THE ROLE OF ART IN GERMAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FESTIVAL OF GERMAN FILMS IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Irina HERRSCHNER
PhD Candidate and Tutor
German Studies
School of Languages and Linguistics
University of Melbourne, Australia
irina.herrschner@unimelb.edu.au

ABSTRACT: In Germany, cultural diplomacy, or auswärtige Kulturpolitik, is seen to provide the option for a creative and less inhibited self-representation than other forms of diplomacy (G. Schneider, 2010; Schulte, 2000). A unique ‘German model of cultural diplomacy’ has emerged during the 20th century describing the mandate of one entire branch of foreign policy to independent non-government organizations, the largest of which is the Goethe-Institut (GI) (Michels, 2005; Singer, 2003). The GI is responsible for the cultural representation of Germany abroad, and follows the aim to ‘represent an authentic and varied picture of contemporary Germany’ (Denscheilmann, 2010). The GI understands film as a particularly useful medium to engage in a Kulturaustausch (cultural exchange) and organizes German Film Festivals and screenings around the world (Mosig, 2008, 2011). The GI thus engages in contemporary cinematic diplomacy, a concept that has so far evaded academic scrutiny. Different to a traditional understanding of cultural diplomacy, cinematic diplomacy highlights global commonalities and engages in an international dialogue (Füssl, 2004). This paper adds to the concept of cinematic diplomacy and highlights the opportunities that film provides in creating a reflective and productive intercultural dialogue. Through an analysis of the largest of the almost 150 Festivals of German films organized by the GI, which is held annually in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia, I highlight the importance of culture for German foreign politics. I argue that cultural diplomacy in general, and cinematic diplomacy in particular, can help establishing a picture of contemporary Germany that is less dependent on stereotypes formed during and post-WWII. Thus allowing for a crucial process for establishing egalitarian and constructive international communication (Cull, 2010; Harvey, 2005; C. P. Schneider, 2009).

KEYWORDS: Cultural Diplomacy, Cinematic Diplomacy, Erlebniskultur, Film Festival, Goethe-Institut.
INTRODUCTION

German cultural diplomacy plays an increasingly important role in German foreign politics. An emphasis on cultural assets allows Germany on the one hand to distance itself from its tainted past during the Third Reich, and provides a common basis for a reunited Germany as well as drawing on its self-identification as a *Kulturnation*. This term, coined by Friedrich Meinecke in 1957, describes the focus on a common culture and language as the identity shaping and giving factors of the German nation (Meineke, 1962). The role of film festivals, organized as part of German cultural diplomacy, is thus threefold: to represent the German *Kulturnation*, German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* post-WWII, as well as the GDR and Germany’s subsequent reunification. The following article examines the role of film festivals in German cultural diplomacy, focusing on the Audi Festival of German Films (AFGF) held annually in Australia. In particular it tries to understand the opportunities film presents to the Goethe-Institut as the official representation of German culture. An analysis of the curatorship of the AFGF, with a focus on pre- and post-screening events, illustrates developments in German cultural diplomacy and the role of the film festival in it. In particular, the article attempts to understand these time-events framing the film screenings in terms of the festival’s explicit aim of fostering an appropriate *Deutschlandbild*. Firstly, a historic overview of German cultural diplomacy and of the GI will provide the background for the analysis; the theoretical framework will explain the approach and definition of cultural and cinematic diplomacy, approaching film and film festivals as public spheres within the context of Delanty’s festivalization of culture (2011) and Hake’s *Erlebniskultur* (2012). A typology of time-events over the time of the AFGF since 2002 illustrates the wider developments of German cultural diplomacy and argues for the value of film festivals in German cultural diplomacy.

GERMAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Germany is currently undergoing a phase of growth in political and economic power in Europe and finds itself in a position that many wished to never see Germany holding again (Economist, 2014). One century after WWI, 70 years after WWII and a quarter of a century after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany has experienced a tumultuous 20th century and a new challenge begun as part of the European Union. Only 25 years after Germany’s reunification, the country is in a position of power and has to negotiate this position with its heavy history. The representation of Germany to the world involves addressing a complex
narrative of guilt and collective shame, an image that is publicly recognized on both a domestic and international stage (in Paulmann, 2005, p. 64). German cultural diplomacy thus necessitates a careful negotiation of these narratives in the context of a contemporary, multicultural Germany in the center of Europe. To negotiate this image abroad, Germany has created a ‘German model of cultural diplomacy’, where independent, non-government organizations hold the mandate for the representation of German culture. This division of power is seen to ensure an objective representation detached from political powers and party politics and help Germany’s international image (Schulte, 2000). The potential of Nye’s (2008) concept of soft power was recognized by the German government by Willy Brandt, who called cultural diplomacy the ‘fourth pillar of German foreign policy’ in the Konzeption2000, where its importance was re-emphasized as the basis of foreign policy (Denscheilmann, 2010; Schulte, 2000).

