Diplomacy as Controversies – A Study of the Materialisation of the Nordic Embassy Complex in Berlin

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Abstract

Diplomacy constitutes one of the most important fields of study within International Relations (IR). While significant process has been made to understand how diplomacy operates, scant attention has been devoted to understand creativity and materiality within diplomatic practice. This thesis aims to remedy this lacuna by developing a framework for studying diplomacy as controversies. The structure of the paper is as follows. To place the paper in context, I start by reviewing the existing literature, arguing that it provides a poor toolkit for capturing creativity and materiality. I then outline a methodological framework better equipped for this purpose. Applying a critical understanding of methods, I develop a two-layered approach, which consists of (1) setting the methodological 'scene' and (2) identifying methodological 'tools'. This allows me to establish a robust link between the 'processing' and 'gathering' of data. Having sketched out the methodological framework, I then move onto the main body of the thesis. The thesis will be structured into three chapters. The first chapter develops a framework for studying 'diplomatic controversies'. Drawing upon a wide range of literature, it shows how the study of controversies can give valuable insights into understandings of diplomacy. The second chapter explores how the study of controversies can help us rethink Nordic diplomatic practices by drawing on a case study concerning the establishment of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. The third chapter delves further into this by exploring how the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can allow us to rethink concepts within IR: the Nordics, creativity and materiality.

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Introduction

Diplomacy constitutes one of the most important fields of study within International Relations (IR). While significant process has been made in the literature, scant attention has been devoted to understand diplomatic creativity and materiality. This paper aims to remedy this lacuna by developing a framework for studying diplomacy as controversies. The framework is applied to the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. Emerging after the Cold War, the event is exceptional in Nordic diplomatic history. Never before have the five countries gone together and created a common embassy complex. As I intend to show, the embassy complex is not only interesting itself, but provides important lessons on how materiality and creativity works within diplomatic practice. In essence, the project sheds light on diplomatic practices often ignored within the literature.

The thesis will be structured into three chapters. The first chapter develops a framework for studying 'diplomatic controversies'. I start by highlighting how the 'practice turn' has become an increasingly popular theoretical strand to explore diplomacy. While recognising its diversity, I argue that it consists of four core elements: (i) an ontological commitment to the everyday, (ii) a focus on processes over stasis, (iii) a shift from abstract theorising to practical imperatives, and (iv) seeing knowledge as practice. I then move onto exploring two of the practice turn's foundational articles, one by Iver Neumann and the other by Vincent Pouliot and Emanuel Adler. By doing so, I find that while the 'practice turn' was originally open to creativity and materiality, later writings have tended to ignore these elements. I argue that the reason for this can be linked to the practice turn's heavily theoretical reliance on writings by Pierre Bourdieu. While Bourdieu's toolkit has proved successful in capturing the 'stickiness' of diplomatic practices, it has not succeeded in capturing creativity and materiality. In order to remedy this lacuna, I argue that diplomacy should be understood as 'controversies'. A concept emerging from Actor Network Theory (ANT), a 'controversy' has the strength in capturing orderings that are unstable. The core argument of the chapter is then to introduce the concept of 'controversy' and argue that it better captures the role of diplomatic creativity and materiality.

The second chapter draws upon the theoretical framework and studies the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. After the Cold War, the Nordic states decided to create a common Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. A unique project worldwide, this paper seeks to understand the processes behind the emergence of this diplomatic site. In order to do so, the chapter is divided into three parts. I start by drawing attention to how the idea first emerged. I find that the idea was first launched by Thorvald Stoltenberg at a Nordic meeting in 1992. While initially receiving great scepticism, it eventually became accepted. Having explicated how the idea

emerged, I move onto exploring the processes behind the complex. Here, I draw attention to five different controversies that were assembled: 1) the purchase of the building plot, 2) the making of room plans, 3) the launching of architect competitions, 4) the process of furnishing, and 5) the arranging of ceremonies. The controversies will be analysed through looking at a wide range of archival documents. To supplement the findings, interviews are conducted. By exploring the materialisation of the embassy complex, one can see the many actors that partake in such processes. In light of this, studying diplomacy as controversies allows to see the contingencies at play, drawing attention to creative and material practices. The aim with the chapter is to show how studying diplomacy as controversies can give insights into diplomatic practices behind the emergence of a diplomatic site.

The third chapter explores how the study of controversies can help us rethink Nordic diplomatic practices. The aim of the chapter is to show how the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can contribute insights into key debates within the discipline. The chapter is divided into three parts, each part exploring one concept. The first part looks at how the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can give insights into the concept of 'the Nordic'. Here, I find that the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can provide three lessons by underlining (i) a relational understanding, (ii) a contextual understanding and (iii) a material understanding. The second part shows how the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can teach three lessons around 'diplomatic creativity'. It draws attention to (i) the relationship between creativity and change, (ii) how diplomatic creativity emerge, and (iii) the difficulty of capturing diplomatic creativity. The final part explores how the Nordic embassy complex can yield insights into the concept of 'materiality' in diplomatic practice. Here, it draws attention to (i) how materials shape conditions of possibility, (ii) the relationship between materiality and identity, and (iii) the active role of materials. Taken together, by using the Nordic embassy complex as a foil, one can gain several insights into wider debates within the discipline.

However, before delving into the chapters, I below present a review of the current literature and sketch out the methods applied. Reviewing the diplomatic literature, I argue that it provides a poor toolkit for dealing with creativity and materiality. I then outline a methodological framework better equipped for this purpose. Applying a critical understanding of methods, I develop a 'two-layered' approach which consists of (1) setting the methodological 'scene' and (2) identifying methodological 'tools'. By developing such a 'two-layered' approach, it allows me to establish a more robust link between the 'processing' and 'gathering' of data.

Literature Review

The decision to write about the Nordic embassy complex did not spring out of thin air but emerged through the familiarisation with the literature. In this section, I show how the topic has been previously discussed and outline areas where the paper seeks to contribute. The aim is to provide a brief overview of the theoretical advances in the literature on diplomacy.

Long considered a practical issue[1], diplomacy has now been explored through a range of International Relations (IR) theories. While disagreeing on the role of diplomacy, IR theories generally unite in seeing it as an inter-state practice[2]. From a realist perspective, diplomacy is understood as the epitome of national interest. By seeing diplomacy as statecraft (Constantinou 2013: 144), the emphasis is largely on strategic action[3] and instrumental rationality (Langer 1951, Kissinger 1994)[4]. The English School sees diplomacy as an important force in itself, constituting one of the five institutions within the international society (Watson 1982)[5]. However, while more open to normative questions, defined as 'the common stock of ideas and values possessed by the official representatives of states' (Bull 1977: 316), it similarly underscores the centrality of states (Kuus 2015: 370)[6]. Even the liberal perspective, though more inclusive to the idea of non-state actors, generally approaches a state-centric vision of diplomacy. Here, diplomacy is seen as a tool for states to resolve conflict and produce a more stable liberal international order (Diamond and McDonald 1996, McRae and Hubbart 2001). Therefore, traditional understandings see diplomacy as a negotiation by which states in a system conduct their relations (Adler-Nissen 2014: 660). Despite the different understandings, diplomacy is generally taken as an inter-state practice.

[1] For a long time, the study of diplomacy was criticised for its rejection of theory (Der Derian 1987, Constantinou 1996, Murray 2008, 2011, Wiseman 2011).

[2] One of the most famous diplomatic scholars, Ernest Satow, in the *Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, defined diplomacy as the conduct of official relations between states (Satow 1917). Satow has later become an important authority in foreign ministries around the world (Neumann 2012: 1). Another classic within diplomatic circles is *Diplomacy* (1939) by Sir Harold Nicolson.

[3] The literature on strategic culture can be traced back to American studies of the Soviet Union, see (Snyder 1977, Jacobsen 1990, Johnston 1995).

[4] For example, Henry Kissinger (1994), one of the most famous authors of diplomacy, adopts a fixed ontology of diplomacy as statecraft. According to Kissinger, a diplomat is there to provide the statesman information.

[5] Seen as one of the five institutions, diplomacy through the English School is largely seen as an 'order-creating' institution.

[6] Similarly, scholars have recognised how Hedley Bull presupposes a system of states where the concept of 'international society' is understood as an extra layer based on some degree of sameness and continuity (Bartelson 2015: 679). Seen as a layered phenomenon, the concept of an 'international society' should not be a question of either or, but one of degree (Neumann 2011: 466).

State-centric approaches have recently been challenged by the 'new diplomacy'[7] literature[8]. The 'new diplomacy' literature has taken primary interest in exploring how globalisation affects diplomacy. Its core achievement is drawing attention to the range of actors taking part in diplomatic practices. As the rise of non-state actors has significantly proliferated (Murray et al. 2011, Bjola and Kornprobst 2013), the scope of participation is no longer limited to official representatives of states (Altman and Shore 2014: 338). However, the problem with this literature is how it views states and non-state actors as operating in a zero-sum game. By consequence, the very rise of non-state actors is often taken to imply the demise of conventional diplomacy (Cooper 1997, Sharp 1997, Held and McGrew 2002). Yet, as Sending et al. have highlighted, it is one thing to point at the emerging power of non-state actors, but quite another to account for the process by which they become more powerful relative to other actors (Sending et al. 2011: 534). Indeed, the role of non-state actors is not something that necessarily undermines the position of traditional diplomacy. Due to its static understanding of state and non-state actors, the literature has struggled to explore what global interconnectedness means in practice.

The so-called 'practice theory' has a better toolkit to overcome such problems. After Iver Neumann's call for a 'practice turn' in 2002[9], scholars have developed a practice approach to study the international (Pouliot 2008, Hopf 2010, Adler and Pouliot 2011, Adler-Nissen 2012). Its primary object of analysis is not what people think, but what they *do* (Brown 2012: 442)[10]. It thereby takes the 'stuff' that drives the world seriously (Bueger and Gadinger 2015: 2). The emphasis on practice has been applied to a range of different topics, including writings on security (Balzacq et al. 2010), history (Spiegel 2005) and the European Union (EU) (Bicchi 2014). Heavily influenced by Pierre Bourdieu, most of the literature explains how certain practices maintain over time. Applied to diplomacy, scholars have pointed out the endurance of symbols such as handshakes, gifts, parties, etc[11]. Without a doubt, explicating the 'stickiness' of practices has given key insights into understanding diplomacy. However, while a lot can be captured by this habitual framework, it fails to sufficiently deal with creativity and materiality. If diplomacy is seen as being predominantly about practices of ordering, one needs to understand when new ordering rationales

[7] The concept of 'new diplomacy' is often used interchangeably with the concept of 'public diplomacy'.
[8] For criticisms of a state-centric understanding of diplomacy, see among others, Constatinou (1996), Sharp (1999), Cooper and Hocking (2000), Neumann (2002), Riordan (2003), Lee and Hudson (2004), Jönsson and Hall (2005), Adler-Nissen (2009) Cornago (2010),
[9] It should be noted that the study of practices first emerged in sociology, anthropology and organisation studies. For key works see Bourdieu (1990), Schatzki et al. (2001), Reckwitz (2002).
[10] A key trend has thus been a shift from the focus on politicians to professionals. This has been particularly evident in the strands of critical security studies, see for example Bigo (2000), Leander (2005), CASE Collective (2006), Huysmans (2014).
[11] From a post-structuralist perspective, diplomacy has been predominantly understood as a kind of knowledge production.

emerge, what they constitute and how they change. To be sure, the solution is not to bid farewell to the 'practice turn'. Rather, the aim should be to develop the practice turn along more creative and material lines (see Pouliot 2010, Schindler and Wille 2014, Cornut 2015). This requires a methodological framework that captures these dynamics.

The aim of this study is therefore twofold: 1) to create a better understanding of creativity, and 2) to create a better understanding of materiality. To be sure, the lacunas have already been identified. For example, Andrew F. Cooper and Jérémie Corrnut (2019) note that there is an emphasis on continuity in the diplomatic literature, while change and creativity are frequently neglected. This is unfortunate because 'a diplomat's ability to improvise is crucial to enhance their influence' (Cornut 2018: 729). Yet, few have taken up the challenge to explore exactly *why* the literature has struggled to grasp these elements. The thesis therefore seeks to understand why these elements have been ignored. My argument is that the literature's close reliance on Pierre Bourdieu's theorising has prevented a more creative understanding of diplomacy. By being more aware of the strengths and limitations of Bourdieu's toolkit, one can better capture creative practices and understand diplomatic improvisation[12]. The second aim is to better capture the role of materiality in diplomatic practices. While the turn to a sociological understanding of international politics has been welcomed, it has also largely neglected the role of materiality. Generally speaking, IR has a tradition of abstracting the social and the human from the natural and the non-human (Corry 2018: 244). Still, at the very centre of the discipline lies the idea that human nature holds the key to understand international politics[13]. In the diplomatic literature, the neglect of materiality has also been highlighted. In an article by Vincent Pouliot and Jérémie Cornut, they note how the material structure of diplomatic practices has been neglected, but sees it as a promising line of research (Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 309). Taken together, the diplomatic literature often privileges continuity over change[14] and humans over materiality. Recognising the limitations with the current literature, the thesis wishes to contribute theoretical tools that better capture diplomatic creativity and materiality.

Finally, studying diplomacy provides a way of studying IR in general[15]. After all, diplomacy constitutes the key elements of international relations, spanning from multilateral governance to

[12] The emphasis on continuity in diplomatic literature is highlighted by Cooper and Cornut (2019).
[13] This theorisation of materiality is particularly prominent within political geography. Examples include Braun and Whatmore (2010), Connolly (2011), Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams (2011) and Squire (2015).
[14] For criticisms, see Schindler and Wille (2015) and Holmes and Traven (2015). There are also important exceptions. Some scholars have recently begun to grapple how diplomacy has a history of both continuity and change, see for example Melissen (1999), Wiseman and Sharp (2012) and Cohen (2013).
[15] For a good discussion of why diplomacy is important to understand international politics, see Sending et al. (2015).

international law. Yet, one might raise the question on what a Nordic embassy complex has to do with IR. This leads us to a question that keeps hunting students and scholars alike: 'is this really IR?'. After all, what can the study of an embassy complex tell us about international politics? At the core of it, IR is about the handling of difference between polities (Neumann 2015: 966-967). That includes a multiplicity of relations that have yet to be discovered. As I will elaborate in a the methods section below, the materialisation of the embassy complex cannot give generalised insights into patterns of how embassies are materialised. That said, a study of the Nordic embassy complex can be used as a foil to engage with several debates in IR. First, it can provide insights into concrete understandings of regional cooperation and materialisation. Second, and very much linked to this, it can yield insights into questions of change and creativity. Third, it can yield insights into how materiality is being made and remade. While the case study might initially come across as mundane and irrelevant for the 'big' picture, the intention is to embed it in theoretical discussions and yield new perspectives on more general debates.

There are always reasons for why someone ends up studying what they study. I am no exception and believe transparency here to be key. In addition to finding the case study interesting, there are certain personal and practical reasons for why this case was chosen over another. First and foremost, I am myself Norwegian and have had a long interest in the Nordic region during my years of studying IR. Having done my whole university education abroad, first in London and so in Oxford, I have been able to explore the Nordics from the 'inside' and the 'outside'. When studying abroad I often see myself as an 'insider', but when returning home I sometimes feel like an 'outsider'. This play between being on the 'inside' and the 'outside' has propelled my fascination for the topic. In addition to this, studying the Nordics has proven easier than other regions because of linguistical reasons. Language is one of the most important ways to convey information, and to be able to master three of the Nordic languages (Norwegian, Swedish and Danish) makes it easier to gain access and understand the context[16]. The reason to study diplomatic practices, however, is perhaps a bit more surprising. I think the roots are multiple. When I did my undergraduate degree at King's College London, I was introduced to a range of scholars who constantly encouraged me to think creatively and push boundaries of knowledge. I long applied this to the field of security, before I discovered that the diplomatic literature suffered from some of the same theoretical

[16] I want to highlight one of the case study's weaknesses, namely its Western orientation. I am fully aware that diplomatic studies remain largely Eurocentric and the problematic implications this have (see Sankaran 2001, Sabaratnam 2011, Shilliam 2011, Hobson 2012). However, seeing this as a predominantly theory-driven thesis, I hope that the theoretical innovation can inspire other to undertake similar studies outside the Western context.

hindrances. The eagerness to always add something to the literature instead of balancing existing ideas is what continues to make the subject of IR fascinating.

In this literature review, I have identified current trends and limitations in the literature. I started by sketching out how mainstream IR theories (realism, liberalism, the English School) have approached diplomacy from a state-centric perspective. With globalisation and new actors emerging, the 'new diplomacy' literature intended to mitigate this state-centrism by highlighting the role of new actors. While I found this to be welcoming, I argued that the literature still suffers from seeing state and non-state actors as operating in a zero-sum game. The most important theoretical contribution in diplomacy in recent times has been the so-called 'practice turn'. It is this literature that this dissertation will mostly be centred around. While the practice turn was seen as having several theoretical strengths, I made the argument that it has yet to unleash its full potential in highlighting diplomatic creativity and the role of materiality. As a final comment, I chose to briefly elaborate on how the case study of the Nordic embassy is situated, explicating my own relationship to the topic. Having identified the gaps in the literature, one has to sketch out the tools for extracting and situating information. That is the topic of the methodological section.

Methods

> 'Experiments challenge that which is taken for granted and attend to the complexity of the world' (Aradau et al. 2014: 9).

> 'Take the abstractions for granted, and we miss a very large part of what counts as politics, as well as what might be interesting and productive among all those things that are going on' (Walker et al. 2018: 5).

This section outlines the methodological framework for the thesis. I start by discussing recent trends in the methodological literature and make the case for methodological pluralism. Seeing methods as techniques for 'situating' and 'generating' information, I develop a two-layered approach. The first consists of the (1) methodological 'scene' and the second consists of the (2) methodological 'tools'. The methodological 'scene' allows to better 'situate' data and consists of three methodological undercurrents that run throughout the paper. I call them 1) *transdisciplinarity*, 2) *reflexivity*, and 3) *relationality*. The second layer provides more direct tools to 'generate' data. These methodological tools include 1) *archival research*, 2) *interviews* and 3) *(disrupted) participant observation*. While the two concepts of 'situating' and 'generating' are clearly interlinked, the framework allows us to better combine theoretical and empirical research along critical lines[17].

A Case for Methodological Pluralism

> 'Purity and closure work together' (Bigo and Walker 2007: 734).

In recent years, methods have increasingly become a topic of discussion as part of theoretical and empirical research in International Relations (IR)[18]. At the core of it, methods drive research in social sciences by providing standards on how to proceed information (Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nhaimas 2004)[19]. As Sandra Harding notes, methodology is the 'theory and analysis of how

[17] Though this is not the space to get deep into methodological debates, it is necessary to briefly outline what I mean by 'critical methods'. As noted above, I adopt a broad understanding of methods. Methods are not 'formulas to follow', but experimental tools to open space for critical thought. Contemporarily, I reject the dominant view in political science that causal theorising is the most important purpose of research (i.e. King, Keohane and Verba 1994).

