation in 2009 and was until the launch of the EEAS in December 2010 reporting on EU foreign affairs in general and advancing the establishment of the EEAS. At this time, the EEAS hardly had any Twitter followers, minimal engagement and a strictly informative tone but the frequent posts still signaled awareness of its future potential. The practitioners in charge of social media during this time described how during this period of time they were too busy increasing the coherence of the EEAS social media accounts, to be able to allow visual connections to be made. By 2013, the eu_EEAS had generated a following, yet there was very little use of Twitter as anything other than a secondary channel of information. Tweets reported press conferences, briefs and speeches and rarely used the opportunity to highlight content or statements and instead relied on direct links. In this sense, Twitter was used like any other traditional communication channel and summarized the EEAS information flow by reporting new activities of relevance to external action, but without efforts of framing or engagement. Even so, the early patterns of retweets signaled that the EEAS was interested in the potential of

92 Politicization is not an uncommon concept in the crisis management literature or in studies of the politics of social media. In fact, it is commonly argued that while in times of crises there have historically been taboos and norms against political exploitation in party politics, in recent years crisis management has become an increasingly politicized practice (Stern 2017). In addition, simplification of social media has been considered to amplify politicization by for instance contributing to polarized political debates. Here the understanding of politicization is more basic and the Twitter account was lifted to higher political urgency.

93 Many of the delegations already had social media accounts by the time the EEAS was established but their account names and the way that they were using social media gave no coherence. For instance, the EEAS had to engage Facebook for assistance in the standardization of delegation account names (you were not allowed to change names after a certain number of followers had been reached).

94 Rather than summarizing content, the tweets would inform about content found through a direct link.
Twitter and retweets included news media articles on relevant topics which signaled a move away from strict official information. The Ukraine crisis changed the prioritization of this practice and practitioners referred to it as the time when the eu_EEAS was first discovered by many followers and by internal stakeholders:

It was very clear that at that time we were expected to be present and active on Twitter (Interview #9 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016).

I think it is safe to say now that we did not anticipate that the Ukraine crisis would happen, at least not when it did and to that extent. And although we did have plans to develop digital diplomacy as a capacity of among other things crisis management, we were certainly not ready for that (Interview #3 Senior diplomat, EEAS, September 2016).

Back in 2013, social media was not yet understood here and we were using it as just another channel of communication. Then the Ukraine crisis happened and we saw how other actors were very active and how things on Twitter were picked up by the media and that we were getting more followers and more engagement (Interview #5 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

These statements conveyed the general sentiment that the EEAS was suddenly expected to, but not yet ready to, manage crisis on Twitter in 2013. Although crisis management was already an identified potential capacity, these practices were still not developed on the ground. This was, as previously discussed, not understood by all as being a skills gap as such (the EEAS had already employed social media communication experts), but was linked to the uncertainty surrounding the diplomatic mandate and the unexpected situation in Ukraine. In this sense, Twitter and the early anticipation of digital diplomacy was lifted to a higher political urgency than the role it was actually serving on the ground.

Sense-making, #Ukraine and the Power of the Image

Following the political anticipation and despite the internal insecurities, the EEAS was certainly active on Twitter during the Ukraine crisis. In the 216 days between the 21st of November 2013 and the 24th of June 2014, the eu_EEAS account produced 783 tweets. Out of these, 210 tweets were somehow related to the Ukraine crisis. In the initial stage of sense-making the tweets were frequent and signaled awareness and presence but spoke without a clear sense of direction. Throughout the crisis the main hashtag used was #Ukraine and before the crisis escalated it was chiefly projected in relation to the EU’s support of the Euromaidan movement (together with #Euromaidan). In fact, “Euromaidan”,

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which became the collective term for the wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine during this time, was first coined as a Twitter hashtag. When the demonstrations began in November 2013, the EEAS tweets first signaled a careful process of sense-making and attempts to maintain EU diplomatic coherence. The EU entered into talks with the Ukrainian government and opposition and the EEAS tweets reported these efforts by different EU representatives to facilitate negotiations. The official statements shared on Twitter were carefully expressed: they condemned the excessive use of force by the police in Kyiv against protesters but did not go much further in the EU positioning (see first statement by Ashton and Füle 30-11-2013).

The tone and style of the tweets however changed quite drastically by December when the HR/VP Ashton travelled to Ukraine. The sense-making phase had by then moved towards efforts to control the situation and signal presence beyond awareness. What followed were tweets strongly supporting the Euromaidan and condemning violence against protesters. In retrospect, this narrative practice of projecting support through both explicit statements and symbolism in images was confrontational and, in many ways, aligned with the timely ideas of the transformative power of Twitter following the Arab Spring. For instance, while Ashton was in Ukraine on the 10th of December 2013, eu_EEAS tweeted a photograph of her walking arm in arm with the protesters of Euromaidan.

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95 The demonstrations took place on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) which was the same location as the Orange Revolution. Pro-EU activists therefore dubbed it #євромайдан on social media which translates as #Euromaidan (also #Euromaydan) or European Square. Ziemowit Jozwik, a Polish journalist who was the first to use the translated English hashtag #Euromaidan on Twitter, explained to the BBC that "I wanted to spread the news around the world" (Hebblethwaite, BBC Trending report 03-12-2013).
In many ways, this tweet exemplifies the pattern of an (at the time) advanced and creative use of digital diplomacy by the EEAS. The photograph does not feature a classic EU diplomacy set up, is not in a formal setting of elite negotiations but is rather a seemingly spontaneous, “in the moment”, snapshot of grassroots engagement. This image does not suggest a traditional meeting but rather that Ashton is actively (and happily) participating in the front row of the protests. In this regard, this tweet goes further than EU foreign policy did at the time and interacts more directly with the political crisis. The Eastern Partnership and the ongoing negotiation of an Association Agreement with Ukraine were indeed clear indicators that the EU was actively involved in the democratization of Ukraine but actually to “join forces” on the ground, with a smiling Ashton leading the way, might suggest engagement beyond such partnership.

Bearing in mind that Ukraine was also explicitly expressed to be in the Russian sphere of influence (negotiations with Russia had been taking place for several years), and that EU cooperation was contested in the country at the time, this image could be considered rather confrontational. In this respect, it reflects how digital diplomacy leads to new opportunities for diplomatic signaling. Through Twitter a message like this one can be spread across the world without confrontational statements beyond a mere official visit. When asked about the role of photographs and the rationale behind the choice of this particular one, the

96 Although not mentioned in the caption, the photograph pictures prominent opposition leaders Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who later served as Prime Minister of Ukraine (2014-2016) and the former foreign minister Volodymyr Ohryzko (2007-2009).
practitioners however signaled less awareness of its symbolism. Using their own photographs, they described it as a mere adaptation to what other actors were doing on Twitter at that time and the rationale behind the choice was described as process of “simply picking the best one”:

I do remember it being a hassle. We could only use the EU official photos that we had copyright to. It was a pain. We got a limited number of photos to choose from and we choose the best ones. That was the strategy, choosing the best ones! (Interview #17 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

Irrespective of the above statement, the photograph offered a strategic narrative that went beyond the EU’s careful positioning at the time. The support for the Euromaidan movement and hence the European path for Ukraine is illustrated by Ashton’s persona and role as an EU leader taking part in the protest against the suspension of the Association Agreement. This image (showing Ashton in the protests) therefore also projects a strategic narrative of the EU. The international system narrative relates to the liberal international order and the path towards democratic reform for Ukraine. Ashton’s presence in the Euromaidan protest thus signaled a legitimation of the Ukrainian struggle towards a closer relationship with the EU. The issue narrative here is a peaceful and positive projection of Euromaidan. The photo features smiling faces and comradery. The two men on each side of Ashton are dressed in ways that allude to the identity and the momentous crossroad for Ukraine. On the one side is a man dressed in black modern attire (Arseniy Yatsenyuk) and on the other side is a man dressed in what one would assume is stereotypical Russian winter clothes: a long dark coat and a tall black fur hat (Volodymyr Ohryzko). The counter-narrative at work here is thus that Ukraine does not have to choose between the old ways and the new (illustrated by Yatsenyuk as the future of Ukraine) but can move forward (alongside Ashton), together. This counter-narrative thus confronts the Russian narrative that led to the suspension of the Association Agreement, whereby closer cooperation with Russia was incompatible with closer cooperation with the EU. The projection of these strategic narratives through #EuroMaidan, the hashtag used by protesters on the ground, shows that the EEAS also aimed for connectivity and the effects of multiplication through Twitter networks (cf. table 1. The transformation of media logic).97 A social media manager confirmed that the photograph did cause a stir:

97 These narratives were in fact picked up the pro-EU movement in Ukraine where Ashton and her visit to Euromaidan became a symbol of EU support. Protests were in the media, reported to have been “cheering on” Ashton and shouting her name, which is not the traditional public
To us it was just about making the most of the content we were given but that photograph was picked up everywhere! (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

As expected, the sense-making stage first reflected careful sensitivity in digital diplomacy efforts. This stage however developed into being experimental, drawing on symbolic references exemplified in the above photograph, and even confrontational. This is a strong indicator of a politicization process in the sense that a blend between the logics was driven by expectations of adaptation to twiplomacy. In this initial phase, this was especially reflective of how the anticipation of active use of Twitter (for long-term political purposes) created tensions with the diplomatic logic of careful sense-making in crisis management.

*Careful Decision-making and Informative Efforts*

The stark support for the Euromaidan protests disappeared from the EEAS crisis management narrative when Russian forces took power in Crimea in February 2014. By that time the initial crisis in Ukraine had escalated to an international geo-political crisis calling for EU diplomacy outside the frame of the Eastern Partnership. What followed were therefore efforts reflecting Twitter as a real-time informational channel. The tweets during the height of the crisis were frequent but contained no political signals or strong statements. Instead, a vast majority of the tweets included links to documents such as press releases, conclusions or statements. The captions were often no more explicit than stating that there was a new press release. The rare uses of Twitter to project the EU’s voice were restricted to exact quotes from the attached documents of statements. While any transformative role of Twitter in terms of crisis management was downplayed during this period it was clear that it was considered an important channel of communicating information for the EU’s active engagement in negotiations. The following string of tweets were all tweeted on the 26th of February 2014 and referred to meetings held with stakeholders two days earlier:

reaction to a visit by an EU leader. Meanwhile, the EU counter-narrative was central in EU discourse projecting that that the Association Agreement was never directed towards or against Russia.
@eu_eas 26 Feb 2014 Catherine #Ashton in #Ukraine: holding talks with interim President Olexandre Turchynov

@eu_eas 26 Feb 2014 Catherine #Ashton in #Ukraine: holding talks with Petro Poroshenko

@eu_eas 26 Feb 2014 Catherine #Ashton in #Ukraine: holding talks with Vitali Klitschko

@eu_eas 26 Feb 2014 Catherine #Ashton in #Ukraine: holding talks with acting Finance Minister Yory Kolobov

@eu_eas 26 Feb 2014 Catherine #Ashton in #Ukraine: holding talks with Yulia Timoshenko

While a press release would have reported this as a day of meetings with stakeholders (which it did), the Twitter format here allowed these events to be separated while still using the power of repetition to signal more active engagement. Moreover, all five tweets came with photographs and four of them were almost exactly the same, picturing a formal setting, two chairs, the EU flag, the Ukrainian flag, Ashton and the stakeholder posing. While the setting in these photos was formal, it was still less formal than a more traditional press conference following diplomatic negotiations, reflecting the way that Twitter was often being used at this time.98 The image of Ashton and Yory Kolobov, at the time the acting Finance Minister, exemplifies the four first photographs.

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98 The fact that they are sitting down rather than standing up shaking hands and that Ashton’s handbag is placed by her feet does not suggest that this is a photo staged for the press but is a common type of photo diplomats and MFAs use, to report from “inside the negotiations” on Twitter.
Catherine Ashton and the acting Finance Minister Yory Kolobov, photograph posted by @Eu_EEAS 26-02-2014

The fifth photograph instead portrayed Ashton’s meeting differently:

HR/VP Catherine Ashton and Yulia Timoshenko, photograph posted by @eu_EEAS, 26-02-2014
Here Ashton was instead pictured standing up, bending towards a sitting Yulia Timoshenko, looking straight into her eyes and squeezing both her hands. Without going into a full visual analysis, the photograph signals compassion for Timoshenko who appears weak because she is sitting down (she was at the time in a wheelchair, following her imprisonment). In addition, the setting is different, because the meeting with Timoshenko took place the day after the official negotiation talks with stakeholders on the 25th of February, an important diplomatic distinction that the sequence of tweets blurred. Moreover, while the formal talks pictured traditional diplomatic conduct, the picture with Timoshenko is more personal and even emotional. Although Timoshenko and the EU-friendly opposition were natural preferred partners of the EU, such statements during the height of the crisis could have caused further provocation. Instead, the image represented what was not said openly, by exploiting the ambiguity of non-verbal signaling.\textsuperscript{99}

While the political logic during this time was guided by a decision-making process among the Member States that restricted the EEAS from making bold statements, the blend with media logic still presented opportunities to signal presence and active engagement. This pattern can be linked to the spectacularization effect of media logic. By framing political events in ways that play up the meaning or impact, political actors can increase their attention and amplify their role in the political game (cf. table 1. The transformation of media logic). Even so, the political logic at work, the decision-making process at stake and the inherently sensitive nature of EU foreign policy all hindered obvious attempts at spectacularization. Using the Twitter format and different photographs, presented the EEAS with opportunities for a careful projection of the EU’s strategic narrative. The fact that Ashton was respectfully engaging in talks with all stakeholders signaled support for the liberal international order, respect for Ukraine’s right to choose its own path and attempts to achieve a peaceful solution. The allegiance with Timoshenko again supported the liberal international order but here specifically the Ukrainian struggle for the right to self-determination against Russian influence. Here Timoshenko herself was an important symbol, her release from prison (which happened only days before) was one of the EU’s conditions for entering into an Association Agreement with Ukraine. The issue narrative at stake was thus again a counter-narrative to the Russian pressure on the Yanukovych government and the suspension of the Association Agreement.

\textsuperscript{99} Non-verbal signaling has the advantage of being inherently ambiguous and thus disclaimable (Jönsson & Hall 2005, p. 86).
Similar usage of photographs to support or amplify the captions in the tweets were posted in the later stages of the crisis but it was only during the first phases that the narratives in the photographs signaled a stronger positioning than their tweet captions, in part a reflection of strategic timing exemplified in the above example of the five meetings. Compared to the photograph of Ashton during her visit to the Euromaidan, (where the caption reinforced the photograph) the caption narrative and the visual representation here were seemingly consciously separated. While the practitioners did not confirm the active use of photographs as a practice of diplomatic signaling\(^{100}\), they did suggest awareness of the cognitive opportunities to use images and interpreted these practices as belonging to the digital diplomacy tools:

Twitter like other social media channels desires communication at high speed. We do not read tweets in the same way as we would read a press release. Visual content is much faster for the brain to process compared to text (Interview #5 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

During the Ukraine crisis, we did not know what we were doing on Twitter, we did not have a strategy for that but we were trying to communicate that we were at least doing something! With this aim, all content was useful. (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

We know a lot about how we can use images, videos and photos to achieve our goals now but back then we did not have that capacity and were trying things out and following the lead of others (Interview #17 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

These recollections suggest that although the images may come across as deliberate use of the potential of digital diplomacy, this was not really the case. Rather than opportunities of diplomatic signaling in a true sense, the patterns of exploiting negotiation talk in multiple tweets and symbolic photographs were attempts at communication engagement and Twitter presence in lieu of actual diplomatic capability at the time. In sum, rather than a strategic usage of media opportunities with diplomatic goals (which I explore in chapter six), these narratives reflected how digital diplomacy during this time was more about adaptation to expectations.

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\(^{100}\) Diplomatic signaling can be both verbal and non-verbal but is however not necessarily a result of intent or conscious behavior and may refer to when a signal is perceived by another (Jönsson & Hall 2005, p. 77). In this case, the practitioners did not confirm that this was a conscious signal which may or may not be true, but could thus still be understood as a signal if it was perceived as such by others.
of Twitter use through visibility. Here, in the urgency of projecting EU engagement in the midst of consensus-seeking decision-making both within the EU and in Ukraine, the EEAS was also learning how to do digital diplomacy.

**Meaning-making: Softening the Hard Facts and Leaderization of Ashton**

A meaning-making phase would suggest a guiding political logic of reassuring the public. Communication efforts are then expected to focus on building a narrative that corresponds to the public’s expectations (Boin et al. 2005). A pattern that took off during the height of the crisis but signaled meaning-making rather than decision-making were the continuous attempts to simplify hard facts about EU foreign policy. After the annexation of Crimea, the EEAS projected frequent links to updated fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs) through Twitter. The factsheets were at the time already an existing part of the EU's efforts to share information about the European Neighborhood Policy. Each partner country had a factsheet that summarized key facts in the relationship to the EU. These were hard facts mainly focused on formal agreements and numbers in terms of EU economic support for reform programs. As highlighted by some of the statements in the interviews quoted in the introductory sections of this chapter, the Ukraine crisis was a wake-up call, proclaiming that the EU’s information efforts in the Eastern neighborhood had failed. An initial reaction was therefore attempts to set the record straight by means of references to the fact sheets. Moreover, the EEAS produced FAQs that dealt with what had emerged as common misunderstandings about EU-Ukraine relations. One of the social media managers and a senior diplomat who were active at the time recalled how correct and updated information became a key resource in the EU’s crisis management:

> We were trying to keep the information updated at all times. These events did not only direct the spotlight to Ukraine relations but to the Eastern Partnership in general and this was really when some of the myths were hitting international media so we were trying to focus on projecting correct information (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

> Before we had reached a common position on what the EU response would be the main thing that we could do was to share the correct information on ENP, on the EaP and specifically on the partnership with Ukraine that was essential to the understanding of our role in the crisis (Interview #6 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

The understanding that information was being misconceived and that myths were flourishing also led to new attempts to soften these hard facts. The FAQ’s directly
confronted the issue narrative of the EU’s interest in Ukraine and the Association Agreement that had been put on the table. The Ukraine fact sheet was updated on a weekly basis and presented key facts in bullet points. Of special interest to the later development of EEAS digital diplomacy, several of the practitioners spoke of how the EEAS at this time started projecting infographs, which was described as an attempt to solve the information gap at the time and was a result of inspiration from other digital diplomacy actors.

Infographs are a type of data visualization that serve to provide an efficient graphic display of mainly quantitative information. Hence, infographs are visual representation of information, data or knowledge presented in a way that is pedagogical and easy to digest. Political infographs became very popular following Barack Obama’s presidential campaign in 2012, as means of subtly guiding an audience to conclusions about politics. During the Ukraine crisis, infographs as well as political maps, another type of data visualization, were also frequently used by international actors and thus more advanced users of digital diplomacy. Most notably, the Canadian delegation to NATO’s Twitter account projected a map picturing Eastern Europe where Ukraine, including Crimea, was titled “NOT RUSSIA”.

Tweet posted by @CanadaNato 27-08-2014
Although this map was in fact tweeted after the termination of the crisis, several practitioners I talked to referred to this map and the Canadian use of sarcasm as a way of being clear in a “soft way”. The use of this political map was regarded as groundbreaking and a source of inspiration during this time. In fact, on the topic of digital diplomacy and the Ukraine crisis, this tweet was often the first thing that came to mind in the informants’ recollections.

We tried a few things out during that time and, even more so, we were inspired by others. You saw how the Canadians used that funny map? That was much talked about here. We could not do that then but have done more creative content since then and really thought about how we can simplify but still strengthen the narrative (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

Irony and sarcasm are not tools that we would normally use in crisis communication or in official diplomatic communications in general so it was interesting to see how such content could reach and engage followers by suggesting something quite strong without actually articulating it (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

Clearly, the map-tweet had made an impression and had been talked about as a subject of interest. As I will illustrate in the next two chapters, sarcasm, humor and storytelling later became acknowledged practices in the EEAS digital diplomacy arsenal and although there were very few attempts in this direction in the observations during the Ukraine crisis, this was by many understood as a “creative seed”. These narratives signaled, however, that repackaging information, visual content and communicational creativity began to become more important during this time.¹⁰¹

HR/VP Ashton

As already indicated in the previous phases, a strong pattern throughout all the crisis stages was the focus on Catherine Ashton. While #Ukraine was the most common hashtag and hence organizing node during crisis communication, #Ashton came in second place and was used more often than #EEAS or #EU. Moreover, rather than communicating the actions of the EEAS and the delegations, the eu_EEAS Twitter account focused primarily on Ashton’s activities. This was a general pattern in the Twitter feed but was especially strong

¹⁰¹ In the year that followed the Ukraine crisis the EEAS published three infographics that communicated the EU’s financial support to Ukraine (published about a month after the Canadian map), the EU Association Agreements and the Eastern Partnership. These were also translated and projected by the delegations in the Eastern Partnership countries.
during the Ukraine crisis. This pattern signals personalization which is a well-observed effect of political adaptation to media logic (Bennett 2012). News media are considered to have dramatized politics into an entertainment spectacle, often through such personalization (a focus on who and how, rather than on political issues, context, structure, and interpretation). In this case the adaptation was, however, not quite so simply understood, for two main reasons. First, the empowered role of the HR/VP and the launch of the EEAS served a political aim of coherence and leaderization in its own right. Rather than as a result of news media dramatization or indeed the simplification demanded by social media logic, this was an answer to a political demand most commonly illustrated by the supposed question by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: “Who do I call if I want to call Europe?” Secondly, although eu_EEAS was the official Twitter account of the EEAS at the time, Catherine Ashton did not herself use Twitter, had no personal account and did not want one. Compared with the subsequent HR/VP, Federica Mogherini, who was already a Twitter user before she took on the leadership, the EEAS Twitter account thus had another function during the Ashton period. Paired with the political aim of the HR/VP to fill the gap of a present EU leader, the leaderization tendencies were not a strict reflection of invasive media logic. Rather, Twitter presented an opportunity to project political interests of leaderization using media logic, a sign of blending and a clear politicization of Twitter as a communication channel. In addition, practitioners explained that the focus on Ashton in some ways made the coherence of the account easier, as it was an institutional Twitter account but was focused on its leader (Interview #17 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018). The eu_EEAS made ample use of the opportunity presented by the Twitter format. A large proportion of the tweets did in some way project Ashton as the new leader of EU foreign policy. An example was tweeted on the 4th of March 2014:

102 The personalization of politics is motivated by the fact that average news consumers prefer to read about specific political candidates or leaders rather than parties, bureaucracies or government agencies, thus stories about such groups tend to focus on group leaders, sometimes also referred to as a leaderization of politics (Mazzoleni 2008a).

103 There is no formal reference to this quote and it is even questionable whether it was ever uttered, but it has nonetheless become a saying in debates over EU leadership.
The above tweet thus answered Kissinger’s question of who to call, by demonstrating that Ashton, in the capacity of HR/VP, is the one who picks up the phone to discuss with Russia about Ukraine.\textsuperscript{104} Moreover, Ashton is framed as equal to Russia’s foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, the length of the discussion is mentioned and it is described as “interesting”. Here, what might be assumed to be a relatively common conversation between parties involved in crisis negotiations, is both amplified in meaning and symbolically projected. While at the time the FAC had yet to agree on a common position and hence a strategic narrative for Ashton to project, the very fact that she was in direct contact with Lavrov suggested that Ashton’s leadership was more empowered than was actually the case. Further, the description of the discussion as “interesting” and “an hour long” is cryptic in creating a value around the conversation without saying anything of its content. That is not to say that the conversation was not interesting, diplomacy often depends on informal discussions, but without the Twitter format here it is likely that Ashton would have a less prominent role and that, since no political content could be shared, the conversation would not be reported at all.\textsuperscript{105}

The fact that so many of the tweets concerned with the crisis included the hashtag #Ashton and that this hashtag was more common than the #EU signaled a strategic focus on the leadership of Catherine Ashton. Focusing foreign policy communication on Ashton rather than on policy could also be a way of projecting an image of reactiveness and capability during a time when traditional communication efforts were constrained by consensus-seeking. Although EU policy in relation to the crisis was seldom explicitly expressed, Ashton was seemingly very active and visible in all the “right places”.

\textsuperscript{104} In reality, this was not really the case as German Chancellor Angela Merkel ultimately played the central role of EU leadership in the negotiations.

\textsuperscript{105} Interestingly, brief statements that mention nothing else than phone conversations taking place have become increasingly emphasized in press statements by MFAs since 2013 (my own observation). This could be a reflection of the increased transparency norm in international politics or even a “spillover effect” from the Twitter format through cross-posting practices that are common across communication channels.
Termination, Assertion and Coherent Consensus

During the FAC meeting 20-21st of March 2014, the EU leaders agreed to strongly condemn the Russian annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and to strengthen the imposed sanctions. Since the consensus reached in March 2014, the EU had been progressively imposing sanctions on Russia. Further, during the FAC on 23rd of June 2014, the Council adopted measures to implement the EU’s policy of non-recognition of the annexation. Accordingly, during this time the EU presented a more assertive position on Ukraine and towards Russia. While the focus in the eu_EEAS twitter feed was still often on Ashton, during this stage she became framed as an EU spokeswoman. By reference to the common EU position, Ashton was now projected as assertive, calling on Russia to respect Ukrainian sovereignty. While the official tone towards Russia had previously been less confrontational, Russia was by now clearly pointed out as the main adversary.