Today, German cultural policy is the responsibility of independent organizations, each with their own area of responsibility and expertise. The DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) is responsible for student mobility and tertiary German language teaching, the Alexander von Humboldt association for international research in Germany and international research collaborations, and the Goethe-Institut (GI), which holds the mandate for the representation of German culture and language outside of the University context. The GI is the largest and best-funded of the three cultural diplomatic organizations and has language schools and cultural centers around the world. Next to language teaching, the largest responsibility of the GI is the representation of German culture, with the aim of creating a contemporary image of Germany (Goethe-Institut, 2012).

After having been closed down by the Allies as a Nazi organization, the GI was reopened in 1956. It acts independently of the German government, although its main directions are discussed with the German foreign ministry on an annual basis. The main themes of the GI are the Vergangenheitsbewältigung of the Third Reich, the GDR and German reunification, and multiculturalism in Germany (G. Schneider, 2010). Cultural works, such as literature, art, music and film are used to engage international audience in a dialogue with Germany and to question their image of country and culture (Goethe-Institut, 2012). Whilst many actors are involved in this creation and negotiation of a national imagery, the GI represents one of the official voices of Germany. As such, it is bound to political and cultural conventions by being dependent on a state-funded part of German diplomacy. Art, literature and film can thus be seen as an alternative
and second voice that allows the GI to diversify, contrast and extend its represented messages and images on Germany.

The definition of culture that German *Kulturdiplomatie* follows today, is based on two German theorists and practitioners, Hilmar Hoffmann and Herrmann Glaser, promoting *Kultur für alle* (Hoffmann) und *Bürgerrecht Kultur* (Hermann) (Fuchs, 2007, p. 51). In this, Germany moved away from an elitist approach to culture, as promoted by the Frankfurt School, the static understanding of culture of Max Weber. Germany today emphasizes the notion of cultural exchange, or *Kulturaustausch* - as its leading principle of cultural foreign politics. In particular literature, art and film are media used to engage foreign audiences in a dialogue with and about Germany. Holger Stunz points, in this context, to the importance of festivals as a means of cultural diplomacy, as cultural festivals are acting as cultural diplomacy themselves as well as creating a space for discussion and exchange for audience and artists (Goethe-Institut, 2012, p. 4).

**FILM AS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**

Film forms such a major part of the cultural work that the GI organizes events that annually attract more than two million visitors in over 80 countries, as well as running workshops and seminars to help developing local film industries (Goethe-Institut, 2012). Two scholarly concepts drive the work of the film department of the Goethe-Institut in Munich and the global institutes: cultural diplomacy – as defined above, and cinematic diplomacy. Different to cultural diplomacy, cinematic diplomacy focuses on the use of cinema and film for establishing intercultural dialogue. The term was coined during the Cold War, when the USA and the USSR used film to showcase the benefits of their respective ideologies for their people (Cull, 2010; Harvey, 2005). Film has only recently regained its image in diplomacy and is now used as ‘cinematic diplomacy’ by governments and film festivals (Schneider, 2009). The focus of this reinvented concept is on peace through intercultural communication and understanding and is gaining rapid importance in the discourse and practice of cultural diplomacy (Bechtold, 1986). The underlying argument of this cinematic diplomacy is that film not only portrays cultural differences, but also shared human themes, thus connecting nations as equals. This aligns with the idea of *Kulturaustausch*, promoted by the German Department of Foreign Affairs as their credo for cultural diplomacy, and the GI thus employs film festivals to create dialogue on contemporary Germany as well as its history.
Film festivals started as a European phenomenon, with the strong agenda of forming a counterweight to Hollywood. A festival circuit was thus created to allow for film distribution within Europe and a reciprocal showcasing of national films. This circulation occurs by taking cultural works out of their original national context and disseminating them through other cultural circles. The role film festivals have in these processes is widely acknowledged (Evans, 2007; Williams, 2002, p. 43; Wong, 2011, p. 57). Film festivals can thus be seen as an opportunity to showcase an alternative to Hollywood productions, but also a different rhetoric on national character and ideas. Anderson’s (2006) ‘imagined communities’ is a concept frequently used in discussions of the festival experience and explains the communal and social experience of such festivals. He defines nations as ‘imagined communities’, based on an intangible connection bonding the group. Even though these cohorts do not share their daily lives, socio-demographic or psychological characteristics such as nationality, shared language, or common interests are enough to create a sense of belonging. Film festivals contribute to imagined communities due to their often identity-shaping and identity-based criteria, such as queer, national or context-based film festivals (Berry, Liscutin, & Mackintosh, 2009, p. 84; Wong, 2011, p. 182).