[18] This has been manifested with the surge of publications devoted to the topic. One example is the special issue on 'Method, Methodology and Innovation' in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43(3).

[19] Similarly, Samuel Barkin and Laura Sjoberg define methods as 'specific techniques and processes of gathering/or analysing information' (Barkin and Sjöberg 2015: 855).

research should proceed' (Harding 1989: x). However, scholars are far from united in how methods should be thought[20]. Rather, different standards are constantly up for contestation, with different understandings of what methods are and what they should achieve. The starkest difference can be found between positivist and post-positivist thought[21]. Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba (KKV) famously asserted that 'all good research can be understood to derive from the same underlying logic of inference' (King, Keohane and Verba 1994: 4). Essentially, this standard methodology is based on ontological realism[22]. The issue with KKV is that inference is understood in a narrow way where they define and delimit what counts as science[23]. Yet, inference, being about learning something from observing something else, can be understood in a range of different ways (Barkin and Sjoberg 2015: 857). By restricting inference to empirical observations that are unproblematically treated as 'facts'[24], KKV limit the scope of scientific research. Relatedly, the main criticism against positivist methods concerns their 'guarantee' for scientific research (Aradau and Huysmans 2014: 597). By avoiding and obliterating mess (Harcourt et al. 2015: 160-161), positivist methods are said to be too 'hygienizing' (Law 2004). Others highlight how privileging positivism over other epistemologies leads to a form of disciplinary gate-keeping (Barkin 2015: 1005)[25]. This 'single reality doctrine' excludes alternative realities (Seth 2007)[26]. Here, IR becomes 'less a discipline than a series of disciplining acts' (Vrasti

[20] It is worth highlighting the differences between 'methodology' and 'methods'. As Claudia Aradau and Jef Huysmans note, '"methodology" is subsumed within ontology, epistemology and the theoretical arranging of concepts structuring the discussions, while "method" becomes at best a reflection on the tools for organising empirical material and practical research design' (Aradau and Huysmans 2014: 597).

[21] In the literature, there is a tendency to divide methods into 'quantitative' and 'qualitative'. However, these divisions hide more than they reveal. For instance, regression analyses are generally seen as a neopositivist methodology rooted in realist philosophy. However, a regression analysis is, first and foremost, a tool that points to a relationship of numbers, not objectivity (Barkin and Sjoberg 2015: 863-864). Quantitative methods should therefore not be seen as *inherently* positivist, as it is the theory which suggests the utility of particular forms of regressions. Due to this, I have therefore chosen to stay away from this distinction, arguing that the most important division lies between 'positivist' and 'post-positivist' lines of thought.

[22] Ontological realism is here understood as the 'assumption that the world exists independently from its human observers' (Friedrichs and Kratochwil 2009: 704).

[23] This gate-keeping has been expressed in publishing patterns that indicate the predominance of rationalist mode of thought, see Tickner (2013).

[24] This epistemological divide is apparent in IR journals. For example, journals such as *Millennium* and *European Journal of International Relations (EJIR)* are generally interpretive-qualitative, whereas *International Security* and *Security Studies* are generally explanatory-quantitative (Bennett 2015: 990). Instead of attempting to merge this epistemological divide, I follow the view that it is better to let the different fields develop. In this paper, I largely draw upon journals such as *Millennium* and *EJIR* and follow the debates that have taken place there.

[25] Here, Laura Sjöberg raises an important issue around the power structures in which these neopositivist methods are embedded. If neopositivist epistemologies are embedded in power, who is empowered by them 'is not only an empirical question, but a normative one' (Sjöberg 2015: 1009).

[26] A range of scholars have pointed out the Eurocentrism in IR, see Sankaran (2001), Acharya and Buzan (2010), Sabaratnam (2011), Shilliam (2011), Hobson (2012), Muppidi (2012) Shilliam (2015) and Bilgin (2018). Methods, by inscribing one single way of extracting knowledge can also (re)produce Eurocentrism,

2008: 300). Much of the push for expanding disciplinary boundaries therefore concerns creating new ways of knowing (Blaney and Tickner 2017: 294). Instead of calling for a *unity* of science, the argument is to embrace methodological pluralism. This implies rejecting the hegemony of a single scientific method and champion the plurality of interpretive strategies (Price and Reus-Smit 1998: 261). Methodological pluralism is desirable not only for the growth of knowledge, but also for reasons related to policy, 'for only a plurality of theoretical perspectives can protect practitioners from the temptation of premature closure in the formulation of foreign policy' (Zambernardi 2016: 5)[27]. That IR scholars do not agree upon a 'standard recipe' of how methods should be thought is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength[28]. It is, after all, the constant reconsideration of the discipline that makes IR the rich field it is today (Lacatus, Schade and Yao 2015: 778)[29]. As an overall principle, IR scholars should think closely through the methodological choices they make and the implications they have.

Having highlighted some of the issues with positivist methods, the challenge is to develop methods along more critical lines[30]. Long neglected, critical IR has only recently become concerned with methods[31]. Through a critical perspective, methods are not neutral ways of gathering information (Bleiker 2015, Law 2004, Law and Ruppert 2013). Instead, methods play a key role in enacting 'truthful' worlds (Aradau and Huysmans 2014: 594)[32]. While describing reality, methods are also constituting this very reality (Bleiker 2015: 886). Put another way, scientific methods are world-making exercises with performative results (Blaney and Tickner 2017: 296). In line with this, one can see how methods are political. As Claudia Aradau and Jef Huysmans assert, 'methods are instruments not for creating common ground, but for power struggles, competing enactments of worlds and/or creating disruptive positions in the worlds of international politics' (Aradau and

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which signifies another important argument for methodological pluralism. This speaks to another issue within IR, namely the tendency to invoke 'great thinkers' without acknowledging how they are embedded in imperial structures. For good critiques, see Gani (2017), Keene (2017) and Vergerio (2019).

[27] This stands in stark contrast to for instance rational choice theory that is guided by a single theoretical tradition and thereby rejects a more pluralistic approach to theory (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003: 21).

[28] Countering the idea of pluralism, some scholars argue that abandoning fixed standard of evidence opens up dangers of relativism. Challenging scientific standards is seen as undermining scientific rigour and even political judgements. However, I share Roland Bleiker's sentiment that 'the hubris of indisputable knowledge is more dangerous than a clash of different perspectives' (Bleiker 2015: 872)

[29] Reflection on IR ontologies and epistemologies are central for discussions around the relevance of IR (Zanotti 2017: 362).

[30] The difference of seeing knowledge as a *reflection* or as a *perspective* cuts to the heart of social scientific accounts. As Patrick Thaddeus Jackson notes, 'the issue of whether the knowledge that academic researchers produce is in some sense a *reflection* of the world, or whether it is irreducibly a *perspective* of the world' (Jackson 2008: 130).

[31] Patrick Thaddeus Jackson has been one of the most prominent scholars to foreground this work (Jackson 2011).

[32] Similarly, Kimberly Hutchings (2018) notes how all knowledge has power effects and encourages scholars to be more reflective around the context in which knowledge claims are made.

Huysmans 2014: 598). Following this, methods can be an important site of revisiting critique. Moreover, the critical perspective challenges the conventional view of analytical rigour. Instead of seeing rigour as parsimonious theorising, it highlights how a focus on complexities, multiplicities and non-linearities can provide another pathway to analytical rigor (Harcourt et al. 2015: 162). The recent trend in IR to critically approach methods has therefore been welcoming in opening up new ways to extract and situate information.

The core aim of this paper is to capture creativity and materiality in diplomatic practices. But what methods allow for best capturing diplomatic creativity and materiality? Acknowledging how methods enact some 'orderings more visible than others' (Aradau and Huysmans 2014: 612), it becomes important to reflect on what kind of methods that serves this purpose. As this thesis is primarily interested in ruptures, statistical methods – while useful in highlighting tendencies – are not particularly helpful in capturing deviances. Instead, this paper follows Claudia Aradau et al.'s urge of 'experimenting with combining theories, concepts, methods, and data in unfamiliar ways to bring out relations that otherwise remain largely invisible' (Aradau et al. 2014: 7-8). Resting on epistemological and ontological pluralism, this paper favours heterogeneity, multiplicity and difference over homogeneity, unity and identity (Bonditti et al. 2014: 161). Methods should not do the service of closing down but opening up (Harcourt et al. 2015: 159). The aim is not to construct a grand theory or an overarching device[33], but to create innovative insights by experimenting with methods, concepts, and empirics' (Aradau et al. 2014: 9). To this purpose, I below develop a two-layered approach to methods. The first layer consists of a methodological 'scene' and the second layer consists of methodological 'tools'. However, it is not my intention to argue that these methodological decisions should be universally imposed. I echo David Lake's observation that 'there is no guarantee that any one kind of knowledge generated and understood within any one epistemology or ontology is always and everywhere more useful than another' (Lake 2013: 580). The choice of method is contextual[34]. The overall point is that scholars should think carefully through epistemological and ontological decisions.

[33] In line with this, the criminologist Mariana Valverde argues that a grand theory must be avoided in order to create more innovative research (Valverde 2014).
[34] Following this, as Milja Kurki has noted, 'positivist' methods fail to account for the social context around the construction of knowledge (Kurki 2015: 780).

Methodological scene

The first methodological layer consists of a 'methodological scene'. The aim of the methodological 'scene' is to provide a framework that allows to better 'situate' data. One can see the methodological scene as three undercurrents that run through the paper. I call them: 1) *transdisciplinarity*, 2) *reflexivity*, and 3) *relationality*.

1) Transdisciplinarity

> 'Diplomacy takes place in a complex web of relations, and as such it cannot be studied in isolation from the many faces of contemporary governance' (Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 305).

First, this paper seeks to enhance a *transdisciplinary*[35] dialogue. Claiming the international as something that can be separately studied, International Relations (IR) has long seen itself superior due to its higher social reach. The carving out of the international can be traced back to David Singer's influential idea that politics could be divided into three 'levels of analysis': the 'international', the 'state' and the 'individual' (Singer 1961)[36]. Indeed, Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* drew upon this idea and enabled 'a synthetic vision of the international as political space to emerge' (Epstein 2013: 503). Even though Waltz's theory has been criticised from several sides, it has been pioneering in creating a boundary between the 'inside' and the 'outside' (Walker 1993). Here, the main boundary concerns the 'state' (inside) and the 'international system' (outside) where the principle difference being hierarchy as the ordering principle within states and anarchy as the ordering principle in the international (Tickner 2003: 309). Crucially, IR became a discipline no longer looking at states, but looking at them *from without*[37]. This analytical move meant that the 'international' became its own justified domain with its own theories and concepts. Whereas IR today is increasingly becoming a more vibrant intellectual hub[38], the idea of a distinct international is still present.

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[35] I prefer the term 'transdisciplinary' over 'interdisciplinary' as the latter runs the risk of seeing disciplines as singular (Lisle 2016: 420). However, I share the view that all disciplines are interdisciplinary, whereas academics perform disciplinary distinctiveness through the ways they promote their fields (Turton 2015: 245).

[36] However, as Nikolas Rose observes, these distinctions are technical and not ontological (Rose 1999: 5).

[37] The exclusion of the social was seen necessary to sustain a narrative of the international with clear boundaries (Bigo and Walker 2007: 728). One effect has been how IR theories prioritise order over change (Bigo 2017: 303).

[38] As a field, IR has become more pluralistic since the end of the Cold War. As Justin Rosenberg highlights, the end of the Cold War opened up the field from being heavily focused on military relations to become a more intellectual hub where ideas were imposed from across the social sciences (Rosenberg 2016: 128).

The theorisation of diplomacy has largely occurred within IR. Even though the paper will be situated within IR, diplomacy cannot be understood from any single perspective[39]. Rather, diplomacy takes place in a web of relations and cannot be seen in isolation from the many faces of contemporary governance (Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 305). Diplomatic scholars have therefore recognised the need to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and seek a cross-disciplinary dialogue (Murray et al. 2011: 724). By engaging with a diverse set of disciplines (i.e. geography, sociology, history and anthropology), it allows for broadening understandings of diplomatic practices. However, engaging with knowledges across disciplines implies more than simply gathering additional information. The aim is not to 'bring' different disciplines into IR, but to 'engage the space that emerges by working between them' (Bourne et al. 2015: 310)[40]. A commitment to transdisciplinarity serves therefore a richer methodological purpose. By engaging with literatures that are not of your immediate interest, it challenges the taken-for-granted (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016: 1059). It enables us to ask questions better 'attuned to the complexity and creativity of social practice' (Kuus 2015: 370). Moreover, engaging transdisciplinarily allows us move beyond the lingering state-centrism that still exists in the diplomatic literature. An approach that starts with transversal practice is less imprisoned in a teleological narrative of state sovereignty and more attentive to the ways small habits connect to the grand architectures of power (Kuus 2015: 380-381). Taken together, the commitment to engage in a dialogue between different disciplines sets the background for better processing data[41]. In order to understand diplomacy in general, and to capture diplomatic improvisation in particular, it is necessary to engage in a transdisciplinary dialogue.

2) Reflexivity

'All that any of us is ever doing is telling stories' (Harcourt et al. 2015)

Second, this paper adopts a reflexive approach to knowledge. It thereby rejects the ontological view that there is an objective truth that can independently exist from those who observes it (see Skinner 1969, Foucault 1972, Jackson 2015)[42]. In IR, there has been several debates to what extent

[39] In a similar way, diplomatic practice cannot be captured by a single method.
[40] Or, as Merje Kuus similarly notes, 'the task is not simply to dip into "other" literatures but to hold different kinds of knowledge in a relation of dialogue' (Kuus 2015: 379).
[41] To be sure, the aim with trandisciplinarity is not to create a grand narrative. As Didier Bigo notes, we need 'neither a wall between disciplines nor their fusion into one meta-narrative but their articulation and a reflexive statement about their (…) production of knowledge' (Bigo 2016: 1069).
[42] It should be noted that 'scientific' and 'interpretive' knowledge is largely unbridgeable (see Hollis and Smith 1990). I align with the view that it is not desirable to bridge these different epistemological designs (Barkin 2015).

'science' is possible in international politics. I depart from the view that knowledge is not neutral, but becomes naturalised (van der Ree 2013: 24). This means that the subject is implicated in the constitution of the object (Friedrichs and Kratochwill 2009: 704)[43]. Reflexivity is necessary to understand how the knowledge generated is linked to our own theoretical positions and positionality (Lai and Roccu 2019: 76). A commitment to reflexivity has several implications for the research carried out. Recognising how knowledge is always situated, it becomes crucial to be reflexive around the relationship with oneself and one's context (Neumann and Neumann 2015: 799). A researcher cannot pretend that she or he has nothing to do with the creation of data – 'that somehow all the information had been there already and the research simply consisted of unearthing hidden gems that are then presented in their original authenticity to a reader' (Bleiker 2015: 887). Rejecting the idea of one ontological truth leads to a more reflexive approach to knowledge.

Moreover, a reflexive approach intends to deal with the political without being bounded by fixed concepts[44]. Since what we study is inseparable from the concepts we use, one has to be more reflexive around the use of categories[45]. Neorealism and neoliberalism have long taken concepts such as the 'international system', 'states' and 'interests' as immutable (McCourt 2016: 476). However, adopting a reflexive approach, one does not take such concepts as given. As concepts are co-constitutive of theories and at the centre-stage of our communication (Guzzini 2013: 535), it becomes crucial to adopt a reflexive approach. All concepts are contested (Lakoff 2006: 23) and conceptual fixities, however convenient they may be, must be engaged with critically[46]. Also, concepts cannot be understood without their semantic context (Guzzini 2013: 536). Therefore, whereas diplomacy is a distinct practice that can be identified, it will be necessary to account for how diplomacy is embedded with other IR concepts, such as 'identity', 'state' and 'the international'. Eventually, I expect this to give a more integrated account of how diplomacy is executed. However, engaging reflexively with concepts is not simply an intellectual exercise. As concepts are techniques through which objects are constituted, conceptual language holds power (McNevin 2014: 305). Social inquiry 'does not only organise objects of study, but actually changes that object' (Barkin and Sjoberg 2015: 858). It therefore becomes crucial to reflexively approach the concepts in use.

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[43] As Robert Cox famously asserted, theories are 'always *for* someone and *for* some purpose (Cox 1981: 128).
[44] See Felix Berenskoetter (2016) for a good discussion on conceptual analysis in IR.
[45] Indeed, reflexive approaches are characterised by the suspicion of the 'taken for granted' (Ravecca and Dauphinee 2018: 126). In a similar way, feminists pay attention to 'the throw-away gesture, to the seemingly trivial – or what feminists investigators more accurately call the *trivialised*' (Enloe 2016: 322).
[46] Moreover, since all concepts have a history, one should also pay attention to struggles of categorisation (Bigo 2012: 125).

What differs a critical approach to knowledge from a conventional form?[47] Simply put, it starts from the assertation that 'knowledge is situated knowledge' (Neumann and Neumann 2015: 800). This rejects the idea that knowledge can be neutral and sees it as a misleading starting point (Kurki 2015: 785). While there is often an impetus to write from an objective point of view, this so-called 'view from nowhere' is always situated somewhere. Since the scholarly self is irretrievably tied to the world, the concept of reflexivity[48] around positionality becomes absolutely crucial. Turning the scholarly gaze back to ourselves allows us to identify how disciplinary ways of thinking shape our understandings of objects (Coleman and Hughes 2014: 145). Such reflexivity is not only important in terms of increasing trust in the narratives that are told, but also in terms of being more transparent towards around any biases that research entails (Bueger and Mireanu 2014: 130). This becomes important as knowledge has the ability to divide along core-periphery (Tickner 2013)[49] and gendering lines (Sylvester 1994)[50]. Indeed, 'the "data" is not merely gathered, but processed, internalised and experienced by the authors' (Bueger and Mireanu 2014: 130). However, turning the gaze towards the researcher is not necessarily a turn away from achieving objectivity. Rather, by recognising the context in which knowledge arises one can gain a stronger form for 'objectivity' (Kurki 2015: 785). The more the researcher knows why they have chosen to study X, the better the data and the texts (Neumann and Neumann 2015: 799). A key tenet of adopting a reflexive approach to knowledge is therefore to turn the gaze towards the Self.