@eu_eeas 13 Apr 2014 #Ashton reiterates the #EU’s strong support for #Ukraine unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity and calls upon #Russia to do so as well

The above tweet from the 13th of April 2014 differs substantially from the previous tweets. Here, Ashton is set within a new and repetitive narrative of the EU’s strong support and commitment to Ukraine which aligns with the political solution of an EU consensus. Furthermore, this tweet is assertive, as it suggests that Russia does not respect Ukraine’s unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. While the tone is more assertive that before, the tweet still signals termination rather than further confrontation. The termination stage in a crisis management situation is expected to showcase commitment to the political solution. Hence, the political logic at issue would lead to expectations of a communication of de-escalation through commitment to Ukraine and sanctions towards Russia. The narrative patterns of crisis management followed these expectations and while efforts to project facts were still favored, these were now accompanied by a commitment to the termination of the crisis:

@eu_eas 29 Apr 2014 #EU focusing efforts on de-escalating the crisis in #Ukraine. See updated Fact Sheet on EU-Ukraine relations: [link to fact sheet]

@eu_eas 17 June 2014 The #EU has been deeply engaged in seeking a solution to the crisis in #Ukraine. Let’s get the facts straight: [link to fact sheet]

In these tweets, the attention was not on Ashton but on the EU’s role in crisis management and the information projected related to the political solution of enforced support for Ukraine. Hence the strategy behind the fact sheets was no
longer to signal engagement during consensus-seeking or to address general misconceptions but to showcase the EU’s common and thus official response. These efforts were, however, more than showcasing the solution and the situation also appeared to have presented an opportunity to showcase the fact that consensus was reached as being a success in itself.\footnote{A similar trend of using Twitter to showcase successful diplomatic negotiations has been observed in other cases, for instance in Iran-US relations (Duncombe 2017).} Bearing in mind that consensus and a common position is an accomplishment in EU foreign policy, a crisis management process deemed successful is important to the general narrative of the EEAS. The diplomats especially highlighted this fact in their recollections of the termination phase:

> The fact that there was consensus in such an important question of foreign policy was just as important to communicate as the de-escalation of the crisis itself (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

> It is challenging to communicate EU foreign policy because here everything is about balancing, it is always controversial. If you have a situation when it is not controversial or at least less controversial, that is when you have the opportunity to truly project a strong narrative (Interview #9 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016).

The essence of these statements about the opportunity of showcasing EU foreign policy coherence was captured in a new pattern in the tweets during this stage that projected the Council of the EU leadership rather than the EEAS or Ashton. The Council (consisting of Member State leaders in different configurations) represents the pooled sovereignty and EU consensus and thus signaled a stronger positioning than the EU’s diplomatic arm. Before March 2014, there was no common Council position which led to more focus on the diplomatic mandate of the EEAS. Once consensus was established it was thus clear that emphasizing Council meetings and decisions related to Ukraine was the favored strategy of signaling engagement. The position of the Council was therefore often repeated and recalled:

> @eu_e eas 23 June 2014 #EU recalls its condemnation of illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and will not recognize it #Ukraine [link to Council conclusions] #FAC

In the above tweet the EEAS’s twitter followers are reminded of the common EU position of condemning the Russian annexation by reference to the European
Council since March 2014 before introducing the extended sanctions that were confirmed by the FAC on the 23rd of June. In similar ways of repeating the consensual position, the wording “strong condemnation” was often repeated in conjunction with #EU or #Council during this time. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that Twitter is a networking practice; it is relational in the sense that the networking logic (connectivity through both hashtags and followings) reflects a conversation. The EU was not the first international actor to condemn Russia for its annexation of Crimea, rather the captions aligned with a pattern of responses from Western diplomatic actors. In addition, these were also responses to the active tweets of Russia during this time that projected the situation as a humanitarian crisis (foremost through accounts @mfa_russia and @natomission_ru). In fact, the Russian MFA’s account even tweeted directly to the EEAS (with a mention in the tweet) during the crisis but the EEAS chose not to engage directly because they felt it was too confrontational (Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018). Compared with the tone of the international conversation on Twitter during this time, the EEAS was in this regard just adapting to the conversation.

Finally, the termination phase in a crisis management situation is also expected to include reflection and learning. While these activities are not externally communicated and no such political logic could be traced in the tweets, the accounts from practitioners signaled that the Ukraine crisis was indeed a learning experience. In relation to the lessons learned the diplomats and, to some extent, the communicators expressed the view that digital diplomacy during this time was an adaptation to demands, on which political caution was also required:

Yes, we do these things [crisis management communication on social media] we tried it then and we still try but we are out of our comfort zones and we are pushed there by the new media climate (Interview #9 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016).

Speaking in general terms, diplomacy has not come to terms with social networks and we are still trying to figure out if it really can go hand in hand with traditional diplomacy. This is what the last few years have been about, trying it out and that is when it is important not to get carried away just because there is a demand (Interview #11 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016).

These reflections of caution were related not only to the difficult mandate of the EEAS but also to the more general development and expectations on diplomatic actors. Here, the diplomats were clear about the fact that digital diplomacy during this time was a response to a changing media climate which to some degree
diverges from the official EEAS narrative of digital diplomacy as an opportunity already grasped. This confirms the argument of a politicization of Twitter during this time that has resulted from a new media ecology and thus was not driven by external demands from a media sector. In relation to this, it is however important to keep in mind that diplomats here also had experiences that predated the EEAS and their roles as EU diplomats. Hence, rather than an adaptation of EEAS diplomats, when diplomats spoke “in general terms”, this was also reflective of a wider adaptation of the diplomatic professional field in response to a changing media climate. In addition, the second quote above represented a common interpretation among diplomats of the importance of not losing control of the diplomatic practice which suggests resilience rather than surrender when confronted with the demands of media logic.

Lessons of Adaptation

This chapter has served as an illustration of the mediatization of politics in its initial phase of blending which, I have argued, reflects adaptation. Specifically, there were two important patterns that reflected this blending. First, the narratives of practice during this time period revealed that crisis management communication was partly carried out through a new media channel (Twitter) and the communication patterns that resulted from this signaled both adaptation and political usage of its formatting logic. Secondly, the narrative practices of Twitter led to the both conscious and less conscious processes of strengthening the EU’s diplomatic voice through visual content such as photographs, political maps or infographs and through elements of timing, fragmentation and repetition that were in line with the EU’s strategic narratives at the time.

I consider this politicization of Twitter to have resulted in a pattern of mediatized practices where the guiding political logic of diplomatic crisis management and the media logic of the Twitter format could still be dissected in their own right, but the result was a blended product of mediatized practices. The adaptation here was concerned with presence, visibility and activity that enhanced the political value of using Twitter as a channel of crisis management. The lessons learned from this pattern of mediatized practices are closely related to the research front on mediatization and thus relevant to the criticism I have offered in chapter two. It is related because this pattern comes close to the dominant understanding of how politics becomes mediatized in terms of a pattern of adaptation, but it rebuts the assumption that this is a result solely of pressure from a media sector. Rather, the
political sphere here adapted to a new media ecology, a structural condition that led to both anticipation from within the political sphere and perceived expectations from the outside. This adaptation was thus more nuanced than previous studies have suggested it to be and was to a large extent also conditioned by the political context (in terms of the diplomatic context of the Ukraine crisis, the new and unique diplomatic mandate of the EEAS) and in some ways by the leadership of Catherine Ashton. Hence rather than an invasion, adaptation occurred as a result of a blend between the guiding logics at stake.

Moreover, the anticipation surrounding the use of Twitter that was closely linked to the new role of the EEAS and of digital diplomacy was primarily an internally expected practice. Rather than a sign that the EEAS was submitting to expectations from the news media, or the emerging international practice of twiplomacy, Twitter was politicized as a promising practice and through a willingness to join the latest developments in diplomacy. Nevertheless, the expressions of this adaptation largely aligned with the basic assumptions of how media logic is adopted in the political sphere in terms of communication techniques (cf. Strömbäck 2011). The effects of adaptation which I have traced here, such as visual representation, symbolism, simplification, personification and leaderization, are all well-known mediatization effects (Mazzoleni 2008a). In this regard, these effects were influencing practices of political communication rather than policy-making. Still, a politics-centered approach contributed to situating these effects within a political context of a new diplomatic mandate and a political crisis. This led us to understand that media logic does not simply invade or adjust political practice but blends with the political logic at work: sense-making processes are dependent on cognitive short-cuts and the practices using the power of the image are therefore a result of resonance rather than commercialization.

Moreover, although a spectacularization of the EU’s role in the negotiations between stakeholders could be traced, narratives from the practitioners signaled that the use of Twitter was in fact closely guided by the inherent political sensitivity.

The meaning-making phase, on the other hand, showed early signs of experimentation, a pattern that will be further traced in the next chapter and a central factor that ultimately led the mediatization process to intensify beyond adaptation. Lastly, the termination stage signaled opportunities to project EU capability which in this case was restricted to adaptive practices. The capability tweets followed an international pattern of condemning Russia in the Twittersphere during this period, but in the case of the EEAS was also connected with the successful achievement of consensus. In addition, there were few, if any,
signs of the two-way engagement (beyond adaptation to the strategic narratives of others) that had been anticipated by the introduction of twiplomacy. Thus, while mediatization here led to adaptive practices, this adaptation was certainly conditioned by the political context. By breaking down political logic into the diplomatic logic of crisis management and its phases, we could see that the adaptation of media logic blended with the political logic at work in the specific stages. Hence, a politics-centered approach also carries promise of the aim of field-level analysis, by providing a contextual understanding that may lead to theoretically generalizable insights.

Finally, there is something to be learnt from the specific context of EU foreign policy in this illustration. The anticipation of digital diplomacy and the politicization that occurred during this time were more than an attempt to keep up with the international evolution of diplomacy. The new emphasis on public diplomacy in the EEAS’s new mandate signaled that increased public inclusion was perceived as a legitimacy-generating source for the EU’s external action and quite possibly for opportunities of legitimation beyond. Keeping in mind Marcinkowski’s, and later Trenz’s, argument of the role of inclusiveness in a mediatization process, the pressure to generate visibility for EU operations, which was acknowledged in the Lisbon Treaty, had in the narratives in this chapter been connected to the new role of the EEAS and the anticipation of opportunities in a new media ecology. While this connection in itself was not unconventional, the 21st Century Statecraft initially developed from a similar connection, it signaled a significant change in the context of EU politics where legitimacy had traditionally been derived from democratic input (Member States) and throughput (institutions) rather than by output from the visibility of its international engagement.107

Summing up the Chapter

This first empirical chapter has illustrated how mediatization in the phase of adaptation took place when the EEAS was put to the test during the Ukraine crisis in 2013-2014. In so doing, it traced patterns of mediatized practices in the EEAS

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107 The common conceptual distinction between input legitimacy and output legitimacy in IR and European studies is to consider input legitimacy generated by citizen participation in (and control over) the political process (a democratic phenomenon) and output legitimacy generated by the results from effective/efficient problem-solving of institutions (not necessarily a democratic phenomenon). Hence the EU, being a union of democracies, has traditionally focused its legitimacy-generating efforts on input legitimacy (or throughput legitimacy which is a development of the concept and refers to the governance process) (e.g. Scharpf 1999; Hix 2008; Kohler-Koch 2010; Schmidt 2013; Steffek 2015).
use of Twitter that became politicized during the Ukraine crisis as a result of anticipation and expectations from both within and outside the EEAS. The blend between political logic (here diplomatic crisis management) and media logic was traced through a deconstruction of expected phases of crisis management. The initial anticipation was met with constraints related to the EEAS mandate that hindered a full grasp of the opportunities of crisis management on Twitter. The adaptation was however driven by both internal and external expectations and although some signs of experimentation of strategic usage were signaled, the dominant patterns were adaptive.

This illustration ultimately served to contradict previous research assumptions of adaptation as the result of a retreat of political logic at the expense of media logic. While media logic could certainly be traced here, so could the political logic of crisis management that largely conditioned its expressions, hence suggesting a blend rather than a conflict between the logics. While the political logic appeared to have the upper hand in the reasoning of practitioners, the fact that this practice took place on Twitter added, however, a formatting logic that created more balance in the interaction. In effect, this illustration served to prove that a political centered approach matters to the understanding of how politics is mediatized and provided support for the necessity to understand the hosting context of such a process. Finally, the mediatization of politics illustrated here suggested a correlation at stake in the context of EU foreign policy between mediatization and the perceived opportunities of legitimacy generation.
Chapter 6.

Experimentation in the Countering of Disinformation

Introduction

In the aftermaths of the Ukraine crisis, the EEAS had woken up to a new media climate in which myths and lies about the EU were spreading. While myths about EU politics have always accompanied the European integration process, the situation in Ukraine had demonstrated that this was a new set of problems in the field of EU external action. In the years that followed, digital diplomacy therefore went from being a responsive practice of information efforts to an experimental practice of containing and countering disinformation. This chapter describes and discusses how digital diplomacy developed to become a practice of strategic communication in the EEAS. Here, the political context was one of controversy and disagreement about the urgency of the threat and the best way to respond to Russia’s attempt systematically to discredit the EU by making use of the new media ecology. This chapter therefore departs from the controversy that followed the Ukraine crisis but focuses on the special role of the EEAS as from March 2015 when it was officially charged with countering Russian disinformation. Further, this chapter specifically considers the resulting in-house East StratCom Task Force and its practices of myth-busting in the toolbox of EU digital diplomacy. In this chapter I trace the interaction of political logic and media logic in these new mediatized practices of countering disinformation at the EEAS. This pattern, I will argue, reflects the phase of amalgamation that I have suggested in the interaction model and suggests a more advanced stage of the internalization of media logic at the EEAS compared with the previous adaptation.

The snapshot in focus thus tells the story of how efforts of digital diplomacy and specifically strategic communication, were used to respond to and counter Russian disinformation. Here, the establishment of the East StratCom Task Force and its
practices stands out as an experimental attempt to catch up with the more advanced internalization of media logic in Russian foreign policy. To this end, this chapter is divided into three sections. First, I set the scene in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis and describe the narratives of failure in the communication efforts towards the Eastern partner countries. In this context, I thus discuss disinformation as a practice resulting from the blending of political logic and media logic in Russian foreign policy. In this section I therefore trace the new role of strategic communication and specifically the assignment of the East StratCom Task Force to the political responses to a new security environment in the EU. The second section of the chapter then moves to consider the East StratCom Task Force and how its original role and organization reflected initial controversy and compromise. I then move to discuss the patterns of mediatized practices that resulted from amalgamation. Here, I focus on the activities of the East StratCom Task Force, specifically on practices of myth-busting through online newsletters, that were selected for in-depth analysis. In this section I thus analyze narrative practices and media tactics in the disinformation narratives and their EU counter-narratives. In the analysis, I find signs of how the new media ecology presented solutions not only to the problems of disinformation but also to some of the uncertainties surrounding the diplomatic mandate of the EEAS. Of particular importance here were the opportunities taken of narrative practices of digital diplomacy, in which the EEAS made explicit use of strategic narratives both through the deconstruction of Russian narratives and by navigating the new media ecology and its multiple audiences. In this light, the narratives of practice signaled a disagreement between the two main groups of diplomats and communicators. They disagreed on the role and actual practices understood as digital diplomacy that reflected a more advanced stage of internalization, as compared with the initial politicization illustrated in chapter five. The mediatization process was thus in part driven by matching the problems facing the EEAS and the solutions found for them, as well as the controversy and the absence of consensus both at the Member State level and among the practitioners.

This chapter, and the time period and processes it encompasses, thus describe a creative phase of experimentation in the internalization of media logic at the EEAS. Finally, I devote the last section of this chapter to a discussion of the lessons learned from this illustration of amalgamation and the pattern of mediatized practice that have in the main been revealed by previous mediatization research. It thereby contributes to the value of a politics-centered approach to mediatization.
Setting the Scene

In the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis the EU foreign policy debate reflected a gradual acceptance of a new security environment that called for new efforts of strategic communication. Although the Ukraine crisis was a development that had not been anticipated, the role of the HR/VP, the EEAS mandate and the emphasis on public diplomacy appeared at least to be well suited to meeting some of the new challenges facing EU foreign policy. At this point, the EU Member States had reached consensus over the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, though there was still division over whether or not the EU should keep the door open for the Eastern partner countries. Moreover, the political and economic support for Ukraine had given rise to further confrontation. Increasingly, continued support for the Ukrainian reform process was met by systematic attempts to discredit the EU’s policies towards the Eastern neighborhood. The Russian strategy of spreading “disinformation” had therefore begun to worry member-state governments, in varying degrees. As greater understanding of the Russian “hybrid war” was achieved, the EU had to respond to challenges that had arisen from the new media ecology. While previously digital diplomacy was an anticipated practice that brought with it new opportunities for public diplomacy, new challenges also stressed the need for the practice to engage in containment and counter-narratives. If, in the initial adaptation phase, it could still be argued that digital diplomacy was merely a communicative development of public diplomacy through migration to a digital sphere, that was now no longer the case. As disinformation steadily became a recognized threat to EU foreign policy, a new understanding of digital diplomacy grew in importance.

Amalgamation and Hybridity

In 2015, the EEAS faced challenges that were themselves related to a mediatization of politics. The amalgamation, and hence the theorized state of a blend between political logic and media logic that I have described as resulting in intertwined practices for the purpose of strategic ends, were in this case related to both the threats and solutions facing EU foreign policy. Accordingly, 2015 was a year when notions of hybrid war and hybrid threats flourished in the EU foreign policy debate. When I speak of terms such as “hybrid war”, “hybrid threats”, “information war”, “propaganda” and “disinformation” in this chapter, I am referring to concepts in the EU foreign policy debates and EU official vocabulary. These are not analytical concepts and therefore to not require detailed theoretical definitions. The substance of these terms will however be better explained as the analysis unfolds.
logics. Hybrid war and hybrid threats refer to the weaponization of information and technology, and are thus a kind of blend between a political logic of war (or a war logic) and a media logic of power over narratives and IT infrastructure.

Reports of a Russian hybrid information war targeting the Eastern neighborhood had already flourished for several years when efforts to discredit the EU (among other international actors) were reported to be increasing in 2014. What were known as the “Color Revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine (2003-2004) had been termed a “wake-up call” for Russia, resulting in the Kremlin’s conviction of the need to build up its own social power by bridging the “attractiveness gap” between Russia and the EU (Lutsevych 2016; Missiroli (ed.) 2016). Subsequently, Russia Today (later renamed RT), a dedicated TV channel funded by the Russian government, was launched just one year after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. As indicated in the previous chapter, it was during the Ukraine crisis in 2014 that the EU had begun to realize the influence of Russian disinformation in the neighborhood. Shortly after the Ukraine crisis, disinformation campaigns also began to be discovered in Member State’s media outlets, especially in the former Soviet satellite states. The concept of disinformation quickly gained ground as a collective term for the conscious spreading of myths, lies, misconceptions and deception. In fact, experts in the field had reported that by 2014, disinformation was a fully integrated element of Russia’s military and defense arsenal and that the information line of effort was fundamental to the annexation of Crimea with the purpose of providing a strategic narrative and producing a smokescreen (House of Commons Defense Committee, 01-03-2016). Since these events “hybrid war” has been a commonly used collective term for the blend, or as in this case amalgamation, of conventional warfare and irregular warfare, for the purpose of military strategy. While the research front still (in 2018) cannot account for the full extent of the Russian hybrid war and its impact or offer a comprehensive understanding of the “weaponization of information”, this amalgamation driven by Russia sparked a changing role for EU digital diplomacy.

109 In fact, as early as in 2000, the Russian Foreign Ministry had defined “information security” as strategic activities to protect national interests in the information sphere, but it was not until ten years later that the resources were developed to match fully these aspirations (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000; Giles 2016; Aro 2016).

110 Military deception, in Russia referred to as the practice of “Maskirovka”, is centuries old and had been an integral part of Russian warfare doctrines since the 1920s. Since the beginning of the new millennium this tool had been increasingly emphasized at the political and diplomatic levels, making it ‘a prominent Russian method of warfare in the information age’ (House of Commons Defense Committee, United Kingdom, First Report of Session 2016 -17)
The amalgamation phase, in which political logic and media logic blended further at the EEAS, thus began through Russia’s hybrid warfare. While the Russian spread of disinformation in the EU and partner countries was first considered a return to Cold War propaganda, experts later grasped its new strategic and non-linear rationale (Pomerantsev & Weiss 2014). The new rationale can indeed further be traced to the role of media logic in a new media ecology (cf. table 1). As compared with, for instance, the news media’s propaganda function during the Cold War, the new media ecology did not merely communicate, frame or spread disinformation, to a large extent it also constituted its very substance. While there were more traditional and ideological strategic narratives current in the disinformation campaign, establishing a presence in the new media environment and spreading confusion were of equal importance. In addition, Russian disinformation built on media logic by means of entertainment features. The content was known to be emotionally engaging, alluding to entertainment values and combining glossy formats with a strong sense of patriotism and nostalgia. It was also avant-garde in its experimentation with different media channels and use of networking reach, via social media opportunities in new but systematic ways (e.g. the use of “bots”, “trolls” and “fakes”). Modern Russia was thus at this time considered to have embraced digital opportunities of warfare (Lucas & Pomerantsev 2016). Most importantly, the awareness of multiple audiences had led to targeted messages using different strategies. In this way, the Kremlin was able to adapt both the political content and the media means of dissemination to different audiences resulting in both effective delivery of the messages and in confusion in the attempts to build a unitary position across multiple audiences. Hence, reports had concluded that there was no “meta” or grand narrative in the Russian disinformation campaign, rather it was a series of core themes that consistently appeared but were varied and often contradicted one another (Missiroli (ed.) 2016). Russia’s use of strategic communication through various media opportunities was and is accordingly complex to understand, both with regard to ideas and institutions. It was carried out both directly and through proxies, it was proved effective but was not consistent and its delivery was highly sophisticated, targeted and specifically tailored to different audiences (Missiroli (ed.) 2016). The awareness and appraisal of audiences and the strategic appropriation of political content that does not form a comprehensive political

\[111\] Digital propaganda efforts have three main elements: “bots” (automated accounts), “trolls” and “fakes” (websites or social-media accounts that imitate genuine ones in order to spread confusion) (Lucas & Pomerantsev 2016).
narrative indicated that the means and packaging of spreading confusion in many ways had become more important than the idea of political persuasion.

Here I thus trace the Russian disinformation and the international knowledge thereof, as the initial stages of a mediatization phase of amalgamation. Bearing in mind that there was already an ongoing convergence in the ambitions of the EEAS new role in EU foreign policy and that this had already developed through an adaptation phase during the Ukraine crisis, the situation sparked a further intensification of the blend between logics at the EEAS.

An EU Response to Disinformation

By 2015, Russian disinformation was thus conceived as a threat to European security. The EU had effectively been cornered into a need to respond to these challenges, leading to what appeared to be an ongoing process of enhancing the role of strategic communication, as a now valued foreign policy tool. A process of organizing a response had, however, already been initiated. It did not take long, after it became clear that Ukraine would not sign the Association Agreement at the EaP summit in 2013, for the EU to learn of the influence that the Russian disinformation campaign had involved:

The first time that we really talked about this was during a “snow meeting” in Vilnius in 2013. 112 We knew then that Ukraine was not signing the Association Agreement and we learnt that this had something to do with the manipulative and negative perception that Russia was spreading in the neighborhood. We talked about how Russia was building a capacity to deliver lies in our partner countries and even in our Member States. It was understood as being an active use of narrative aggression and we needed to do something about it (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

We started brainstorming possible ideas of how to deal with this almost immediately, it was not taken lightly. We knew that it was about adding capacity for strategic communication but even more so it was about finding a way of managing the new information environment in a legitimate and credible way (Interview #11 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016).

112 A snow meeting is a traditional informal discussion club, organized by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry since 2008 which brings together prominent analysts, political scientists and influential politicians from all over the world. In January 2013 Lithuania held the presidency of the EU Council and the Eastern Partnership was a prioritized foreign policy objective.
In the above recollections, diplomats made it clear that the need to respond to Russian disinformation was an almost immediate reaction. Some of the early attempts to counter lies and to project hard facts and credibility that reflected this new awareness were shown in the previous chapter’s analysis of the EEAS Twitter feed. Even more so, the accounts by practitioners spoke clearly of their understanding of disinformation as being not merely something that they needed to deal with but also a potentially bigger threat this time. The above narratives thus went further than the initial response in the previous chapter, in suggesting that this was not simply a crisis management rationale but had been raised to the level of tactical urgency. Following the Russian annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol in 2014 and the collapse of the subsequent Minsk protocols that had aimed to restore stability in the Donbass region of Ukraine, there had been increasing pressure on the EU to respond to Russian aggression. Although non-recognition policy, sanctions and financial support to Ukraine had remained the main strategy of the EU, new and more direct counter-actions and protection against hybrid threats began to be requested by both Member State leaders and by the public. Since the fall of 2014, several motions and written questions that were passed on to the Commission by the European Parliament raised concerns about the lack of a common framework to counter disinformation. For instance, Poland’s foreign minister, Radek Sikorski, had floated the idea of creating an EU-funded, Russian language TV station to counter the spread of “EU myths” in the neighborhood. Furthermore, after flight MH17 was shot down over Eastern Ukraine, the Netherlands stepped in with substantial funding to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) for a study on potential responses against Russia’s “information war”.