The notion of film festivals as ‘time-events’, first proposed by Janet Harbord (in Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009, pp. 40-46) alludes to the unique character of film festivals, as opposed to a film screening as part of usual cinema programming. Film festivals enhance standard programming by creating an interpretative framework around each film (Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009, p. 41). This framework consists of a limited number of screenings, Q&A sessions, the presence of ‘stars’, as well as the interpretation of the festival and specific films in the marketing before and accompanying the festivals. The festival’s potential for cultural diplomacy is enhanced by these time-events, such as the opening and closing night and Q&A sessions, as well as a musical and culinary entertainment program. Habord’s concept describes film festivals as different to other film screenings because of the emphasis on time as a limited resource. The limited screenings and tickets, the last-minute release of the program and the surrounding events all contribute to the creation of a different temporality. Meanwhile, cinema itself manufactures time by recording unique events and archiving them. Film festivals thus juxtapose two temporalities of the repeatable and the unique, resulting in the potency of film festivals as events. The time of the film and the time of the festival are therefore inextricable for audience members who view the films in this context (in Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009, pp. 40-46).
Today, 25 years after the end of the Cold War, and in the context of neo-liberal cultural policies, Elsaesser (2005, p. 86) points towards reasons for the widespread expansion of the film festival network since the 1990s, as growth and competition of secondary global cities\(^1\) and shifts towards a commercial film industry have added to the importance of independent cinema. Following Sassen's (2001) notion of ‘global flows’ aids an explanation for this growth, by seeing metropolitan cities as nodal points of cultural and commercial circulation. The emergence of ‘global cities’ is linked to the context of territorialization of global processes of capital and cultural circulation (2013, p. 127). These nodes are expanded on by Stringer (2003), who describes the heart of film festivals as the nexus of global and local; he therefore proposes a combination of an aesthetic and political reading strategy to understand film festivals and their culture. Film festivals are, furthermore, an enactment of cultural policies, linking cultural labor, governance and commerce towards a common goal through their mostly public-private funding (Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009, p. 15).

In addition to Sassen’s concept of cultural circulation, the concept of ‘the five dimensions of cultural flow’ (Appadurai, 1996) is useful for the analysis of the wider socio-political framework of film festivals. In particular, notions of ‘mediascapes’ and ‘ethnoscapes’ pose a useful view for analyzing film festivals within the concept of ‘geoscapes’ and cultural flows (Sassen, 2013). Mediascapes describe the global landscape of images that provide large and complex repertoires of images to ethnoscapes. Ethnoscapes make up the landscape of persons who constitute a shifting, contemporary world, including tourists, migrants, guest workers and other mobile cohorts (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). These two-scapes extend the two-way notion of Kulturaustausch surrounding cultural diplomacy through film festivals.