3) Relationality

Third, this paper seeks to explore how politics operates *relationally*. In line with the view of knowledge as situated, relationalism starts with the view that humans are always fundamentally relationally and socially embedded (Neumann and Neumann 2015: 800). Relationalism is often linked to the works of Karl Marx[51], Norbert Elias[52], Bruno Latour[53], Pierre Bourdieu[54] and Michel

[47] Here, an example can be drawn from the field of critical geography and their understandings of maps. The literature highlights how maps are not objective facts distinct from the world but created through the processes of mapping. Indeed, tools are chosen to shape the representation into a map (Loughlan, Olsson and Schouten 2014: 26). By emphasising mapping as a process, one can see how the map is not static but mobile and can be interpreted differently (Czarniawska and Sevón 2005).
[48] The concept of reflexivity is a critical part of Pierre Bourdieu's work.
[49] To illustrate, Arlene B. Tickner (2013) observes how participation in internationally recognised journals and citation patterns illustrate that knowledge production is entrenched in core-periphery relations.
[50] Christine Sylvester argues that the rational exemplar of 'proper science' has led to the exclusion of women (Sylvester 1994: 316).
[51] Karl Marx argued that society expressed the sum of interrelations. For elaboration, please see Cohen (1978)
[52] For an introduction to Norbert Elias in IR, see Linklater (2011).
[53] For an overview of Bruno Latour in IR, see Salter and Walters (2016).
[54] For an overview of Pierre Bourdieu in IR, see Adler-Nissen (2012).

Foucault[55]. The most popular text written on the topic, however, remains Mustafa Emirbayer's (1997) 'Manifesto for Relational Sociology'. Situated in the sociological literature, Emirbayer starts with the observation that sociologists face the dilemma of either focusing on substances or on processes (Emirbayer 1997: 281). According to him, 'the key question confronting sociologists in the present day is not "material versus ideal", "structure versus agency," "individual versus society," or many of the other dualisms so often noted; rather, it is the choice between substantialism and relationalism' (Emirbayer 1997: 282). In order to explicate what relationalism is, Emirbayer starts by contrasting it to substantialism, because what binds relationalism is its opposition to substantialism. Substantialism – no surprise here – takes substances as its starting point. It insists that the basic units of analysis are substances or essences: things, beings and systems (Go 2016: 118). Adopting a relational ontology, one rejects 'that one can posit discrete pregiven units such as the individual or society as ultimate starting points of sociological analysis' (Emirbayer 1997: 298). Instead, relationalism starts with relations and see them as constitutive (Go 2016: 118)[56]. These relations give rise to both actors and environments (Jackson and Nexon 2019: 2). It is worth pausing at this point because some would object to the view that scholars do not look at interactions between entities. They do. The difference between understanding something as an 'interaction' and as a 'relation' is that the interactionist approach sees relations as static ties among substances whereas the relational approach sees relations as dynamic processes (Emirbayer 1997: 289). Put differently, a 'relational' approach differs from an 'interactionist' approach as the latter has the tendency to take fixed units as given before they 'interact' (Bigo 2012: 124)[57]. From a relational perspective, the individual and society cannot be ontologically separated (Go 2016: 120)[58]. In order to capture the difference between relationalism and substantialism, the figure below epitomises it well:

[55] While linked to these scholars, it is known to have been systemised more explicitly within social theory, particularly US sociology, i.e. Mische (2011) and Tilly (2005).
[56] This is the perspective Michel Foucault adopted when noting that the subject is not a unified identity, but inseparable from the contexts it is embedded (see Foucault 1980).
[57] This is why relationalists reject actor-centric ontologies (Jackson and Nexon 2013: 554).
[58] In a similar vein, Didier Bigo has highlighted how the opposition between society and individuals or structure and agency makes little sense (Bigo 2012: 124). Emannuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (2011) highlight how the 'practice turn' overcomes these dualisms.

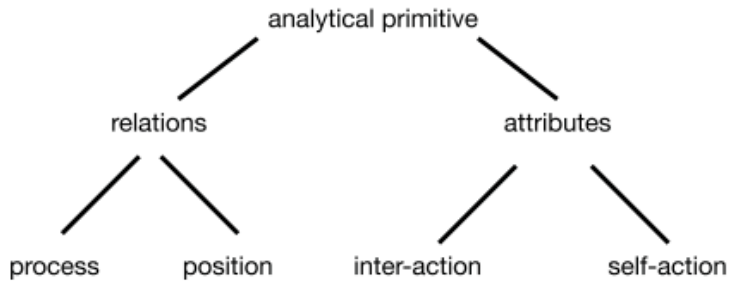

Figure 1: Fractal distinctions in social theory (Jackson and Nexon 2019: 12)

As one can see, most IR theories are to be found on the right-hand branch of the diagram[59]. They focus on substances and hold the view that entities come first and relations come second. In IR, substantialism has been at the core of theoretical developments.

The interest in relational ontology has only recently made its inroad into IR, but has already shown potential in advancing new innovative insights. Relationalism has several theoretical strengths[60]. First, by focusing on relations rather than agents, one sees change as immanent. Indeed, seeing relations as persistently fluid opens up for the ever-present possibility for change. This is particularly important for a field like IR, because it often puts forward theories and structures that appear repetitive and unchangeable. However, such an understanding limits our understanding of a social reality that is dynamic, continuous and processual. The fluidity of structures means that reducing them to an 'autonomous system is analytically hazardous' (Go 2016: 121). Moreover, a commitment to relationalism allows us to escape the 'need' to draw simplistic boundaries (such as structure/agency, domestic/international, exceptional/normal, materiality/discourse etc.) (Bigo and Madsen 2011: 221). By seeing practices as relational, one avoids the use of all-encompassing rationales to explain political processes (Côté-Boucher et al. 2014: 199). In the study of diplomacy, I apply a relational ontology to recast several debates within the literature. Diplomacy is, by definition, a relational practice (Neumann 2019). One example is the aforementioned debate on states and non-state actors. By seeing them as operating in relation, rather than in isolation, one can yield new insights. As part of setting the methodological scene, relational thinking can allow us to clean our lenses and think differently[61].

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[59] One can distinguish between two different forms of substantialism: 'holism' and 'individualism'. Holism posits a system where the whole is seen to have its own logic (Go 2016: 119). For example, Kenneth Waltz's theory of international politics posits a single global structure. Individualism, the other form of substantialism, prioritises not a system but a single social actor. For example, rational choice theory, which presumes the individual to have an essential unchanging identity, is a form of individualism.

[60] Adopting a relational ontology is still rare within the IR discipline. Despite so, it has already shown potential in approaching topics such as the rise of China (Pan 2018), global history (Go 2016), hegemonic-stability theory (Nexon and Neumann 2018) and migration (Ansems de Vries 2016).

[61] As a final note, it is important to highlight why a commitment to relationalism is located as setting the methodological 'scene' instead of providing methodological 'tools'. While the analytical primitive is the

Methodological tools

While the 'methodological scene' helps situating data, more direct 'methodological tools' are needed to generate empirical material. To that end, I below sketch out three methodological tools I use in the thesis: 1) *archival research* 2) *interviews*, and 3) *(disrupted) participant observations*.

1) *Archival research*

First, this study draws upon a wide analysis of documents. In exploring the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex, documents are needed to develop a narrative of what occurred. Here, different types of documents give different clues about practice. This paper draws upon diplomatic handbooks and manuals. Within the study of diplomacy, handbooks and manuals provide important guidance into how diplomats carry out activities. While they are not the practices themselves, they can give clues about the background knowledge that informs them (Bueger 2014: 402). Other sources of interest are documents produced by diplomats themselves. The thesis therefore draws upon archival documents, including letters and documents produced by diplomats. The aim with these sources is to explore the wider understanding of why diplomats acted in a particular way. Put differently, they give a glimpse into the inner mechanisms of what happened. Finally, aligned with the recent 'aesthetic turn' in IR (see Bleiker 2015)[62], I also pay attention to visual artefacts, in the form of video, photography, art or paintings[63]. Looking at material documents, such as architecture, can give important clues of how materials enable certain types of behaviour. I therefore take aesthetic materials seriously in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the process. In other words, the gathering of documents will be diverse, believing that only through the plurality of sources can we get to grip of the practices at

relation, there are different ways of approaching this (i.e. social-network theories, The Columbia School and the practice theory). Relationalism has therefore no direct methodological implications. In fact, there is significant methodological debate within relationalism itself, and they generally concern the generation of knowledge. Whereas all parties agree on the scientific ontology that social relations surround and sustain actors, they disagree on how to study those relations and their impact on outcomes of interest (Jackson and Nexon 2019: 15). Therefore, 'relationality' is part of setting the 'methodological scene' – but cannot be understood as a 'methodological tool'. This is a good reminder of the importance of a two-layered approach to methods. Too many studies jump quickly into discussing methodological tools before they have sketched out an overview of the broader structures in which they operate.

[62] The body of literature encompassing the 'aesthetic turn' has grown significantly over the past years. For key works, see Campbell (2003), Williams (2003), Constantinou (2006), Hansen (2011) and Butler and Bleiker (2016).

[63] The importance of being attentive to such material documents has been particularly emphasised by Costas Constantinou. As he elaborates, 'to be attentive to the montage of the diplomatic spectacle – the gathering and framing of images projecting specific visual narrative – is to open up to spatio-temporalities that underscore how diplomacy operates on the human mental screen and indeed in everyday life through assemblage and more-than-human agency, with unexplored consequences' (Constantinou 2018: 409).

play. A full list of primary sources, including unpublished Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) documents, as well as newspaper articles, published documents, websites etc. is available in the bibliography.

It should be noted that archival research also has its limitations. As Martin Müller highlights, 'documents, no matter how detailed or vivid, always already contain a pre-selection of the association that their authors consider noteworthy' (Müller 2012: 383). Whereas this is inescapable, I tried my best to be as reflexive as possible approaching the documents. When visiting the archives, I asked for documents related to the Nordic embassy project without emphasising any particular angle I wanted to explore it through. When I received the material I was initially surprised by all the documents that included building plans, architectural drawings, furniture decisions, etc. My background in social science led me to search for 'motives' and 'rationales' behind the project and not how many square metres a technical room should have. However, as I continued the project, I understood that these technical documents were not unimportant details, but necessary to understand how the project materialised. A lot of diplomatic practice behind creating an embassy consists of deciding how a building should look, what it should include and where things should be placed. Going into the archives with an open mind is crucial for not sweeping away documents that are not of your immediate interest[64]. The point to stress is that the more reflexive scholars are around their own backgrounds, the better the interpretation of data.

2) *Interviews*

Second, the dissertation draws upon conducted interviews[65]. In understanding diplomatic practices, scholars stress that more space should be given to what diplomats have to say about their own profession (Neumann 2019: 329). Interviews are useful to reconstruct the practitioner's point of view (Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 308). The intent is to make sense of how other make sense of the world (Kuus 2013: 117). One can distinguish between two types of interviewees: 1) someone who is participating in the practice or 2) someone who has spent considerable amount of time in observing the practice. In the first case, one is interested in understanding the everyday actions and underlying standards. Here, the interviewee is forced to explicate one's implicit knowledge. Since interviews are usually carried out in a dialogue, the interviewer and the interviewee reconstruct meaning together; they co-produce an interpretation of practices. In the

[64] While some selectivity is always unavoidable, being as open as possible in the archival search allows for more flexibility later in the research process.
[65] For an overview of the strengths and limitations with conducting interviews, see Adler-Nissen (2012).

second case, one is interviewing someone has a thorough understanding of the practice. Rather than asking for details of a practice and turning implicit knowledge into explicit, one is here interested in seeking assistance with the interpretation process. Type one practitioners therefore help collecting raw data, while type two practitioners help interpreting the events.

The interviews for the thesis were mostly conducted in the spring of 2020. I conducted ten interviews, ranging from 30 minutes to 90 minutes in length. Six of them were diplomats, two of them were politicians, and the remaining two were academic experts. Questions circled around diplomacy in general and the Berlin project in particular. Since the project in Berlin is over twenty years old I sent over some questions in advance. This allowed the interviewees to be better prepared. Some of the interviewees brought documents and drawings. However, I also tried to keep some flexibility, encouraging interviewees to speak as freely as they could. I emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions I asked, and that details they might deem useless could still be of use to me. I also used the 'snowball' method, asking interviewees for potential people to contact. Half of the interviews were contacted after other interviewees' recommendation. Most of the interviews were conducted over Skype due to the COVID-19 outbreak. While this was not ideal, it functioned relatively well. Interviews are anonymised with identifiers provided in the footnotes. Taken together, the conduction of interviews aims to give a more rounded account of the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex.

3) *(Disrupted) participant observation*

Third, the thesis had planned to undertake participant observation in Berlin. This was made impossible due to the outbreak of COVID-19. I will, however, provide a brief overview of the method because understanding the rationales behind it shaped the way I ended up carrying out my research. The idea behind participant observation is that a full understanding of practice requires scholars to leave the office and capture dynamics that otherwise would not have been captured (Lequense 2015: 363). The strength with participant observation is that it records practices which do not entail speech. Such a method is useful in capturing the 'here and now' and unveil how practices are contextualised. This being so, it allows for a 'direct proximity to practice' (Bueger 2015: 9). Indeed, Iver Neumann (2007) has demonstrated the promises of such an approach in relation to diplomatic practices. Through a participant observation of the Norwegian foreign ministry, he shows how speech writing is not a unitary pronouncement of an objective national interest, but the result of practices where the speech is twisted and transformed to stand for the ministry as a whole. Observing what happens from 'within' therefore gives access to practices easily lost in abstract theorising. It also increases our awareness of the effects scholarly analyses

have (Bueger and Mirenau 2014: 135). In this sense, participant observation can be thought of not only as a 'way in' but also as a 'way out'. It becomes a 'means of escaping conceptual enclosure, of attenuating the obviousness of disciplinary problematics" (Coleman and Hughes 2014: 149-150). In relation to this project, the method was seen important to capture the creative and material dynamics at play. Taken together, participant observation is a method that allows for capturing practices that do not entail speech.

However, participant observation is also a demanding research method. It requires considerable logistics, significant time and often considerable financial investments (Bueger 2014: 399-400)[66]. As I experienced myself, it can all of a sudden be heavily disrupted and eventually become an impossible exercise. Even though carrying out the participation observation would have been the most desirable outcome, recognising the utility of the method can be of value in itself. In order to better understand how the diplomats perceived their environments I ended up interviewing more field diplomats than initially planned. I also attuned the questions more towards their experience of their surroundings, especially towards material objects in their everyday work. While this does not replace the research method, highlighting the method is seen useful because it shaped the research I carried out and shows its fragility to unexpected events.

Conclusion

In this section, I have outlined the methodological framework for this paper. In order to do so, I started by making a case for methodological pluralism, arguing that such an approach was better attuned to capture diplomatic controversies. I then developed a two-layered approach to methods consisting of a 'methodological scene' (first layer) and 'methodological tools' (second layer). The methodological scene consisted of three methodological undercurrents that ran throughout the paper: 1) *transdisciplinarity*, 2) *reflexivity*, and 3) *relationality*. The methodological tools consisted of more direct tools to generate empirical data: 1) *archival research*, 2) *interviews* and 3) *(disrupted) participant observation*. This allowed me to create a more robust link between the interpretation and generation of knowledge. The overall aim, however, was to be more reflexive about methodological decisions and the implications they have. Having sketched out the methodological framework, one is better equipped to account for creativity and materiality in diplomatic practice. This is the aim of the next section.

[66] Additionally, as Geoffrey Wiseman notes, diplomatic sites can be difficult to access due to a culture of secrecy (Wiseman 2015: 318).

Chapter One – Diplomacy as Controversies: Accounting for Creativity and Materiality in International Practice

The first chapter sets out a theoretical framework for studying diplomacy as controversies. The aim is to draw the 'practice turn' along more creative and material lines. In order to do so, the chapter is divided into four parts. First, I sketch out some general features of the 'practice turn' in International Relations (IR). While recognising its diversity, I draw attention to four core elements: (i) a commitment to the everyday, (ii) a focus on process over stasis, (ii) a shift from abstract theorising to practical imperatives, and (iv) seeing knowledge as practice. Second, I explicate two of its foundational texts. By doing so, the aim is to retrieve elements of creativity and materiality already present. Third, I explore *why* creativity and materiality has been neglected in the diplomatic literature. Here, I make the argument that the link between the 'practice turn' and Bourdieusian theorising has led to an unsatisfactory account. Finally, I draw upon the works of Bruno Latour and argue that diplomacy should be understood as 'controversies'. The notion of 'controversies' is better attuned to capture the creative and material aspects of diplomacy.

Practice Turn in International Relations (IR)

> '(…) taking a practice turn is no small business for the IR discipline' (Pouliot 2008: 285)

While the study of practices has long been present in other disciplines[67], the 'practice turn' has recently made its inroad into IR. Recognising its diversity[68], four features can still be sketched out[69].

[67] The 'practice turn' has its origins within sociology and was only later incorporated into IR. One of its most prominent contributions is *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (2001) written by Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike von Savigny. For long, sociologists were preoccupied with how ideas influenced action. Practice theory, however, de-emphasised what was in the head of the actors and instead focused on their routine activities. As Ann Swindler puts it, 'a focus on practices shifts attention away from what may or may not go in actors' consciousness – their ideas or value commitments – and toward the unconscious or automatic activities embedded in taken-for-granted activities' (Swindler 2001: 84). Moving beyond a focus on individual actors, the focus on practices allowed scholars to explore the embedded routines in organisations. It is therefore worth mentioning that the practice turn has been particularly prominent in organisation studies, see Nicolini and Monteiro (2007), Suddaby et al. (2011).

[68] While often referred to as a 'theory', practice theorists are clear that it should not be seen as a new 'grand theory' of IR (Bueger and Gadinger 2015: 9).

[69] To be sure, there is no single way of understanding 'international practices'. In fact, recent studies have distinguished between different understandings. For example, Mervyn Frost and Silviya Lechner (2016) argue that there are two core conceptions of international practice: one 'Aristotelian' and one 'Wittgensteinian'. Similarly, Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger (2015) argue that the practice turn rests on two traditions: 'critical theory' and 'pragmatism'. In addition, Reji Miettinen, Dalvir Samra-Fredericks and Dvora Yanow (2009) argue that the practice theory can be defined through two research programmes: 'empirical' and 'theoretical'. The four features presented here are often emphasised in the literature, but should not be seen as exhausting the practice turn.

First, at the core of the 'practice turn' lies an ontological commitment to the everyday. While IR theories often 'level up' to the international, the practice turn seeks to capture 'stuff' that often goes ignored (Kwa 2002)[70]. It thereby rejects the 'bird eye's view' of international politics and seeks out agency for individuals (Cooper and Cornut 2019: 304)[71]. Second, there is a focus on process over stasis. Seeing the world in constant change, practice theorists prefer verbs such as 'ordering' and 'knowing' over nouns such as 'order' and 'knowledge' (Bueger and Gadinger 2015: 5)[72]. Here, the international is itself understood as a process (Jackson and Nexon 1999, Guillaume 2007, Yaqing 2010). Third, practice theorists contend that actors are driven less by abstract forces than by practical imperatives (McCourt 2016: 475). Instead of focusing on what people think, they focus on what they do (Pouliot 2008: 274). The basic claim is that what one does and how one sees the world goes hand in hand (Cornut 2015: 389). Fourth, practice theorists have a distinct perspective on knowledge (Friedrichs and Kraochwill 2009). Here, reason is not a mental faculty but a practice phenomenon (Schatzki et al. 2001: 14). Knowledge is always situated in practice. Members of groups learn and internalise practices through common interactions and the focus is on revealing how these practices are created and maintained (Bueger and Gadinger 2015: 5)[73]. Summed up, the 'practice turn' includes at least four core elements: (i) an ontological commitment to the everyday, (ii) a focus on process over stasis, (ii) a shift from abstract theorising to practical imperatives, and (iv) seeing knowledge as situated in practice.