In the beginning of January 2015, the foreign ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania and the United Kingdom issued a non-paper (a discussion document not representing an official position) on boosting the EU’s strategic communication activities in response to Russia, to be discussed during the FAC on January 19th. The coalition of four Member States outlined two main reasons for the urgency of a collective response; the nature of Russian attempts to polarize

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113 In chapter five, Radek Sikorski was identified as one of the persons with a friendly relationship to Catherine Ashton who influenced the initial anticipation of digital diplomacy at the EEAS.

114 196 Dutch nationals and 102 other people were killed when passenger plane MH17 was shot down while flying over Eastern Ukraine. The UN joint investigations team concluded that the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile launched from a pro-Russian separatist controlled territory. The EED is a Brussels-based foundation that was established in October 2012 to support pro-democracy activists and organizations in Eastern Europe (but not in Russia).
attitudes in the neighborhood as a “real security threat to the Eastern edges of the EU” and the need for the EU as “an idea” to resonate in the Eastern neighborhood by inspiring non-corrupt societies (EU Strategic communication, responding to propaganda non-paper 2015). It was at around this time that experts had begun to raise concerns to Member State governments about the seriousness of the disinformation threat, primarily in the “frontline states”—Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and in partner countries—but also in the EU as a whole (Lucas & Pomerantsev 2016). Furthermore, the reference to the role of the EU as “an idea” to counter Russian influence in the neighborhood suggested the acknowledgement of susceptibility to disinformation. In building up its own social power, Russia was targeting the EU’s counterpart. The strategic adaptation to targeted audiences had been exploiting the EU’s weaknesses in terms of internal divisions, inadequate policy delivery, mounting populism, refugee crisis etc. The role of the EU as “an idea” could hence be concerned with the need to project normative narratives more effectively and hence to reduce receptiveness to Russian disinformation. The non-paper and the subsequent meeting of the FAC on January 19th marked a new commitment to a common response and also signaled for the first time that Russian disinformation had been lifted to a common security problem. In fact, after the meeting Lithuania’s foreign minister, Linas Linkevičius, was quoted as stating that “[media] is not just a tool, it is a weapon. So, we should seriously counter it. We are not talking about European propaganda - we are talking about countering propaganda” (Panichi 2015). The need to be clear about the difference between engaging in propaganda or counter-propaganda and “countering propaganda” also appeared to be an important result of the common discussion and has since been a narrative repeated in press releases and in numerous media outlets by participants in the FAC and by EEAS officials.

In the beginning, it was absolutely central to communicate and to maintain that we would not be engaging in propaganda. That was just as important as signaling that we would be doing something (Interview #9 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016). To me, what you call it is less important, the important thing is why and how you do it and in that understanding the separation from propaganda was quite evident but yes that is very sensitive (Interview #1 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2015).)

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115 The informant here was using present tense since this conversation (pilot interview) took place when the East StratCom Task Force was just starting up its activities and there was still controversy surrounding a collective EU response.
The two narratives here were not in conflict but represented the same interpretation of the urgency of avoiding all connections to propaganda that was a key factor at that time. Around that same time, the European Parliament voted to urge the European Council to maintain EU sanctions against Russia, approve benchmarks for lifting them and additionally, urging the EU “to come up with a plan to counter the Russian information war” (Press release from EP plenary session 15-01-2015). In the end of January 2015, there was hence a political commitment to react but a policy void in terms of strategy. In March 2015, the European Council formally tasked the new High Representative, Federica Mogherini, to prepare, in cooperation with EU institutions and Member States, an action plan on strategic communication in order to address Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns. It was specifically requested that a communication team should be assembled as a first step in the implementation of this plan (Conclusions, European Council meeting 19-20 March 2015, Brussels).

In June 2015, the EED presented its report “Bringing plurality and balance to Russian language media – final recommendations” on how to challenge Kremlin dominance in the Russian language media space, stemming from the study commissioned by the Netherlands (and a later contribution by Latvia). The report argued for greater coordination among initiatives, coherent funding and the production of quality content that is trusted by audiences. The recommendations suggested that the EU focus on five building blocks: a regional Russian language news hub, a “content factory” to produce content on local issues, a center for media excellence, a basket fund bringing together government and nongovernmental funding and finally a future multimedia distribution platform, with a global brand, to ensure that the content produced reaches the widest possible audience (EED report 2015). Following presentation of the report, the European Council again stressed the need to mobilize EU instruments to help counter hybrid threats as part of strengthening the security and defense framework (Conclusions, European Council meeting 25 and 26 June 2015, Brussels).

The time after the Ukraine crisis thus reflected a time of geopolitical uncertainty where new challenges and direct threats of disinformation had emerged in the EU’s media environment. Russia’s use of media logic in an information war had thus led to a new need for strategic communication and a new role for digital diplomacy in EU foreign policy. The political context was characterized by the...

116 Shortly thereafter, the conclusions of the foreign ministers meeting in the FAC in May also invited the High Representative, in cooperation with Commission services and the European Defense Agency (EDA), to develop a joint framework to help counter hybrid threats (Council conclusions on CSDP, 18 May 2015).
need to contain and counter the disinformation campaign while still balancing the EU consensus-seeking process and the need to refrain from falling into a propaganda war. In March 2015, when the EEAS was charged with developing a strategic communication capacity, the initial blend of political logic and media logic that I have described in the previous chapter intensified to more intertwined practices. Next, I therefore turn to the narratives that described how the East StratCom Task Force approached their task and how their practices of experimenting with narrative practices in a new media ecology further developed EU digital diplomacy.

The East StratCom Task Force

In accordance with the action plan adopted in March, the EEAS East StratCom Task Force was operational by September 2015. The task force was officially charged with putting the focus on effective communication and promotion of EU policies towards the Eastern Neighborhood, strengthening the overall media environment in the region and improving the EU’s capacity to forecast, address and respond to disinformation. These objectives of the Task Force reflected the discussions during the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015 and were considered a first step towards implementing the recommendations suggested by the EED report (Interviews #1,2,3,4,6,8,9 and 1, EEAS, 2015-2017). The formal assignment of a communication task force under the framework of the EEAS to effectively counter disinformation suggested a new and more strategic role for communication and actively seizing new media opportunities.

The task force initially consisted of eight communication experts (the constellation later depended on its members being seconded from the Member States). The job description in the recruitment of task force members suggested that the team would engage in activities of “correction and fact-checking of misinformation/myth” and the “development and regular updating of EU narratives”, with an emphasis on communicating the benefits of the Eastern Partnership (Rettman 2015). The members had different professional backgrounds but were recruited as communication experts who would bring a new element to EU diplomacy.
It was very strategic choice not to use diplomats in the task force. Diplomats and civil servants have traditionally communicated EU foreign policy and, as we now know, that has failed. Here we needed communication experts with experience of the Russian media climate and with time to navigate the media landscape including social media (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

The idea was that we would not use bureaucrats or generalist diplomats, the communication experts have another approach to policy and we needed their vision (Interview #11 Junior diplomat, EEAS, December 2016).

They were a new element in the EEAS, nobody had their skillsets before, they did things differently. We had communicators before but not strategic communications officers in the true sense of the word. We needed this expertise! (Interview #23 Senior diplomat, April 2018).\textsuperscript{117}

These statements confirm an amalgamation phase in a most literal sense. The experience of the Russian media climate, the time to navigate the media landscape and a different vision, all speak of a conscious intent to include media logic in foreign policy practice. It was a conscious move but still a reaction to an amalgamation of logics in Russian foreign policy that had already taken place and a continuation of the adaptation which the EEAS had undergone during the Ukraine crisis. The recruitment of these communication experts to complement EU diplomacy was hence not an organic development of the digital diplomacy agenda at the EEAS but a reactive move to a perceived threat taking place within the new media ecology. This is also where the essence of political logic could be traced, the need and the steps taken to add capacity to this end – a strategic solution to a problem caused by similar strategy by the adversary. The idea that communication experts (most of whom had primarily professional experience from the media sphere) would take over the traditional role of civil servants, bureaucrats and diplomats in the communication of EU foreign policy is also unorthodox (Wagnsson & Hellman 2018). While states could be expected depend on communication expertise, it is important to keep in mind that the EU had not traditionally been expected to communicate its foreign policy successfully to its citizens. Foreign policy is an area of EU politics that is more restricted to inter-governmentalism than others, hence deriving its legitimacy from Member State representation. The task of explaining and motivating EU foreign policy to EU citizens has thus traditionally been considered a responsibility of the Member

\textsuperscript{117} This statement of the previous absence of strategic communication at the EEAS was again not a skills gap but foremost a reflection of the fact that 2015 was the first time that the EEAS had a mandate by the Council to engage in strategic communication.
States. Still the situation stressed the urgency of effectively managing and countering the disinformation threat in a way that politicized the new role of strategic communication at the EEAS (Bjola & Pamment 2016 p. 134).

The creation of the task force and its objectives was thus not only controversial as a response to Russian disinformation but also as a new element at the EEAS. The question of how to finance the task force was therefore a sensitive question both for the Member States and at the EEAS (Panichi 2015, Interviews #3,8 and 9, EEAS 2016). By this time, it was generally known that the Kremlin was heavily funding the Russian propaganda machine.\(^{118}\) Despite this, the EU position not to engage in a “Cold-War type” of confrontation with Russia was difficult to align with funding the East StratCom Task Force.

\[^{118}\] Although no number had been officially confirmed, Russia was in 2016 rumored to be spending between US$600 million to $1 billion annually on state controlled media (House of Commons Defense Committee, First Report of Session 2016 -17).

This was very controversial at the time and there was lot of hesitation from Western Europe and from the EU institutions. The West European instinct was that we do not engage with propaganda so we cannot fund this (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

It was ridiculous really, we were tasked with doing all this but without a budget for it! (Interview #6 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

The first statement above highlights that the hesitation was chiefly coming from Western European states while the former Soviet states in East Europe were urging the EU to do more. Despite the fact that the question of funding was much emphasized in the EED report, it appeared to be an important propaganda denominator. The EU institutions were reluctant to signal official acceptance of an information war through a substantial budget for countering activities. Therefore, it was decided that the task force would be funded on existing resources within the institutions and the Member States, including staff from institutions and cost-free seconded national experts from Member States. The first members of the East StratCom Task Force were seconded from Member States that were eager for a European response: UK, Denmark, Czech Republic, Latvia and Estonia. Other Member States later followed and seconded their own experts. The task force thus worked within the existing budget allocated to EU Strategic Communication. They also worked closely with the Commission to make sure
that relevant financial instruments supported the EU’s overall objectives vis-à-vis strategic communication in the neighborhood.

The absence of a budget and the resulting solution of cost-free seconded experts and low-cost strategies of strategic communication mattered greatly to the practices the East StratCom Task Force engaged in and how they furthered digital diplomacy at the EEAS.

We were constrained by the fact that we had no budget but there were benefits to the fact that the members were sent from the Member States. They were not socialized into EU communication but could add new perspectives. (Interview #15 Senior diplomat, EEAS, April 2018).

It led to our having to integrate into the operations in the EEAS. Since we did not have a budget it was about adding value, about using our expertise to help others spend their money better. (Interview #18 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

While in the beginning, the practitioners involved felt frustrated and expressed strong criticism about the absence of a budget, there was in retrospect some agreement on the benefits of the solution. The lack of previous EU communication experience by most of the members and integration with already ongoing operations at the EEAS also support the argument of an amalgamation phase. Rather than becoming a strictly new element at the EEAS (which in theory they were), they blended into the current organization for these pragmatic reasons. Furthermore, there was consensus around the fact that the absence of a budget and the composition of the group that resulted from this, greatly influenced the practices of experimentation and strategy that they later engaged in.

Mediatized Practices of Experimentation and Strategy

The East StratCom Task Force was an experimental group in the first place and there was no precedent for their mandate or what became their EU foreign policy activities. The group was led by British diplomat Giles Portman which was motivated by the acknowledged leadership of the UK on matters of strategic communication: “it just had to be a Brit” (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016). Portman, like many of the senior communicators at the EEAS, had experience of going between policy and communication roles at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in the UK. Apart from Portman, most
members of the task force lacked diplomatic experience and were instead qualified for their expertise in strategic communication, knowledge of Russian and the Russian media landscape. The objectives that guided the task force were divided into four categories; proactive strategic communication, ad-hoc communication, myth-busting communication and communication supporting projects in key policy areas (eeas.europa.eu 10-08-2016). Apart from these four categories of objectives that were only loosely defined, the members of the task force described how they were very much involved in the process of formulating strategy and undertaking activities:

There was no initial aim and we had to invent what to do. There were prescribed objectives, that was what we had to work with but we had to design how to implement them (Interview #10 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, December 2016).

We were a very experimental group with little initial agreement amongst ourselves. We did not even have a common definition of strategic communication which led to a creative debate. In the beginning, it was almost like a reality show – different people thrown into a house to see what would happen (Interview #7 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

This initial process again reflects the idea of amalgamation in a mediatization process but here traced in the actual practice: the members of the task force were considered to bring different ingredients to the mixture that would lead to a new output of practices. At the heart of the initial brainstorming session was however the idea that strategic communication would be the guiding logic. Moreover, there was a broad consensus in the group that the communication strategies that had been used in relation to the Eastern Partnership fell short of being strategic and the four categories of communication efforts were aimed at correcting this fault. Proactive communication was in the task force at the EEAS and amongst EU institutions widely described as activities of “EU positive narrative projection”. Positive narrative projection here was another way of separating EU activity from Russian disinformation or propaganda. Still, positive narrative projection aimed beyond setting the record straight towards gaining recognition of the EU brand by means of strategic narratives (a consensual narrative in interviews #3,4, 8,9, 13,14,15,16,17,22 and 23, EEAS 2016-2018). On the other side of the coin, “myth-busting” was introduced as direct counter-practice to effectively “bust” the myths created by the Russian disinformation campaign. Ad-hoc communication and communication to support projects in key policy areas was on the other hand concerned with strengthening the existing strategies and
correcting the past mistake of not including the communication component in policy development and implementation.\textsuperscript{119}

**Reviewing and Digesting Propaganda**

In the remainder of the analysis, I specifically turn to the category “myth-busting” and its interrelationship with the category of proactive strategic communication that together introduced a new practice of digital diplomacy to the EEAS. Whereas the other categories were developed and strengthened capacities at the EEAS and in EU foreign policy communication, myth-busting was more directly connected with the perceived threat of Russian disinformation. This was hence a new practice that was a direct result of the amalgamation phase in focus.\textsuperscript{120} Myth-busting was also the practice that came closest to the sensitive nature of counter-propaganda and therefore desired constant differentiation from what was considered malpractice. Further, myth-busting practices reflect an amalgamation phase, by illustrating the reciprocal relationship between the perceived threat of Russian disinformation and the EEAS’s attempts to make a strategic response which was also made possible by the same opportunity structure of a new media ecology.

The cornerstone of the East StratCom Task Force’s practices of myth-busting was the two online newsletters entitled *The Disinformation Review* and *The Disinformation Digest* published in both English and Russian. The newsletters were at the end of 2016 considered to account for 90% of the task force’s myth-busting activities (Interview #6 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016). The Disinformation Review was first introduced in November 2015 and later complemented by the Disinformation Digest in February 2016 (later discontinued in 2017). The Disinformation Review presented examples of pro-Kremlin disinformation and exposed the breadth of this campaign, showing the countries and languages targeted. The weekly Disinformation Review was

\textsuperscript{119} In 2017, Federica Mogherini was quoted stating that ”the best antidote for fake news is real news. For this reason, we created within the European External Action Service the first task force on strategic communications, focusing on our Eastern partners and Russian-speaking communities. Over the past 2 years, the Eastern target group StratCom has revealed more than 3,000 cases of misinformation” (Mogherini 2017). The emphasis on ”real” or ”true” as opposed to ”fake” or ”myths” hence remained central to the narrative of legitimizing the East StratCom Task Force.

\textsuperscript{120} This analysis does not follow the same tracing of the individual logics illustrated in chapter five for the reason that in this phase they are already integrated. Here, the mediatized practices are instead understood as the result of the integration of political logic and media logic.
based on a collection of disinformation examples that had been reported to the task force. The review also provided an analysis of the trends emerging from the reports received. In addition, the Disinformation Digest analyzed how pro-Kremlin media saw the world and shared the analysis of independent Russian voices. Both newsletters were explicitly expressed as not representing official EU positions although the analysis was a direct product of the task force and thus produced from within the EEAS. While the review was mostly concerned with reacting and responding, the analysis in the digest followed the logic of probing and at times even pushed through bold argumentation.

The newsletters built on information that was reported through a “myth-busting network”. It was by the end of 2016 reported to be comprised of more than 400 experts, journalists, officials, non-governmental organizations and think tanks in over 30 countries. Anyone could request to join the network; the task force was actively marketing it and always looking for new informers. After controlling the information, the task force would then analyze the myths in the newsletters and spread them accompanied by factual correction through social media, a Twitter account titled EUMythbusters (@EUvsDISinfo) and a Facebook account titled EUvsDisinfo. This myth-busting practice was a creative result of the brainstorming sessions of the East StratCom Task Force. The EED report had suggested a large-scale effort of fact-checking and rebuttal but with significant funding. The myth-busting network and the newsletter product were a result of the attempt to fulfill this aim, but without funding resources. The practitioners expressed an awareness of their ground-breaking practices in this initial period of sense-making:

> It was clear that we had to use creativity to get ahead here, we were far behind and we are still trying to melt an ice berg with a tea bag. At the same time, we were trying to make sense of our mandate – what could we do and where were the limits? (Interview #10 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

> No one else was doing this, there is no other product like ours (Interview #2 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, August 2016).

> We brought these experts into a new setting for both them and for us with the intention of finding creative solutions to a peculiar problem (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

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121 Out of this number a much smaller group were regular contributors.
The members of the task force emphasized the understanding that creativity was essential to the experimental nature of the group, as was confirmed by diplomats. Because of their lack of resources and what they considered, the great advantage of Russia, creativity was central to finding effective ways of implementing a counter-strategy. At this time, there was no other counter-strategy that used newsletters in a similar way. The NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) that had been active since 2014 had similar objectives to improve strategic communication capabilities within the alliance and allied nations in response to Russian disinformation. NATO StratCom COE was in contrast to the East StratCom Task Force, a well-funded effort which led to other counter-practices. While the task force produced newsletters that resulted from voluntary contributions from their myth-busting network, the NATO StratCom COE commissioned reports by leading experts in the field that drew on case studies of Russian disinformation. In this respect, the newsletters were unique in their purpose but also how they led to a counter-practice within the new media ecology. Rather than dissecting disinformation in the traditional way of collecting intelligence and intellectual analysis, the newsletters therefore empowered its readers to see and understand the nature of Russian disinformation themselves.

Between November 2015 and the end of December 2016, the East StratCom Task Force published 52 issues of the Disinformation Review and between February 2016 and the end of December, 36 issues of the Disinformation Digest. The Disinformation Review and the Disinformation Digest were structured in a similar manner, featuring a number of selected stories that had been reported through the myth-busting network. A majority of these stories were originally published in Russian media outlets targeting audiences in the Baltic States, the Caucasus, Belarus and Ukraine but many were also found in original English or other European languages. Apart from the well-known pro-Kremlin media outlets such as Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik, stories were found on minor websites, blogs and social media. Since November 2015, the Review had been providing data (access to a spreadsheet of reported stories) reviews of international media and so-called Pro-Kremlin disinformation on a weekly basis. The information in the Disinformation Review was effectively summarized using hyperlinks to direct

122 The East StratCom Task Force and NATO StratCom COE cooperated from the beginning. Their cooperation was strengthened through the adoption of the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats adopted in April 2016 and the Joint Declaration signed by the EU and NATO in Warsaw in June 2016.
the reader to the source of highlighted stories.\textsuperscript{123} The early newsletters had less developed graphics and focused on information while the later newsletters were more elaborate, using infographs, tables, catchy web posters and suggestive titles. They reflected the learning curve whereby the task force discovered which stories and type of content would be picked up and shared and which did not. \textsuperscript{124} In addition to reporting disinformation stories, the Disinformation Review exposed strategies of disinformation, paths of disinformation (how stories are systematically repeated in different outlets) and specific techniques (such as the frequent use of fake images in Russian media).

The Disinformation Digest differed from the Review in scope and style. It offered well-written analyses of individual stories, recycled stories or clusters of stories, outlining the Russian advances. The Digest also identified key narratives in the Russian disinformation campaigns, most prominently the EU’s lack of independence and identity and its status of being under the control of the United States. Another key narrative dimension was the fostering of anti-NATO sentiments. Furthermore, it monitored the Russian media landscape (i.e. the expansion and withdrawal of Sputnik). It also continuously reported disinformation spread, both well-known activities such as trolling on social media but also signs of propaganda campaigns in EU media (e.g. inaccurate information in the Guardian) and in factual misconceptions in the academic sphere (i.e. Disinformation Review issue 19, and Disinformation Digest 15-04-2016).

The Disinformation Review and the Disinformation Digest not only addressed disinformation related to the EU. Both publications had a general approach to the report of disinformation, but the Digest was more clearly targeting the EU audience. While the Review reported the widespread disinformation campaign, the Digest focused on explaining the pro-Kremlin narratives to the EU public. For instance, a key objective in the Russian disinformation campaign was the framing of NATO as an enemy of the Russian state; a majority of all stories reported in the Disinformation Review were somehow related to this narrative. The EU was primarily connected to this narrative through its support for NATO,

\textsuperscript{123} The first issues of the review were only spreadsheets of reported instances from the myth-busting network and were not accompanied by a covering letter at all.

\textsuperscript{124} All the issues of the Disinformation Review and the Disinformation Digest that I studied are listed in the reference list. I have listed them according to their title that in relation to the Disinformation Review changed in form from “Week 1” to “Issue Eleven” to suggestive title. The titles in the list signal the reoccurring themes. Reading through the list of titles also shows the experimentation and learning involved in the process of publishing the news letters.
although conceived as a puppet in hands of the US. The Digest offered continuous analyses of how and why this undermining of the EU had strategic value to Russia.

**Narrative Practices**

The myth-busting practices of the East StratCom Task Force were to a large extent concerned with countering and projecting alternative strategic narratives. These strategic narratives were actively disseminated and contained in different layers by the task force. First, the idea of myth-busting, correction of disinformation and positive narrative projection could itself be understood as a meta-narrative (or even meta-propaganda), it was an effort of propaganda against propaganda itself. It also represented a securitization of narratives, how narratives had become an integral part of the EU’s security agenda (Wagnsson & Hellman 2018). The decision that the EU would collectively respond to the Russian disinformation campaign therefore alluded to an international system narrative of European liberal order in opposition to Russian expansionism. Moreover, the East StratCom Task Force linked the Russian disinformation stories to the tactical use of strategic narratives, hence another narrative practice by exposing such use. Finally, the selection of disinformation stories and strategic narratives and their correction led to another narrative layer that showcased and made sense of the Russian strategic narratives before offering correction. There are thus three layers of storylines in which strategic narratives could be traced through the East StratCom Task Force: stories of how strategic communication had entered the EU’s security narrative, stories produced the by pro-Kremlin propaganda machine and stories produced by the task force. Moreover, the different levels of narratives suggested by the strategic narratives framework (international system, identity and issue) could be found in all three layers of narratives.

The international system’s narrative at play in the EU response was by far the most controversial dimension and therefore downplayed. Whereas the official debates and resulting documents were very clear about the fact that this was a response to Russia, the controversy surrounding both the sanctions against Russia and the risk of counter-propaganda led to careful balancing in the reactive tone. This was however an area where there appeared to be tensions between political logic and media logic at play. While the diplomats emphasized the East StratCom Task Forces as “a low-key strategy”. The strategic communicators were emphasizing exposure as imperative to successful reach.

We needed to develop a new capacity here but we intentionally kept it small and low profile, we needed to respond in a low-key way! (Interview #11 Junior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).
Alongside our activities here we try to raise awareness in the Member States, not just about the problem that we are tackling but also who we are, what we are doing and why! (Interview #7 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

The practitioners reflected on this tension between logics during this time and brought up several instances when a conflict between exposure to the group and “the low-key way” had occurred. This tension was also linked to the limited resources especially in terms of budget. While the diplomats did not consider the lack of an allocated budget a significant problem and some even justified it as a sensible approach, the communicators continuously emphasized the need for more resources to do more. This tension between logics is related to the international system narrative at issue, where stark opposition towards Russia would mean a political acceptance of information warfare that was controversial. The political logic thus guided the view and projection of the task force as a first and careful step of containing disinformation by strategic communication efforts to targeted groups. The media logic involved in the amalgamation however emphasized the success of the group in terms of reach and exposure. Whereas the East StratCom Task Force was an effort to challenge the Russian international system narrative, it was not politically intended to offer a counter-narrative at this level but to defend the international liberal order without playing the propaganda game. This conflict over how to characterize and project the East StratCom Task Force’s practices was over time resolved by the decreasing controversy surrounding the group and their mandate. By 2018, there was a consensus at the EEAS of the success of the task force, they had received funding and it was no longer a low-key initiative.