In a similar stance, Stringer describes film festivals as Erfahrungsräume (a space for experience), emphasizing how the experience for the audiences differs for film festivals and ‘normal cinema’ (in Hurch, 2009). The unique experience of film festivals emphasizes the role of the audience, which adds to this ‘time event’ character by creating an atmosphere of belonging (Roesch, 2010, p. 12). According to Nichols, film festivals provide, as interstitial events, places of social and cultural contact and ‘a window onto a different culture’. He describes the experience of the audience as similar to that of an anthropologist or tourist, immersing themselves into a different culture, alluding to the power of film in a context of cultural diplomacy (1994, pp. 16-30). Film festivals are thus mediations of collective identities, by combining cinema and its ‘dream-like state of reception’ (Hansen & Hansen, 2012, p. 125) with a ‘politics of participation’ and ‘experience of difference’ (de Valck, 2007, p. 175, 117).
According to Nichols, foreign films provide a window onto a different culture by submersion in an experience of difference (1994, pp. 16-33). He thus places the film festival in a transnational space, communicating between cultures and allowing people to empathize with characters on screen. Elsaesser (2005, p. 86), adds to a contemporary post-national environment, and emphasizes the role of national film festivals abroad as creating such a transnational space for mutual exchanges. Identity-shaping film festivals are motivated by increased global mobility and growing international diasporas (Ma, 1998, p. 145). Diaspora film festivals are set at the nexus of ethnoscapes and mediascapes, presenting films from a home country to its respective diaspora. Delanty (2011, p. 175) theorizes that ‘festivalization’ of cultural diplomacy represents a shift away from the axis of elite/popular culture, emphasized by the Frankfurt School, towards an idealized, new democratic space. This is a pertinent point for the discussion of any themed film festival and the ‘imaginaries’ screened. Habermas describes the public sphere as an arena for critical dispute and open debate on issues of public interest and thus a space in which opinions are formed. For film festivals, this approach means a focus on the two-way conversation a festival engages in and the critical productivity it possesses (in Delanty et al., 2011, p. 8; Wong, 2011, p. 226). Set, in a contemporary Erlebniskultur, (culture of diversion), where German films are ‘sought to accommodate the audience’s [...] desire for less complicated narratives of Germanness [...]’ (Hake, 2004, p. 308). Within this framework, the AFGF engages in cultural diplomacy through entertainment, education and edutainment to varying degrees.

THE AUDI FESTIVAL OF GERMAN FILMS

The first GI in Australia opened in 1978. It is part of a network of German associations that take care of the German migrant community and create a dialogue and exchange between the two countries on different sides of the world. This conversation is necessarily mediated, formerly through letters, now accelerated through the Internet, TV and mobile phones. The Goethe-Instituts are the most active ambassadors of German film worldwide. No other “cinema” has more than two million viewers each year in over 80 countries (Goethe Institut, 2015). Roughly 2,500 film screenings take place each year at the 136 Goethe-Instituts: from classic silent films to the latest German box office hits. Further activities such as seminars, workshops and advanced training courses for filmmakers in the host countries, promote intercultural understanding and help to establish and expand the local film and media landscapes. Films are seen as a valuable medium of representation and the Festival of German Films in Australia is thus a pathway of communication, challenging the imaginary of Germany.
Although not the oldest, the Audi Festival of German Films (AFGF) is the largest festival of German film outside of Germany (A. Sölter, opening speech AFGF 2013) and therefore presents a flagship for festivals of German film. The festival was inaugurated in Sydney and Melbourne in 2002 with 17 films and has since then continuously expanded in terms of both the number of films and participating cities. The AFGF is funded by the GI and festival sponsors (the main sponsor since 2006 is Audi), making the festival less dependent on box office income and therefore more able to showcase films for their cultural and intellectual merit rather than their predicted financial success. In 2014, the AFGF attracted over 20,000 visitors and screened 59 films. Thus, it has significant potential in influencing the public opinions of Germany and increase unmediated communication between the antipodes. Reinhard Hauff called the GI the largest distributor of German film, alluding to its extensive role in the dissemination of German film abroad (in Mosig, 2008, p. 9). For the GI, German cinema thus provides a historic archive as well as a tool for intercultural communication. Whilst contemporary film itself often screens a multi-cultural production and Weltanschauung, the setting in a German Film Festival enables a conversation about German society, values and culture. The curating of time-events surrounding the film screenings enhances this focus on Germany and the analysis allows for insight into developments of German cultural diplomacy.