Creativity and Materiality as Foundational to the Practice Turn

While recent years have seen a surge in the study of practices in IR, I will here explicate two of the foundational texts. The first is 'Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn' (2002) by Iver Neumann and the second is 'International Practices' (2011) by Vincent Pouilout and Emannuel Adler. The

[70] It is worth noting that this is not 'unique' for the practice turn. Feminists have for decades been pioneering in bringing people back in view. Indeed, at the very core of feminist scholarship lies the idea that the 'personal is political is international' (Holmes et al. 2019: 214). This has been reflected within feminist methods. While feminist methods are diverse, they are at the forefront in lifting up everyday realities of lived experience (Harman 2018: 793). Their perspective on knowledge is directed towards stories, experiences and representations (Ahäll 2018: 41). They aim to construct knowledge from multiple locations and from marginalised subjects (Tickner 2011: 615). Whereas feminists have provided significant theoretical and methodological contributions, Lina Ahäll (2018) is right to note that feminist knowledge remains largely ignored. For an introduction to feminist methods in IR, see Ackerly et al. (2006).

[71] Ty Solomon and Brent J. Steele (2017) note that there are two reasons for the shift from 'macro' to 'micro'. First, with the decrease in interstate wars (Mueller 2009), micropolitics provides a new lens to explore the continuance of violence. Second, with the dissatisfaction with systemic and grand theories, an interest in the everyday emerged.

[72] As Christian Bueger puts it, 'the key idea expressed here is that structure becomes *structural*, and order becomes *orderly* by practices of *structuring* and *ordering*' (Bueger 2014: 393).

[73] Put differently, there is a move from abstract theorising to an attentiveness to contextualised practices (Joseph and Kurki 2018: 71).

idea of revitalising these texts is to highlight the role of creativity and materiality, and argue that the practice turn has not fulfilled its potential in allowing their importance.

One of the foundational texts is 'Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn' (2002) by Iver Neumann. The text is often referred to as the founding text of the 'practice turn' in IR[74]. Neumann's main contention is that the 'linguistic turn' and its focus on discourse has turned into 'armchair analyses' in which analyses are simply text-based without complementing data from the field (Neumann 2002: 628)[75]. His argument is that these studies have to be combined with the study of practice. In explicating what practices are, he draws attention to five things: 1) practices are integrative, 2) practices are improvisational, 3) practices are reflexive, 4) practices are quotidian, and 5) practices are performative (Neumann 2002: 637-638). However, Neumann is particularly interested in the aspect of improvisation. To explicate how practices can yield insights into IR, he invokes the example of how Norwegian diplomats after the Cold War improvised building a new region. In so doing, the Norwegian foreign ministry commissioned several studies on how the relationship between Norway and Russia had always been friendly at the grassroot level despite the recent decades of communism (Neumann 2002: 640-641). This made it seem like building a new region was not 'a new undertaking at all', but as 're-establishing what was historically natural' (Neumann 2002: 641). Neumann here points to an important tension between improvisation and practice – it happens not in opposition but in relation. Understanding these not as binary but as complementary is a critical part of Neumann's analysis and something that has gone relatively unnoticed[76]. Improvisation and creativity were therefore critical to one of the foundational texts of the practice turn.

While Neumann is seen as one of the initiators of the 'practice turn' in IR, Emannuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot are seen to have encouraged a kind of 'movement' within the discipline by actively promoting and systemising the 'practice turn'[77]. As Chris Brown notes, they gave 'prominent to its discourse' (Brown 2012: 440). Adler and Pouliot define practices as 'socially meaningful patterns of action which (…) reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the

[74] For example, Erik Ringmar argues the article to be the 'initiative' to the practice turn in IR (Ringmar 2014: 1).

[75] This reminds of how the practice turn was initially driven by empirical concerns, see Dreyfus (1991), Turner (1994), Reckwitz (2002), Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks and Yanow (2009). Accordingly, methods such as participant observation, interviews and text analysis have been central. For a good discussion on practice theory and methods, see Pouliot (2012).

[76] When the text is referenced it is often used either as a critique of the 'linguistic turn' or as a reference to the beginning of the practice turn. Few have actively engaged with improvisation as a key part of his argument.

[77] Indeed, as they acknowledge themselves, the practice literature was well in place before the article was written. The aim was to 'systematise a research program' as an entry point to IR (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 1-2).

material world' (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 4). Here, I want emphasise the notion of 'the material world'. Whereas many build upon the idea of seeing practice as 'background knowledge' (Schatzki et al. 2001: 11)[78], fewer have taken seriously the role of materiality. Yet, as they elaborate, 'practice is typically enacted in and on the world, and thus change the physical environment as well as the ideas that individually and collectively people hold about the world' (Adler and Pouiliot 2011: 7). Drawing on Bruno Latour, they further emphasise how 'practice typically does something in the world, and thus can change the physical world as well as the ideas that individually and collectively people hold about the world' (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 15). Accordingly, 'practices are directed toward the material world and thus exist only embodied in materials' (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 15). This is important because it highlights how materiality has been part of the inroad of practices from the very beginning. One should therefore not do the mistake of arguing that the 'practice turn' has neglected materiality but engage the material side to a much greater extent than what has currently been done[79].

Explicating these two articles is important because it shows how some of the initial motives behind the practice turn was to better grasp creativity and materiality. To make the argument that materiality and creativity should be better accounted for is therefore not a radical move from the practice turn. Rather, in line with the view that heterogeneity is desirable, one can make the argument that it actually strengthens it (Bueger and Gadinger 2015: 6). Yet, while one can find emphasis on creativity and materiality in some of the foundational texts, most writings have later focused on continuity in social practices. One critical step is to understand why. The next section takes up this challenge.

Pierre Bourdieu and the 'Practice Turn'

One of the core arguments in this paper is that the robust link between Pierre Bourdieu's theorising and the 'practice turn' has eventually reduced the practice turn's potential. More specifically, this has led to its inability to successfully capture creativity and materiality within diplomatic practice. Departing from the observation that Pierre Bourdieu has been a major source of inspiration to several scholars interested in international practices (i.e. Adler-Nissen 2014, Bigo 2011, Guzzini 2000, Hopf 2010, Mérand 2010, Shapiro 2002, Villumsen-Berling 2012), I intend to show how

[78] Theodore Schatzki is one of the scholars who has unpacked the concept of 'background knowledge'. For elaboration, see Schatzki (2002, 2005).
[79] While the article is helpful as a starting point, I share the sentiment that the practice theory can appear unnecessary overwhelming at times (Bueger and Gadinger 2015: 2).

Bourdieu's key theoretical concepts has led to a focus on continuity over creativity and the social over the material.

Bourdieu's theory of practice can be broken down to a few innovative concepts: 1) 'field', 2) 'capital', and 3) 'habitus'. First is the concept of a 'field'. A 'field' is a social space that consists of the positions of social agents and the relations between these positions (Loughlan, Olsson and Schouten 2014: 27)[80]. As a sphere of social action, it involves the 'rules of the game' that shape actors (Jackson and Nexon 2019: 8). A field is thus a relatively autonomous 'social space wherein contestation over capital takes place' (Frost and Lechner 2016: 338). The second concept is 'capital'. 'Capital' refers to the resources that agents deploy to occupy positions within the hierarchy that identifies the field (Brown 2012: 443). Bourdieu argues that the most important forms of capital are economic, social, cultural and symbolic (Loughlan, Olsson and Schouten 2014: 27). 'Capital' is understood as a social relation 'not necessarily related to tangible resources or objects' (Frost and Lechner 2016: 338). The final concept is 'habitus'. Advanced by Bourdieu, 'habitus' can be understood as a socialised subjectivity through which agents develop a 'feel for the game' that becomes invested with meaning (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). The 'habitus' is the implicit knowledge inscribed in individuals and becomes a set of dispositions that determine the normal (Ringmar 2014: 9)[81]. This prevents questioning the way in which the field is maintained (Bourdieu 1991). The important point is that the relation between the field and the habitus of its social agents (re)produces the structure of the field (Laughan, Olsson and Schouten 2014: 28). This often leads to a certain repetitive behaviour[82]. Deriving from these concepts, Bourdieu sees practice as 'the patterned outcome of habitual action' (Frost and Lechner 2016: 338). The three concepts of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus' are central to understand Bourdieu's notion of practice.

In the literature on diplomacy one can see the influence of Bourdieu's theorisation. There is already a sufficient literature on diplomacy that draws upon the work of Bourdieu (e.g. Adler-Nissen 2014, Pouliot and Cornut 2015, Jones and Clark 2015, Kuus 2015)[83] and in current definitions of diplomacy one clearly find remanence of Bourdieu's theorising. For example, Vincent Pouliot and Jérémie Cornut define diplomacy as 'a label that practitioners use in order to

[80] Importantly, these positions are not absolute but relational. To what extent a social actor is powerful can only be determined by examining it to something else (Loughlan, Olsson and Schouten 2014: 27).
[81] Fields are structured by taken-for-granted rules which is often referred to as a 'doxa' (Pouliot 2008: 275). The concept of 'doxa' is similar to 'habitus' but refers to the knowledge of a specific field.
[82] It is worth highlighting how 'habitus' is not the same as 'habit'. As Vincent Pouliot explicates, 'the former is fundamentally generative while the latter is strictly iterative' (Pouliot 2008: 274).
[83] The study of diplomatic practices has been applied to a range of different international organisations, including the European Union (Adler-Nissen 2014, Kuus 2014, Bicchi 2015, Lequense 2015), the United Nations (Ambrosetti 2012, Schia 2013), the G20 (Cooper and Pouliot 2015), NATO (Græger and Haugevik 2011, Villumsen-Berling 2012), the Alliance of Civilisations (Goff 2015) and the World Bank (Neumann and Sending 2010).

describe an array of socially organised and meaningful ways of doing things on the international stage' (Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 299)[84]. Similarly, David McCourt defines diplomacy as a 'well-bounded social sphere with strong norms and conventions' (McCourt 2016: 478). Both definitions are heavily influenced by Bourdieu's understanding of practice. To be sure, a Bourdieusian notion of diplomacy yields several interesting insights. First, a Bourdieusian notion of diplomacy highlights the forms of knowledge upon which diplomacy is constituted (Neumann 2005, Constantinou 2013). This is important, especially since the 'stickiness' within diplomatic practices is undoubtedly apparent[85]. Second, and in line with this, Bourdieu's theorising shows how diplomatic decisions are not determined by rational choice but are results of diplomats' 'habitus' (Bigo 2012: 124). Here, the diplomat's dispositions constrain and enable social actors (Cornut 2015: 389). Third, the concept of a 'field' allows diplomatic scholars to move away from methodological nationalism and capture terrains that cut across national boundaries. Finally, understanding diplomacy as social practice allows scholars to overcome several dualisms in the field. Overcoming such dualisms is seen as an important philosophical achievement (Kustermans 2016: 176). Introducing Bourdieu to the literature has therefore yielded several insights.

While a Bourdieusian approach to diplomacy has yielded insights, it has also refrained from capturing the more creative and material aspects of diplomacy. In terms of capturing creativity, Roger Brubaker notes how Bourdieu's theory is 'marked by a strong tension between the impulse toward generality' (Brubaker 1985: 770). At the core of Bourdieu's theory is the notion of 'habitus'[86] and while habitus is useful to explain reproduction of domination, it is not useful to explain social change[87]. While the practice theory is indeed broader than Bourdieu's theorisation, it still remains its main theoretical reference. For example, when defining practices, Cooper and Pouliot see them as 'established way of doing things, which does not preclude deviation, improvisation and calculation but, rather, defines the scope of agency' (Cooper and Pouliot 2015). Such definitions appear to exclusively privilege continuity over creativity[88]. Accordingly, a lot of

[84] Accordingly, diplomatic practices are understood to 'embody forms of know-how and competence that are socially meaningful and recognisable at the level of action' (Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 299).
[85] Iver Neumann's (2007) writings on how institutional practices prevent textual creativity is an excellent example of this.
[86] Similarly, the 'field' is often applied in a static way. Richmond et al. criticise this static understanding and emphasise how the field also includes contestation (Richmond et al. 2015: 25).
[87] The inability of the practice turn to deal with change has been pointed out by several scholars, including Duvall et al. (2011) and Ringmar (2014).
[88] It should be stressed that Cooper and Pouliot recognise the possibility of change. As they note, 'practices are, indeed, relatively stable; but they may also be played with and played around (local change). And they incrementally transform over time (long-term evolution)' (Cooper and Pouliot 2015: 336). By implication, change is understood within a very 'sticky' conception of practice and not something that is at the very core of practice itself.

emphasis has been at the non-conscious aspect of what people do (McCourt 2016: 478). Diplomacy is certainly a practice that tends to reproduce itself, but it also a practice open to innovation[89]. One needs a better understanding of contingency and change. That the practice turn has struggled with change has already been pointed out. For example, Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille argue that the dominance of a particular strand has led to an understanding of practice that 'emphasises the unconscious reproduction of social order' (Schindler and Wille 2014: 330)[90]. Geoffrey Wiseman has similarly argued that the 'practice theory could adapt by going beyond its current instinct, which is to explain stability, to also explain change' (Wiseman 2015: 329)[91]. The aim must be to diversify the practice turn and develop an account that is more open to change and contingency. One should therefore move beyond the widespread reliance of Bourdieusian theorising to better account for diplomatic creativity[92].

The robust link between the practice turn and Bourdieu has led to a neglect of materiality. While Adler and Pouliot highlight the role of materiality in their foundational text, few scholars have taken materiality seriously when studying diplomacy[93]. Diplomacy is generally understood as a human endeavour[94] and most accounts contemporarily focus on rationality and human agency. Again, my argument is that this is due to the robust link between Bourdieu's theorising and the practice turn. The focus on humans has been revitalised within Bourdieu's theorising and scholars have taken interest in how social practices reproduce certain dynamics within diplomatic pre-existing 'fields'. While understanding social practice is important, one should also consider diplomacy to be more-than-human affairs (Dittmer 2015: 81). In the end, human beings 'inhabit

[89] Whereas most studies focus on the durability of practices, some highlight how diplomats abroad have a greater room for manoeuvre than diplomats at home. Whereas diplomats at home tend to produce existing knowledge, diplomats abroad do a great deal of 'ad-libbing and corner-cutting' (Neumann 2012: 7). Therefore, diplomats returning home often experience a 'bureaucracy shock' (Neumann 2012: 7).

[90] To be sure, criticising the practice turn's inability to deal with change does not equal saying that the current literature is flawed. Rather, one should stress how different practice approaches serve different analytical ends (Andersen and Neumann 2012: 462). The aim should never be a 'unified' theory of practices (Ringmar 2014: 20).

[91] In a similar way, Karin Knorr-Cetina early noted that the current conception of practice was mostly emphasising the habitual and rule-governed features of practice. She argued that one should develop an understanding of practice as creative and constructive (Knorr-Cetina 2001: 184).

[92] For a similar critique, please see Turner (1994).

[93] To be sure, there are exceptions. In an article by Vincent Pouliot, he stresses the relationship between materials and practice: 'The materials of practice, which are at once enabling and constraining, do not obey conventional ontological distinctions between nature and culture' (Pouliot 2010: 295). Pouliot is one of the first scholars who brings Bourdieu and Latour into dialogue in exploring diplomatic practice. For other exceptions, see Dittmer (2014), McConnell (2017), McConnell and Dittmer (2018).

[94] One important exception is the emerging literature on animals in diplomacy. Scholars have argued that animals should be understood as diplomatic subjects, see Hartig (2013), Leira and Neumann (2016).

an ineluctably material world' (Coole and Frost 2016: 11)[95]. How we understand meanings of diplomacy are therefore produced through processes where language and matter relate (Van Veeren 2014: 37)[96]. From this perspective, diplomacy should be thought of as 'arrangements that are simultaneously material *and* semiotic' (Walters 2010: 220). The socio-material density of diplomacy must be taken seriously because the material conditions of diplomacy is a constant concern for diplomats. Thinking along these lines highlights the multiple practices that embody different logics of diplomacy. My argument is that by accounting for materiality one can better understand diplomatic practices.

So far, I have shown how the practice turn's links to Bourdieusian theorising has hindered understandings of creativity and materiality. My argument is that its toolbox is not well enough equipped to capture creative and material practices. To be sure, this is not an issue with the practice turn per se. As pointed out, the foundational texts of the practice turn opened up for theorising along creative and material lines, while the later literature – by heavily leaning on Bourdieu's conception of practice – has led to a focus on reproduction of social practices. Drawing on Actor Network Theory (ANT), the next section will introduce tools that are better equipped to highlight the role of creativity and materiality.

Diplomacy as Controversies: Accounting for Creativity and Materiality

Having highlighted the practice turn's inability to capture creativity and materiality, I here invoke the concept of 'controversy' to remedy this lacuna. Drawing upon Actor Network Theory (ANT), I first explain what a 'controversy' is. I argue that studying diplomacy as controversies has two core advantages. The first advantage is that it better deals with change. The second advantage is that it better deals with materiality.

[95] Here, humans exercise agency not as 'stable entities, but are themselves shaped by a range of materiality that change over time' (Dittmer 2015: 81).

[96] Here, material factors are not primarily a matter of being interpreted but something to be used (Pouliot 2010: 297). It is worth explicating the difference between constructivist approaches and ANT on this matter. To be sure, constructivists do not deny the role of materials. However, they believe that it is through interpretation that these materials gain importance' (Andersson: 2010). This presents materials as passive objects with no ability to make a difference on their own. However, from a Latourian perspective, materials are seen to acquire a form of agency (Pouliot 2010: 298). As Peer Schouten notes, where constructivist approaches to IR 'consider the state of nature as a *cultural* construct, ANT retorts that political society is a *socio-material* (or material-semiotic) construction' (Schouten 2013: 560). It thereby rejects the ontological distinction between the social and the material. As Latour emphasises, 'when any state of affairs is split into one material component to which is added as an appendix a social one, one thing is sure: this is an artificial division imposed by disciplinary disputes, not by any empirical requirement' (Latour 2005: 83).

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) has only recently found its inroad into IR[97] and is often referred to the work of Bruno Latour. The notion of 'controversies' plays a central part of Latour's theorisation. Briefly explained, controversies are 'moments of doubt when accepted stories are challenged or events upset conventional accounts' (Laws and Rein 2003: 175)[98]. At the very core, Latour is interested in mapping processes of stabilisation (Loughlan, Olsson and Schouten 2014: 38). A study of controversies allows studying moments where implicit knowledge becomes explicated and articulated (Bueger 2014: 395). Here, participants in a normalised practice discuss and argue about whether the new situation can be accommodated into existing practices. Adjustments often have to be made and new practices have to be invented. Importantly, controversies cannot be understood in isolation but needs to be conceived in terms of other controversies. A controversy is namely 'not so much determined by its specific focus' but should be seen 'in terms of its relations to a moving field of other controversies, conflicts and events, including those that have occurred in the past and that might occur in the future' (Barry 2012: 330)[99]. The overall aim with exploring controversies is therefore to identify moments where actors improvise and invent new practices.