The Disinformation Review and the Disinformation Digest showcased Russian strategic narratives that in their own right projected an international system narrative, identity narratives and issue narratives. The Russian disinformation campaign projected strategic narratives about the other rather than itself but in so doing also reflected a self-image in the contrast to the other. The international system narrative was foremost concerned with discrediting the EU and NATO as corrupt and illiberal conspiracies. For instance, a key objective in the Russian disinformation campaign was, according to the newsletters, the framing of NATO as an enemy of the Russian state; a majority of all stories reported in the Disinformation Review were somehow related to this narrative. The EU was primarily connected to this narrative through its support for NATO although often conceived as a mere puppet in hands of the US. The Disinformation Digest offered continuous analyses of how and why this undermining of the EU had
strategic value to Russia by emphasizing this international system narrative. While Russia symbolized an orderly and organized world, the international system narrative projected the EU as a disintegrative force of influence that had resulted in chaos.

The most prominent identity narrative identified in the newsletters was the efforts of ascribing the EU a Nazi identity. The newsletters exclusively highlighted Nazi narratives or analogies to World War II. A prominent Nazi narrative was the framing of Ukraine as “governed by Nazis” (Disinformation Review, issues 6, 11, 14, 15, 16, 29, 30, 37, 40, 43, 45, 50). Among other things Ukraine was frequently reported to have concentration camps for Russian speakers. Nazi influence was also linked to NATO states, frequently reported as on the rise in Germany (personified in German chancellor Angela Merkel) and the EU was labeled a “Nazi brainchild” (Disinformation Review, issue 27, 33, 39). The frequent occurrence of this identity narrative led it to be a common theme of analysis in the Disinformation Digest. The Digest for instance, explained how the Nazi identity was contrasted to the view of Russia as the sole liberator of Europe in World War II. The Nazi narrative was also used to motivate the Russian anti-immigration discourse and the projection of general acceptance of the annexation of Crimea among European publics. This identity narrative was in the newsletters deconstructed though several narrative techniques. The Nazi narratives were contrasted with narratives within the disinformation campaign supporting obvious contradictions such as Jewish conspiracies at work in the same countries but would still leave the readers to draw their own conclusions. This was sometimes even explicitly stated, for instance after having presented stories on two interlinked issues (anti-sanction sentiment and fear of US hegemony in the EU) the newsletter reader was encouraged to draw the rather obvious conclusion about how they both support the same narrative: “finding the link between the two issues is left to the reader’s imagination” (Disinformation Review, Issue 26, 24-05-2016). These strategies of correction systematically undermined the Russian identity narratives by framing them as pathetic and paranoid. Moreover, strategic narratives were exposed using infographs to simplify the contrast between disinformation and facts. The infograph depicts four disinformation statements on top of a map with a circle titled “FACT” to the right of it. The disinformation statements, all of which relate to the Nazi identity narrative, were picked up from patterns in the disinformation reports. The disinformation statements have been

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125 In Russia, the war is called the “Great Patriotic War” and is politically still very important because it is often used to legitimize president Putin’s policies.
labeled with a classic red stamp of “DISINFORMATION”, contrasted by FACT that provides the correct facts about the supposed Nazi influence in Ukraine.

This infograph reflects how the newsletters opposed the Nazi narrative while balancing what was interpreted as counter-propaganda. Instead of rebutting the actual statements, the infograph projects facts about the far-right nationalist influence in Ukraine that allow the readers themselves to deconstruct the Nazi narratives. Still the image provides a stronger rebuttal by “stamping” the statements as disinformation.¹²⁶ In effect, a subtle counter-identity narrative is created about Russia as paranoid and its public as brainwashed. The infographs and multimedia products were in general complements of “soft packaging” for the “hard facts” made available in the newsletters. This was also where the cross posting of myth-busting content potentially had influential roles to play. The web posters and infographs produced by the task force were catchy with clear messages, often alluding to Cold War propaganda through irony. In many ways, this content followed the assumptions of the transformation of media logic (table 1, chapter two) and the pattern found in the Twitter feed in the previous chapter, the messages were simplified, polarized, spectacularized and often put an individual at the center of stories of disinformation to invoke emphatic emotions.

¹²⁶ The stamps here appear to allude to an official seal where the statements have gone through a process of authentication but “failed”.
In addition, they were well suited for the networking rationale of social media where they were posted to draw attention to the newsletters.

Finally, in contrast to the other levels of strategic narratives, the issue narratives presented convergence in the themes projected by Russia and EU public debate. While NATO conspiracy theories and Nazi influence were rather easily discarded, the issue narratives were more controversial. The awareness of different levels of sensitivity was confirmed by the members of the East StratCom Task Force:

Some of the narratives that we identify are evidently false and if we highlight it the public can see it for themselves, we don’t need to push an interpretation. But there are narratives that are more difficult to disarm because they create confusion about something that is already complicated. That is when sticking to the facts is absolutely crucial (Interview #6 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016)

Sometimes when the facts are more difficult to grasp it is just about showcasing the problem and offering an understanding of the problem (Interview #10 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016)

In the time period between November 2015 and December 2016, two central issue narratives stood out; migrant crisis and Brexit (the British referendum that resulted in a decision to leave the EU). The EU migrant crisis referred to a period in 2015 when the number of people seeking asylum in the EU more than doubled from previous years. According to the issue narrative in the Russian disinformation campaign, the migrant crisis pushed the EU to the verge of a collapse. The extract below, from the Disinformation Review, reflected the sensitivity concerning the migrant crisis issue narrative. The fact that the migrant crisis was a challenge to the EU was acknowledged upfront but the meta-narrative of an EU systemic collapse was deconstructed by carefully revealing instances of disinformation in the Member States:

We see this as the main disinformation trend this week, as the undoubted challenges the EU and Europe in general face over the refugee crisis are distorted and reported in a very inaccurate way.

Thus, in the table, you will see multiple examples of claims like “the refugee crisis is orchestrated by the USA / EU / Israel”; or that the whole migrant crisis is a part of a bigger plan to destroy European culture and Europe’s population. You will see similar claims in Dmitry Kiselyov’s show (hyperlink to media outlet, precise timecodes are included in the table). One pro-Kremlin outlet claims that pork
meat is now disappearing from German restaurants and school cafeterias, in order to please Muslim refugees [hyperlink to media outlet].

Several Czech outlets claim that Germany is going to close its borders, which will lead to thousands of refugees coming into the Czech Republic [hyperlink to media outlet// hyperlink to media outlet]. Others claim that the Visegrad countries\textsuperscript{127} will have to leave the EU to avoid being destroyed by the orchestrated arrival of migrants [hyperlink to media outlet // hyperlink to media outlet].

Extract from the Disinformation Review issue 19, 15-03-2016

While the issue narrative of the migrant crisis was chiefly handled in this way of directing the readers to the source, there were also counter-narratives in the news letters. Most prominently, the Russian involvement in the Syrian conflict was highlighted as a contributing factor to the migrant crisis in the EU. Similarly, the issue narrative on the British vote to leave the EU was in the Russian disinformation campaign reported as the beginning of the collapse of the EU and followed by numerous fake stories about other Member States popular support for leaving (e.g. Spain, Ireland, France, Sweden etc.). This was another sensitive issue narrative that connected with other levels of identity and international system narratives. The newsletters followed the same strategy of pointing out fake stories and correcting factual misrepresentations. A counter-narrative was also carefully projected by pointing to the increased support for the EU in Member States following Brexit (Disinformation Review Issue 34).

Navigating a New Media Ecology

One of the most important capacities added by the introduction of the East StratCom Task Force was the understanding of a new media ecology and the practitioners’ evolving ability to operate within it (interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016). Even more so, the Disinformation Review and the Disinformation Digest empowered their readers to understand disinformation by using new media ecology. For instance, the fact that Russian disinformation was strategically timed in the repetition of stories and the systematic spread of lies was demonstrated in all issues of the Review, both by summarizing narrative purpose and by using hyperlinks to direct readers to the original source. In this way, the newsletters also illustrated the lifespan of stories, how old stories were recycled.

\textsuperscript{127} The Visegrád group is an alliance of four Central European countries that are members of both the EU and NATO: Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia.
and connected to new stories. Below is an example of how the Review presented the linkages between reported stories in the review table including hyperlinks for redirection:

In this week’s table, you will see again well-known examples of recycled disinformation: that Ukrainians are Nazis governed by the Americans; that what happened in Ukraine was an illegitimate coup (this week, we learn, organized by Catholics: [link to media outlet]; but also some “new” efforts to denigrate the Ukrainian nation – for example, a fake UNICEF accusation that the Kyiv authorities were guilty of aggression in Donetsk and Luhansk, that was spread as far as South America [link to media outlet].

Extract from the Disinformation Review issue 17, 01-03-2016

The Disinformation Review here does not only expose the disseminating sources of disinformation, it also identifies the targeted audiences. For instance, the last-mentioned story in the above extract suggesting that UNICEF had accused Ukraine of aggression against Donetsk and Luhansk was aired by Latin American TV channel TeleSUR (Disinformation Review issue 38). Moreover, it put the stories in relation to the shifting trends in the disinformation campaign. For instance, the task force estimated how many disinformation stories occurred in the Member States media climate every month. When there was a sudden increase in stories they sounded the alarm and engaged in efforts to understand why. For instance, following the renewed aggression in the East of Ukraine during April 2016, the task force detected a strengthening of the disinformation campaign in pro-Kremlin media that was linked to the military operation (Interview #7 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

In addition, as part of the analysis of stories, the Digest charted the sources of information, experts quoted or reference to other media, organizations or studies. The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS), an official body financed by the Kremlin, was for instance a common source of often outrageous claims. At times the Digest made attempts of painting the bigger picture by showing readers how individual stories fitted into a propaganda agenda. For instance, following a political analysis of an interview with a spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry in one of Russia’s most read weekly newspapers, the Digest stated that:

128 TeleSur is a multi-state funded television network sponsored by the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia.
This sort of emotional communication and narrative language is not usual for diplomatic environments, including in Russia. Using emotional language and strong narratives secures the attention of an audience that is much broader than traditional readers of international affairs news. This communication can be seen as part of an overall trend to secure maximum involvement of the Russian public in the country’s foreign policy (Disinformation Digest, 26-02-2016).

This is an example of how the Digest went beyond myth-busting and attempted to educate readers on how to recognize and understand the Russian disinformation campaign. It also offered explanations of why and how disinformation was used as a weapon in Russian military strategy, put in stark contrast to the Western understanding of free media and journalism. There were numerous other ways in which the Digest differentiated the EU’s actions from Russian strategy. The Digest did for instance on several occasions make references to public opinion polls noting that while EU publics were critical towards Russian leadership and policies, the dissatisfaction was not extended to the Russian people (Disinformation Digest, 29-04-2016). Such statements support the notion that the EU was morally “above” Russia’s dubious activities and inspired its peoples to be informed rather than confused.

The Digest also shared the other activities of the Task Force, for instance by pointing to the results of their various infographs (the number of views on Facebook or how information was picked up in the media, among partners in the Eastern neighborhood or even in pro-Kremlin media) or other communication strategies. Every week, the Digest would end with “Friday Fun”, a story so outrageous that it bordered on comedy or satire, often produced by Russian contributors, giving the reader a chance to laugh at the absurdity of the disinformation and the stupidity of its targeted audience. An example of a Friday Fun piece was illustrated in the headline “Occultist wizards backed by NATO brainwash Russian children” referring to a new animated children’s show featuring Russian kids at war against a gang of Harry Potters turned evil by NATO (Disinformation Digest, 01-04-2016). This trend of introducing entertainment values can be seen as inspired by the Russian disinformation campaign, but attempting to suit a European public that could be expected to be more difficult to engage than the Russian speaking mass audience. For instance, British comedy such as Monty Python may not translate to all publics within the EU. Therefore, the comedy elements of the newsletters were often either over-explicit or specifically tailored for a context-aware audience such as the diplomatic corps.
Myth-busting for whom?

The Disinformation Review and the Disinformation Digest offered its readers a chance to stay up to date with the latest disinformation stories and narratives from pro-Kremlin media outlets. In this regard, the two newsletters must be considered products directed to elite audiences rather than to the general public. Although the publications were public, free of charge and successful in their aim of pedagogical communication, they were not likely to be read by the masses with relatively low levels of interest in EU foreign policy. In this sense, the task force was clearly restraining from engaging in counter-propaganda aimed at mass mobilization; instead it gave “interested readers” enough information to form their own opinion. The Disinformation review was recognized as a valuable tool for public servants, politicians, diplomats, journalists and academics since it offered an overview of the disinformation campaign. These actors would also to some extent use this information and reference back to the Review in ways that were more likely to reach the public:

Our public when we communicate EU foreign policy is always the interested not a broad audience. The idea here was that the newsletters would be a resource for the interested few so that they could spread awareness in their respective networks (Interview #18 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

At first glance, it was primarily the Brussels-based EU news outlets that made references to the newsletters (e.g. EurActiv, EUobserver, European Voice and Politico), again signs of an elite audience. This targeting of an elite audience was likely also a reflection of the constrained budget. The task force did not have the means to quantify its reach; instead it was restricted to using strategies to multiply its communications efforts through a highly connected audience. In fact, the use of the Brussels base as a source of “national multiplication” could be confirmed through the task force’s appeal to the European Parliament to help spread the message. On February 18th 2016, Giles Portman (head of the task force) told the sub-committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) that; “there is a limit to how much we as the External Action Service can reach into the public of the Member States without others’ help. That means the help of the Member States, but I really think we can use your help as well to support our network and spread the information we find out” (quote from EurActiv.com 19-02-2016).

Another obvious target audience was the Eastern neighborhood. The translation into Russian was only one side of this; the objective of a projected positive EU narrative was chiefly concentrated on restoring faith in the EU among the partner publics. This is also why getting corrections and infographs picked up in these
countries was strategically important, beyond myth-busting. Despite this, rather than targeting these publics directly, the newsletters provided local “partners” the tools for another EU narrative. The EU narratives were then appropriated to correct the disinformation spread by Russia, but again, rather than providing a counter-narrative in the strict sense the task force was trying to inspire “fact checking”.129

While the target audience was clearly limited compared with the scale of pro-Kremlin news stories, the newsletters were an active response to the Russian disinformation campaign and a proof that the EU had not remained passive. Instead of a full-frontal counter campaign, the newsletters produced by the task force depended on the principle of passing it forward and the plurality of the EU’s political and media landscape.

Lessons of Amalgamation

This chapter has served as an illustration of the mediatization of politics in its middle phase of blending, which has reflected a process of amalgamation in which media opportunities and constraints were co-constitutive with the political opportunities and constraints at hand. In considering this period of 2015-2016, this chapter has traced how the growing awareness of a new security environment discussed in the previous chapter, developed into an understanding of the intrinsic role of the new media ecology and the need to respond therein. In this vein, this period saw an amalgamation phase through the institutionalization of strategic communication in the EU foreign policy process, a clear example of how a political organization internalized media logic. This was no longer a matter of adaptation through existing practices of communication using new channels, but called for the development of a new capacity (and new practitioners). This reflected awareness that such amalgamation (between military strategy and media logic) had already occurred in Russia. To this end and seemingly in contrast to Russia, the EEAS was constrained by the political controversy surrounding the perception of this threat in the EU, an unwillingness to engage in an information war and problematic associations to Cold War propaganda. Facing this scenario of a political willingness to act (at least by a majority of Member States) and

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129 The increased role of empowering publics to conduct their own “fact checking” is an interesting tendency that can also be observed as a strategy against rising populism worldwide. For instance, “fact-checking” has been a buzzword in political campaigns since 2015 (e.g. the Brexit campaign 2016, the US presidential election 2016 etc.).
controveray, the solution to this new problem also stemmed from the new media ecology. The EEAS was able to add this capacity by recruiting new competence among media and strategic communications officers and by making use of opportunities of media ecology through cost-free practices, myth-busting through newsletters that could counter strategic narratives by navigating the disinformation campaign in ways that would empower its readers to spread the message in their own national contexts.

The East StratCom Task Force was thus a low-cost, low-key initiative that in retrospect has been deemed very successful (interviews #8, 9, 15, 16, 18 and 23, EEAS 2016-2018). Thus, the solution to the problem at hand was already available using existing ideas, competence and resources that had been anticipated in relation to the digital diplomacy agenda that was illustrated in the previous chapter.

The patterns of practices that emerged from this blending were strategic in nature, much more so than the previous attempts of digital diplomacy with relation to crisis management during the Ukraine crisis. While the pattern of mediatized practices following adaptation resulted from a politicization process where the guiding logic of crisis management led to a restricted use of the opportunities of digital diplomacy, the amalgamation process led to a more articulated goal and thus a strategic process of containment. Creativity and experimentation among the members of the East StratCom Task Force not only reflected that the EEAS was building a previously non-existent capacity, it was also a strategy used to exploit the new media ecology. In addition, the creative use of new opportunities was also where the patterns of strategic narratives both in the Russian disinformation and in the EU myth-busting activities stood out as a narrative practice in international politics that was actively used to give meaning to the international system (cf. Miskimmon et al. 2013). While the disinformation campaign was clearly adding capacity to the strategic narratives (although sometimes coherent only in their purpose of spreading confusion) by navigating multiple audiences, the myth-busting activities also showed strategic use of this opportunity, despite being limited to elite awareness as a source of multiplication.

Analytical similarities or empirical results that relate to the phase of amalgamation and the resulting patterns of mediatized practices are rarely found within the 130 In fact, the East StratCom Task Force has been described as a “lighthouse initiative” that has inspired the formation of similar task forces across EU settings to meet the challenges of the new media ecology – this development will be discussed in the next chapter (see for instance remarks by Mogherini 2016 at the plenary session of the European Parliament on the subject of the “Fotyga Report”).
dominant approaches to mediatization, for the very reason that they tend to neglect the resilience and agency involved in politics. Nevertheless, this illustration certainly alludes to the notion that we live in a mediatized society and to the idea of an omnipresence that sparks these institutionalization processes. Previous research that comes closest to this dimension is found in the sub-field of the mediatization of conflict and war (e.g. Maltby 2012a, 2012b; edited volume by Eskjær, Hjavard & Mortensen 2015; Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2015). These contributions are instructive in the consideration of the hosting context of mediatization and support the assumption of some level of initial convergence of the logics at issue. However, they only rarely consider how the logics interact in terms of the institutionalization of the repeated patterns of practices that signal adaptation to the new media logic. Hence, these studies do not focus on the blend and therefore they often fall short of accounting for the variations in the results of mediatization. A politics centered approach to mediatization is accordingly needed to situate these findings within a broader framework in which they can inform each other.

Finally, in this illustration just as in the former, there is something to be learnt from the context of EU foreign policy. While this was a case of new problems meeting new solutions in a new media ecology, in the context of EU foreign policy this was a set solution that could potentially conflict with the purpose of countering Russian disinformation during this time. What I am saying is that the problem here was not merely the fact that Russia had militarized this information dimension and that the EU was falling behind, but that this scenario also tapped into the classic EU capability-expectations gap (see, Hill 1993; Ginsberg 1999; Risse 2012 etc.). While the EU foreign policy agenda has since the 1990s signaled grand ambitions to acquire increased responsibility in world politics, the EU has continuously struggled to reach consensus in foreign policy matters and the response to the events in Iraq 2003 and Libya 2011 supports the fragmented view of the EU’s foreign policy image. Although consensus was reached to impose sanctions on Russia following the Ukraine crisis, any notion of a further response towards Russian aggression, during the period when the task force was set up in 2015, was highly controversial. This is an important factor in considering why the low-cost, low-key manner of responding through the task force and their activities was deemed so successful: it became a reactive move that could be down-played or up-played depending on context. For instance, the members of the task force were all seconded by the volunteering Member States and did not have their own

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131 This conceptualization refers to the lack of coherence between grandiose EU rhetoric and actual capabilities.
budget – hence it was not a collective foreign policy initiative in the true sense. The position in the newsletters often went further in condemnation of Russian activities than the official position would allow, but was allowed to pass thanks to the use of irony and disclaimers, that the content (although published by the EEAS) represented the official EU position. Finally, the fragmentation of audiences in the EU fitted well with the multiplication strategy through key players that furthered the awareness campaign in the national audiences. Strictly top-down information paths were thereby avoided. In sum, the East StratCom Task Force conducted digital diplomacy as an EU response to a foreign policy situation while bypassing the traditional route of lengthy consensus-seeking decision-making. Hence, this illustration has indicated that there may be opportunities to promote the EU’s international role by means of a successful mediatization process. In effect, mediatization may be further involved in the generation of EU legitimacy at a tactical level beyond primary assumptions of engagement through digital diplomacy.

**Summing up the Chapter**

This second empirical chapter has illustrated how a mediatization process through the process of amalgamation took place when the EEAS had realized that Russia was engaging in a disinformation campaign. It further traced amalgamation in the process leading to the formation of the East StratCom Task Force, a result of a blend of political logic and media logic to solve the problem of responding to Russia. This led to an analysis of the creative and experimental practices of digital diplomacy at the EEAS during 2015-2016. Specifically, it traced patterns of mediatized practices in the task force’s activities of myth-busting through online newsletters that signaled navigation of narrative layers, the exploitation of the new media ecology by Russia and the awareness of multiple audiences. Finally, the chapter argued that the East StratCom Task Force was a success because it was a case of mediatization when solutions and problems could be matched in a new media ecology and because of the specific opportunities available in the context of EU foreign policy.

This illustration ultimately served to motivate further a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics, beyond ideas of adaptation. While the connection between mediatization and hybrid warfare has been made in previous research, this is not only a tactical question. Here the amalgamation process showed that this was also a matter of social acceptance of the amalgamation in Russian foreign policy and that a similar process of integrating the new media ecology into the EU foreign policy framework was necessary. While the patterns of media mediatized practices here largely correspond to effects of mediatization at the tactical level,
understanding the role, controversy and success of the task force was dependent on the larger political context. Moreover, media logic could in this illustration no longer be untangled from political logic without failing to account for the political practice at issue which proves that the idea of blending is valuable to further the understanding of how the expressions of mediatization vary. Finally, the mediatization of politics illustrated here suggested opportunities of furthering EU foreign policy in the mediatization process.
Chapter 7.
Image, Recognition and Storytelling in a New Era of Strategic Communication

Introduction

The experience of the East StratCom Task Force led to changes in the communication culture at the EEAS and a new understanding of digital diplomacy. With the task force, the EEAS had for the first time been given a mandate for strategic communication and this new capacity spilled over into other areas of communication. This meant that digital diplomacy became increasingly associated with strategic communication and that by the summer of 2016 such practices had come to be interpreted among practitioners at the EEAS as a key component of EU foreign policy. This chapter thus describes and discusses how digital diplomacy became an established practice of strategic communication at the EEAS. Here, the political context was marked by the gradual disappearance of controversy over the role of strategic communication and a consensus at the EEAS about the necessity to do more to motivate, explain and legitimate EU foreign policy to the EU citizens. These sentiments were reflections of the new media climate since the Ukraine crisis but were further accentuated after Brexit when, by a small majority, the British people voted to leave the EU. As it happened, Brexit coincided with the launch of the new EU Global Strategy (EUGS), which emphasized the role of strategic communication in the EU’s resilience in a new political climate.

This chapter therefore departs from the reception of the EUGS at the EEAS and considers the practices that resulted from a new strategy in which strategic communication had an enhanced role. More specifically, this chapter tells the story of how the convergence of the new media ecology, the leadership of Federica
Mogherini and the launch of the EUGS intensified a process of institutionalizing strategic communication as the essence of digital diplomacy and its role in responding to changing international conditions. I therefore study how the EUGS was projected by practitioners of digital diplomacy at the EEAS. In this chapter I thus trace the interaction of political logic and media logic in established and accepted mediatized practices of digital diplomacy at the EEAS. This pattern, I will argue, reflects the phase of consolidation that I have suggested in the interaction model and suggests the most advanced phase of the internalization of media logic at the EEAS, as compared with the previous adaptation and amalgamation.