The AFGF is organized by the GI in conjunction with German Films – the national information and advisory center for the promotion of German films worldwide. The main objective of the company is the marketing and selling of German films to distributors worldwide. For this, German Films stages nine festivals of German films in cooperation with varying local partners. In the Australian case, the collaboration between GI Australia and German Films is because of the different objectives not always straightforward; whilst German Films aims at selling German films, the GI has the task of representing German culture in Australia. However, the organizations are dependent on each other, as German Films has no insight and reputation in the Australian market, the GI has no relationships with film producers and can thus not negotiate screening conditions and fees. The festival is financially dependent on sponsorship agreements and audience numbers, as well as the support of the German embassy in Sydney, and would not be possible without the favorable or free screening rights German Films can negotiate with film producers. The different objectives of German Films and the GI become especially clear during the film selection process for AFGF.
Films are first selected and suggested by German Films, creating a short-list of films that adhere to the agreed criteria of: recent year of production, success at film festivals and positive reviews in the German and international press. A selection committee in Australia, consisting of the CEO of GI Australia, the two cultural managers of GI Australia, and two independent, Australian film critics (Peter Krauss, and Richard Kuypers) uses this list and makes their recommendations. Major limitations to the film selection are thus the criteria employed by German Films, as well as the competition with other festivals and screening rights. Film distributors often prefer to debut their film at the largest and most prestigious festival offered to them, which means if a film is offered a screening at Sydney International Film Festival or Melbourne International Film Festival it will most likely not be available for the AFGF. Further, if a film is offered a general release for Australian cinemas it will also not be available for the AFGF. As a general release is the main goal of German Films, objectives and methods of the two organizers sometimes clash. An example of these competing interests are the films *Hannah Arendt* (Margarethe von Trotta, 2012), that debuted at the Jewish Film Festival in Melbourne and *Barbara* (Petzold, 2012), which achieved a general release through Palace Cinemas before the festival. As international film festivals not only act as public spheres, but also as market places, the timing of the AFGF shortly after the Berlinale, means that many films will find distributors or be offered screenings at large festivals at the Berlinale, putting the AFGF at a disadvantage of prestige, size and timing. These constraints mean one needs to be careful about drawing conclusions on diplomatic aims purely based on the selection of films for the AFGF.

**THE ROLE OF THE AFGF IN GERMAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**

Time-events are, other than the films, a clear expression of cultural diplomatic efforts. Whilst films are dependent on current film productions, screening rights and are chosen in collaboration with German Films, time-events are independent of these constraints. This means that time-events are curated around the films with the highest expected impact, in terms of audience numbers, topic or local interest. Time-events are here defined as pre- and post-screening events that frame the film as a curated event. This event can include discussions, Q&A sessions, entertainment, music and/or food. An analysis of time-events as part of the AFGF over the years since its inception reveals a typology of events and changing emphases over time. The following table illustrates all time-events which have been part of the AFGF since its inception, according to the different types of events. Cinematic events focus on German cinematic ‘high-culture’,
academic events take films as the starting point for academic and historic discussions, whilst ‘edutaining’ events combine discussions with entertainment, whilst the last category focuses on entertainment only.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural diplomacy as a celebration of high culture</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927) and orchestra Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1920), and The Last Laugh (F.W Murnau, 1924) with accompaniment by live orchestra</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Discussion on the future of Art-house Cinema Panel discussion on the role women play in the German film industry</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<td>Didactic cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Downfall (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004) and panel discussion on ‘Remastering the Past’ Sophie Scholl (Marc Rothemund, 2005) with Q&amp;A on the role of women in German resistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Three panel discussions focused on the themes in The Wave (Dennis Gansel, 2011) and whether totalitarianism could ever return to Germany and discussions attached to the screenings of And Along Came Tourists (Robert Thalheim, 2007), and The Counterfeiters (Stefan Ruzowitzky, 2007).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Panel discussion on the international war crimes tribunal in the context of Storm (Hans-Christian Schmid, 2009).</td>
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<td>Accessible cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Fall of the Wall: I will not lose (Sandra Kaudelka, 2013) and The Family (Stefan Weinert, 2013) with food, drinks and Berlin pop-cabaret band</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>This ain’t California (Marten Persiel, 2012) and skating event with the director Sound of Heimat (Arne Birkenstock, 2012) and Sing Along</td>
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<td>Popularizing cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Oriental night: Exit Marrakech (Caroline Link, 2013) and (Ummah: among friends (Cüneyt Kaya, 2013) with belly-dancing and food</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Moonlight Mania: Bela Kiss: Prologue (Lucien Förster, 2013) and The Station (Marvin Kren, 2013) with Q&amp;A and drinks</td>
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Cinematic time-events add to the AFGF cultural event, emphasizing German cinematic culture. This subset of events add to an understanding of German high culture before WWII (all films screened were made in the Weimar Republic). In these events, a narrow interpretation of German culture catered to
a small demographic of cinephiles, thus excluding new cultural and societal developments in Germany. These events follow a tradition of German high-culture and connect the Australian cinephile audiences to the long tradition of German film-making. In 1970, the Minister of Foreign Affairs called for a widening of the cultural definition of Germany and the 10 articles for German cultural diplomacy and in 1975, called for a move away from cultural-export to a cultural dialogue between nations. Wolfgang Schneider (2010) critiques this rhetoric for remaining purely theoretical, whilst the organizations implementing these policies, such as the GI, have remained in traditional, one-directional representations of Germany. The time-events from 2002-2005 take on the role representing German cinematic culture and creating a unique event, that adds to the festival experience. In this the GI positions itself as the cultural authority of Germany and establishes the AFGF as a cultural event, attracting audiences interested in German culture and cinema.