The notion of 'controversy' can better capture creativity and change. While for IR theorists, social order is often the rule while change is the exception, for ANT scholars 'the rule is performance and what has to be explained' (Latour 2005: 35). This approach differs from the 'practice turn' by highlighting how diplomatic practices are anything but routinized. Latour is firm in emphasising how society constantly needs to be (re)produced[100]. From this perspective, change is always immanent, while stability requires explanation. The consequences of this view is enormous, notes Latour. As he elaborates, 'if intertia, durability, range, solidity, commitment, loyalty, adhesion, etc. have to be accounted for, this cannot be done without looking for vehicles, tools, instruments, and materials able to provide such a stability' (Latour 2005: 35). In turn, 'politics

[97] While some contributions have been made, it is hardly recognised as an approach to study international politics (Schouten 2014: 554).

[98] This bares resemblance to the concept of 'liminality'. Liminality, a widespread concept within the anthropological literature, similarly brings forward the processual nature of politics and highlights moments representing change, (Vasudevan 2015). What is particularly important is how liminality produces intense creativity and therefore 'shines a light on practices of innovation, political renewal and aspiration' (McConnell 2017: 142). Importantly, liminality also offers insight into the ambiguity, confusion and unsettledness. I have chosen to stick with the concept of 'controversy' because it is more open toward not only creativity, but also materiality. However, readers should be aware how the notion of 'liminality' ca potentially give a more nuanced understanding of change.

[99] Here, we find a key difference between Bourdieu and Latour. Latourian mapping does not see actors as moving within pre-fixed 'fields', but as controversies becoming assembled into non-controversial.

[100] As Latour notes, 'people will go on believing that the big animal doesn't need to feed any fodder to sustain itself; that society is something that can stand without being produced, assembled, collected, or kept up; that it resides behind us, so to speak, instead of being ahead of us as a task to be fulfilled' (Latour 2005: 184).

must be understood as dynamic and sometimes contradictory' (Naumes 2015: 831). While Bourdieu's practice theory goes a long way in accounting for how practices maintain a certain way – it does not go far enough in realising the mechanisms in providing such a stability. Rather than making a normative judgement of a diplomatic practice, a scholar should take interest in how an array of unpredictable elements becomes stabilised. Brining in Latour's understanding of the social as a 'peculiar movement of reassociation and reassembling' can therefore strengthen the understandings of diplomatic practices.

Another useful element with studying diplomacy as controversies is the inclusion of materiality[101]. ANT, originating within Science and Technology Studies (STS)[102], is typically understood as emphasising the agency of nonhuman actors (Go 2016: 131). In fact, Latour makes a straightforward argument that social scientists have failed to address the role of objects within political life (Barry 2012: 329). According to Latour, the view that a political society can be separated from nature is mistaken[103]. In ANT, the political is mediated by the 'purposeful entanglements of humans and non-humans' (Schouten 2014: 560)[104]. This departs from most social science, which rarely takes objects as making a difference of their own (Srnicek 2010: 33). Within ANT, human and nonhumans are equally actors and it therefore overcomes the subject-object dichotomy (Schinkel 2007: 707). By emphasising how an actor is not necessarily a human agent, the divide between Nature and Culture breaks down into the 'networked divisions between the multiplicity of forces' (Scrnicek 2010: 34). Instead of seeing diplomacy largely as textual practices (i.e. Der Derian 1987), diplomacy is entangled of associations – material and non-material. Diplomacy is governed through both discourse and objects and must be understood as a socio-material construction. There are many benefits with highlighting the role of materiality. First of all, linking discourses to space better explains how framings of diplomacy, and in this case – Nordic

[101] This speaks to a wider literature on 'new materialism' in IR, see Connolly (2013), Barry (2015) and Squire (2015). See also the special issue on 'Materialism in IR' in *Millennium* (14:3).
[102] Latour himself argues that the Actor-Network-Theory starts with the following three papers: Latour (1987), Callon (1986) and (Law 1986).
[103] Latour argues that Western knowledge is caught in a 'Cartesian blind' with a range of separations such as human/non-human, fact/value and mind/body (Blaney and Tickner 2017: 296). This is applicable to IR theories that are often premised on the divide between ideas and matter. For example, neorealists highlight how materials determine outcomes unmediated by ideas and knowledge (Pouliot 2010: 295). Here, physical objects are seen to have a self-evident meaning. Constructivists, on the other hand, posit that intersubjective meanings drive international politics. The system's structures are internalised via their identities for so to be integrated into their decision-making processes (Epstein et al. 2018: 789-790). This also rests upon an ontological divide between the physical and the social (Pouliot 2010: 197).
[104] Latour has a different understanding of what the social is. According to him, the social is not 'special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of reassociation and reassembling' (Latour 2005: 7). Put differently, the social is not something visible or something already there on disposable, but only visible 'by the *traces* it leaves when a *new* association is being produced between elements which themselves are in no way 'social'' (Latour 2005: 8).

diplomacy – persist[105]. Second, one can better understand the plural nature of diplomacy. The concept of 'diplomacy', in and out itself, has no essence. Instead understanding diplomacy as controversies allows us to see how different authorities, knowledges and materials create a certain 'art of diplomatic practice'.

Chapter Conclusion

In this first chapter, the aim has been to draw the practice turn along more creative and material lines. I began by noting that while the practice turn is diverse, it is still possible to elucidate some of its core elements. I drew attention to four specific tenets: (i) the ontological commitment to the everyday, (ii) the focus on process over stasis, (iii) the shift from abstract theorising to practical imperatives, and (iv) seeing knowledge as situated in practice. Having sketched out these core principles, I revitalised two of the foundational texts in the practice turn. The aim was to show how creativity and materiality were present and thereby could be considered as foundational to the practice turn itself. Yet, most of the later writings in the practice turn, and particularly those linked to diplomacy, have drawn on Bourdieusian theorising. I argued that the link between the practice turn and Bourdieu had led to a neglect of creativity and materiality. In order to remedy this lacuna, I finally introduced the concept of a 'controversy'. The aim of the concept was to better capture creativity and materiality. In the next chapter I draw upon the concept when explaining the materialisation of a Nordic embassy complex in Berlin.

[105] I owe this insight to William Walters (2015). While Walters applies the role of materiality to migration, his theoretical innovations flow well into the diplomatic literature. This is yet a reminder that openness to different fields can allow for rethinking practices within our own immediate spheres.

Chapter Two – The Establishment of the Nordic Embassy Complex in Berlin

> '(…) whenever anyone speaks of a 'system', a 'global feature', a 'structure', a 'society', an 'empire', a 'world economy', an 'organisation', the first ANT reflex should be to ask: 'in which building? In which bureau? Through which corridor is it accessible? Which colleagues has it been read to? How has it been complied?' (Latour 2005: 183).

After the Cold War, German authorities decided to move the capital from Bonn to Berlin. The move was not just an ideological statement of a unified Germany, but generated considerable amounts of building activity[106]. The move also led to changes within the diplomatic sphere, with new sites being invented and relocated. Indeed, it was in this context through the Nordic embassy complex emerged. The Nordic embassy complex in Berlin is unique in Nordic diplomatic history. Never before have the five Nordic countries gone together to create a common embassy complex[107]. This chapter looks at the establishment of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. Drawing upon a wide range of empirical material in the forms of interviews, newspapers and archival documents, it gives an account of how the project emerged. The chapter is divided into three parts[108]. First, I explore where the idea came from, explicating how the idea was originally raised by Thorvald Stoltenberg in 1992. Second, I give an account of how the project materialised. Here, I draw attention to five controversies that were being assembled: 1) the purchase of a building plot, 2) the making of room plans, 3) the launching of architect competitions, 4) the process of furnishing and 5) the arranging of ceremonies. This should not be understood as a linear all-compassing account, but as different practices being assembled and materialised. At the end, I link the materialisation of the complex to the emergence of a diplomatic site. The aim is to show how studying diplomacy as controversies reveals the importance of creative and material practices.

[106] As a result, Berlin was long referred to as 'Europe's largest building site'.

[107] Few studies have sufficiently explored the project. To my knowledge, no one has made the project their prime object of investigation.

[108] Here, it starts with the empirical narrative, before exploring it more theoretically. Beginning with the empirical case before examining it theoretically is central to Bruno Latour. As he notes: 'It is as if we were saying to the actors: "We don't try to discipline you, to make you fit into our categories; we will let you deploy your own worlds, and only later will we ask you to explain how you came about settling them"' (Latour 2005: 23).

An Idea Emerges

In 1992, the Nordic Council of Ministers met in Helsinki. Thorvald Stoltenberg, the Norwegian foreign minister at the time, had asked his advisor to prepare a speech with concrete propositions around Nordic cooperation 'that could be at the front page of the newspapers and would not cost anything'[109]. His advisor proposed the idea to look at the possibility to establish common Nordic embassies. By having mutual contact, the Nordic states would have the opportunity to influence one another[110]. Stoltenberg suggested that there should be 'Nordic Houses' in Murmansk, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Berlin, Warszaw, Budapest, Prague and Brussels[111]. According to him, the 'Nordic idea' would then be 'transported to new states' so the world would be better informed of 'the Nordic model of society'. During the time, there were already talks about the need for a new Norwegian embassy in Berlin. Stoltenberg wrote a proposition that the Nordic countries should go together and establish a common embassy[112]. This was an entirely new idea. Whereas one had established 'Nordic Houses' in Reykjavik and the Faroe Island, one had never seen a Nordic embassy. In line with the initiative to look at the possibilities to establish Nordic Houses, the question about a common Nordic embassy complex in Berlin emerged.

The proposition received relatively large attention, and was discussed within the different Nordic foreign ministries. All the foreign ministries initially thought it was a poor idea[113]. Aftenposten, a Norwegian newspaper, reported that the proposition of a Nordic embassy complex was 'lukewarmly achieved'[114]. Nevertheless, as the proposed idea was already out, Stoltenberg had to do something to 'make it less embarrassing'[115]. Stoltenberg was namely furious that so little was happening and called the Swedish foreign minister Sten Anderson to change his mind. The Swedes were considered an important ally since they already had an embassy property and were seen as the most powerful actor amongst the Nordics. They eventually agreed to go for a common Nordic embassy complex in Berlin and speak with the three other foreign ministers so the 'bureaucrats could not decide the case'[116]. Stoltenberg quickly discovered that the Danes could be the problem since they were already planning a Danish embassy at Unter den Linden. Stoltenberg and Anderson agreed to first contact Finland and Iceland to receive their support before consulting the Danes. This would mean that the Danes would have to choose between their 'own' option or a 'Nordic'

[109] Interview Politician-1.
[110] 5th of April 1995 – Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartementet.
[111] 22nd of April 1992 – Aftenposten article.
[112] 24th of April 1995 – Det Kongelige Finans-og Tolldepartementet
[113] According to one of the interviewees, 'everyone wanted their own embassies' (Interview Expert-2).
[114] 22nd of April 1992 – Aftenposten article.
[115] Interview Diplomat-3
[116] Interview Politician-1.

option. The strategy worked out. After lots of doubt, the Danes finally said yes[117]. Later the year, Stoltenberg said[118]:

> 'I am happy to see that one is working with the possibilities to build a more practical way of cooperating between the Nordics. In my opinion, one should look at the opportunities to build Nordic embassies in countries where more than one of the Nordic states are present. This could be a natural extension of the Nordic information offices we already have in the Baltics. But the most important is that these "Nordic Houses" appear like Nordic culture and information units - with libraries, lecture halls, etc. This will be a good way to mark Nordic unity and find practical solutions for mutual benefit. I am convinced that by furthering Nordic solutions we also strengthen the Nordics' position in Europe. It thereby also ensures our own national interests' (Aftenposten 1992, translated).

In the spring of 1994, two years after the idea was first purposed, a working group for the project was established. The group was led by Statens Fastighetsverk (National Property Board of Sweden) and included representatives from all the Nordic countries. The overall aim with the project, they noted, was to prioritise and strengthen Nordic cooperation[119]. According to the plan, the complex would be ready in 1999 when the German government offices were scheduled to move from Bonn to Berlin. The process was now materialising.

Assembling Ideas and Materials 1994-1999: Building Plots, Room Plans, Architect Competitions, Furnishings, and Ceremonies

> 'Political situations do not consist of a continuous flow of events; they have to be stitched together from fragments that are distributed across time and space' (Barry 2012: 331).

In the materialisation of an embassy there are a range of processes at play and one does not necessarily follow the other. This is why the concept of a 'controversy' is particularly useful. It highlights a moment where things are unstable and in the process of being stabilised. Understanding diplomacy as controversies, I explore how different processes build up a sense of a 'temporally and spatially extended political situation' (Barry 2012: 330). Below, I draw attention to five of these processes: 1) the purchase of a building plot, 2) the creation of room plans, 3) the

[117] The reactions within the ministries were frequently sceptical. Stoltenberg's advisor was himself called into questioning because he proposed the idea 'without having declared the economic consequences with the administrative section first' (Interview Politician-1).
[118] 22nd of April 1992 – Aftenposten article.
[119] 19th of January 1995 – Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartementet

arranging of architect competitions, 4) the process of furnishing and 5) the arranging of ceremonies. While the purchase of the building plot takes place before the inauguration ceremony, it is important to emphasise that these processes should not be understood as 'steps' in a causal chain, but as processes that happen in relation to one another[120]. Also, these processes do not exhaust the materialisation of the process, but are intended to give an idea of the role of materiality and contingency within diplomatic practices.

Purchase of Building Plot

One of the first tasks for the working group was to purchase a building plot. The negotiations to buy a property in Berlin began quickly after German authorities decided to make Berlin the capital[121]. Up until then, the Nordic countries had two embassies in Germany: one located in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and one located in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The negotiations now concerned a property in the Tiergarten municipality, more particularly Klingelhöfer Dreieck[122]. The reason this property was in question was because Sweden and Finland had during the Second World War had embassies on parts of the property. However, during the war, the embassy buildings were bombed and all that remained was a bunker used for storage. In 1972, when the FRG and the GDR recognised each other as sovereign states, Sweden and Finland sold their properties to Berlin City Council[123]. However, they reserved the property for future embassy use and the negotiations now concerned to what degree they could buy back the property. The other part of the property in question belonged to the German regional state Hessen. An internal agreement to negotiate from a Nordic standpoint was made 16th of June 1994[124]. Representatives from the working group and representatives from Finland and Sweden negotiated with Berlin, while representatives from the working group and Denmark's representation

[120] It is worth highlighting that examining the emergence of the Nordic embassy complex is, by virtue, a causal process. Simply put, one is interested in understanding an outcome. However, examining a causal process is not straightforward. Whereas cause-and-effect relations are often seen as two independent events, this paper sees cause and effect as interrelated (Kurki and Suganami 2012: 409). Here, causality is not understood in terms of identifiable causes, but in terms of conditions of possibility (Kuus 2015: 380). I reject the idea that one factor can be identified as a cause of particular developments. Instead, multiple processes work together to make some outcomes more likely than others. Understanding causality this way allows for a better capturing ambiguity and contradictions.

[121] While the decision to move the capital from Bonn to Berlin was made in 1990, there were still uncertainties around how exactly this would be done. However, 27th of June 1995 the Auswärtiges Amt (Federal Foreign Office) arranged an information meeting for all embassies and made it clear that the move to Berlin within 1998-2000 was 'beyond any doubt' (June 1995 Bonn)

[122] 2nd of November 1995 – Statsbygg

[123] This was stipulated in the Basic Treaty, 1972.

[124] Here, several points were raised, including the deadline for purchasing the building plot, how the countries should finance it and the principles behind sharing the building costs.

negotiated with Hessen[125]. These negotiations happened with the reservation of approval from each of the Nordic countries. After long discussions internally and across the respective countries a conclusion was finally reached[126]. In June 1995, a deal about the property was signed.

One important factor behind purchasing the building plot was undoubtedly economic. The Nordic countries were namely given a sufficient discount from the Berlin City Council in purchasing the property. If the Nordic countries purchased the building plot before 1st of July 1995, they were offered a 25% reduction[127]. According to estimates, this was ca 50% of the market value. No doubt this made the property appear 'incredibly favourable'[128]. However, stipulated in the contract was also a requirement that outer walls and roofs had to be completed by 1st of October 1998[129]. Unless this was done the 'reduction' had to be paid back. Nevertheless, the rationales should not be understood as purely economic. The idea of a common Nordic embassy complex had a certain appeal in itself. In a statement released by the working group, the reason behind the cooperation was 'partly due to the wish of a common Nordic project and partly due to the positive economic consequences of a common complex'[130]. In a similar way, one diplomat said that 'uniting the embassies would strengthen the countries' close relations, while money could be saved through common use of certain facilities'[131]. Nevertheless, the exact intentions and motivations behind the project is not known and varied between the different actors at play. What is sure is that the purchase of the building plot gave a necessary foundation to go further with the project. The work with the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin was now in a phase where the project was being concretised and countries were expected to commit to a greater degree.

Creation of Room Plans

One important task for building projects is to create 'room plans'. Room plans are meticulously detailed plans of how each square meter in a building should be spent. Creating a room plan is an important step for a building project because it stands as a key marker of visualising and imagining what is being materialised. Room plans must also be in place before architect competitions[132]. In

[125] 15th of May 1995 – Statsbygg
[126] In December 1995, an important deal was signed concerning 'the implementation of a common Nordic embassy complex in Berlin'. Here, it was set out how the building plot would be shared. The building plot was to be shared after the built total area for each of the independent countries' chanceries. The five Nordic countries agreed on the following share: Denmark 25%, Finland 23.8%, Iceland 5.8%, Norway 21% and Sweden 24.4% (December 1995 – Kammeradvokaten).
[127] 19th of January 1995 – Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartementet
[128] 19th of December 1994 – Statsbygg
[129] 17th of October 1996 – Statens Fastighetsverk
[130] 30th of August 1994 – Statsbygg
[131] Interview Diplomat–1
[132] 4th of July 1994 – Statsbygg

this project, it was early decided that the Nordic states would have their own independent embassies while they together would share one 'felleshus' (Pan-Nordic Building)[133]. As a consequence, six different room plans had to be created - five concerning the national embassies and one concerning the common Nordic complex. One of the most important decisions in making the room plans was to put the consular section in the common complex instead of in the individual embassies. By having this section in the 'felleshus' one could limit visitors to the individual embassies[134]. The processes of creating the room plan for the 'felleshus' and the process of creating national room plans happened in parallel. Due to limitations of space, I will here focus on the room plan behind the 'felleshus'. Readers should, however, be aware that this was only one of the six buildings and that the respective countries carried out room plans for their own individual embassies. These processes often included complicate discussions between different ministries and directorates.