The snapshot in focus thus tells the story of how practices of digital diplomacy and, specifically, strategic communication, had become taken for granted at the EEAS. The EUGS was a document intended to produce a guiding logic for EU external action practices, and the way in which the EUGS was received and understood by practitioners and translated into practice therefore offered opportunities for consolidation in the mediatization process. Here, the projection of the EUGS reflects how the previous hesitations and controversy surrounding digital diplomacy had declined. Instead, digital diplomacy had developed into an array of practices in which the EUGS could be projected through engagement, image management and storytelling. To this end, this chapter is divided into three sections. First, I set the scene of the enhanced role of strategic communication and its incorporation in the EUGS. I then move to discuss the status of the relationship between strategic communication and EU public and digital diplomacy at about the time and make connections with the growing entanglement of the theorized consolidation phase of mediatization. While I understand mediatization along the lines of structuration and thus as an interplay between structure and agency, in which the result of blending is best found in political practice, it is in this chapter also relevant to consider the part played by, specifically, Federica Mogherini, as leader. The section therefore concludes with consideration of “the Mogherini Effect”. The second section of the chapter then moves to consider how the new strategic narrative in the EUGS was interpreted and put into effect in the practice of EEAS digital diplomacy. In so doing, I trace

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132 As structuration theory maintains that social action cannot be fully explained by structure or agency theories alone, a focus on how digital diplomacy is practised seeks to capture the interplay of actors and rules in a social context rather than agents and institutionalization processes in their separate capacity. Structuration theory is not, however, intrinsically contrary to the idea of institutional entrepreneurs and in this particular case the narratives of practitioners revealed that it is reasonable to include in the analysis the part played specifically, by Federica Mogherini, as leader.
patterns of mediatized practices in the projection of the EUGS by practitioners. While I argue that strategic communication had by this time been internalized into EEAS digital diplomacy and emphasized in common EU foreign policy, this consolidation was still not fully reflected in the interpretation of common practices. I therefore consider this snapshot to be an illustration of the early signs of consolidation, rather than as a completed phase.

This chapter and the time period recalled in it also serve as the conclusion of the empirical exploration describing and discussing the emergence of mediatized practices of digital diplomacy at the EEAS. In the final section of this chapter, I therefore discuss what can be learnt from this illustration of consolidation as the final phase within the mediatization of politics, with an eye towards analytically general insights.

Setting the Scene

Since the EEAS was first introduced in the Lisbon Treaty and launched in late 2010, making sense of its mandate and the consolidation of EU diplomatic practice had been a work in progress. Despite the formal task of reuniting EU external representation, the EEAS was in its first years often argued to be still operating on the remains of Member State diplomacy and the pre-Lisbon structure which divided its conduct between the Council Secretariat and the Commission (Juncos & Pomorska 2013, Spence 2015). Even so, the EEAS and the empowered role of the HR/VP were innovative developments that signaled a more ambitious role for common EU diplomacy and the specific need for a coherent narrative in EU public diplomacy. In addition, recent years had seen changes in the way that diplomacy was conducted on the international stage, in terms both of the new actors empowered and of emphasis on new communication patterns. As described in the previous two chapters, these were both exemplified by the emergence and development of digital diplomacy. The trajectory of EEAS development had thus been characterized by both the continuation of established diplomatic standards and practices, and the attempts to achieve transformative structures and innovative diplomatic practice. In order to navigate this nexus, both in the EEAS and in the status of EU common diplomacy added value had been sought in its role as a catalyst to strengthen the EU’s position in the world. In practice, the problem was thus not necessarily the lack of political will, institutional complexity, resources or the lack of diplomatic channels, but rather a general absence of confidence in the new role. The EUGS presented in June
2016, was an attempt to fill this gap. The fact that the guiding logic of EEAS diplomatic practice was articulated at a time when disinformation, increasing Euro-scepticism and cyber threats were conceived as being existential threats to the EU, opened the way to a consolidation in the integration between political and media logic which had been developing over the preceding years.

In 2014, at the time of her hearing at the European Parliament, Federica Mogherini signaled her intention, if appointed High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), to engage in a process of strategic reflection. A year later in the summer of 2015, she presented her assessment of the new international environment — “a more connected, contested and complex world” calling for a new security strategy (Mogherini 2015). The European Council acknowledged the call and tasked her to deliver an EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy by June 2016. She thus presented the resulting EUGS at a time now characterized by international turmoil, only days after the United Kingdom had voted to leave the EU and also in the aftermath of the Russian annexation of Crimea, when general distrust of the EU was on the rise both within and outside its borders. In this light, the EUGS was an anticipated clarification of the EU’s goals and interests in world politics. It was also a document that was anticipated in the internal organization of the EEAS. While efforts to consolidate EU diplomatic voices had been in progress for some years, the EEAS diplomatic practice still relied on traditional ways of multi-leveled and intergovernmental diplomacy, characterized by an absence of EU hierarchy (Lequesne 2015). Notably, the ambitions to strengthen the EEAS’s public diplomacy and the EU strategic narrative, as proclaimed by the Lisbon Treaty, had been missing a roadmap and practical tools of implementation. The anticipation was therefore that the EUGS would fill the gap in order to integrate policy and practice and provide both diplomatic goals and other tools needed (Interviews # 2,4,5,6,7,8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, EEAS 2016-2108). It was also a much called for

133 Although the process was driven by Mogherini, the EUGS was due to replace the former European Security Strategy from 2003 (updated in 2008) that was outdated because of the changing international environment and the institutional developments set in the Lisbon Treaty. The process to update the ESS was set in motion through the European Council Conclusions in December 2013. More specifically the ESS was outdated because it was based on an old distinction between external crisis management and internal security activities that was no longer valid (due to spill-over dimensions of migration, crime and terrorism) and because it did not take into account multi-dimensional threats to security (hybrid threats such as cyber-attacks or disinformation). In addition, the final process of strategic reflection included wide consultations with EU Member States, EU institutions, third-country representatives, civil society, experts and academics.
document among practitioners who in different ways communicated EU foreign policy, because: “without a political sense of strategy there can be no strategic communication” (Interview #12 Digital strategist, European Commission, December 2016). Hence, while the EUGS was far from being an action plan, it signaled a move towards a common sense of strategic direction.

In contrast to previous attempts (most notably in the ESS of 2003) to produce a strategic narrative that attempted to advance the EU’s security ambitions the EUGS centered on the timely approach of resilience and unity. In similarity with the EES, the EUGS had been described as an attempt to exploit the external dimension to come to terms with internal turmoil, a commitment to a strategic narrative to create order in a time of uncertainty (Mälksoo 2016). The emphasis on the projection of a strategic narrative centered on resilience and unity and was thus a continuation of the EU’s traditional soft power approach and legitimation through normative power. But it was also understood by some as a step back from previous ambitions in this area, through the new understanding of a more “principled pragmatism” as a means of pairing idealism with more realistic assessment (Cross 2016). The communication of principled pragmatism was thus generally understood as strategically important to both the internal and external justification of EU foreign policy. The idea of principled pragmatism also put more emphasis on the output and measurable success in context, as compared with previous ambitions of benchmarking against EU democratic ideals.

The EUGS concerned the overall EU foreign and security policy but had specific implications for the practice of EU public diplomacy in its emphasis on the EU’s strategic narrative.134 It both reinforced the role of EU diplomacy and the importance of public diplomacy in times of crises and brought forward the need to correct misconceptions about the EU, both internally and on the global stage. In this ambition, the EUGS projected EU credibility as a key strategic source of power and hence a diplomatic goal which also translated into strategic communication as a central diplomatic tool (Cross 2016). The EUGS was also linked to a more general agenda pursued by Federica Mogherini to strengthen the EU’s meta-narrative in international politics. In this capacity, the empowered leadership of the HR/VP mandate had been anticipated as influential and possibly even essential to the future role of the EU. The strategic narrative that Mogherini was projecting, namely of the EU’s global role, accordingly received a notable

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134 I clarify here that I do not provide a systematic analysis of the EUGS document as a whole but focus on its content in areas of public diplomacy and strategic communication and its role that mattered to the way that practitioners were doing digital diplomacy at the EEAS since June 2016.
“push” through the introduction of the EUGS. Specifically, the practical tools of resilience it provided were expected to match better the increased visibility through the HR/VP role. This convergence was also where the EEAS efforts of digital diplomacy were an important dimension of the implementation of the EUGS in practice. While previous chapters have illustrated that digital diplomacy was had been anticipated within the EEAS since its early days, it was considered that Mogherini’s leadership and the introduction of the EUGS would both better facilitate and amplify these practices (Interviews #4,5,6,7,8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, EEAS 2015-2018).

Strategic Communication and the EUGS

The previous chapter illustrated the enhanced role of strategic communication though the specific case of the East StratCom Task Force and strategies to counter disinformation. The enhanced role of strategic communication at the EEAS was, however, also a reflection that was related to both a more general development within the international practice of political communication and to the somewhat changing role of digital diplomacy during this time. “Strategic communication” had been a buzz word for well over a decade but had by this time been further stressed through debates surrounding the potential threats of disinformation and fake news. This was also where a significant change in the conceptualization and use of digital diplomacy appeared to have occurred. Whereas digital diplomacy was originally expected to foster dialogue between leaders and engagement with foreign publics, it was now increasingly conceived (and interpreted by its practitioners) as being synonymous or intertwined with strategic communication. Rather than a means of building relationships, digital diplomacy was now increasingly associated to acts of narrative projection or even attempts at persuasion. In addition, digital diplomacy had become a means of contesting reality. For instance, during the first two months of the Crimean crisis, the Russian government used social media to communicate that there were no Russian troops in Ukraine, while the US State Department used their channels to argue the opposite (Manor 2017). As was discussed in chapter five, the EU pursued a middle path that was instead characterized more by the original

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135 “Fake news” became a common term after the Brexit campaign and the US presidential campaign 2016 when myths and incorrect information flourished on social media.
conviction of digital diplomacy as a means of opening new and transparent channels for mediation, but to little meaningful effect.

There was at this time some confusion among diplomatic actors about whether or not the influence exercised in public diplomacy (and, by extension, in digital diplomacy efforts) aimed to influence perceptions or measurable political outcomes (Pamment 2016a, p. 95). For instance, the Israeli MFA, which had been among the pioneers of digital diplomacy, had openly declared their engagement in these practices, with the aim of influencing political outcomes.136 The enhanced role of strategic communication in digital diplomacy had inarguably led to more focus on goals in the international debate, as compared with the previous emphasis on relationships. The line that separated the role, practice and goals, between strategic communication and digital diplomacy, appeared to be in a state of flux.

In general, practices of strategic communication could be argued to have been well established in political governance and, at about this time in 2016, most political institutions engaged in certain activities of strategic communication.137 Accordingly, strategic communication had already become a scholarly field that informed and educated a group of professional communicators who could be found in all types of organizations. It was, nevertheless, a relatively new practice that had originated in the field of public relations and differed from traditional political communications. A Chatham House report from 2011 provides an often-cited definition of strategic communication as: “a systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across strategic, operational and tactical levels, that enables understanding of target audiences and identifies effective conduits to promote and sustain particular types of behavior” (Cornish, Lindley-French & Yorke 2011). Especially important to the differentiation from political communication on the one hand and from traditional public diplomacy

136 Digital diplomacy and public diplomacy are in the Israeli context associated with the practice of “hasbara” which is translated as “explanation” but is a term used by the Israeli government to describe its efforts of public advocacy. The aim of hasbara is to motivate and to legitimize the Israeli cause and various public organizations have engaged in these practices since the 1960s (Toledano & McKie 2013). In addition, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have been frequent users of social media with strategic purpose (Kunstman & Stein 2015).

137 Most notably, Tony Blair’s New Labor government introduced changes in the approach of government communication since 1997. They established a new Strategic Communications Unit and a 24-hour media monitoring unit, to coordinate the dissemination of the government’s message of the day. In addition, they appointed friendly former journalists to senior posts in government departments, increased the number of special advisers, or “spin doctors”, who could use new media modes to circumnavigate the press corps and communicate with the public directly (Kuhn 2002; Esser 2013).
and the first conceptualizations of digital diplomacy on the other hand, is the idea of using communication across levels in a manner that is raised to a tactical dimension of politics.

The EU, in similarity with other political organizations, had undergone changes in its communication management that reflected this increased role of strategic communication.\(^{138}\) An example of this was the fact that the general communication strategy of the EU had been significantly strengthened since 2014. The declared strategy was based on a transition from an information-oriented to a communication-oriented kind of interaction that considered social media to have “enormous potential for EU agencies” (the Communication Handbook for the EU Agencies 2013). As a result, the EU’s multiple communication strategies were slowly moving away from the aim of maximizing reach towards maximizing engagement. In extension, this shift suggested that the EU was gradually abandoning its traditional priority of communicating legitimacy through explaining representation and democratic process and instead moving towards gaining recognition for political results (which is more in line with strategies of generating output legitimacy).

The combination of a general need for strategic communication at a time of information abundance and the timely need for coherence and reduction of uncertainty surrounding the EU’s international narrative thus fed into the process of developing a new global strategy. Specifically, the EUGS declared that:

The EU will enhance its strategic communication, investing in and joining-up public diplomacy across different fields, in order to connect EU foreign policy with citizens and better communicate it to our partners. We will improve the consistency and speed of messaging on our principles and actions. We will also offer rapid, factual rebuttals of disinformation. We will continue fostering an open and inquiring media environment within and beyond the EU, also working with local players and through social media.

This passage in many ways reflected the general new emphasis on public diplomacy that was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and illustrated in chapters five and six but went further in suggesting its role to facilitate and strengthen the connection between both EU citizens and partners. Keeping in mind that public diplomacy was traditionally considered diplomatic communication with foreign publics, this understanding alludes to the blurred lines of EU foreign policy and

\(^{138}\) I stress here that many MFAs were at this time far more advanced than the EEAS in their use of strategic communication (see for instance the development of British public diplomacy in a study by Pamment 2016a).
attempts to increase internal legitimacy through external purpose and coherence. Moreover, disinformation was specifically mentioned as a key threat and social media as a tool of implementation. The new essential role of strategic communication in the EEAS’s public diplomacy and the emphasis on social media, suggested that rather than an amalgamation, as was suggested in the previous chapter, the EUGS signaled a consolidation phase that saw an integration in this set of practices that originally stemmed from both political logic and media logic.

Early Signs of Consolidation

The EUGS is an almost perfect example of how EU foreign and security policy had internalized media logic. Consolidation, I have argued, is the most advanced phase of mediatization and supposes a more or less unconscious use of media characteristics, services and opportunities in the formulation, practice and communication of politics. In this phase I have suggested that the logics are entangled beyond separation and that mediatized practices depend on their integration. This is where I argue that the understanding of strategic communication in the EUGS and, as we will see, in its projection, has blurred the lines between policy and communication. This has led to digital tools becoming a part of the agency of diplomatic practice. This development goes beyond the notion of political actors assuming media logic (Strömbäck’s fourth phase) because the mediatization has occurred within the political process rather than as a transformation of communicative output. I speak of consolidation here because unlike the illustrations in previous chapters, the incorporation of strategic communication in the EUGS suggests that there was no longer a tangible separation between the logics. Whereas the adaptation of the EEAS to project its crisis communication via Twitter (alongside other channels) during the Ukraine crisis was driven by both political interests and media demands, strategic communication here was a development of a blending process within the host context of EU diplomacy. Whereas the East StratCom Task Force suggested an amalgamation whereby specific political problems met specific media solutions, the specificity of political logic or media logic could here no longer be traced to the specific problems and solutions in question. Instead, the status of strategic communication was now taken for granted. 139

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139 Another reflection of this shift from controversy, to an aspect of EU foreign policy now taken for granted, was the fact that in 2014 and 2015, when I started to put questions about these things to people at the EEAS, informers stressed their anonymity, not only by name but also
This consolidation within the EUGS was however not only a result of policymaking and strategic reflection but a perception of clarification and justification of contemporary EU diplomatic practice. The EUGS both confirmed the role of media practices and instilled in the practitioners at the EEAS new feelings of strategic guidance. In addition, the convergence of policy and communication was already an ongoing process within EU foreign policy practice that was deliberately advanced by practitioners of EU digital diplomacy. This “uploading from below” was also a reflection of how digital diplomacy had emerged as a practice at the EEAS. This uploading, influence from practitioners through best practices was an acknowledged and positively perceived result at the EEAS. During interviews with practitioners, a common starting point in their experiences of strategic communication was this general shift that had been in progress for some time:

There has been a significant development in the role ascribed to communication in general and at the EEAS, this development will continue in the future as it is related to the strengthened role of StratCom in the Global Strategy and the new comprehensive framework of EU foreign policy (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

I have been a social media manager at the EEAS for three years and so much has happened during this time. We have undergone a change from informational communication governed by an understanding of old media towards actual strategy. Sure, there was a strategy in place before but there was nothing strategic about it (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

During the lifespan of the EEAS we have gone from a place where communication was an afterthought to its becoming an essential and integral practice (Interview #16 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

These narratives of change speak of a shift in progress that was agreed upon in this community, whereby communication in different ways had become a more integral part of their practices. The communicators had felt frustrated about the absence of clearly defined political goals (that they felt they needed, in order to do their job). The EUGS was in this regard a welcome clarification, necessary in order to match the aspirations of the EEAS public diplomacy role. The inclusion of strategic communication in the EUGS was also received by the communicators as an acknowledgement of their role in the EEAS.

by nationality (despite working in the EEAS) and initially did not want to be quoted at all on these matters. By the end of 2016 this no longer seemed to be a concern, since these requests were no longer made.
While the communications development was clearly related to multiple streams of influence, the uploading from below was chiefly understood as being the result of inspiration from the East StratCom Task Force. By the end of 2016, the task force was widely considered a big success in Brussels and described in terms of a significant influence on the communications culture:

It is a very successful initiative that in many ways changed the role of communication here and they definitely influenced the understanding of strategic communication in the EU institutions (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

They are invited everywhere here [Brussels] to talk about what they do and teach us how to step up our communication efforts (Interview #12 Digital strategist, European Commission, December 2016).

It has been a massive learning experience, I cannot stress it enough. The East StratCom Task Force was a trailblazer really, pushing the boundaries and encouraging us to communicate in a much bolder way (Interview #15 Senior diplomat, April 2018).

These statements represented a common understanding that the East StratCom Task Force had both inspired and “pushed” other areas of the EEAS (and other EU institutions and agencies') communication practices towards strategic communication. Essentially, this was a move away from a classic view of EU political communication towards more proactive practices of advocacy, campaigning and outreach. In addition, it was a change towards better use of different channels, different events, different communication strategies and public affairs. This new understanding of strategic communication was also understood as a change from efforts of informing, to strategies of explaining, engaging and listening (Interview #18 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018). A general trend thus appeared to be a change in the role of strategic communication to a new way of managing misconceptions and to project policy output. This is also where eyes were being turned towards the EEAS. The practitioners felt that the EEAS held a special role in this shift because of the emphasis on public diplomacy in the Lisbon Treaty.

The practitioners therefore also stressed the need to appropriate the content of foreign policy communication and to focus more on projecting the successful results of EU foreign policy. The change thus lay in both the political essence of communication and in the role and use of media practices in which they had become entangled.
The Mogherini Effect?

It was no coincidence that the convergence between a general shift in the EU communications and the introduction of the new Global Strategy occurred during the leadership of Federica Mogherini. While, traditionally, EU foreign policy had been a strictly top-down affair confined behind the closed doors of the FAC, under Mogherini the EEAS had entered a new era of EU foreign policy visibility which in the Brussels circles was referred to as “the Mogherini effect” (Interviews #2,4,5,6,12, 15, 15, and 19, EEAS 2016-2018). The Mogherini effect was understood as both the idea of a strengthened narrative of EU foreign policy (both in terms of coherence and tone) and increased media congeniality (visibility). At the time of her nomination Mogherini was a contested candidate. With only brief experience as foreign minister of Italy, Mogherini was relatively young (ten years younger than her predecessor, Catherine Ashton, on appointment) and to many she represented the Southern European perspective of retreat to a pre-2014 normality after the turbulence of the Ukrainian crisis. Mogherini was, however, often praised for her media literacy and her ability to reach and engage citizens. Among other things, Mogherini had written an influential lifestyle blog while building her political career in Italy and since stepping up as the HR/VP she had been praised for having actively managed her own social media accounts and prioritized them as channels of communication. Moreover, Mogherini was described as media congenial, known to be welcoming to engagement with the press and always ready to speak to and pose for the camera.

Mogherini’s understanding of media logic was within the EEAS described as a notable change from her predecessor in the way that she encouraged communicative elements in the policy process. The head of the strategic communications division around the time, Michael Mann, had described her as a “driver of digital diplomacy” in ways that correspond to adaptation to media logic by political actors:

From relatively humble beginnings on Twitter, our reach has grown exponentially and at an even greater pace since the beginning of the mandate of the new EU High Representative and Vice President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini. She recognizes the importance of team work in successful Digital Diplomacy, the need to break down the silos and insist that all staff contribute the raw materials, rather than leaving communication as an afterthought. Inspired – and trusted – from above, we have been able to undertake a major push, reinforcing our Digital Diplomacy Strategy for HQ and EU Delegations, providing pre-posting training for all new Ambassadors and working closely with the other EU bodies, something which is not always a given (guest blog post Twiplomacy, Mann, April 2015).
The role of Mogherini’s leadership in the new emphasis on strategic communication within the EEAS was generally agreed but rather than driving the consolidation I speak of above, she appeared to be encouraging adaptation to a certain format. Mogherini, practitioners claimed, understood social media, why it was important and how to use it. That, they said, had opened the way to more opportunities of visibility and for the personal qualities that her mandate brought with it to be connected to diplomatic goals. While previously digital diplomacy was more of an afterthought and social media a secondary channel of communication, Mogherini had changed things around:

We get a lot of multimedia content to work with now and we can mix the campaigns produced with visibility on Mogherini. She provides a lot of social media material, she thinks about social media when she plans her activities, there is always a team ready to shoot and there are lots of things that we can choose from, to project (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016)

It is important to have a leader who is by default also a communicator of clear foreign policy. If you have someone who is engaging in political communication it is much easier when you have a face and a voice that convey the messages and who is aware of the platform – that is when you can push the boundaries of communication forward (Interview #19 Spokesperson, EEAS, April 2018).

The description of Mogherini in this statement resonates with previous research on the adoption of media logic by politicians and diplomats’ (see chapter two). Even so, the practitioners stressed the difference between adapting to do digital diplomacy and doing digital diplomacy well. Mogherini was, according to a majority of the informers, doing a good job. The role of social media was however understood as being far from a primary channel for diplomacy and at most, complementary channels. The visibility and the attention were still primarily measured as successful in terms of being picked up by the news media. As one of the informants explained:

Sure, social media is a way of controlling the narrative, they know that, but as a leader in international politics you would still rather be quoted in Le Monde than in a tweet (Interview #4 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

The good job that Mogherini was doing was thus chiefly an exercise in courting the media, in showing the media the stories that they could (and should) be reporting. Several informants recalled Mogherini repeating that “there is no point in doing good work if nobody sees what you are doing!” (Interviews #3, 4, 13, 19,
In this light, Mogherini was perceived as mastering the art of attracting more news media attention through social media.

Although a general shift in EU communication and the emphasized role of digital diplomacy was acknowledged, the basic sentiment was thus that these practices were still at the experimental stage and largely lacked strategic coherence (Mann 2016a, 2016b). The comparison with US digital diplomacy was frequently brought up and even more so the advanced understanding of Strategic Communication in UK diplomacy and especially as performed by the FCO. There were, however, success stories from the experiments, most notably the case of the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2015, which resulted from talks facilitated by Mogherini in Lausanne. Throughout the talks, the EEAS reported via Twitter providing real-time updates and exclusive behind-the-scenes photos that were picked up by major news media around the world (using hashtags #IranTalks, #IranDeal that were also engaged by other world leaders). In addition, the EEAS had employed a translator who translated all tweets into Farsi which led to the accumulation of many Iranian followers. Finally, Mogherini broke the news of the deal through her account (@FedericaMog) resulting in the most successful tweet by the EEAS thus far (more than one million likes). This case again suggests that Twitter was a secondary channel, used to get picked up by the news media that were still perceived to matter more.

While the feelings of confidence in Mogherini were coupled with a weaker conviction of the established role of digital diplomacy on the ground, the combination of the leadership of Mogherini and the introduction of the EUGS were in 2016 often emphasized as potential game-changers:

The main goal of the EEAS social media channels is to develop a coherent narrative, that is what is needed and that is what the new strategy, the new leadership and these tools can offer (Interview #5 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2016).

While before we felt that we were in shackles trying to do digital diplomacy without being found out, with Mogherini all of a sudden it was as if we were not being brave enough (Interview #18 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

In chapter five, I discussed the role of Catherine Ashton as a facilitator of the anticipation of digital diplomacy in early years of the EEAS, whereas Mogherini was here described by informants as being more of a “driver”. Mogherini’s leadership could hence be considered along the lines of “institutional
entrepreneurship” and she was seen as an entrepreneur in the way that she was using social media to project, actively, strategic narratives of EU foreign policy.