From 2005, under a different festival director, time-events took films not as the direct medium of the event, but as the starting point for a discussion on the film’s topic. At the same time as a ‘memory boom’ (Carrier, 2006, p. 175) in the early 2000s in Germany, re-examining Germany’s Nazi past, the AFGF staged discussions on the Third Reich. Since unification in 1990, Germany has seen an increase in confronting memory, evident in a sharp increase in novels, films, autobiographies, and other forms of public discourse that engage with the long-term effects of National Socialism across generations. According to the festival director, the Third Reich forms an integral part of German history and contemporary culture, as well as attributing commercial benefits to the screening of ‘Nazi films’: ‘Sex and goose-stepping Nazis sell!’ (Krischok, pers. Conv. 2013)

Examples for time-events focusing on the Third Reich and its Vergangenheitsbewältigung are the screening of Sophie Scholl – the final days (Marc Rothemund, 2005) and a podium discussion on the role of women in the German resistance and the screening of The Wave (Dennis Gansel, 2011) with discussions on the possibility of whether totalitarianism could ever return to Germany. During this time the AFGF engaged in critical Vergangenheitsbewältigung and took on a different role in cultural diplomacy, as the clear interpreter of German culture and mediator between the German films and the Australian audiences. From 2010, films and time-events started to include productions outside of a German framework, but mainly concerned with global human rights issues. According to Kocka (2012, p. 4), the interest in dictatorship and democracy forms the bas-so continuo in modern Germany and Europe. The AFGF uses its voice through
films and time-events to advocate for human rights and to illuminate global injustices, for example the war in former Yugoslavia in *Storm* (Hans-Christian Schmid, 2009) and North Korean ‘re-education camps’ in *Camp 14 - Total Control Zone* (Marc Wiese, 2012). Both GI directors, Klaus Krischok (2005-2011) and Arpad Sölter (since 2012) agree that these films engage in ‘conversations worth having’ and part of ‘Germany’s post-war responsibility’. 

With the third festival director coming in 2011, the festival moved away from a film festival with a national focus to an international festival aimed at reaching a wider public. Time-events in these years range from edutainment to entertainment. An ‘Oriental night’ and a ‘Horror night’ interpreted the topic of the film and added to its theme with food, beverages and music. Events with an ‘edutainment’ character expand on the film’s topic in order to include new information, interpretation or aspects in the event. The ‘Fall of the Wall’ event in 2014 is such an example, where the two documentaries screened presented the GDR as Germany’s second dictatorship, whilst the time-event added an Ostalgie² discourse. The GI uses these events to make German culture more accessible as well as distancing itself from a hierarchical and didactic interpretation of cultural diplomacy. In line with Hake’s *Erlebniskultur* (2004), and Delanty’s ‘festivalization of culture’ (2011), developments of cultural diplomatic efforts of the GI show a move along the spectrum of education to entertainment (Reinhardt, 2005, p. 10). In this trend, the GI follows an understanding of art as edutainment that acts as a medium and mediator of inter-cultural communication and that combines education with entertainment. The festival thus allows audiences to interpret the art presented to them, rather then art being interpreted by the curator (Mitsuhara, Hirakawa, Kanenishi, & Yano, 2007, p. 22).