The working group had the responsibility of creating the room plan for the 'felleshus'. Whilst a first meeting on creating a room plan was conducted already in June 1993[135], it was only after the working group was established in 1994 that the work properly took form. In a meeting 3rd of November 1994, one could clearly see the divergences over the use of the 'felleshus'[136]. The Finish ambassador, Kai Helenius, raised the point that there had been 'no common Nordic decision on what the "felleshus" should actually include'. He himself thought it should be limited to a 'parking space and technical functions'. To this the Swedish ambassador, Örjan Berner, agreed that the use of the 'felleshus' was unclear, but that he would at least 'appreciate a common canteen'. In a meeting 20th of November 1994, a more comprehensive room plan of the 'felleshus' was being put forward. Now one was discussing including meeting rooms, restaurants, VIP facilities, exhibition halls, etc. The Danish ambassador emphasised that 'representations with such facilities had a better possibility to advance their interests than representations without'. Since Berlin was going to be an important representation, it was imperative to have such facilities in place[137]. Besides the need for profiling, diplomats also recognised the socio-material significance of the room plan. One diplomat argued that an important factor was how the 'daily interaction with Nordic

[133] For a brief moment there existed uncertainty on whether Iceland would have their own building. However, the Icelandic government confirmed in 1994 that this would be the case.
[134] Also, these processes took place under Schengen negotiations. In 1996 all the Nordic countries joined Schengen. As a result, visa applications were expected to decrease.
[135] 28th of June 1993 – Statsbygg
[136] 8th of November 1995 – Bonn
[137] In a letter, the Danish ambassador provided a long list of what the 'felleshus' should include: 1) A conference hall with translation facilities, video equipment and a concert piano 2) An exhibition hall (300m2), 3) Language centre, 4) Conference room (space for ca. 20), 5) Guest offices for travelling journalists, researchers, cultural personalities, etc. 6) Reading rooms with newspapers and books, 7) Cafeteria, 8) Changing rooms, storage rooms, bathrooms, etc. (Udenrigsministeriet September 1994).

colleagues in the common areas would strengthen the exchange of information'. Moreover, the common areas would 'give possibilities to arrange activities where important groups could come into dialogue'. How embassy buildings look and what they include are not given, but emerge through processes. Here, in a couple of weeks, the 'felleshus' had gone from consisting of parking spots and technical facilities to a more comprehensive unit that would serve representative and social functions.

While room plans are often thought of as simply practical matters, they both change and are changed by political events. One important anecdote to the story is that during these discussions European Union (EU) referendums were taking place. In 1994, four of the five Nordic countries held referendums on whether to join the EU, the exception being Denmark who had been a member since 1972. While Finland and Sweden voted yes, Norway and Iceland voted no. This political issue affected the individual embassies' need for space. Before the referendum the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) noted that 'the room plan at the embassy in Berlin will depend on the outcome of the EU referendum'[138]. Most importantly, if Norway became a part of the EU the personnel was seen to increase, which would demand more space. Due to this, the MFA decided that the final decisions around the room plans had to be made after the referendum. When Norway decided to not join the EU, this did not decrease the significance of being present: 'After Norway and Iceland have decided a different relationship to the European community than the rest of the Nordics it is more important than ever to improve Nordic cooperation and take this as an opportunity to use this as a 'mouthpiece' and a 'listening post' to the EU'[139]. This stands as a good reminder that political events never operate in isolation, but happen relationally. EU referendums that were taken place in the Nordics affected the room plans created in Berlin.

Architect Competitions

Having created the room plans, architect competitions were now in order. The embassy project in Berlin included a two-stage architect competition. Part one was an open competition concerning the urban design of the total complex. Based on the concept in part one, countries held selected architect competitions for their individual embassies. The first architect competition was launched June 1995 with a deadline in November the same year. In determining the winner a jury[140] was set

[138] 30th of August 1995 – Statsbygg
[139] 19th of January 1995 – Norwegian MFA
[140] German media also covered the plans. For example, Frankfurther Allgemenie Zeitung called the project 'one of the most interesting building projects to be completed in 1999'. It was seen particularly positive that the countries had reached a common solution, departing from the traditional notion of embassies behind 'high inaccessible walls' (June 1996 Bonn).

down, while embassies also contributed with their perspectives[141]. Over 388 firms ended up participating and the winner of the competition was the architects Alfred Berger and Tiina Parkkinen. The dominant element in their architectural drawings was a tall copper wall circling around the complex[142]. The separate embassies were arranged according to the location on the map and bounded together by this copper bond[143]. This play between the individual and the collective is a defining feature of this project. It is worth paraphrasing some of the jury's[144] verdict at length to understand some of the considerations taken into account:

> '(…) this entry will stand as an outstanding architectural symbol of the aim of the Nordic countries to create a joint embassy complex, convincingly expressing the unity and the individuality of the embassies in one conceptual gesture consisting of an exterior copper facade (…). The unity is expressed through the mutual facade that embraces all the embassies and the individuality is expressed through how the embassies present themselves as individual members of the Nordic ensemble. The virtue of this entry is the brilliant contextually difficult setting of the complex. Situated between a 'nowhere land' and the upcoming city this entry formulates a convincing urban conclusion and transitional element.
>
> The extremely difficult theme to define and convey the Nordic spirit into the embassy complex is successfully represented in the design (…). The internal urban grid will, as the jury sees it, produce a verified and sophisticated atmosphere where the differences and the presence of the individual will occur. The sites for the individual embassies take form from the exterior mutual facade and the interior streetscape. This creates shapes that at a first glance seems irrational but through closer investigation reveals volumes that in size and geometry are reasonable for the further planning and should be seen as a challenge to the next phase of competition (…)' (Jury's Verdict, 1996)[145].

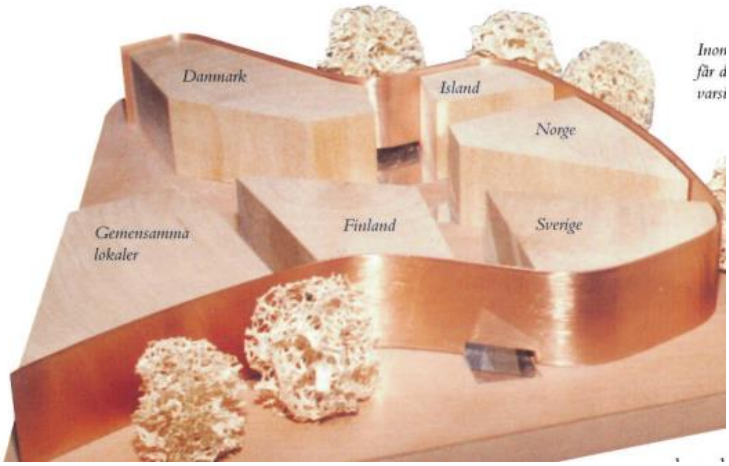

Figure 2: Architectural model of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin

[141] They did not always only comment the drawings, however. A Norwegian diplomat highlighted the 'very poor language' and urged the architects to improve this before later competitions (May 1996 Bonn).
[142] 28th of June 1996 – Statsbygg
[143] According to Berger and Parkkinen, 'connecting the five Nordic embassies by a copper band gives the entire embassy complex an appropriate urban presence and transforms the six individual buildings into a "landmark" in the heart of Berlin' (Berger and Parkkinen 2020)
[144] Setting up a jury can also become a controversy. After a meeting, the governance group reported that the Mayor of Tiergarten was 'not particularly positive' about the project. It followed that the 'slight negative attitude was coloured by the fact that the jury had rejected him to be an advisor, which he argued to be normal procedure in Germany' (November 1995 Statsbygg).
[145] 26th of March 1996 – Statsbygg

When buildings are set up there are a range of procedures to follow. First of all, one has to follow the general rules set out by authorities. Important here was that the boundaries of each building site followed the 'Baulinie' (construction line) specified by the local planning authorities. Moreover, the base of the 'traufenhöe' (roof) of all buildings had to be the same height (14 metres above the ground) and the ground floor of all buildings had to be the same (0.20 metres above ground)[146]. There were also rules specifically related to the project in question. For example, since parts of the Danish embassy faced the busiest street (Rauchstraße), its facade 'should not dominate the total architectural expression at the expense of the embassy buildings of the Nordic countries and the common complex'[147]. In addition, there were a range of safety measures to consider. For example, the buildings had to build in separate staircases leading to a passage on the ground floor. From everywhere in the building there would have to be a maximum walking distance of 35 metres from one of these staircases. Architect competitions are central to the materialisation of buildings and must be in place before the building begins. However, architects do not start with a blank sheet of paper with the agency to do what they want, but act within an assemblage of different actors participating and guiding the process[148].

The Process of Furnishing

Deciding the furnishing is another important part of materialising buildings. Here, the architects had already emphasised how the idea 'was to create a Nordic atmosphere by choice of materials, lighting and furniture'[149]. All furniture would be designed and produced in the five Nordic countries and was said to be 'experienced as a harmonious unity'[150]. In May 1998, the working group met in Stockholm to discuss what the 'felleshus' should include. Some argued that the materials in use had not been very well thought through. For example, the exhibition room was mainly thought as consisting of glass and one diplomat pointed out that 'to put up art one has to

[146] This meant that buildings were encouraged to have four storeys with a gross height of 3.4 m each. Roofs were also meant to be flat.

[147] 27th of February 1996 – Statens Fastighetsverk

[148] Having concluded phase one, countries began their own architectural elaboration. These national projects happened in relation to the general project set out by Berger and Parkkinen. Participants were made aware of the following criteria: 1) Loyalty towards the winner in part one 2) Mirror an expression of an 'individual' identity, 3) Areal effective solutions, 4) Show possibilities for later expansion, 5) Consideration of security measures related to embassies. By June 1996, all embassies had awarded their own architectural winners (March 1996 Statsbygg). The winners of the national architect competition were announced 31st of May 1998. Finland: VIVA Arkkitehtuuri Oy, Sweden: Geir Wingårdh, Norway: Snøhetta, Iceland: PKdM Arkitektar.

[149] As one elaborated, 'Nordic materials' mean 'tree, light, air and stone and if it comes from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway or Sweden is the same. It is a Nordic expression' (Interview Expert-1).

[150] 15th of February 1999 - Berger and Parkkinen

put a nail on the wall… hanging up stuff in threads are anaesthetic and rarely accepted by artists'. Glass tables were also advised against 'due to the daily cleaning it demands'. It was also regularly emphasised how the material set-up affected social practices. The Icelandic ambassador, Ingimundur Sigfusson, highlighted how too much of security arrangements in the entrance would create an 'uninviting atmosphere'[151]. Another concern was how the canteen was set up with a bench facing the windows. Arranging it this way was seen to have an 'unfavourable social dimension'. According to one, 'the aim of the canteen is to create community and such a "fast food" solution would work against this goal'. The conclusion was therefore that the benches had to be replaced by small tables[152]. The process of furnishing is therefore not only a practical matter, but something that is often well thought through.

In December 1998, work is proceeding in determining what exactly the common complex should include. Here, the level of detail is worth mentioning. In the foyer, there should be a movable reception desk, computers, newspaper racks, information material, moveable info-stands, wardrobes and a seating area. In the exhibition room there should be flexible and sufficient light (40 spots), audio and visual elements, seating area, moveable walls with the same height, tools and ladders. In the auditorium there should a translating system, video equipment, screens, sound systems, concert piano, moveable speakers, microphones, presentation tools and a soapbox[153]. Materials are not simply passive things that exist independent from social practices, but are enmeshed within them. In this case, diplomats stressed how the material set-up affected the ability to work effectively. For example, in the offices book shelves were said to be reachable from the chairs to prevent workers from standing up every time they wanted to reach something[154]. The material set-up also affects the ability to communicate. For example, one ambassador emphasised the need for direct door connections from the ambassador's office to the anteroom[155]. Without such a connection, it would be 'particularly cumbersome for the secretary in the anteroom to regularly go in and out of the two offices'. This would complicate 'the necessary swift communication through the door ajar'. The process of furnishing can serve important diplomatic functions, such as working and communicating effectively.

Furnishing the complex did not only concern what to buy, but also what to bring. In the summer of 1999, all the Nordic embassies found themselves in an unusual state. In these summer weeks diplomats were stocking most of their stuff into paper boxes. Determining what to bring

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151 17th of October 1996 – Statens Fastighetsverk

152 Some diplomats also claimed to have 'bad experience with chairs with three legs' and asked the chairs to be replaced by something else (May 1997 – Norwegian MFA).

153 14th of December 1998 – KGL Bonn

154 26th of January 1999 – KGL Bonn

155 2nd of February 1999 – KGL Bonn

and what not was a large part of the process, and the embassies often raised questions around objects with diplomats back home. For example, the Norwegian embassy in Bonn wrote in 1999 back to the administrative section in Oslo about what they should do with the twelve national costumes ('bunads') they had. The response was to bring them, but make sure that they were placed somewhere not humid[156]. Around 200 people were affected by the embassy move to the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. While slight changes were made, the personnel were able to move into the dates as planned[157].

Organising Ceremonies

The most visible part of diplomatic building projects is the ceremonies. Generally, there are two ceremonies taking place in relation to embassy projects: the ground-breaking ceremony and the inauguration ceremony. The ceremonies are seen as prestigious events and often include considerable planning.

The ground-breaking ceremony took place Tuesday 6th of May 1997[158]. Ambassadors, diplomats, family members and officials from Berlin and Germany were invited[159]. The ground-breaking itself was carried out by the five Nordic ambassadors who used a specially designed shovel with five interrelated handles[160]. Before the ceremony a press conference was held where the Nordic ambassadors answered questions. After the ceremony there was 'fish and Aquavit' served aimed at giving a taste of the Scandinavian restaurant due to be open in the 'felleshus'. The Norwegian ambassador Kjell Eliassen spoke of a historic event: 'For the first time, all the Nordic countries have come together to set up a joint embassy project'[161]. The Swedish ambassador Mats Hellström said that 'a joint establishment was particularly important in Berlin because it is also part of Northern Europe'. Jürgen Klemann, representing Berlin City Council, spoke of a 'crystal among the many architectural tones of the city' and said it was 'a wonderful signal for a common Europe'[162]. The ceremony marked the official beginning of the building complex[163].

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156 26th of January 1999 – KGL Bonn
157 21st of May 1999 – By-og Boligministeriet
158 Invitations to the ground-breaking ceremony were sent out 7th of April 1997.
159 6th of May 1997 - Aftenposten
160 9th of May 1997 - KGL Bonn
161 7th of May 1997 - Süddeutche Zeitung
162 8th of May 1997 - Der Tagesspiel
163 One of the main rationales behind ceremonies is to attract attention, and a large part is to ensure that the event is covered in a positive manner. Diplomats report these events back home. In this case, the Norwegian embassy could report of a positive experience: 'One has to say that the ceremony received very good media covering. This is probably connected with the unique fact that several countries are building an embassy complex together, but also because the Nordic complex is the first within the revival of the embassy quarter in Tiergarten' (May 1997 Bonn).

The next ceremony was the inauguration ceremony. An important part of preparation was deciding whom to invite. The issue was raised at a meeting amongst the Nordic ambassadors in Bonn 22nd September 1998[164]. Here, they recommended the countries' state leaders to be present. According to a common statement, the point of an inauguration was 'not only the opening of the embassy complex itself'. Rather, the main point was 'to be visible'. Having state leaders present would give the concept of the Nordic an exposure in German media that 'would be impossible to achieve in any other way'. All the Nordic leaders eventually confirmed their presence, and so did the German Federal President, Johannes Rau. Having these guests confirmed was seen key to ensure a 'dignified' inauguration. The inauguration ceremony itself was planned to be a 'mix of formal and festive' and the number of speeches were 'held at a minimum'[165]. As Iceland held the Chair of the Nordic Council at the time, Iceland's representative was asked to hold the speech on behalf of the Nordic countries. The theme of the inauguration was 'Nordic countries as modern societies and their future-oriented cooperation with Germany'. This was also mirrored in the cultural activities[166].

The inauguration ceremony took place 20th of October 1999 from 11am to 6pm. This ensured that most travelling guests[167] could travel back and forth during the day[168]. The day after, 21st of October, it was reported of a successful event:

> 'The ceremonial opening of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin's historical diplomatic quarter gave a visible impression of Germany with its new capital getting closer to the Nordics. With icy wind and sunshine it was quite literally a Nordic day when the three monarchs and two presidents opened the new embassy complex. The very inauguration was of a scenic character as a curtain went aside led by a glorious fanfare opening the embassy buildings in a broad panorama. Iceland's president Olafur Ragnar Grimsson had the honour of leading the ceremony and emphasised how the Nordic countries inhabit an influential position in the new Europe (…). However Denmark's Queen Margrethe, which opened the complex due to having reigned the longest reminded of the also darker sides of the connection. "The events from 1933 to 1945 will for always be a part of our history, a time that we will never forget, and part of the reason for why the Nordic countries have since then followed and engaged with the development of modern Germany"' (Aftenposten 1999, translated)[169].

[164] 29th of September 1998 – KGL Bonn
[165] In this case, the embassies also arranged a 'goodwill' event where they invited Berlin's citizens to an 'open house' the Saturday after the inauguration.
[166] As a way of financing the event, the Nordic countries sought financial support from the Nordic Council. Each embassy also applied for national support.
[167] The exception was guests travelling from Iceland.
[168] 29th of September 1998 – KGL Bonn
[169] 21st of October 1999 – Aftenposten

After speeches were held, the five foreign ministers met and concluded through a common declaration that the cooperation between Nordics and Germany should intensify through common security, finance and environmental policies. Seven years after the idea was first launched, the Nordic embassies in Berlin were officially open.

The Emergence of a Diplomatic Site

> 'any site has to be *made to be a place* by some other focus through the silent meditation of drawings, specifications, wood, concrete, steel, varnish and paint; through the work of many workers and artisan who have now deserted the scene because they let objects carry their action in absentia; through the agency of alumni whose generous deeds might be rewarded by some bronze plague' (Latour 2005: 195).

With the opening of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin a new diplomatic site emerged. How the diplomatic site was going to be materialised was not given, but emerged through an assemblage of different practices. The five processes outlined above can be understood as interrelated controversies assembled in the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex. While it was possible to separate these into different categories it is important to understand them not as a distinct, but as taking form through the relation with other controversies. As part of the narrative was an assemblage of ideas, relations between different units, materials on the move, diplomatic reporting, different directorates, lawyers, entrepreneurs, architect firms, building workers, journalists, etc. Some decisions were taken spontaneously while others required long bureaucratic processes[170]. Some materials were chosen out of practical reasons while others were embedded with notions of identity. Examining diplomacy as controversies allowed for a better understanding of the many different diplomatic practices behind a project. Whereas one might think that drawing attention to how book shelves should be placed is not of interest to understand diplomacy, a lot of these 'practical' decisions are central to how diplomatic practices are carried out and should not be ignored. Eventually, explicating the manifold different practices behind a project reminds us of diplomacy's multiplicity. Instead of seeing diplomacy simply as an ordered practice predominantly occupied by bureaucrats, one can through understanding diplomacy as controversies better capture the creative and material practices present. In total, the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex emerged through a range of interrelated controversies taken place.