Mediatized Practices of Strategic Narratives

I have theorized that the consolidation of political logic and media logic in a mediatization process leads to a pattern of practices that encompasses the integration of policy and communication in practices of digital diplomacy. This pattern differs from the previous patterns of mediatized practices in the inability to disentangle the political objectives and strategies from the use of media logic in practice. Hence, whereas crisis management or myth-busting are political practices in their own right that interact with media logic only in ways of doing digital diplomacy, strategic communication as projected by the EUGS builds on an inherent understanding of politics being practiced in a new media ecology. You cannot practice strategic communication without media logic or for that matter without political goals. The way a consolidation phase takes place however will again depend on the context and is therefore more likely to be influenced by experimentation and creativity than the other patterns. This is because being “new practices” means that they are less connected to previous path dependencies of political practice. I observed early signs of how the practice of digital diplomacy became characterized by experimentation and creativity in the activities of the East StratCom Task Force. In this process, this spirit of creativity in digital diplomacy had spread through the agenda of “positive EU narrative projection” (interviews #1,2,3,4,12,17,18,19 and 23, EEAS 2016-2018). In the EUGS and in its perception by the practitioners, this momentum of strategic communication was connected to aims of restoring the EU’s image and gaining global recognition of the good that the EU was doing in the world. In this understanding, the emphasis on strategic communication in the EUGS was connected to the resilience of the EU in the information environment. 140 The strengthened role of strategic

140 I emphasize here that this refers to the understandings of the EUGS and resilience in the narratives of practitioners of digital diplomacy and should therefore not be confused with more general understandings of the EUGS and EU foreign policy. Resilience is defined in the EUGS as “the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises” (EUGS 2016). The understanding of resilience in the narratives in this chapter is specifically focused on the resilience of the EU’s image. It therefore differs from the broader agenda in the EUGS where societal resilience is emphasized which focuses on the practical consequences of actions and local practices. Resilience is mentioned 41 times in the EUGS, a 60-page document (see for instance Juncos 2016).
communication in EU diplomacy could hence be found in these practices of positive narrative projection.

**Positive Narrative Projection: Image and Recognition**

In a discussion of the public diplomacy role of the EEAS, Mai’a K. Davis Cross suggested its role had been a question “image resilience” (2015, p. 341). Image resilience in this understanding, is the preservation of the EU’s soft power by maintaining positive external perceptions. Although the idea of international image is central to public diplomacy, approaches to image have usually focused on image-related problems during a specific time or problem and largely neglected the role of image resilience as a strategy over time (to some extent this was also reflected in the two previous chapters). In the case of the EU, however, problems about image have been a constant and fundamental dimension of EU communication constraints, because it relates to longstanding questions of European identity, the legitimation of European integration and the lack of an articulated end goal of the EU. Throughout its lifespan, support for the EU has always fluctuated but awareness about image and attempts to achieve resilience are new tendencies.\(^{141}\) In fact, the very creation of the EEAS through the Lisbon Treaty reflected a new emphasis on public diplomacy, understood along the lines of image resilience as a long-term strategy of managing external perceptions (Cross 2015). This argument is reflected in the fact that its formal mandate included enhancing the visibility of the EU, promoting a better understanding of the EU’s actions and positions and exerting a positive influence on how the EU was perceived in partner countries. The EEAS therefore held a key role in the efforts of image resilience after the Lisbon Treaty and the task of creating attractive narratives about the positive and successful aspects of EU policy.

A further dimension of the EU’s communications shift was the new aim not only to de-mystify and positively project a coherent narrative, but also, effectively, to gain recognition. Positive narrative projection in this sense was not understood as traditional framing practices or spin tactics, but as a question of showing actual tangible success to an international audience. Instead of projecting soft power from the EU’s status as a union of democracies, there was a common understanding of the need to increase global recognition of the good that had been done in the world. Several of the practitioners reflected about how the EU’s attractiveness was under attack at this time; it was no longer enough to be

\(^{141}\) These tendencies can be traced to the increased role of publics in international politics that I have discussed in chapters one and two
normatively “good” and it was now central to show the good that results from being good. This was likely in part a result of the contemporary media ecology encompassing false accounts of EU policy in the US presidential campaign 2016, in the Brexit campaign 2016 and in the disinformation campaign driven by Russia especially in the Eastern neighborhood. A dominant narrative among the practitioners was that the EU’s reputation in the world needed to be defended. Showcasing results was therefore a way of demystifying and getting what was considered rightful recognition, as there was a general sentiment that the EU was getting unfair treatment:

We have to advertise the EU’s achievements now. It is time that the EU gets a share of global recognition, there have been previous misconceptions – other brands have stolen the glory. This all comes down to making communication a policy component (Interview #12 Digital strategist, European Commission, December 2016).

In the case of EU foreign policy, positive narrative projection is the capacity to demystify and showcase the successful results and central to this task is simplification. We must add this additional capacity to EU foreign policy communication - communication is now competition, you have to add that competitive edge (Interview #3 Senior diplomat, EEAS, September 2016).

In sum, we have been steering away from informing the media of what we do towards a campaign style approach, we are moving from a message centered communication to audience centered communication. Instead of telling them that we are good, we show them that we are good! (Interview #16 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

These accounts of the importance of gaining recognition were put in context with the use of strategic misconceptions by others but also a more competitive information environment. Recognition was hence both about setting the record straight and also about responding to and countering adversary narratives. While several of these misconceptions were pointed out as resulting from external disinformation, the shortcomings of the news media sector within the EU were also mentioned several times. In this respect, this was also an area that connected with member-state disparities, where the news media in some countries were considered to allow the spread of misconceptions. Rather than addressing misconceptions and falling into the same activities as “they”, the remedy for this problem had been identified as the goal of adding global recognition for the actual successes of EU foreign and security policy. Practitioners often made these comments about the normative character of the EU and reasoned that “we are
good, we do good – we don’t need propaganda or disinformation we just need to
showcase our success”. Again, the EUGS was framed as a new opportunity to
further this goal and recognition was described as being central to the EU’s image
resilience both internally and externally. Success narratives were also highlighted
in the previous chapters (consensus in the response to the Ukraine crisis, the low-
key, low-cost solution of the East StratCom Task Force), in comparison with
previous strategies. Recognition of past success was now considered just as
important as furthering EU foreign and security policy.

There were numerous practices engaged with the agenda of recognition to increase
image resilience. Among them, storytelling was commonly identified as the
narrative technique best used for positive narrative projection. The central role of
storytelling was to go beyond legitimation through facts and official
communication to emotions and sentiments of recognition.

It’s about going from macro to micro, to be specific. Not to say fluffy things about
the EU as a humanitarian power but really to say how and why we engage in
external action. The storytelling approach is about saying that we are proud about
something in a very light way. It is a soft touch but it can still be incredibly
political! (Interview #16 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018)

This statement speaks of storytelling as a legitimizing process of showing the EU
public the good that EU foreign policy brings in the world. While previously the
labels of alternative power used to project the EU in international politics had
been abstract and not leading to engagement of the EU public, storytelling was
identified as an opportunity to say the same thing by using stories that would lead
to sense-making in the intended direction. For instance, when seeking to
communicate the EU’s humanitarian power in the world, a focus on the
individuals who benefit from EU aid in war-torn countries, through stories of
personal impact, was a way of legitimizing the EU’s international role. This
statement also reflected the need to project better how EU aid money was put to
use, something that practitioners had experienced had been in demand in the
aftermath of Brexit. This demand also specifically related to the “enormous
potential” (as identified in the communications handbook) of social media to set
the record straight. Increasing global recognition of the EU as a force for good
appeared central to practices of image resilience and an area where digital
diplomacy offered narrative opportunities. This development could also be
observed as a notable trend in the social media feeds where these favored
techniques had led to a new flow of EU foreign policy success stories. The early
experimentation with digital diplomacy led to infographs, informal photos and
Q&A sessions as discussed in chapter five, irony, sarcasm and empowerment of
the followers to navigate the new media ecology in chapter six. The post-EUGS scene instead saw a drastic increase in promotional videos through storytelling. Social media were during this time recognized as a way of making use of the power of storytelling, building on the logic of sharing personal stories through self-representation to an audience of followers (Lundby 2008). Storytelling therefore holds a central role in the understanding of why social media are argued to be transforming international politics, because intimacy comes with simplification of complex politics, transparency of previously secretive activities, interaction and speed (cf. table 1 the transformation of media logic).

**Storytelling and The European Way Campaign**

A concrete example of how image resilience and the quest for global recognition characterized EU digital diplomacy after the introduction of the EUGS at this time was *The European Way* campaign. Public diplomacy campaigns follow the common assumption that successful influence results from showing the best version of a national image (Adler-Nissen & Tsinovoi 2018). Here the national image was instead about promoting a common European identity, hence the title that suggests there is such a thing as a “European way”. The campaign was launched in March 2017 and included four animated videos that sought to explain why EU foreign policy matters to its audience. By this time, the EUGS had already led to other digital campaigns, following the rationale of storytelling that was picked up in the narratives. Among them a campaign in cooperation with UNICEF titled #EmergencyLessons featured celebrities and children to highlight what school means for children affected by crises (in Ukraine, Guinea or Iraq).

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142 Another practice that was trending during this time was to speak of “curation” and specifically “co-curation”. Curation is the term commonly used to describe the selection (or production) of content on social media with emphasis on the “flow” of content. Co-curation was a technique used during this time to engage partners (NGO’s etc.) by letting them manage EU social media accounts during a limited time. The aim was again to increase legitimacy by sharing stories from the grassroots. The idea of curation was closely related to storytelling, the practitioners sometimes confused one with the other, which is why I here focus on storytelling practices where curation was an implicit way of managing the stories and videos were the favored format.

143 #EmergencyLessons in many ways also exemplified the narratives of image resilience and global recognition through the norms and strategies of media logic in a new media ecology by following (spectacular) celebrities and (emotionally engaging) children in showcasing EU aid policy. The celebrities were British actor Tom Hiddleston; Italian European Space Agency astronaut, Samantha Cristoforetti; Slovenian basketball player Boštjan Nachbar; and Hungarian news presenter and media personality Kriszta D. Tóth. Over seven months, stories
The European Way campaign was however of even further relevance as it sought to promote EU foreign policy to a general audience and specifically focused on projecting the EUGS. The campaign was launched in March 2017 and included four animated videos that sought to explain why EU foreign policy matters to its audience. The campaign was introduced by the EEAS Strategic communication team and was spread in all social media channels in combination with communication about the EUGS, often with the adjoining hashtags #EuropeanWay, #EUGS or #EUGlobalStrategy. The campaign presentation text read:

Europe’s foreign policy matters to you. A strong European foreign policy can help our region’s stability and provide Europeans with great opportunities. This is the Union we are building with the Global Strategy for foreign and security policy (from the EEAS website 27-03-2017).

In sum, the campaign sought to motivate EU foreign policy and aligned with the central narratives of resilience and principled pragmatism in the EUGS. In so doing, the four videos told different stories. These videos reflected a trend highlighted by practitioners in storytelling and video format that was considered a best practice around the time of the EUGS launch. Since early 2016, the EEAS social media channels had increasingly been projecting short YouTube videos that either featured extracts from speeches with key arguments by the HR/VP Mogherini or catchy argumentative storytelling videos. The storytelling videos sought to communicate narratives of EU foreign policy that explained, motivated or justified EU external action. These videos were considered a move away from communicating EU foreign policy output in terms of numbers and towards projecting, instead, engaging stories of the individuals who benefitted from those numbers.

Numbers are out, now it’s all about showing the faces of those that are affected. When the EU invests in education in partner countries we need to show the children who can now go to school. We want to know their stories, who they are! (Interview #14 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2017).

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of children in crisis situations were shared on social media using the hashtag #EmergencyLessons.

144 Storytelling and videos were still considered best practices of EU digital diplomacy in the summer of 2018.
Sometimes trying to make EU foreign policy into a story is really complex, there is no clear plot to the reality of things and we still want representation and to communicate in a way that is digestible for the public. That is when personal storytelling using video is a valuable approach - to focus on the reality of a person rather than the complexities of the world. (Interview #23 Senior diplomat, EEAS, April 2018).

This pattern was confirmed as a favored practice by practitioners and an area where the communication experts felt they were involved in the transformation of EU diplomacy. This was thus a result of the consolidation whereby these practices were no longer considered to be related to the new media ecology but a natural development of diplomatic practices. For instance, both diplomats and communicators described how storytelling was becoming an instrumental part in the strategic communication of foreign policy for several reasons:

A video lets you tell a story where you can control the narrative on several levels but still fit the format of social media, we can cross-post it and we know from experience that we get more coverage than through other types of content (Interview #14 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2017).

They know how this type of communication works, that is their job, they can package politics in ways that will get the public’s attention and more importantly how to explain politics to the uninterested or the uninformed. As diplomats, we know the purpose and we know the goal but how to get there, how to actually do public diplomacy which is not our typical audience - this is where communication experts are important to the development of digital diplomacy (Interview #8 Senior diplomat, EEAS, November 2016).

Here at the EEAS we are slow compared to the international practice of digital diplomacy. You have to have speed, you have to have trust. Here we don’t have that capacity, we really have to push our content, it can take months to get even the smallest thing approved and there are at least three levels of clearance to go through. That is why videos are great because we can loop them and then still actually use some elements of timing (Interview #6 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

While storytelling techniques have a very evident connection to media logic, specifically to formats of popular culture, this connection was never problematized by the informants. While in the previous illustrations such adaptation or use of media techniques were discussed and related the restricted mandate of the EEAS and the danger of propaganda practice, such reflections did not follow this trend.
Instead, the rationales above suggested that these practices had become an accepted part of “doing public diplomacy”, but that the practitioners were aware that the EEAS was behind in the international diplomatic community. These motivations of image resilience and global recognition through practices that were no longer controversial could all be traced in videos of *The European Way* campaign.

The first video *EU Global Strategy – Foreign policy matters to you* projected to the audience a general narrative of the importance of a strong EU foreign policy. In order to face threats such as terrorism, weak economies and migration (conceptualized as enforced displacement), a strong EU foreign policy was described as a way to overcome them and bring stability and opportunities to EU citizens. The main message of the video was that isolation was not the answer, instead the EU must engage with partners outside its borders, “acting together the European way”.

The second video *EU Global Strategy – A future for Syrian refugees* explained why Syrian refugees have been forced to flee their country and how their deepest wish of returning depended on the EU’s help to end war and rebuild Syria. By focusing on educational support, the EU was helping Syrian children to get a chance to learn a job and get opportunities that will keep them away from the influence of fear and hatred (images of armed men all dressed in black that alluded to jihadist militant group and the unrecognized proto-state ISIS). The video specifically articulated that the EU support of education in Syria is “EU diplomacy at work”.

The third video *EU Global Strategy – The story of Sophia* told the story of Sophia, an infant born on an EU military ship after her pregnant mother had fled violence in Somalia through the hands of human smugglers. The human smugglers put her and her mother at risk but she was saved by a European military vessel. It was therefore decided to name the EU’s new naval operation in the Mediterranean after Sophia, since it aimed to make the sea safer by arresting smugglers and training coast guards in partner countries to prevent risky voyages. In the video the European way was projected as the joint force to fight crime and save lives. This video thus used a personal storytelling technique, telling a compelling story of an individual to personalize and dramatize politics. Here, baby Sophia’s life was saved thanks to an effective EU migration policy and security enforcement.

The fourth and final video *EU Global Strategy – Solar Energy in Uganda* explained how investments in faraway places like Africa could create jobs in the EU, using the example of a solar plant in Uganda. The plant was built with funds and loans from the EU and now provided clean and safe energy in Uganda and had created jobs for both Africans and the private EU firms that were contracted to build the
plant. The key narrative was that EU foreign policy could benefit both European citizens and international friends.

The videos, produced by a contractor, were animated in the same way, using cartoons in motion and narrated by two voices (two of the videos by a male voice and two by a female voice). The tone of the narration alluded to movie trailers and the videos were accordingly accompanied by dramatic music. The music assisted the dramaturgy, amplifying the initial tragedy when suspense was mounting and finally when the hero (EU Foreign and Security Policy) saved the day. Although the videos projected different sub-narratives they are conclude with the same punchline:

This is the union we are building with the Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy. This is what we can achieve when we act together – the European way (EEAS Strategic communication March 2017).

What is perhaps most striking about these videos, which explicitly projected the EUGS, is that they clearly targeted an internal audience of EU citizens. The identity narrative was one of “us” and “we” which was only at times complemented by the inclusion of “partners” or “international friends”. The four videos all sought to explain and motivate EU foreign policy to EU citizens, what the EU was doing in terms of migration and foreign aid and more importantly why these activities in distant places benefit EU citizens. This targeted audience could be considered surprising bearing in mind that the use of strategic narratives in public diplomacy (or other areas of representation of external action) had previously been thought of as strategies that enhance positive perceptions about an actor to foreign publics (Miskimmon et al. 2013, p.9).

One of the organizers behind the campaign confirmed this targeted audience:

This campaign, these videos were indeed intended to target a wide EU public, the idea being to raise awareness of EU Foreign Policy among citizens. This was important in relation to the EU Global Strategy and the new momentum that it had brought. We launched this campaign in order to get people interested and engaged in some of the initiatives that followed, among them PESCO (Interview #14 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2017).

While the campaign went south to project and motivate the EUGS, the intent went further to prepare and raise awareness for some of the initiatives that were launched following the EUGS. The statement above makes references to the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defense (PESCO), a much-debated initiative for defense cooperation that was initiated in September 2017.
The development of PESCO had sparked the longstanding debate over the idea of a common European defense capacity which could be expected to need both engagement and legitimation from the internal EU audience. This legitimation of foreign and security policy to an internal audience was thus only partly understood by the hybridity of EU external action. The EEAS had a coordinating role and as such it was understandable that the projection of coherence was both internally and externally important. Still, these videos legitimized the implementation of EU external action, not the preceding steps of policy formulation and coalition building such as in the case of PESCO. Furthermore, they sought to legitimize the activities that were carried out on international or foreign waters or lands.

The overarching storyline projected a narrative of EU foreign policy as successful and urgently necessary to the wellbeing of both citizens and foreign publics. A strong strategic narrative held promises of success that was here related to the EU’s global presence in the quest for international security. The international system narrative thus supported the liberal international order and the view of the EU as primarily a normative and economic power. The narratives of success and legitimation of the EU’s global role supported the claim that the EUGS was introduced as a means of using the external dimension to come to terms with internal turmoil (Mälksoo 2016). Moreover, the issue narratives in the videos built on extensive simplifications of EU foreign policy. A polemic issue, such as migration and the managing efforts of the EU’s naval operations in the Mediterranean, was here presented as a successful and unproblematic way of saving baby Sophia’s life. In reality, EU migration policy and the enforcement of the external border security have been contested among the Member States and although the storyline avoids contested discourse by focusing on “forced displacement” and “human smugglers”, this narrative had wider policy implications. A similar simplification of contested EU policy was found in all four videos. The economic issue and criticism of EU foreign aid was countered through the projection of mutual prosperity and job growth. The terrorism issue was countered through the EU’s normative influence and focus on education in conflict, which resonated with the frame of principled pragmatism. These simplifications and the focus on the output benefits for EU citizens suggested that these were counter-narratives, projected to offer understandings of common misconceptions. These counter-narratives thus served to oppose the EU crisis narratives of migration, economy, terrorism and, perhaps most importantly, narratives of disintegration. The videos both began and ended with an emphasis on the importance of working together. Since the EUGS was launched only days after the UK voted to leave the union, the timing of its presentation had been
suggested to be an act of strategic diplomacy to counter disintegration in its own right (Cross 2016). Countering narratives of disintegration was therefore an evident strategy of image resilience.

The European way campaign was a rather unexpected product of EU digital diplomacy. It was directed to an internal audience that would appear to need substantial simplification and even polarization in terms of good (EU global presence and security) versus evil (insecurity though wars, terrorism, economic decline, job loss), to grasp EU foreign policy. This was not the traditional audience of EU communication which has been member-state media and elites, but more likely a response to increasing populism and right-wing narratives. Accordingly, the practitioners referred to informational or promotional videos as elements that could be used as conversation starters, which was a new strategy:

Storytelling videos are conversation starters and they are a great way to simplify and visualize the message (Interview #10 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, November 2016).

We know that our press releases do not engage the EU public. The Global Strategy sparked a lot of initiatives and we needed to get people engaged in this new era of EU foreign policy. We wanted to do something different, something more dynamic so based on past experiences of the need to be “lighter” in our communication we decided to try animation, using engaging stories that were relatable (Interview #14 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2017).

The videos are didactic, we realized now that we need to teach our followers, not just inform them! (Interview #15 Senior diplomat, April 2018).

These statements again associated the role of storytelling with the urgency of engaging the EU public and making them understand why EU foreign policy is important. Videos had been identified as the best way of doing this and the Strategic Communications Divisions were being accorded increasing resources to do it. In 2017, a video editor was added to the team and yearly filming trips to the ENP countries provided them with a lot of video material.145 In fact, Federica Mogherini was said to personally to have argued for the simplifying videos after a meeting with the EU Council: “The leaders of the EU don’t even know what we are doing, we have to educate them on EU foreign policy” (recollected quote in Interview #15 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

145 Making in-house productions was considered cheaper and a way of better controlling the content but contractors were still used to produce EUGS content.
The European Way campaign thus served as a valuable illustration of the stakes of a consolidation between political logic and media logic. Despite the fact that this campaign reflected use of popular cultural aesthetics and a commercialization of EU foreign policy in the attempts to “sell” the EUGS (and its future initiatives), it was in the eyes of the practitioners the result of a policy process, a political debate and a political trend of favoring engagement over reach. Using personalized narratives that not only simplified the policies involved were here used to portray them as less controversial. It was also to illustrate how principled pragmatism was indeed about emphasizing the results rather than the normative influence of the EU’s global role, especially in relation to European security. Here, storytelling stood out as a pattern of mediatized practices precisely because the purposes that stemmed from political logic and media logic were consolidated, which reflected that strategic communication was now an integral part of policy.

The EU Audience(s)

The European Way campaign illustrated how audiences mattered to strategic communication and how EU digital diplomacy was again not only directed to foreign publics. The awareness of multiple audiences and the balancing between them was not a new dimension of EU communication and it comes hand in hand with its multi-leveled and transnational challenges. This was however a challenge that was often brought up in interviews in relation to the promise of digital diplomacy that was particularly relevant to the EU. Moreover, while the understanding of digital diplomacy in the accounts generally reflected a process of gradual change and experimentation, observations of EEAS’s social media channels reflected an advanced use of digital channels and active practices of positive narrative projection. The EEAS social media channels were at this time updated several times per day with extensive use of multimedia and images and interactive engagement (mostly through reposts). The content was to a large extent, however, simply the communication of events and developments that occurred in other spaces. In this sense, visibility was the main purpose. Occasionally, this role was however overstepped depending on audience appropriation. Twitter, for instance, being known to be the EU’s favored channel of social media was used to communicate and engage with other official channels in Brussels, which sometimes led to more interaction and less information. The interviews confirmed that audience appropriation was a well-established and highly valued strategy:
70% of the EU’s followers on Twitter come from within the EU, 30% come from outside, and basically it is Brussels or high-level member-state interaction. In this sense, it is internal communication to people who are interested and up to speed. With other channels like Facebook it’s the opposite, it’s mostly the outside world and that is a wholly different story (Interview #12 Digital strategist European Commission, December 2016).

We have come this far and we now know more about our audiences and we try to be smart about it. Our website is for a professional elite audience, Twitter is for journalists and other engaged professional groups, Facebook is for a generalist audience, Instagram is for young people (Interview #14 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2017).

Although Twitter stood out here, there was a general understanding among communications personnel that the audiences for digital diplomacy were those interested and that it was not a means of reaching new groups. That is interesting in contrast to the European way campaign that simplified and framed EU foreign policy, as if directed to a new audience. It was however important to distinguish between the uninterested and critics. Rather than reaching a new audience, the European way campaign could be considered a means of engaging with critics, which was another pattern in digital diplomacy practice. This resonated with a general emphasis on the need to move from goals of reach to goals of engagement.

We are now focused on engagement rather than reach. Engagement and credibility are absolutely key and to do that we need to be aware of our audiences. Basically, there are three key audiences for all EU communication; the Brussels bubble that serves as a multiplier in their respective networks, stake-holders (Member States and international partners) and interested citizens. These are the target groups we focus on, there is no point trying to reach the non-interested population within or outside the EU’s borders, besides it is not our mandate (Interview #12 Digital strategist European Commission, December 2016).

It’s about adding capacity and not just doing the same thing in a different way. We want to fulfil the expectations of our traditional audience but also to raise awareness and engagement in those groups that we have not been able to reach before (Interview #14 Social media manager, EEAS, November 2017).
We try to communicate so that a more general audience of people can understand and then it is useful to use stories even though they become rather commonsensical or shallow. It is about reaching those people who are not in the loop but still listen and who are more prone to buy into populism or disinformation (Interview # 23 Senior diplomat, EEAS, April 2018).

“Interested” was according to these statements thus not synonymous with being positively oriented towards the EU, and was equally about trying to convince the critics. The communications personnel at the EEAS often talked about their foreign audiences as hesitant and misinformed publics in partner countries. Diplomats in contrast were more concerned with the EU public and the “dangerous” critical voices. Recognition of the EU brand was thus not described as the problem but what it meant and specifically what it meant to them was the goal of positive narrative projection. Furthermore, while the communicators never discussed digital audiences as a generational dimension, senior diplomats constantly referred to these audiences as the “young people”. To a large extent, this was also how digital diplomacy had been officially projected by the EU:

The next generation are ready to listen and engage in lively two-ways dialogues, which is vital in this most challenging of times. We need to tap into this potential (M. Mann on Twiplomacy, May 2016).