This move from more educational and academic events, towards more widely accessible events with a focus on entertainment, further illustrates a move from a didactic approach of cultural diplomacy to a more democratic and, it could be said, ‘modern’ approach. The film and the time-event thus allow the audience to form their personal opinion on Germany and German culture, and according to the current CEO of Goethe-Institut Australia, there is not ‘one Germany to present, but rather a natural multitude of differences’ (pers. Conv. Sölter). The AFGF provides the German stories for audiences with different expectations and ideas, through film and through events. When analyzing the special events curated by the festival directors, two developments become clear. Firstly, the focus of the special events changes with each festival director, and secondly, a move away from cinematic education and historic knowledge transfers to cinematic edutainment. Both developments align with film festival theory and the

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² Ostalgie is a German term referring to nostalgia for aspects of life in East Germany. It consists of the German word for East (Ost) and nostalgia.
changing role of German cultural diplomacy, but also question the positioning of the AFGF within the context of its cultural diplomatic aims.

Cinematic diplomacy through film festivals thus allows for a collapsing of the traditional hierarchies of diplomacy by using films to express alternative opinions, but is also inherently embedded in the hierarchy of foreign affairs. In line with Habermas’ public sphere (1974), the AFGF aims at creating a public sphere, where ideas can be exchanged and developed, but also a space for critical and open debate, where new opinions are being formed and old stereotypes challenged. In the sense of its mandate, the GI employs a *Kulturaustausch* and uses film to help create a contemporary and objective image of Germany. Film diversifies the images of Germany presented through their narrative and provides alternative voices to the official representation of Germany through its diplomacy. The audience perceives these images through their personal lens of experience, but also through their trust into the curated image of Germany, as expressed by this focus group participant.

“I was in Berlin a few times, and really didn’t feel that there was any police corruption. But if the GI decides to screen a film showing this, I guess it must be true...” (Male, 45, Australian)

Whilst films provide alternative and independent voices and images, time-events are understood as the diplomatic voice of Germany. This places importance and responsibility on the organization and staging of time-events. The GI has followed different approaches to time-events, mainly depending on the current CEO of GI Australia, who is at the same time the festival director. These changes in the nature of time-events is not only in line with what De Valck calls the ‘festival of the director’ (2007, p. 19), but also with recent developments away from a didactic and hierarchical understanding of cultural diplomacy.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Film enables the expression of challenging and provocative opinions. This paper has found the role of film for German cultural diplomacy to be complementary to other forms of diplomacy. Independent of party politics, institutions such as the GI can create an engaging dialogue between countries that allows the viewer to form his/her own image of Germany. In this, film festivals are a particular case, as they combine different voices in the narrative of the film and its curating as part of a festival. An analysis of these curatorial events organized as part of the AFGF, highlights four different types of time-events. Each kind of
event adds a different dimension to the representation of Germany. The trend towards more accessible and edutaining time-events can be seen as a counternarrative to long-standing stereotypes of German seriousness and dark past. For Germany, film thus adds another dimension to its diplomatic engagements by moving away from a didactic interpretation of diplomacy, to a democratic Erlebniskultur.

Time-events are an important part in distinguishing film screenings from film festivals and shape its character. Whilst films provide an independent voice narrating Germany, time-events are the diplomatic part of the festival and thus have a diplomatic responsibility. The shifting nature of these events over the years show the influence of the festival director on the AFGF as well as illustrating the changing nature of German cultural diplomacy. In recent years, the use of film in cultural diplomacy provides a democratic means of engaging intercultural communication that leaves the interpretation of the medium in the hands of the viewer. The AFGF thus uses an anti-authoritarian approach, where the responsibility to interpret is on the audience, rather than prescribed by the cultural authority. Especially, in a German context, a prescriptive understanding of culture is tainted by history and as such a contentious issue when expressed by governments. A shift from a more didactic approach to edutainment allows each viewer to form his/her own opinions, but also risks a further stereotyping through a lack of critical reflection. Focus groups further showed, that audiences seek out the festival with the purpose of learning and with an acceptance of the GI as a cultural authority. A move away from the notion of a two-way Kulturaustausch, to multiple, interrelating -scapes, included into a move from a didactic to entertaining/edutaining approach to cultural diplomacy thus bears the risk of alienating audiences as well as a simplification of serious issues and their mis-interpretation due to a lack of interpretation.
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REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: kultūrinė diplomatija, kultūros diplomata, patiriamoji kultūra, kino festivalis, Goethe’s institutas.