[170] In fact, a key skill for diplomats was to deal with unexpected situations that emerged.

Figure 3: The Nordic Embassy Complex today

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the study of controversies can help explaining the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. The aim was to reveal the complex dynamics behind such projects, drawing attention to the role of creativity and materiality therein. The chapter was divided into three parts. I began by giving an account of how the idea emerged, explicating how it was originally sceptically received before eventually accepted. I then gave an account of how the project materialised. It was important to understand this not as an all-compassing account, but as different ideas being assembled and materialised. In particular, I drew attention to five processes that were being assembled: 1) the purchase of a building plot, 2) the making of room plans, 3) the launching of architect competitions, 4) the process of furnishing and 5) the arranging of ceremonies. These processes highlighted the intricate relationship between social and material practices. In total, I have presented one narrative of the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. While this cannot be understood as a full and complete narrative, it can nonetheless give insights into wider debates in IR. This is what the next chapter will look at.

Chapter Three – Rethinking Diplomatic Practices: 'the Nordics', Creativity, Materiality

> 'Difficulties arise not because of the need for addition but because we need to think differently about some very core principles and concepts, even while we have become so comfortable with the conventions that we scarcely notice their constitutive presence' (Walker et al. 2018: 3).

The third chapter draws the embassy complex into contemporary debates within International Relations (IR). The aim is to explore how Nordic embassy complex can reveal insights into concepts within the discipline. In order to do so, the chapter is divided into three parts - each part exploring one concept. First, I use the embassy complex to rethink the concept of 'the Nordics'. Here, I find that the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can provide three lessons by underlining (i) a relational understanding, (ii) a contextual understanding and (iii) a material understanding. Second, I use the embassy complex to show different aspects around 'diplomatic creativity'. Here, I draw attention to (i) the relationship between creativity and change, (ii) how diplomatic creativity emerge, and (iii) the difficulty of capturing diplomatic creativity. Third, I use the embassy complex to yield insights into the concept of 'materiality'. Here, I draw attention to (i) how materials shape conditions of possibility, (ii) the relationship between materiality and identity, and (iii) the active role of materials. Taken together, by using the Nordic embassy complex as a foil, I rethink three different concepts within diplomatic practice - 'the Nordics', creativity and materiality.

Rethinking 'the Nordics' in Diplomatic Practice

There is already an extensive literature on the Nordics in IR[171]. Broadly defined, there are two different lenses through which the 'Nordics' have been explored. The first is 'normative' and the second is 'regionalist'. From a normative perspective, scholars point out how international norms are increasingly setting the standard for appropriate behaviour (Græger and Leira 2004: 45)[172]. The Nordics have gained reputation for being 'respectable members' of the international community (Bergman 2006: 74)[173]. Due to their attempts to strengthen global norms of cooperation, the

[171] For a historical account, see Ingebritsen et al. (2006), Browning (2007), Koivisto (2007), de Carvalho and Neumann (2015) Neumann (2007b, 2014).
[172] In general, the role of informal governance has been emphasised and scholars have highlighted the need to explore like-minded networks (Elgström 2017: 237).
[173] A key debate within the literature has been over the continuance of the Nordic identity. For instance, Christian Browning has argued that the Nordic brand is 'past its sell-by date' (Browning 2007: 28).

Nordics are said to be particularly 'internationalist'. Following this, they are said to have a more social conception of global obligating, putting greater emphasis on issues such as global and economic justice (Bergman 2006: 76). As a result, Christine Ingebritsen (2002) has famously called the Nordics for 'norm entrepreneurs'[174]. The regionalist perspective has focused on the Nordics as a regional development[175]. With the establishment of the Nordic Council in 1952 and the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971, the Nordic region formalised after the Second World War[176]. Here, a range of policy achievements were achieved – including a passport union, a joint labour market and a convention on social security (Andersson 2010: 51). In the regional literature, the Nordics is often seen as a region who has successfully overcome the 'security dilemma' by 'establishing a region of peace and prosperity' (Browning 2007: 32)[177]. Linked by common institutional, economic and identity interests, 'the Nordics' are seen as an 'ideal type of post-sovereign region-building' (Adler-Nissen and Gad 2014: 10)[178]. In IR, the 'Nordics' has generally been examined through a normative or regionalist perspective.

The materialisation of the Nordic embassy project can help us rethink the relationship between the 'Nordic' and the 'national'. One common theme within the literature has been to what extent policies have been levelled 'up' from the state (i.e. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway or Sweden) to the region (i.e. the Nordic)[179]. According to this perspective, the emergence of 'the Nordic' is understood as a phenomenon where closer institutional ties means 'levelling' up policies to the Nordic level. The issue with this approach is how it fails to account for how the state and the region operate relationally[180]. Instead, a relational approach studies how political formations are embedded within, and even co-constitute, one another (McConaughey, Musgrave and Nexon

According to him, it is today difficult to establish the Nordic as something 'distinct' because their values have been lifted up at the European level.

[174] In s similar way, scholars have referred to the Nordics as a 'norm advocacy network', see Björkdahl (2008) and Elgström (2017).

[175] Regional developments can be seen as ways in which individuals and groups relate to the world beyond the conventional nation-state (Keskitalo 2007: 187).

[176] However, signs of a Nordic identity is said to have emerged already in the nineteenth century. At the time a Scandinavianist movement flourished, exemplified through 'low-level' cooperation, including academic conferences, a common currency union, postal services cooperation, etc. (Andersson 2010: 51).

[177] Examples include Hettne et al. (1999) and Wagstaff (1999).

[178] In explaining the history, scholarship has more recently emphasised how the construction of the Nordic was embedded in colonial structures, see Bregnsbo (2008), Ghose (2008), Jensen (2008), Palmberg (2009). Yet, though progress has been made, there is still much work to be done in applying post-colonial insights to the Nordic area (Neumann 2014: 127).

[179] A similar distinction in the literature is Stanley Hoffman's (1966) idea of 'high' politics and 'low' politics.

[180] Merje Kuus (2015) makes a similar argument when stressing how nationalism and transnationalism is tightly bundled within the European Union (EU).

2018: 187). Adopting the concept of a polity[181], one can better understand these relational dynamics. From this perspective, the emergence of the Nordic polity cannot be pitted against the state polity, but must be understood as occurring in relation[182]. This point is worth highlighting because it better captures how the Nordics is manifested[183]. The Nordics is not a level distinct from the 'national' or 'international', but manifested through practices that operate through intensified connections (Schouten 2014: 562)[184]. In contrast to what some believe, the construction of a national and pan-national identity does not operate in a zero-sum game, but creates a new rationale for governance that opens, rather than closes, opportunities for diplomats[185]. Moving from seeing the Nordics as something 'distinct' to seeing it as a series of relations provides new ways of understanding the region.

The materialisation of the embassy complex can give a more contextualised understanding of the concept[186]. What 'Nordic' means is not given, but differs from place to place. For example, one diplomat emphasised how it was 'much easier' to promote the Nordics in Berlin than in Washington because Germans had 'a much stronger idea of what the Nordic was'[187]. Another diplomat said that:

> 'Berlin is perhaps the smartest place to be because the understanding of the Nordics has very positive connotations... My last posting was in the Middle East where the idea of the Nordics did not have the same effect. Here, no one would raise an eyebrow if we cooperated with, let's say, Germany instead of the Nordics… I guess the effect of presenting us as 'Nordic' depends on the geopolitical context we operate in' (Interview Diplomat-3, translated).

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[181] Drawing upon Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach (1996), a polity consists of three elements: 1) a self-reflected identity, 2) a capacity to mobilise resources and 3) a degree of institutionalisation and hierarchy.

[182] The understanding of polities also gives a more dynamic understanding of the 'state'. States are understood not as stable entities but as larger assemblages (McConnell and Dittmer 2018: 140). Understood relationally, a state takes shape in their relation with other states (Neumann 2012: 3).

[183] Adopting a relational perspective, the subject of IR can be understood as the 'political and social life that plays out in settings where there is a plurality of polities' (Neumann 2014: 341). In a similar line of thought, diplomacy becomes the 'negotiation between positions held by different polities' (Neumann 2012: 7).

[184] For critiques of this type of level thinking, please see Bigo and Walker (2007b), Guillaume (2007), Basaran et al. (2017), Huysmans and Nogueira (2012, 2017), Basaran and Olsson (2018).

[185] Moreover, the Nordics is often seen in a 'substantialist manner' where action happens between predetermined entities (see Jackson and Nexon 1999). However, by seeing the Nordics as a 'timeless disembodied necessity' (Rosenberg 1994: 198), one is left with poor tools for analysing change. Indeed, by separating structures from processes, one fails to see how processes can be the sources of change (Ruggie 1998: 153). To overcome this dualism, one should move from seeing boundaries as fixed to see them as processes (Lelandais 2007: 258). By so doing, one can easier explore how the Nordics becomes systemised through a variety of ways that cut across the different 'levels of analysis'.

[186] I depart from Quentin Skinner's idea that one should not study the *meaning* of concepts but their use (Skinner 1969: 37).

[187] Interview Diplomat-2.

The contextualised understanding of the Nordics is not only important as a theoretical argument, but allows for a better understanding of how 'diplomacy is sited'[188]. Diplomats have to develop a feel for where materialising and assembling a region has better effects. This demands an understanding of how the narrative is perceived, depending on the context they operate in. As a more general lesson, it allows us to see that the region does not act as a free-floating unit, but works in relation to the space it is materialised. This might seem as an obvious point, but a contextual understanding in IR is often done at the expense of abstract theorising. Moreover, what is understood as 'Nordic' is a relational practice that depends on internal and external confirmation. The concept of 'Nordic' can therefore be understood as 'clashing interpretations' put forward by insiders and outsiders (Neumann 1994). What is being presented as 'Nordic' is the result of the successful ordering of different practices[189]. Zooming in on one particular project allows for a more contextualised understanding.

The Nordic embassy complex draws attention to the material dimension of the concept, of how the concept organises and shapes material spaces (Berenskoetter 2016: 160). This presents an important challenge to the current literature. As mentioned above, the literature highlights how 'Nordic' norms are increasingly setting the standard for behaviour. However, since norms are seen internal to individuals, they are also invisible to the naked eye (Barnes 2001: 25). By consequence, the literature often suffers from understanding how these norms are materialised in practice. Indeed, 'the Nordic' is not only a 'discourse' or a 'norm collective', but a range of practices woven together 'by the constant circulation of documents, stories, accounts, goods, and passions' (Latour 2005: 179). What becomes visible by studying the Nordic embassy complex is the range of processes that are being assembled and presented as 'Nordic'. The idea of 'the Nordic' has often a more mundane and material tone than what is accounted for. For example, in creating the room plans, the Swedish ambassador emphasised the need for the common complex to have a 'Nordic profile', which he argued to include 'environment consciousness' as well as 'handicap concerns'[190]. Here, the intricate relationship between the material and semiotic becomes visible. In essence, by accounting for this relationship, one can see how socio-material relations matter more than social relations alone (Schouten 2013: 573). The Nordic embassy complex allows for rethinking the concept of the 'Nordic' along more material lines, providing a much-needed criticism of the current literature.

[188] This argument is emphasised in Iver Neumann's (2013) *Diplomatic Sites*.
[189] The benefit with such a performative definition is that it draws attention to the tools needed to upkeep groups (Latour 2005: 35).
[190] 18th of October 1996 – Sveriges Ambassade i Bonn

Summed up, the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can reveal several insights into debates on 'the Nordics' in IR. First of all, by adopting a relational perspective, it allows us to see the entangled relationship between the national and the Nordic. Second, by revealing how diplomats attune their use of the concept depending on the context they operate in, allows for a more contextualised understanding of the concept. Finally, instead of seeing the 'Nordic' as purely ideational, one can draw the concept along more material lines.

Rethinking Creativity in Diplomatic Practice

> 'I think Berlin is an excellent example where someone took a moment that was there – a "window of opportunity" – that perhaps will never arrive again in any other place. That someone managed to do this is fantastic. And I think you won't find the same in any other place in the world. It is perhaps a bit strange, for why do we not see similar cases when it is as successful as it is? Why are we not interested in using it as an example? That's puzzling to me. For improvisation – no, that is not usually the tool for diplomats. Not in these processes' (Interview Diplomat-5).

The materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can provide tools to capture diplomatic creativity. Creativity has often been neglected within the diplomatic literature**.** In explaining diplomatic behaviour, there are generally three traits that are emphasised. First, diplomats are seen as territorial representatives. In contrast to humanitarian actors who have to continually (re)construct the governance object as their rationale for existence, diplomats represent territorial units whose taken as given (Sending 2011: 643)[191]. Second, and very much linked to this, diplomats are said to be in charge of national interests. As a result, they interpret things in the manner which is most favourable to the country in question (Cornut 2015: 396)[192]. In addition to this, diplomats are said to follow a 'bureaucratic script'[193]. The 'bureaucratic script' tells diplomats how to act by following existing practices[194]. From this view, 'to be a diplomat is to incorporate a set of practices' (Neumann 2011: 92)[195]. While these are undoubtedly important traits, the ability to act creatively has gone relatively unnoticed. Departing from the view that diplomats need to be ever more

[191] The relationship to territorial units is important because it showcases the resilience of diplomatic practices. The difficulty of being a diplomat without having a relationship to a territory has recently been explored, see McConnell et al. (2012).
[192] This point is similarly underscored by Constantinou (2013), Smith (2011) and Ross (2007).
[193] In an alternative account, Fiona McConnell and Jason Dittmer (2018) have argued that diplomacy should be understood as a combination of representation, communication and negotiation (McConnell and Dittmer 2018: 140).
[194] As Iver Neumann notes, the key is to 'don't rock the boat' (Neumann 2012: 64).
[195] Similarly, Vincent Pouliot has emphasised how diplomacy relies on a set of skills 'learned in and through practice' (Pouliot 2011: 545).

flexible and versatile (Cooper and Cornut 2019), a better understanding of diplomatic creativity should be welcomed.

The embassy project in Berlin can give different insights into the workings of diplomatic creativity. First, it can give lessons into how diplomatic creativity emerge. Here, one important factor is to perceive the world in change. The idea of the embassy complex arrived after the Cold War[196] – a time that had created upheavals in the way of thinking and perceiving change. Thorvald Stoltenberg, the Norwegian foreign minister at the time, was central in advancing the project and one important element was how he perceived the world:

> 'The Cold War is over. Germany is united, the Soviet Union has collapsed and Bosnia is raging through a bloody civil war. No one can longer doubt that something dramatically is happening in Europe. We are witnessing some of the most fundamental changes in European political order of the century. Such fundamental changes have effects for Norway's situation. The very anchoring principles for our politics are in motion, and we cannot continue like anything happened. When our circumstances change like that, there are reasons to adjust our own foreign and security policies' (Aftenposten 1993, translated)[197].

The end of the Cold War had allowed for interpreting the past and future in new ways. Such moments breed grounds for change. As Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille observe, 'change originates in practice because the meaning of past events is open to contestation and reinterpretation' (Schindler and Wille 2015: 346)[198]. It is clear from Stoltenberg's writings after the Cold War that things could not continue as before, but that one had to rethink several aspects of Norwegian foreign policy. Indeed, when a foreign minister is faced with new ideas (s)he must choose 'when to follow bureaucratic practice and kill it' or 'when to follow the statesman's practice and back it' (Neumann 2012: 173). Thorvald Stoltenberg did not refrain from doing the latter. Taken together, perceiving a world in change was a key step for diplomatic creativity to emerge.

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[196] In the discipline of IR the end of the Cold War sparked intense debates. At the core was a question of change in international politics – 'of whether and how change happens, and how it can be studied and explained' (Schindler and Wille 2014: 330). One of the key debates concerned the transformation of the international system and to what extent the end of the Cold War has led to a system-transforming change. The dominance of structural realism, which contended that the international system had been stabilised through a bipolar system, received great criticisms as their prediction of conflict did not take place. Some scholars called the era a 'triumph of liberalism' while constructivists became increasingly confident that ideas and norms were crucial in understanding in the international.

[197] 8th of January 1993 - Aftenposten

[198] This is important because it allows us to see that practices are always contingent and unstable because their relationship to the past is up for contestation (Schindler and Wille 2015: 346).

The materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can give clues on where diplomatic creativity comes from. Diplomats themselves emphasise how diplomatic creativity had to come from the top of the ministry:

> 'I don't know the history of the Nordic embassy complex well, but it is always individuals who have most of the credit when such ideas becomes reality. I assume this is the case here as well. Such events can never grow out of common practice. It is totally dependent on having people within the ministry who says 'aha, here we have a golden opportunity to do something'. And that they keep pushing for it despite all the objections that come along and say 'no, this doesn't work', 'too demanding', 'much easier to just do as normal'. I am sure this was the case here and this is how it will always be' (Interviewee Diplomat-3, translated).

> 'I think it is difficult because we see that the projects we have tried to create from the bottom of the system is too easily stopped midway in the bureaucracy because there is one person who is not as enthusiastic and does not want the blame if anything goes wrong. You need a clear political decision coming from the top, in my opinion' (Interviewee Diplomat-2, translated)

> 'Such projects have to be decided at the minister level. One has to be clear on what the goal is. What do we actually want to achieve? These Nordic projects are difficult to implement if it is not clear why we are actually doing it. All politicians praise Nordic cooperation, but when it comes to actually doing it all kinds of problems emerge in terms of different laws, cultures, systems, etc. The transition from speech to concretised action is very complicated. These processes get easily lost if there is not a clear message coming from the top' (Interviewee Diplomat-6, translated).

From these statements it is clear that creative ideas had to emerge from the 'top' of the ministry. Indeed, the difficulty of creating such projects can indicate the power of established practices (Neumann 2012: 175). What becomes visible is a relationship between common practice and improvisation. As previously noted, creativity and common practice do not operate in isolation but in relation. Indeed, that the Nordics had a history of close regional cooperation played part in developing the idea in the first place. However, the importance that the idea came from the 'top' of the ministry and the determination to implement it was critical for the project to materialise[199]. While the 'practice turn' often highlights the 'stickiness' of diplomatic practices, the embassy complex shows how creative ideas are incorporated and highlights the importance of ideas coming from high up in the ministry.

[199] The important role of Thorvald Stoltenberg was stressed in the interviews. As one noted, 'without Thorvald this would never happened. That's how it is. One has to have someone who really believes in it' (Interview Diplomat-4, translated).