We need to be on social media because of the importance of communicating with a younger audience (Interview #3 Senior diplomat, EEAS, September 2016).

Strategic communications officers and social media managers on the other hand specifically emphasized that this was not about reaching new audiences but to engage with different audiences.

The key capacity is the ability to speak to a diversity of people through the active use of social media (Interview #10 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, December 2016).

More than anything this is about being aware of the fact that we have very specific objectives if we for instance talk about the EU as a security provider in East Asia. We need to think about who we want to tell this to, we need to bring the audience in, to use them to reach our objectives (Interview #16 Strategic communications officer, EEAS, April 2018).

To some degree, this discrepancy appeared to be well known and managed but not consolidated in the digital diplomacy culture of the EEAS. While in
agreement about the role and practices of digital diplomacy, the conversations during interviews often steered towards an “us” and “them” separation between the diplomats and communicators. While diplomats were described as generalists with generalist approaches to digital diplomacy, communicators represented a more specialist approach. These disparities reflected that when it came to audience awareness this was still not a “finished” consolidation phase. Thus, while audiences were not theorized in their own right in the analytical framework in this study, disagreement about their role was still a signal of a constraint on EU digital diplomacy and area where the practices of reach and engagement were yet to be consolidated. Still, although audiences where not convincingly navigated and managed, audience awareness was highly integral to these practices and represented a significant development since the early days of EEAS Twitter use.

Lessons of Consolidation

This chapter has illustrated how the mediatization of politics, in its most advanced form of blending, can be considered a process of consolidation of political logic and media logic to such a degree that they can no longer be identified in their own right. While in the previous two chapters I have traced elements of political logic and media logic in the blending process, here the consolidation resulted in a new integrated logic. This new logic was no longer concerned with adaptation or the strategy of solving problems but rather with a more general agenda for EU foreign policy. The role of strategic communication in the EUGS and the way that it was both perceived and incorporated in diplomatic practice signaled such consolidation although it was perhaps not in its final stage just yet. The specificity of the EUGS carries weight in this argument, since it was not another communication strategy or action plan but an actual new grand strategy for EU external action. All the same, a strictly linguistic analysis of the EUGS (from a media-centered approach to the mediatization of politics) would likely have concluded that the enhanced role of strategic communication was a sign of political adaptation to the narratives of the crisis in the news media and to the new media ecology. Although some level of adaptation was certainly involved, this process (which led to a consolidation in the EUGS) reflected deep entanglement.

146 Bearing in mind that many of the communicators had diplomatic backgrounds this must be understood as a reflection of their current role rather than a true professional divide.
The consolidation in question was situated on several levels that were not entirely coherently developed. Since 2013, the international political climate had changed in ways that had influenced EU foreign policy, via renewed Russian assertiveness leading to the Ukrainian crisis, a disinformation campaign targeting both Member States and the neighborhood, migration crises, trends of populism and nationalism and the decision by the UK to leave the EU. Moreover, insecurity in the transatlantic relationship had further stressed the need for EU cooperation and coherence in matters of foreign and security policy. All these international developments had been linked to a new urgency in the management of competing narratives in the media ecology. While digital diplomacy emerged as a practice during the early anticipation of the Arab Spring a few years earlier, it had during this time developed into being more strictly concerned with strategies of managing communication patterns in terms of containment and strategic communication. A strong indicator that a consolidation had taken place was the fact that the EEAS practitioners reported consensual agreement both among the EU Member States and within the EEAS on the role of, and need for, strategic communication at this time. Compared with the conflicting views during the Ukraine crisis and the contestations surrounding the formation of the East StratCom Task Force, consensus over efforts to achieve strategic communication was a notable development. Hence, by 2017, it was fair to claim that strategic communication was on track to become an institutionalized practice in EU diplomacy, largely as a result of the development that I have studied in this thesis.

This process had been conducted on multiple levels. The enhanced role of the EUGS and the numerous efforts that the EEAS had made to strengthen this capacity signaled a consolidation at a governing institutional level. At the time when the EUGS was launched in 2016, there were articulated ambitions, accepted guidelines and tools of implementation in place to establish strategic communication as a central activity of EU public diplomacy and in effect of digital diplomacy. The period in focus here had also included the recruitment of new professional groups to the EEAS that had borne witness to a change in the way that communication was currently understood, valued and projected. Practitioners of digital diplomacy were by no means limited to the group of diplomats and included communicators in different roles who had largely influenced the emerging culture in this community. The practices on the ground had in this way largely been a result of empowered capacities and resources from above, but policy and implementation structures were also a result of uploading

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147 The leadership of US President Donald Trump had by this time led to uncertainty over the status of the transatlantic relationship between the EU and the US.
from practitioners on the ground driven by best practices and success stories. Uploading here emphasized how the integration of political professionals and media professionals drove the mediatization blend. However, the culture among practitioners of digital diplomacy appeared to be far from consolidated. While the different professional groups were united in the value and purpose of their practices, they had rather different views on how and to what effect their practices should be perceived. A consolidation in the mediatization of politics could, it would seem, be driven from both within and outside the political context and it is perhaps when these factors aligned that the blending had accelerated.

The mediatized practices in this pattern were more connected to policy than in the previous expressions. Specifically, this pattern reflected how the emphasis on image resilience and global recognition, which, in the EUGS, was framed in terms of principled pragmatism, depended on strategic communication in the implementation of the EEAS practices. Here, storytelling stood out as a favored practice that was almost a direct opposite of traditional EU foreign policy communication. The European Way campaign exemplified this dominant pattern by providing very explicit connections to the strategic narratives involved in the EUGS. This pattern also suggested that the audience awareness that had been at issue throughout the development of EEAS digital diplomacy was now of instrumental value, yet was still not effectively managed.

This snapshot of consolidation not only served to illustrate this specific phase, but also provided the closing scene in the play to which the previous two illustrations had also contributed. In effect, this illustration supports the value of a politics centered approach to mediatization, by showing how mediatization processes not only take place in politics but also matter in politics. Moreover, the variations in the way in which the mediatization of politics has been expressed in this chapter signaled that they constituted different phases of a larger process. Here, I have demonstrated that mediatization theory is valuable to the study of politics, because it can help us understand this complex process in which politics is constituted in relation to both internal and external conditions and advanced through both structural prerequisites and the agency of organizations and individuals. To my best knowledge, despite the fact that institutionalization is the dominant supporting theory of mediatization, no similar study of the mediatization of politics has been carried out. The illustration of consolidation therefore allows me to argue that it is crucial to look beyond adaptation to consider what happens when such practices are repeated and played out in a political context.

Finally, the empirical study and the illustration in focus in this chapter suggest significant implications from the mediatization of politics in the case of EU
foreign policy. Through these illustrations we have seen the gradual but swift disappearance of controversy surrounding strategic communication as a foreign policy practice. This was a significant development because it also signaled that the opportunities at issue that were identified in the outset of this study (and discussed in the discussion of operationalization in the analytical framework) had to some extent been grasped. This study has discussed how EU foreign policy has been perceived to play a central role in the re-acquisition of public support and that this role has been advanced through the digital diplomacy agenda. While digital diplomacy is still an emergent practice it also became clear that it is connected with the generation of legitimacy which, during this period has also undergone a development in terms of strategy. The narratives brought to light in this chapter signal a move towards communicating effective results and “building a brand around success”. This suggests that the strategy of generating legitimacy had switched, to focus more on output, in contrast to previous strategies of emphasizing input legitimacy. It is important to keep in mind that these were communication strategies and as such did not necessarily reflect the more general legitimacy generation of EU integration. This result nonetheless signals, at the very least, that the perception of EU legitimacy was changing.

**Summing up the Chapter**

This third empirical chapter has illustrated how a mediatization process, through the process of consolidation, took place in relation to and in the projection of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) launched in June 2016. It thus traced consolidation to the process of strategic reflection overseen by the new HR/VP Federica Mogherini in response to a changing political climate both within and outside the EU. Among other things, the EUGS enhanced the role of strategic communication, giving it, as I have argued here, the status of a policy component. The result of this consolidation of the institutional logics was thus the integration of strategic communication in the EU foreign policy framework which, in this chapter I traced to practices in digital diplomacy. This led to an analysis of how attempts to achieve image resilience and global recognition guided the digital diplomacy practices that followed the EUGS after June 2016. I have argued that these practices were characterized by a true integration of the institutional logics in the way that strategic communication had become taken for granted and had become the organizing practice of digital diplomacy. Specifically, it traced patterns of storytelling to project the EU’s strategic narrative during this time which was exemplified by an in-depth analysis of a video campaign titled “The European Way”. Finally, the chapter put forward the argument that the EUGS served as a final step in the internalization of media logic at the EEAS. This
institutionalization of digital diplomacy, I argued, was linked to a shift in which the legitimacy-generating practices of communication moved towards projecting output legitimacy rather than the traditional EU communication characterized by input legitimacy.

This illustration served to conclude the events that had characterized the time period in focus in the empirical study and thus to evaluate the value of a politics centered approach to the mediatization of politics in relation to an institutionalization process. In this regard, it supported the argument that studies of political adaptation of media logic tend to fall short of accounting for the process that takes place within politics when the institutional logics interact. In this light, it also proved the value of studying the mediatization of politics over time to account for how variations not only differ given the political context but are also related to each other. Through the exploration of the specific context of EU foreign policy, a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics has therefore been instrumental in understanding how politics is conducted in a new media ecology, in ways that both condition and result from the political practice.
Chapter 8.
Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to develop a politics centered approach to the mediatization of politics in response to the media centered perspectives that have dominated this field of study. This has been accomplished through a confrontation with dominant approaches that took account of both the promises and the shortcomings of previous research related to the mediatization of politics. This led me to rethink the scope and the conditions of a mediatization of politics and to propose a new analytical framework in which to address political contexts in mediatization processes. The main contribution of this framework has been to offer a new interaction model for the relationship between political logic and media logic, which might account for variations in the expressions of mediatization and which can be traced in political practice. This interaction model was developed and illustrated through a case study of the context of EU foreign policy and specifically of the EEAS practices of digital diplomacy. Although this case developed in real-time, the expected mediatization played out: the discursive strategies and performative tactics traced through narratives to a blend between political logic and media logic became neutral and natural practices of EU digital diplomacy and a mediatization of politics was realized.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss the strengths of this approach and thereby the contribution that this thesis makes to mediatization theory, especially but not exclusively, within political science. To this end, I discuss the findings in the case study both in relation to the context of EU foreign policy and to politics in a more general sense. This entails that I deal specifically with the role of politics in the variation that results from a mediatization process and I discuss the conditions for the mediatization of politics. Finally, I end this thesis by thinking ahead about the implications of the findings I have offered and about the avenues for future research that this politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics has opened.
Politics in a Mediatization Process

In order to develop a politics centered approach to mediatization, I introduced a question in the introductory chapter which has guided the study presented in this thesis: *What happens to political practices in a mediatization process?* This question was motivated by a previous lack of attention to the political context in which mediatization processes are conducted. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the mediatization of politics is a process wherein the guiding institutional logics at stake, namely political logic and media logic, blend through different phases. This argument remained the focal point of this study, which has contrasted it with otherwise dominant approaches to mediatization. In this regard, the first conclusion to be drawn in relation to the research questions is that politics do matter and that the questions that I have posed, in order to probe the involvement of politics in mediatization, have been proven to matter for the understanding of mediatization in a political context.

Using a dramaturgical illustration, politics matters because it sets the scene in which a mediatization plays out and it provides at least parts of the cast that come to the scene with a rehearsed script. Their training and ability to improvise will greatly influence how the mediatization play evolves and with what result. Mediatization is also emerges, as it were, “off-stage” and therefore also brings something to the play, such as new members of the cast, script changes, new props and so on. This leads to an interaction, so that by the time the play opens before an audience, these elements have at least to some degree been harmonized. I use this dramaturgical illustration because it is these initial steps of staging, casting and rehearsals that previous research on the mediatization of politics tends to miss. When politics is represented in the media it is already at the stage of performing for an audience, the cast has already been set, the props are already chosen, the script has already been learnt and the space for improvisation has already been limited. What remain are the enactment, the reception and the reviews. Hence, when we study political communication, media perceptions in politics and political representation in the media, we fail to consider all the ways in which politics has contributed to the performance we have witnessed. The questions I have asked about what happens to political practices when they interact with elements of media-driven change have therefore contributed to an acknowledgement that politics is more than an institution in which mediatization is performed and that it matters as regards how the mediatization of politics plays out.
Digital diplomacy in many ways demonstrates the urgency of accounting for the steps preceding the performance because it happens in real-time, is interactive and is an in-the-moment practice. Without attempts to understand the actors and their processes to make sense of the underlying communication patterns that result from digital diplomacy, we are left with an inadequate account of the political context in which the play nonetheless took place. In addition, digital diplomacy is a complementary practice and the digital stage-performance is always related to other performances, on other stages. While it is complementary, the audience is often bigger in a real-time drama, which in some ways juxtaposes its role in relation to traditional face-to-face diplomacy. Social media also invites the audience to engage directly with the play by liking, commenting and sharing its content. All this adds up to the importance of keeping in mind that what you see of politics or, here, diplomacy, is a result of much more than the representation on a stage or screen.

The integration between the stage, cast, scripts, props and the performance in the mediatization of politics has in this thesis been argued and theorized in terms of a blend between guiding institutional logics, political logic and media logic. By envisioning the interaction in terms of a blend, I have suggested that the intensification of mediatization is an intensified blend that also accounts for the variations in the mediatization of politics. This assumption was in contrast to dominant approaches that have suggested the interaction to intensify by invasion or even replacement of political logic in favor of the stronger media logic. In this regard, this was an argument with high stakes. The rethinking of the variation of mediatization also leads to questions about the conditions under which such a blend occurs. To develop further the conclusion that politics matters, I therefore turn to the two supporting research questions that have served to assist in focusing this study. I asked: How can we account for variations in, and of, the mediatization of politics? And: Under what conditions has the mediatization of politics occurred in the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS?

The answers to these questions serve both to substantiate and to nuance what happens to political practices in a mediatization process. In the next sections I therefore begin with a discussion of the variations in the mediatization of politics and of how the approach developed in this thesis contributes to their understanding. I end this first part of the concluding chapter by turning to the conditions for the mediatization of politics learned from the exploration of digital diplomacy in the EEAS.
Variation in the Mediatization of Politics

The institutionalization of digital diplomacy that I have traced in this thesis had, by the time I finished my study almost become a fact taken for granted as a result of the tumultuous political times with which it had coincided. In this regard, it was common to speak of the new role of strategic communication as a result of the new media ecology and the exploitation of new media opportunities by adversary actors in international politics. A result of this thesis, even more important than demonstrating this institutionalization, was therefore a need to nuance how it happen. Specifically, I showed that it was not only an adaptation to external factors but also stemmed from an anticipation that had predated the Ukraine crisis and remained among the practitioners who shaped the emerging practices. In this sense, tracing the blend led me to conclude that the mediatization of politics varies according to the context or even the given situation in which that blend occurs.

I have argued that the interaction between political logic and media logic can be envisioned in three phases of blending, namely an initial adaptation phase, a middle amalgamation phase and a final consolidation phase. In addition, I have traced these phases through variations in mediatized practices. Before turning to the phases and what they contribute to an understanding of variation, I remind the reader of the previous discussions about linearity in the first three chapters. On the one hand, I have opposed the idea of deterministic linearity, in which mediatization intensifies according to pre-given assumptions of the permeance of media logic. On the other hand, I have myself offered a new, but still linear way of describing the intensification of mediatization through three phases. I therefore clarify here that although I consider the blend in the three phases to reflect a gradual intensification, whereby the first phase leads to the second and where a consolidation suggests a finished process, practices are not linear. What I mean here is that an adaptation to Twitter in times of crisis management does not automatically lead to future myth-busting efforts. In fact, had it not been for the nature of the new threats of disinformation in the new media ecology, digital diplomacy at the EEAS might have evolved in a very different way – or not at all. Digitalization for instance, although a notable trend, is not only considered beneficial but can also be volatile in ways that cause organizations to abandon new practices in favor of the old ones. Such a retreat may also be the consequence of

\[\text{(148) For instance, digitalization has led to an increase in intelligence leaks (e.g. Wikileaks) that have become a big challenge to governments that have lost control over third-party exposure of sensitive data. While there is debate about whether this is a good or a bad development, there}\]
new leadership. If Mogherini had not favored digital diplomacy practices or if someone else had been chosen to lead the EEAS, the mediatization process might not have intensified. If the new group of communicators had not joined the EEAS during this time, the communication attempts might have been more in line with traditional EU communication. What I am saying is that practices reflect variations in the mediatization of politics but do not necessarily reflect a linear process in the internalization of media logic.

In the empirical study of the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS we saw a gradual process of intensification in the blend between political logic and media logic but that was only within a specific set of practices. Apart from the development of digital diplomacy, the EEAS has hosted multiple processes with the aim of consolidating EU diplomacy and, while some of them may have reflected mediatization (such as the press service), others will not have. Thus, the variations in mediatization which I have studied do not reinforce the view of a one-way high road in which every aspect of politics eventually becomes mediatized.

I have argued that the mediatization of politics varies according to how blended the institutional logics have become. In the adaptation phase, the blend was in an initial stage and the practices that resulted from it reflected an interactive relationship between the logics but one that could easily be disentangled. In the empirical study, the adaptation phase was exemplified by the politicization of Twitter during the Ukraine crisis. This led to practices of crisis management communication which reflected both the expected political logic and the new elements of media logic. The politicization of Twitter in this example can be compared to the politicization of televised debates as discussed in relation to the Kennedy-Nixon campaign in the US Presidential election in 1960. This phase of mediatization (in two different media ecologies) was in both these instances a reflection of adaptation but they led to different practices by Kennedy (and his team) and by Nixon. Variation is thus inherent both between phases and within phases. This means that the practices that resulted for the EEAS adaptation phases may not be reproduced by another organization undergoing adaptation. The generalizability lies instead in the stage of the blend of the institutional logics that a similar analysis of mediatized practices can determine.

An amalgamation phase reflects a more intensified blend between the institutional logics and I have argued that it can be recognized through a match between

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are certain types of data on which there is agreement about the dangers of digitalization, for example as regards sensitive medical information about citizens.
political goals and media solutions. In the context of the EEAS, I exemplified this phase through a focus on the East StratCom Task Force and their practices of myth-busting. Here, the East StratCom Task Force was initially a low-cost, low-key way of responding to Russian disinformation. Essentially the problems that had emerged from the new media ecology were met with solutions that likewise stemmed from a new media ecology. The myth-busting practices were in this regard, not just a sign of adaptation (although adaptation came first) but led to experimentation and new practices that were unprecedented. In chapter three, I suggested that propaganda warfare during the Cold War may reflect amalgamation in instances when it was a favored political strategy. Here the role of propaganda during the Cold War is a good example of how mediatized practices can be abandoned. When the international political context changed, many of these practices disappeared or were transformed (for instance in the shape of public diplomacy). In a similar way, the threat of disinformation may decrease if the problem either goes away or if we learn that the influence of such operations is diminishing. It is then likely that the East StratCom Task Force and their practices will disappear or transform to fill other functions.\footnote{At the time of writing, there is no indication that this will happen. Instead, the East StratCom Task Force has inspired the creation of two additional communications task forces in the EEAS directed to the Southern neighborhood and directed to the Western Balkans.}

The final phase, consolidation, differs more from the other two phases than the previous steps of intensification have implied. Here, I have argued that a mediatization process reflects a consolidation phase when the logics are entangled beyond separation and the blend can be traced in practices of politics that are taken for granted. A consolidation would thus be signaled in practices that reflect “finished” internalization of media logic when such practices are no longer thought of as foreign or new in the political organization. Here I suggested that the enhanced role of strategic communication in EU foreign policy, and specifically in the EUGS, was a sign of such consolidation. In the illustration of this phase I did however point out that this was not a finished phase since there was still some disagreement about the perceived role of the mediatized practices in the EEAS. In relation to this final phase I have also come to believe that the new media ecology differs from previous media ecologies (or waves of mediatization). As discussed in relation to the transformation of media logic (see table 1), I have maintained that the concept of media logic, and thus the assumptions of mediatization in the institutional perspective, can be transferred to a new media context. However, I do not imagine that the media logic associated with the new media sector could blend with political logic to a degree that reflects
consolidation. Even so, in the empirical study, the resulting pattern of practices is exemplified by strategic communication which is a field of practice that largely depends on the traditional understanding of media logic. It is therefore not the practices themselves that I suggest are different because of the new media ecology. Instead, I consider the taken for granted, naturalized and neutral role of these practices to signal the permeance of the new media ecology. In part, I think this is related to the perception of a retained political control of strategic communication in the context of a new media ecology, as compared with the news media sector which, to many politicians and diplomats, is associated with lost control over their narratives.

Collectively, these phases make up a sequence of institutionalization or, as I have chosen to speak of it, an internalization of media logic. The analytical role of variations has thus here been to break down this process and see what happens to political practices in a more delimited contextual phase. In so doing, I have also offered a way of studying and accounting for variations in a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics.

**Variation in the Role of Audiences?**

While I have focused this study on variation in institutional phases and practices, other variations have been signaled in the findings of the empirical study. As I have mentioned throughout this thesis, not studying the audience of digital diplomacy still led to insights about the multiple audiences that influenced the practitioners’ perceived influence of digital diplomacy and the strategies towards appropriation. Although this is sidestepping from the focused research questions, these insights still contribute to our understanding of what happens to political practices in a mediatization process. I therefore briefly summarize and reflect on the variation in the role of audiences which this study has uncovered and which I consider an outcome of the laboratory that the context of EU foreign policy provided me with.

The very idea of public diplomacy builds on relationships with audiences and, in the case of the EU, this has been a long-term obstacle. The increased awareness of multiple audiences and strategies for appropriation that came with the Internet revolution and digital diplomacy was thus of particular value for the EU. The EU had been struggling to reach and engage its audiences precisely because of this multitude. Here, the role of audiences in a mediatization process seemed linked to the perceptions of opportunity and anticipation which this study has discussed. The role of audiences was also central to the digital diplomacy practice that followed. Specifically, it appeared that the awareness and strategies of
appropriation seemed to vary according to the mediatization phases I have argued for and studied in this thesis. The intensification of the blend of political logic and media logic thus also reflected a process of approaching audiences.

In the first phase of adaptation, the targeted audience was, to a large extent, the Brussels base of Twitter users who act as multipliers in their respective networks and the news media that were at the time increasingly using Twitter to monitor crisis development. In the second amalgamation phase, the audience was an EU elite that could raise awareness of the disinformation campaign and how to counter it in their respective network (national multipliers). Finally, in the consolidation phase, the audience was a wider EU public which was targeted during attempts to strengthen the EU’s strategic narrative and to win over its critics.

In sum, the level of audience awareness and hence appropriation appeared to be related to the role that social media were perceived to play in the communication of EU foreign policy (see table 5).

Table 5. Audience Awareness and Variation in Mediatization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Amalgamation</th>
<th>Consolidation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience awareness</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of social media</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Complementary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should therefore be added that the blend between political logic and media logic in a mediatization process is also likely to reflect the increasing role of audience awareness and appropriation and that this will also influence the perceived role of digital channels in mediatized practices. In addition, this result also says something about the new media ecology that has led both to an expanded reach of multiple audiences and to difficulties in managing them. The shift illustrated in table 4 therefore supports my argument that the consolidation phase may be more closely connected with the new media ecology than the previous phases. Most importantly, the consolidation phase reflected a much higher awareness of audiences and reflections surrounding how to appropriate the narratives. In relation to the projection of the EUGS, digital channels were also perceived by the practitioners to be primary channels, as compared with their previous
supporting role. This finding, which provides greater nuance in the understanding of variation in the mediatization of politics, resulted from the attention to political context. The topic of audiences naturally came up in all interviews because of the particular challenges facing the EU in this regard. Here, I thus again stress the value of a politics-centered approach.

**Conditions for Mediatization**

I based my argument of blending logics on assumptions of an inter-institutional interaction between political logic and media logic (Maltby 2012a, 2012b; Hjardard 2014) and further the idea that media logic correlates with political logic to the extent that they are mutually constitutive (Marcinkowski 2005; Trenz 2008). I further probed this idea in previous studies of mediatization and related research in IR and I found support for convergence between the institutional logics as a reasonable facilitating condition for the mediatization of politics. While convergence might sound vague and commonsensical here, I remind the reader that divergence has been the common approach to envision the relationship between political logic and media logic. Convergence between the logics then instead served as an analytical starting point in my attempt to advance a politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics. The belief that convergence hosts the mediatization of politics also led to some initial expectations of the more specific conditions for mediatization, which I discussed when moving the analytical framework to the context of EU foreign policy, at the end of chapter three. In addition to illustrating a mediatization process, the role of the empirical study has been to develop these conditions further, in order to strengthen the theoretical claims by conditionalizing their validity.