The Nordic embassy complex shows how creative practices can be difficult to capture because they are often presented as 'natural'. See for instance how the Nordic Embassy presents the project today:

> "'Each autonomous, and yet together" – at the inauguration of the Nordic Embassies in 1999 Queen Margrethe II of Denmark formulated this motto for the future cooperation of the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. However, it was not merely a wish regarding the future of the common embassy complex. Looking back in retrospect, this motto reflects the longstanding relationship of the Nordic countries over decades and even centuries, out of which this common building emerged as a logical development. The cooperation was initiated not out of the necessity but rather out of a sense of a common heritage, common languages and shared values and convictions – a unique project worldwide' (Nordic Embassy 2020)[200]

Note how the project is now being presented as a 'logical development'. Here it appears that materialising the complex was a frictionless experience where things just happened to fall in place. This bares resemblance to Iver Neumann's (2002) findings on how Norway after the Cold War presented its relationship to Russia not as something new, but as something 'natural'. In a similar way, diplomats are here portraying the emergence of the Nordic embassy complex not as something that departs from previous practice, but as something situated within it. Yet, as has been shown, the materialisation of the embassy complex was far from a frictionless experience and demanded clear stamina from certain individuals to get it through. Creative diplomatic practices are difficult to capture because they in hindsight are often presented as 'natural'.

In sum, the materialisation of the embassy complex can teach three lessons about diplomatic creativity. First, for diplomatic creativity to emerge, it is important to perceive the world in change. Second, creative ideas usually have to come from the 'top' of the ministry in order to succeed. Finally, creative practices are difficult to capture because they in hindsight are often presented as 'natural'. Taken together, the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex can provide several insights into how diplomatic creativity takes place.

Rethinking Materiality in Diplomatic Practice

> 'What would happen to our thinking about politics if we took more seriously the idea that technological and natural materialities were themselves actors alongside and within us – were

[200] 15th of March 2020 – The Nordic Embassies in Berlin (website)

> vitalities, trajectories, and powers irreducible to the meanings, intentions, or symbolic values humans invest in them?' (Bennett 2016: 47).

Diplomacy has traditionally been understood as a human endeavour. Whereas Emannuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot did see practices as a way of 'joining meaning and materiality' (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 8), materiality[201] is often neglected within diplomatic studies[202]. However, diplomatic controversies arise not only around the intentions behind a project, but also around matters of technical detail. This means that 'things' have to become an inherent part of the practices we study (Nexon and Pouliot 2013: 343). Physical objects structure our daily routines and one must understand how diplomatic practices emerge 'from particular material contexts in which the human and non-human enable one another' (Dittmer 2015: 84)[203]. Rejecting the distinction between the social and material, one can better capture the relationship between people and things (Mayer 2012)[204]. In constructing the embassy complex in Berlin, the role of materiality cannot be ignored. Who had access to the property, how the buildings should look and what materials were used were all essential parts of the negotiation and the materialisation of the project. It is impossible to understand the materialisation of the project without accounting for these material dimensions.

The materialisation of the embassy complex can allow us to rethink materiality in in several ways. First, the project reveals how materials shape conditions of possibility within diplomatic practices. As Bruno Latour notes:

> What is so staggering in any given interaction is exactly the opposite of what sociologists with a tropism for 'local sites' find so great in finally reaching face-to-face encounters, namely the crowd of non-human, non-subjective, non-local participants who gather to help carry out the course of

[201] Materiality is here understood as 'the matter out of which the world is composed: the nonhuman things that make up our everyday existence as well as the corporeality of our embodiments' (Aradau et al. 2014: 58).

[202] For exceptions, see Shimazu (2012) and McConnell (2019).

[203] As Diana Coole and Samantha Frost more elegantly note: 'We live our everyday lives surrounded by, immersed in, matter. We are ourselves composed of matter. We experience its restlessness and intransigence even as we reconfigure and consume it. At every turn we encounter physical objects fashioned by human design and endure natural forces whose imperatives structure our daily routines for survival. Our existence depends from one moment to the next on myriad micro-organisms and diverse higher species, on our own hazily understood bodily and cellular relations and on pitiless cosmic motions, on the material artefacts and natural stuff that populate our environment, as well as socioeconomic structures that produce and reproduce the conditions of our everyday lives' (Cole and Frost 2016: 1).

[204] Bringing in the material factor brings a healthy scepticism about the primacy of the human. While humans can engage reflexively while non-human components cannot, this should not be seen as a *fundamental* difference. This view masks how the 'embodied materiality and humanity links us to the rest of the world' (Dittmer 2014: 389).

> action and transport it through channels that do not resemble a social tie, even though all of them are associated together' (Latour 2005: 202).

In the previous chapter, one could see how capabilities enabled by materials were crucial to the working of diplomats (Dittmer 2015: 82). The functionality of materials as well as their design was something up for contestation because it mattered to diplomats how these decisions played out. For example, having direct access to the secretary's office was seen important because it allowed for more rapid communication. Similarly, that the 'felleshus' had a canteen was seen important for diplomatic socialisation to take place. Through examining such decisions closely, one can see that materials shape conditions of possibility. The focus on materiality also shows how human intentions are not enough to produce political change (Dittmer 2015: 103). One thing is to believe in the 'idea' of the 'Nordic', but another is to materialise this idea in practice. It is the materialisation of the idea that allows for the greatest change. Taken together, the Nordic embassy complex can allow us to see that materials have the ability to move us socially and politically.

The Nordic embassy complex can give insights into how materials and identity relate within diplomatic practices[205]. I have already mentioned how a 'Nordic identity' was expressed through the creation of the 'felleshus'[206]. Another aspect was how countries expressed their national identities through their individual buildings. For example, the Icelandic embassy writes that:

> 'The Nordic embassy complex in Berlin is not only a manifestation of strong historical and cultural ties between the five neighbouring Nordic countries. The buildings are also exercises in national characteristics and an architectural embodiment of national aspirations. Visible from the entrance of the complex, the Icelandic embassy occupies a narrow site in the northwest part. Characterised by its Linparit 'Red Rhyotite' natural stone façade, the building actually consists of two parts, a working unit and a service unit. The entrance appears as a crack in the massive stone wall, opening way into the building. Standing by the calm surface of the moat, the two parts of the building are separated by a divide that could be read as the gorge between the continental shelves that run across Iceland' (Icelandic Embassy 2020)[207].

[205] Within diplomacy, few have looked at the diplomatic implications of architecture. Important exceptions include Jane C. Loeffler's (1998) book *Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* and James Sturton and Luke Shite's (2017) book *British Embassies: Their Diplomatic and Architectural History*.
[206] The Nordic embassy complex in Berlin allows us to see how the creating a region is not only a political process – but also a material one.
[207] 20th of March 2020 – The Icelandic Embassy

Here, it becomes clear that the building is not seen as existing outside ideas[208]. Rather, as the Icelandic embassy stresses, the building is seen as the 'architectural embodiment of national aspirations'[209]. Many actors claim ownership to embassy buildings. Governments, Foreign Services, oversight committees, and taxpayers see these buildings as their own (Loeffler 1998: 3-4). This demands a plan for how buildings can reflect the 'nation's spirit'. The Nordic embassy complex can highlight the relationship between materiality and identity within diplomatic practices.

Finally, the Nordic embassy complex draws attention to how materials do not act as a passive background, but are something that are both active and alive. One key event during the materialisation of the project was the move of a 120-ton, 14.6 metre tall and 5.2 metre wide granite block from Iddefjorden, Norway to Berlin[210]. The 900 million years old block was first shipped along the Elbe before arriving in Berlin June 1998. An early morning, the granite wall was raised a couple of centimetres in front of the Norwegian facade, where it was placed down in a water table and attached to the building[211]:

Figure 4: Granite wall on the move

[208] A similar architectural embodiment of the nation can be found in the Danish description of their individual building: 'The heart of the Danish Embassy is a tall lobby which divides the building into two parts: on one side an undulating, wood-clad wall and on the other a 'stairway to the sky'. This is the fundamental idea upon which the building becomes capable of exuding the dignity required in an embassy while, at the same time, being a place filled with light and life and reflecting the Danish spirit – the very qualities which make this building an exciting and beautiful workplace' (Danish Embassy 2020).

[209] Again, this shows the impossibility to separate the ideal and the material.

[210] 13th of July 1998 – KGL Bonn

[211] The rise of the wall needed help from a crane with 1000 ton power and a helping crane with 400 ton power (in comparison, normal working cranes have a power around 2.5 ton)

Figure 5: Granite wall in front of the Norwegian embassy building

Quickly after the wall was in place one discovered that it had transferred water and caused leaks. One can of course raise questions around the decision to move a granite wall in the first place[212], but I here want to draw attention to how the event can tell us something about the fluctuating role of materials. By following specific material objects on the move, one can see that there is a type of movements that go through buildings. This draws attention to how objects become 'visible, distributed, accounted mediators before becoming invisible, asocial intermediaries' (Latour 2005)[213]. This is important because there is a tendency to believe that objects are simply passive when a building is finalised. As one interviewee noted:

> 'With projects it is unfortunately the case that when people move in they are a bit mentally done with the project. It is very natural since that this is the goal, but here lots of processes were not finalised. We had leaks and other detected technical issues. It is not simply about getting hold of a building and move in. You have to continuously work with taking out the effects and rewards of buildings' (Interview Diplomat-6, translated).

A better understanding of the fluctuating role of materials allows us to see how materials are not only lurking in the background, but something that are capable of making a difference on their own.

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[212] One interviewee noted that: 'I would say that the granite wall is one of the biggest mistakes with the project, especially when I realised that it transferred water. It is situated in this little pond. I think the reason they did was to express a form of identity. I do not think one would close the roads in Berlin to move a granite wall again, but it was a gimmick' (Interview Expert-2, translated).

[213] Jason Dittmer similarly highlights the diplomatic system as 'a constantly-changing assemblage of diplomats, secure email systems, state dinners and so on' (Dittmer 2015: 85-86).

Summed up, the Nordic embassy complex can help us highlight the role of materiality in three different ways. First, the Nordic embassy complex reveals how materials shape the conditions of possibility within diplomatic practice. Second, Nordic embassy complex gives insights into how materials and identity relate within diplomatic practices. Third, the Nordic embassy project allows us to see materials not only as passive objects, but as active and capable of making change. Taken together, the materialisation of the Nordic complex sheds new light on materiality within diplomatic practices.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has sought to draw Nordic embassy complex into closer dialogue with debates in IR. The aim was to provide lessons from the project by shedding light on three different concepts: 'the Nordics', creativity and materiality. First, I used the embassy complex to rethink the concept of 'the Nordics'. I argued that the embassy complex allowed us to rethink 'the Nordics' in three different ways. First, by providing a more relational understanding. Second, by providing a more contextualised understanding. Third, by providing a more material understanding. I then explored the how the embassy complex could give lessons about diplomatic creativity. First, I highlighted the importance of perceiving the world in change. Second, I highlighted how creative ideas had to come from the 'top' of the foreign ministry. Third, I found that creative practices were difficult to capture because they in hindsight were often presented as 'natural'. The final concept I looked at was materiality. Here, I showed how the embassy complex could allow us to rethink materiality in three different ways. First, I showed how materials shape conditions of possibility in diplomatic practice. Second, I drew attention to the relationship between identity and materiality. Third, I emphasised the active role of materials. Taken together, using the Nordic embassy complex as a foil, I showed how it could provide several lessons into wider debates within IR.

Conclusions

To conclude, by seeing diplomacy as controversies, this paper has looked at the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. The aim was to shed light on creativity and materiality, something that has gone relatively unnoticed within the diplomatic literature. While the embassy complex could reveal several insights into the creativity and materiality, it demanded theoretical tools that were better attuned to capture these elements. Taken together, the case study was not intended to provide a global mechanism to understand diplomacy. Rather, the aim was to shed light on the contingencies within the diplomatic practice, creativity and materiality therein.

I began the thesis by reviewing the existing literature on diplomacy. Here, I found that the literature had made important advancements in the recent years, moving away from a traditional state-rigidness. An emerging trend within the literature was to draw upon the 'practice turn' in International Relations (IR). While a welcoming contribution, I noted how the literature had not succeeded in developing methods to capture creativity and materiality. I then outlined a methodological framework better equipped for this purpose. Arguing for a pluralist understanding, I developed a two-layered approach that consisted of setting a 'methodological scene' and sketching out 'methodological tools'. The methodological scene was seen as the methodological framework that ran throughout the paper and included: 1) transdisicplinarity, 2) reflexivity and 3) relationality. The methodological tools were seen as more direct ways of generating data and included 1) archival research, 2) interviews and 3) a (disrupted) participant observation. By developing such a two-layered approach, the intent was to establish a stronger link between the interpretation and generation of knowledge. In general, the aim was to be open and transparent about methodological decisions in order to be more aware of how the data was situated and used.

The first chapter developed a theoretical framework for studying diplomatic controversies. In order to do so, the chapter was divided into four parts. First, I sketched out some core tenets of the practice turn. While recognising its diversity, I argued that the practice turn consisted of at least four core elements: (i) an ontological commitment to the everyday, (ii) a focus on process over stasis, (iii) a shift from abstract theorising to practical imperatives, and (iv) seeing knowledge as situated in practice. I then moved on to examine two of its foundational texts. Explicating these texts were important because it allowed me to show that the initial motives behind the practice turn was also to grasp creativity and materiality. The argument that materiality and creativity should be better accounted for was therefore not seen as a radical move from the practice turn. Rather, seeing heterogeneity as desirable, I made the argument that drawing the practice turn along creative and material lines would actually strengthen it. Having done this, I intended to show why the

literature on practices had tended to focus on continuity and social practices. I made the argument that the practice turn's strong links to Bourdieusian theorising had hindered understandings of creativity and materiality. By unpacking Pierre Bourdieu's toolkit, one could better understand why it tilted towards continuity over change and social practices over material. Finally, drawing upon the Actor-Network Theory (ANT), I introduced the notion of a 'controversy' into the diplomatic literature. Understood as a contested moment open for transformation, I argued that the concept was better equipped to capture creative and material practices.

The second chapter looked at the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin. Understanding diplomacy as controversies, the aim was to sketch out the complex dynamics behind such a project. The chapter was divided into three parts. First, I explored where the idea emerged, explicating how the idea was originally raised by Thorvald Stoltenberg in 1992. I drew attention to how the idea was initially met with scepticism before it was eventually accepted. Having sketched out how the idea emerged, I gave an account of how the project materialised. Instead of providing a chronological account, I drew attention to five important processes that were being assembled: 1) the purchase of the building plot, 2) the making of room plans, 3) the launching of architect competitions, 4) the process of furnishing, and 5) the arranging of ceremonies. While these processes were separated for analytical purposes, it was important to stress how they worked in relation to one another. The story revealed an assemblage of ideas, relations between different units, materials on the move, diplomatic reporting, architect firms, lawyers, entrepreneurs, buildings workers, journalists, etc. It was necessary to include the mundane contestations and decisions, because they play a core part of diplomatic practice. By closely examining the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin, the account revealed the role of creative and material practices.

The third chapter drew the complex into more contemporary debates within IR. The aim was to show how the Nordic embassy complex could shed light on several debates within the discipline. I divided the chapter into three parts, each focusing on one concept. The first section looked at how the embassy complex could allow us to rethink 'the Nordics' in IR. Here, I found the embassy complex to reveal three important insights. First, I argued that it revealed a more relational understanding of the concept. Second, I argued that it revealed a more contextualised understanding of the concept. Third, I argued that it revealed more material understanding of the concept. The next concept I explored was 'creativity'. The materialisation of the embassy complex served important lessons when it comes to creativity within diplomatic practice. First, I argued that perceiving the world in change was key for diplomatic creativity to emerge. Second, I argued that diplomatic creativity had to come from the 'top' of the ministry. Third, I drew attention to

how diplomatic creativity could be difficult to capture because it was often presented as 'natural'. The final concept I explored was 'materiality'. Long neglected in the diplomatic literature, the Nordic embassy complex allowed for rethinking materiality in several ways. First, I showed how materials shaped the conditions of possibility in diplomatic practice. Second, I highlighted the relationship between materiality and identity. Third, I stressed the importance of seeing materials not as passive, but as active. Taken together, using the materialisation of the Nordic embassy complex as a foil, several insights could be drawn.

Finally, I want to sketch out three potential avenues for further research. First, future diplomatic studies should aim at being more attuned to empirical practices, digging deeper into specific examples. This does not only do justice to the complexity of diplomatic practice, but it also has the strength of bringing materiality and creativity into light. Indeed, it is often the abstraction in hindsight that masks over creative and material aspects. Second, and directly linked to this, future studies should take material aspects more seriously. While materials are often 'hidden in plain sight', they matter to how practices are carried out. Giving concrete examples of why and how materials matter can give a much-needed sensibility of their role. While the role of materiality is here applied to diplomatic practices, scholars should aim to further the role of materials into other IR debates. For example, scholars should explore how key concepts such as the 'international', 'norms', 'security' and the 'state' are imbricated into materials. Third, while this thesis has once again been centred around a Western perspective, more studies should aim to explore non-Western aspects on this matter. To what extent is creativity enacted differently around the world? How does materiality matter from a non-Western perspective? One can only hope that this thesis is only the beginning of such workAt the most general, the overall hope is that scholars and students keep pushing boundaries and dare being creative. While different strands have been dominated by certain scholars and directions, one should always approach them as heterogeneous with wider potentials. While this study only scratches the surface of what such an account could look like, it aims to inspire future studies to be more playful in dealing with concepts and theories.

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Interview Diplomat-3 19th of March 2020, Skype interview from Oslo, Norway

Interview Diplomat-4 20th of March 2020, Skype interview from Oslo, Norway

Interview Diplomat-5 27th of March 2020, Skype interview from Oslo, Norway

Interview Diplomat-6 2nd of April 2020, Skype interview from Oslo, Norway

Interview Expert-1 12th of December 2019, Oslo, Norway

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Figures

Figure 1 'Fractal distinctions in social theory' reprinted table from Jackson, P. T. and D. H. Nexon' (2019) 'Reclaiming the social: relationalism in anglophone international studies' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 0(0), 12, accessed 30th of March 2020, available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1567460

Figure 2 'Architectural model of the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin' [photo] from article Jane Fredlund ed. 'Östblockets sönderfall bäddade för tre nya svenska ambassader' published by *Statens Fastighetsverk* January 1996, accessed 12th of January 2020, available

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Figure 3 'The Nordic embassy complex today' [photo] from article 'Embassies of the Nordic Countries' on *Architectuul* accessed 12th of January 2020, available at: http://architectuul.com/architecture/embassies-of-the-nordic-countries

Figure 4 'Granite wall on the move' [photo] from article 'The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Berlin" published by *Snøhetta* , accessed 14th of February 2020, available at: https://snohetta.com/project/151-the-royal-norwegian-embassy-in-berlin

Figure 5 'Granite wall in front of the Norwegian building' [photo] from article Euro Inox ed. 'The Nordic Embassies in Berlin' published by *The European Stainless Steel Development Association* 2002, accessed 15th of January 2020, available at: https://www.bssa.org.uk/cms/File/Euro%20Inox%20Publications/Nordic%20Embassies%20in%20Berlin.pdf