The need to conditionalize theoretical claims, in order to develop “scope conditions”, derives from sociological accounts of theory construction. Scope conditions are thought to be essential to conditional testing of theories, that is to say, to conditionalizing theory. In practice, this implies that knowledge claims can be supported through the identification of the scope and conditions in which they are fulfilled rather than be held as universal principles (Cohen 1980). As theories in the social sciences are unlikely to be universal in their applicability, it is important to be explicit about their conditions (King et al. 1994). Hence, theoretical formulations are made conditional by specifying their scope. Bearing

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150 I clarify here that social media were considered to be a primary channel for the projection of the EUGS by the practitioners of digital diplomacy at the EEAS. I thus do not claim that this was a more general perception of the role of social media at the EEAS.
in mind that the target for this thesis has been theory development rather than theory testing, I have not offered predetermined scope conditions of the politics-centered approach to the mediatization of politics. Nonetheless, in order for the analytical framework to be able to travel to other contexts (in which it may be tested) and in order to make generalizable claims from the empirical study, the second supporting research question aimed for this concluding chapter to offer scope conditions. Hence, the approach I have developed in this thesis should be paired with conditions under which the blend between logics in the mediatization of politics is expected to hold more analytical promise than other situations or settings.

The scope conditions I offer all depart from my argument about convergence: that mediatization is more likely to happen when there is some attraction between political logic and media logic, when they are expected to serve each other in a political context. Based on the politics-centered approach which I traced in chapter two and on the findings in the empirical study, I consider that three specific conditions have, independently or together, driven the convergence between the logics in the development of digital diplomacy in the EEAS. I thus suggest that these conditions should accompany the analytical framework and if fulfilled will increase the likelihood of the mediatization of politics as envisaged in this thesis.

**Opportunity**

Although this thesis has not been preoccupied with lengthy discussions of the nature of EU legitimacy, inherent connections with the legitimation of the EU and the role of foreign policy to this end nevertheless emerged in the empirical study. Against the background of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the new media ecology had been connected with the pressing need to increase public engagement in EU politics. The launch of the EEAS, a new institutional body that was to consolidate EU diplomacy, was anticipated in this spirit of expectations of matching the EU’s global role with diplomatic visibility, coherence and public engagement with foreign publics and with an EU public. This perception of an opportunity at stake in efforts of digital diplomacy subsisted throughout the time period I have studied, but changed in character. While initially the opportunity at stake was paired with idealism and the anticipation of coherent EU external action, as envisioned in the Lisbon Treaty, it later became understood as a more practical set of opportunities to overcome specific constraints.

Following the argument of Marcinkowski (2005) and Trenz (2008), the opportunity condition for the mediatization of politics is related to the demands
of popular democracy. When there is a public demand for information, communication and visibility, there is opportunity at stake in a “successful” mediatization. In this case, the demand came not from the public but was an acknowledged challenge in the Lisbon Treaty. Furthermore, while there might not have been an increased public demand for communication in relation to EU foreign policy specifically, this coincided with a global trend of new visibility demands which had led international organizations and agencies to invest more in communication (Seib 2012). This argument is amplified in the context of new media where news media had lost the monopoly of public reach. International organizations that desire visibility were thus during this time becoming aware of the opportunity of reaching and engaging with transnational audiences through social media (Jackson 2018).

The anticipation of reach and visibility through social media was first perceived as desirable in the EEAS but by the end of the time period (in the last snapshot in chapter seven) transformed into a matter of urgency. Practitioners first described how digital diplomacy was first understood as opportunities which they could and wanted to engage with, and later how they had to make use of them. Opportunity thus appeared to have played a role in how the phases of mediatization evolved from one to the other. While opportunity was first understood as anticipation it then evolved into opportunities to counter a problem and finally an opportunity for necessary resilience. The opportunities thus became increasingly connected to constraints (that I will turn to next). The new media ecology thus came to serve as a more specific opportunity to influence the common narratives, ideologies, and loyalties that had been perceived as crucial to the esteem of the EU’s political desirability and its legitimacy. An article by Christina Archetti (2017) pointed out that politicians’ personal image and self-presentational aspects are results of the networked reality of contemporary politics, rather than the lost autonomy of politics to media logic in a mediatization process. These findings resonate with the understanding of opportunity here. These opportunities are not limited to politicians or political organization and one might go so far as to say that political systems also depend on image and self-presentation and such opportunities for self-mediatization will therefore be grasped (cf. Esser 2013). The increased demand for such opportunities in the EEAS is also likely to reflect the growing self-interest in an emerging organization. In fact, Rebecca Adler-Nissen has conceptualized the relationship between the EEAS and member-state MFAs as a struggle for symbolic power (2014). The opportunities grasped to increase its visibility could thus also be considered an act of competition with other EU diplomatic organizations. In his extensive study of the EEAS, Jost-Henrik Morgenstern-Pomorski found that, as would be expected from the trajectory of
bureaucratic development, the EEAS has increasingly been driven by self-interest in its competitive institutional environment (2018). The results in chapter seven offer support for these findings of increasing self-interest (the emphasis on strategic communication after Brexit) and the stakes of symbolic power (storytelling). One can also imagine that mediatized practices enabled socialization processes at the EEAS, where storytelling, for instance, offers a way of making sense of organizational purpose and actions.

Opportunity was a condition that drove the mediatization of politics in the development of digital diplomacy in the EEAS because it incentivized the leadership and the practitioners to do more than just adapting. As we have seen, the patterns of mediatized practices have consciously reflected the specific context at the EEAS where adaptation was always accompanied with some level of experimentation. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that political organizations, institutions or groups are more likely to internalize media logic into their practices when an opportunity of doing so has been perceived.

**Constraint**

The development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS has been continuously accompanied by constraints. At first there were political constraints surrounding how the EEAS should be doing digital diplomacy. While these constraints were never truly overcome, the new constraints of disinformation pushed (through the mandate given by the Council) the EEAS to develop new digital capacities. Finally, the post-Ukraine and Brexit era established strategic communication as central to the resilience of the EU in a new constrained information environment. This development reflects what the research front on digital diplomacy has asserted, namely that while digital diplomacy was initially conceived as a great opportunity it later become a necessary strategy to counter terrorist recruitment and to contain propaganda and disinformation (Seib 2012; Bjola 2016; Bjola & Pamment 2016). The constraints that stem from the new media ecology have consequently pushed governments and MFAs to pay more attention to the digital sphere.

Thus, the institutional logics may converge in harmony in the face of constraints such as obstacles or challenges that relate to communication capacity. Digitalization offers ways of overcoming constraints such as the lack of resources or information reach. The lack of resources was especially highlighted in the adaptation and amalgamation phases, where these constraints led to creative and experimental use of digital diplomacy. Media logic may also offer ways of coming to terms with political constraints, for instance by using humor (Adler-Nissen &
Tsinovoi 2018) or comics (Hansen 2017) to confront sensitive issues. We saw such use of irony and sarcasm by the East StratCom Task Force as ways of projecting counter-narratives without falling into the propaganda practices. Constraints may thus lead to media solutions to political problems.

Constraint was thus also a condition that drove the mediatization of politics in the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS because it forced the leadership and the practitioners to find ways of overcoming it. Just as the first digital diplomacy initiatives in the US were efforts to overcome the new threats of terrorist recruitment online, the EEAS practices of digital diplomacy were a response to specific problems. Overcoming constraints in the new media ecology, and also institutional constraints, typically led to a greater blend between the institutional logics. This was particularly prominent in chapter six where a greater blend in the Russian foreign policy strategy (disinformation) was handled through a similar (but different) response at the EEAS. In addition, these constraints ultimately led to the enhancement of the role of strategic communication in the EUGS. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that political organizations, institutions or groups are more likely to internalize media logic into their practices when constraint pushes them towards such solutions.

**Entrepreneurship**

Finally, I have argued that actors matter in the mediatization of politics. The empirical study has asserted this by emphasizing both the role of leadership and the social group of practitioners where practices are agreed upon. Specifically, I have showed in all three chapters how the HR/VPs Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini in different ways facilitated, encouraged and demanded the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS. Ashton was described by the practitioners as “media shy” and had a troubled relationship with the news media. This led to greater emphasis on digital diplomacy, which was perceived as a welcome way of doing communications work without too much involvement of the news media. In addition, Ashton’s personal relationships were considered to have mattered to the way that the EEAS was able to launch its digital diplomacy.

151 In the last months of writing this thesis, the East StratCom Task Force was receiving an increasing amount of criticism in news media and in academia precisely for this logic of countering by doing the same. Charlotte Wagnsson and Maria Hellman, for instance, suggested that the EU, being a normative power, should instead “spread positive stories about the self while simultaneously pursuing traditional public diplomacy without signaling superiority or ridiculing the other” (2018, p 1172). It is reasonable to argue that the inconsistency with normative power (which can be considered an overarching political logic) in these practices is due to the involvement of media logic.
Most importantly, her friendship with Hillary Clinton led to access to advice from Alec Ross, who had been imperative in the development of the 21st Century Statecraft Initiative. By contrast to Ashton, Mogherini was described as “media congenial” and therefore positive towards a more coherent communications strategy that included digital diplomacy. Mogherini was perceived to have personally emphasized strategic communication and encouraged some of the trending practices like storytelling videos.

Other recent studies of the way that mediatization happens in organizations have also emphasized leadership. For instance, as already mentioned, Fredriksson, Schillemans and Pallas (2015) found in their study of governmental agencies in Sweden that management structure determines how an organization internalizes media logic.\(^\text{152}\) Although the findings in this study will not lead to such a general statement, it has shown that leadership was involved in the process whereby the institutional logics blended to different results. Thus, actors could be entrepreneurs of mediatization. The understanding of entrepreneurship here departs from literature on institutional entrepreneurs (DiMaggio 1988; Fligstein 2001; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence 2004; Kingdon 1995) and “norm entrepreneurs” (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998) but includes both influence over the policy process and in day-to-day practices of doing politics.

Thus, entrepreneurship appears to increase the likelihood of a mediatization process to intensify in three different ways. First, actors who encourage or initiate mediatized practices, by adapting to external expectations or influences, recreate the structural forces of mediatization (Meyen et al. 2014, p. 281). This was the case when Ashton adapted to practices that were already followed by others such as her friend, Hillary Clinton. Actors may also have perceived opportunities or constraints before they are acknowledged by the organization and therefore drive the process by drawing attention to certain solutions. Finally, actors may have a skill-set that enables or speeds up the development of mediatized practices. Mogherini was, for instance, considered to be doing digital diplomacy before she took on the role of HR/VP at the EEAS. These three ways of entrepreneurship can be performed both by leaders of a political organization or amongst the practitioners who take part in the would-be mediatized practices. We have for instance seen how the new professional group of communicators, most notably

\(^{152}\) Specifically they found that career managers invest more in media management than in organizations led by field-professionals. One can imagine here that the career manager profession reflects more blending between institutional logics (not just political logic and media logic) than field-professionals.
illustrated by the members of the East StratCom Task Force, introduced new mediatized practices at the EEAS.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that political organizations, institutions or groups are more likely to internalize media logic into their practices when there is entrepreneurship involved that facilitates or speeds up this process.

**Conditions for Mediatization and the Institutional Approach**

The answer to the second focused question I posed in the introduction is thus that opportunity, constraint and entrepreneurship have been the conditions for mediatization in the development of digital diplomacy at the EEAS 2011-2017. Since these conditions could also be traced in previous research I consider them likely scope conditions of mediatization. In addition, these three conditions are classic determinants of change in institutionalization processes (Hall & Taylor 1996). Specifically, they highlight the multiple directions from which change can occur (both bottom-up and top-down processes and internal and external pressure). Their role as scope conditions here therefore does not contradict previous research. I have departed from an institutional approach to mediatization where such determinants of change could be expected. Here, however, they offer more support to the importance of focusing on convergence between political logic and media logic. The fact that the institutional approach still led to these conditions offers support for the need to abandon the view of political logic and media logic as perfect opposites.

**Thinking Ahead**

Before I turn to offer suggestions for future avenues of research, I will take this opportunity to reflect on what the mediatization of politics implies. Specifically, the arguments, discussions and findings that I have brought forward in this thesis lead to some inevitable questions about the consequences of the mediatization of politics. If, as I have shown, mediatization happens in politics through institutionalization where institutional logics blend to result in new practices, what can we expect from all this? Moreover, since this is indeed a timely subject and resonates with some of the big challenges of the new media ecology to society at large, what can we expect from the future? While the study in the context of EU foreign policy that I have conducted does not necessarily make clear suggestions for future developments, the fact that digital diplomacy has been established as a practice in EU diplomacy and that this practice has developed
from the promises of two-way engagement to be more about strategic communication, indicates that strategic narratives will remain relevant in the future.

This shift in the understanding of the role and practice of digital diplomacy is also a reflection of the role of contexts and of political logic in a mediatization process. Rather than a reflection of changes in the new media ecology during this time, this shift was a result of the changing political climate and the encounter between the internal conditions and external factors that drove the process. Whereas strategic communication was always an opportunity at issue in digital diplomacy practice it was not until this direction was directly related to a political problem that this path clearly evolved. In fact, at the outset of the EEAS exploration of digital diplomacy, strategic communication in the understanding that it later developed into, was consciously avoided and rejected as a “cold war practice”. The narratives that I have obtained from practitioners have spoken of a general ambivalence towards digital diplomacy practice. While digital diplomacy has been spoken of in terms of anticipation, this has also been a process of adapting to demands that were not conceived as fully compatible with traditional diplomatic practice. At the time of writing, and partly because of some of the developments in international politics that this thesis has highlighted, this ambivalence is also partly reflected in the public debate on digital diplomacy. The initial anticipation has at the very least been paired with challenges. In relation to this debate on the future, the findings in this thesis would suggest that digital diplomacy will continue to evolve but that the political essence of diplomacy will likely not be a victim of digitalization but can be an equal partner. The conditions for mediatization can however change both the essence and the speed at which these practices evolve and this should serve as a warning of the dangers of lost political control and lack of reflection in a hasty process.

In this light, the contributions of this thesis open the way to new avenues of research, in relation both to the framework of mediatization and to the study of EU foreign policy and digital diplomacy. The most important implication of a politics centered-approach to mediatization is the fact that bringing politics to the center of the transformation has been proven to matter and can contribute to the contextual understanding of how mediatization happens in society that has been much called for on the research front. In this capacity, the analytical framework that I have developed here can be applied across different cases that can capture new contexts of mediatization, both in the new media ecology and, as I have argued, quite possibly also historically in past waves of mediatization. Other contexts of foreign policy might shed light on some of the findings in this thesis:
US foreign policy that is still assumed to be a world leader in public diplomacy, Israel that openly projects its emphasis on strategic communication and influence operations, or China that has emerged as an actor with new aspirations for social power while controlling the new media ecology to its internal audiences. Nevertheless, this framework is not limited to the foreign policy context, blending processes can be assumed to take place within other policy areas such as environmental policy, trade policy, justice policy and social policy and thus in other organizational fields that to different degrees depend on public inclusiveness. In this regard, it would also be valuable to put the interaction model to a test in a comparative study. Based on the interviews I conducted for this study, I suspect that there is cross-fertilization not only between different policy areas or indeed between different organizations but also at the level of practices. The practitioners that this thesis has followed often had experience from other processes (of mediatization of politics) that influenced how they made sense of digital diplomacy in the context of the EEAS. While in this case these experiences were often why they had been seconded by their Member States to the EU level, in other contexts this could be a question of being promoted within the same organization or changing a job.

Digital diplomacy is an emerging field of politics and this thesis has demonstrated that there is value in an interdisciplinary approach to these practices that has diplomatic, media and technological characteristics. While the research front on digital diplomacy is already interdisciplinary in the way that its expressions and effects are studied, I wish to stress the value of understanding this as an interdisciplinary practice that has resulted from blending institutional logics. I therefore hope that this research has shown that digital diplomacy is more than a communicative dimension to diplomacy and that sociological approaches, such as the mediatization approach developed here, are needed in order to understand how this practice is developing. This entails more attention to the process that precedes expressions and effects of diplomacy and also to the relationship between online and offline practices. A sociological understanding also stresses how this development may both be influenced by and influence other areas of political practice. Digital diplomacy has here served as a clear example of how the mediatization of politics is more than the commercialization and adoption of marketing ideals in political communication and more studies of this kind will be needed to grasp how politics evolves in and through media omnipresence.

I also wish to suggest that more attention should be given to practices in mediatization research more generally and, in this regard, I think the practice approach can provide an interesting path to complement the dominance of
linguistic analysis of media logic. While the discursive strategies that can be traced to media logic have been studied to a great extent, the performative tactics and, more importantly, the interplay of the two dynamics have been understudied. In this light, I think that media-centered approaches to the mediatization of politics would also benefit from a collective effort for greater inclusion of practices that can put more flesh on the bones of traditional media content analysis. Given that the findings in this thesis suggest that mediatization happens through practices, it would be relevant to see how the new media ecology has changed journalistic practice rather than changes in the medium and format. Here a methodological advantage demonstrated in this thesis would be to combine, more systematically, the traditional observations of media logic with commonly used large scale surveys that can produce first-hand accounts about these practices.

Finally, given the connection I have indicated about a general shift of focus from input and throughput legitimacy in political communication about the EU to output legitimacy, substantial research is needed to consider its extent and its potential implications. While this is an indication at most, this study has demonstrated the perception of a communications shift where effectiveness through positive results and individual stories has become more important than communicating democratic accountability. If indeed we live in a time when liberal democracy is under attack from incumbent alternatives through narrative practices, the mediatization process might also lead to emphasis on effectiveness that is not restricted to communication strategies. Moreover, as this research has suggested that this shift is related to the increasing role of strategic communication, such a shift may be reflective of a broader development in international politics. Could it be that in this new age of strategic communication, output legitimacy is the favored source of social power to defend liberal democracies against alternative trajectories?
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Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 1. ‘The Russian worlds is when…’ 26th of February, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS


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Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 5. ‘Let the Westerners blame the West’ 1st of April, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS


Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 7. ‘Too Successful?’ 22nd of April, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS

Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 8. ‘Russophobia? No. We just don’t like your policies’ 29th of April, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS


Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 10. ‘Nowadays, you don’t win with tanks, but with songs’ 20th of May, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS

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Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 15. ‘Is the EU bad or is the EU bad?’ 24th of June, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 17. ‘Warning! State TV can damage your health’ 8th of July, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 20. ‘Missed out on summer reading? We’ll help’ 26th of August, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 22. ‘The imitation game’ 9th of September, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 25. ‘Nine ways to confuse us about MH17’ 30th of September, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 26. ‘I have a mortgage to pay, get out of my studio!’ 7th of October, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 32. ‘Russian media accuse Russian media’ 18th of November, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 33. ‘Racist propaganda on Russian state TV’ 25th of November, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 34. ‘Holocaust on Ice’ 2nd of December, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Digest (2016) Issue 35. ‘New initiatives against fake news’ 9th of September, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Review (2016) ‘Issue Fifteen: They are not us! And war is coming’ 15th of February, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
Disinformation Review (2016) ‘Issue Sixteen: We have nothing to do with Ukraine; and we will always rule Ukraine!’ 23rd of February, East StratCom Task Force, EEAS
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**Social Media Accounts**

Facebook:
The EEAS official account: @EuropeanExternalActionService
The East StratCom Task Force official account: @EUvsDisinfo

Twitter:
The Canadian delegation to NATO’s official account: @CanadaNato
The EEAS official account: @eu_eeas
The East StratCom Task Force official account: @EUvsDisinfo
The HR/VP Federica Mogherini’s official account: @FedericaMog
The Ministry of foreign affairs of Russia’s official account: @mfa_russia
The Russian delegation to NATO’s official account: @natomission_ru

Youtube:
The EEAS official account: European External Action Service (EEAS)

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http://twiplomacy.com/blog/category/studies/ Retrieved 12-02-2018


*Video*


Appendix 1. List of Accounts

**List of interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>In-group role</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Stockholm, Sweden</td>
<td>26-11-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
<td>31-08-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Phone interview</td>
<td>03-09-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social media manager, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>30-11-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social media manager, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>30-11-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>30-11-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>30-11-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Senior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>30-11-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Junior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>01-12-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>01-12-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Junior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>02-12-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Digital strategist, European Commission</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>02-12-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Spokesperson, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>02-12-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Social media manager, EEAS</td>
<td>Phone interview</td>
<td>28-11-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Phone interview</td>
<td>04-04-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>24-04-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>24-04-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Strategic communications officer, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>24-04-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Spokesperson, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>24-04-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Senior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>26-04-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Senior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>26-04-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Junior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>26-04-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Senior diplomat, EEAS</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>26-04-2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I interviewed representatives at the EEAS from the following member-states: Czech Republic, Estonia, Denmark, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy, Ireland, Germany, United Kingdom and France.
List of Secondary Accounts

Catherine, Ashton (2011) Quoted in ‘EU diplomats to tweet and blog for human rights’, EU Observer 12-12-2011


Michael Mann (2016a) Interview in the EEAS Newsletter of EU-African Affairs, no 4, January 2016

Michael Mann (2016b) Interview in the ASEF Public Diplomacy Handbook, How to Win Hearts and Minds, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) p. 132

Appendix 2. Interview Guide

The table on the next page summarizes the interview guide used to conduct informant interviews. The questions in this guide were only suggestions, the interviews were semi-structured and reflective and therefore different from each other but followed the themes (with variations in relation to the sub-topics explored in the three chapters). Some of the questions in this table were therefore phrased differently or not deemed relevant for all interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Suggested questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background brief</td>
<td>To assess the informant’s relevant background and gain insights on particularly interesting experiences that may be valuable to probe.</td>
<td>What is your current role and how long have you been in this position? How do you participate in the practice of digital diplomacy? What are your previous experiences of EU diplomacy and or communication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital diplomacy in the EEAS</td>
<td>To gain the informant's perception of the role, status and importance of digital diplomacy to the EEAS, to assess the development in the field</td>
<td>What is your understanding of what constitutes digital diplomacy? How do you practice digital diplomacy? What is the current role of digital diplomacy in the activities of the EEAS? How are the practices of digital diplomacy organized? Who does what? Why do you think that the EEAS engage in these practices? What is the relationship between digital diplomacy and political communication in the EEAS? What is the role of StratCom to the activities of EEAS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital diplomacy during the Ukraine crisis</td>
<td>To understand the nature, problems and solutions associated with the practice of digital diplomacy during the height of the Ukraine crisis</td>
<td>What was the role of digital diplomacy during the Ukraine crisis? How was the EEAS official Twitter account managed during this time? Who did what? What was the role of Twitter? How was the Twitter account used in relation to crisis management? What tool? When? How? Why? What were the experienced constraints of digital diplomacy during this time? What were the general problems encountered in the communication efforts with regards to the EaP and how could they be overcome? In recent years the EU has sought to develop its crisis management capacity, how does digital diplomacy fit into this agenda?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital diplomacy and Russian disinformation</td>
<td>To understand the nature, problems and solutions associated with the practice of digital diplomacy in relation to Russian disinformation since 2014</td>
<td>What was your role in the process leading up the establishment of the East StratCom Task Force in 2014-2015? What interests did you or your team primarily represent in this process? What is your understanding of how the idea of a task force developed? What were the main difficulties involved in the process of establishing a task force? How were they overcome? Who were the proponents of the creation of a task force? What was the process of coalition building? Were there other alternatives voiced in this process? What were the compromises involved in the resulting process? Why was the East StratCom Task Force not allocated a budget for its operations? What were the agreed upon goals of establishing a task force? How were these goals formulated? How were they translated into practice? What are the main activities of the task force? How are the activities organized? How did the activities of the task force develop? Why myth-busting? How does myth-busting relate to the other activities? Why online newsletters? What has been the team’s learning experiences since September 2015? What strategies have changed? How did this strategy relate to more general developments of EU foreign policy? e.g. the Global Strategy? Hybrid threats? What larger agenda would you consider the establishment of a task force fit into?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital diplomacy and the Global Strategy</td>
<td>To understand the nature, problems and solutions associated with the practice of digital diplomacy in relation to EU Global Strategy</td>
<td>How does the EUGS relate to or guide the practice of digital diplomacy at the EEAS? How has the practice of digital diplomacy change since the introduction of the EUGS? How is the EUGS communicated through digital diplomacy? To what end? Which strategies? Communicated to whom? What was the purpose of the European Way campaign? How was it developed? What was the goal? Who was the audience? What has been the experience of the campaign? Lessons learned? How does this campaign reflect the contemporary practice of digital diplomacy? What is your understanding of the nature and purpose of your activities of projecting a positive EU narrative? What are the gains at stake?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lund Political Studies


142. Strömvik, Maria. To Act as a Union. Explaining the Development of the EU’s Collective Foreign Policy. Lund: Department of Political Science, 2005.


Blending Politics and New Media

This thesis explores the relationship between politics and new media in the context of digital diplomacy. In contrast to dominant mediatization approaches to politics that consider political logic to be dominated or even replaced by media logic, it develops a politics-centered approach where mediatization is considered an interinstitutional process. Using the case of the EU's digital diplomacy, the thesis analyzes how practices of digital diplomacy have developed and are talked about among their practitioners. The conclusion is that mediatization of politics happens through an interaction of media logic and the hosting political context, where expectations, threats, leadership, resources, skills, learning, and individuals influence the practices where new media and diplomacy ultimately blends.