An Organisational Ethnography of Geopolitical Knowledge Production

A Study of the European Centre for Minority Issues

William Richard Andrzej Hughes

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Newcastle University

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Abstract

This thesis explores how geopolitical knowledge is constructed by an important peace-focussed think tank, the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). Based in the Danish-German borderlands region, the ECMI was founded in 1996, on the assumption that the lessons learned from the innovative peacebuilding solution to the 'Schleswig-Holstein question' could be useful in policy interventions to support the rights of other autochthonous national minorities in post-Cold War Europe. In order to explore how it produced knowledge to undertake this work, I conducted immersive organisational ethnography from October 2021 until September 2022. I held a dual role for these eleven months. Firstly, I was a member of the team, in the position of 'visiting researcher'. I was a part of the everyday knowledge production in this role, attending and contributing to meetings, undertaking research, writing material for its website, and later, representing the ECMI as a speaker at academic conferences. Working with ECMI researchers gave me a unique insight into how institutional strategy, funding pressures and the organisation's navigation of the field of minority issues impacted the everyday knowledge production practices. Secondly, I was an outsider who was performing a fieldwork study of them. In utilising interviews and textual analysis in a tri-method approach, I had four focuses: (1) the role the Schleswig-Holstein model plays as either an intellectual tool or 'authority signifier'; (2) how the unique institutional structure of the ECMI shapes organisational strategic objectives; (3) the organisational debate as to whether it should focus more on 'action' or 'research-orientated' projects; and (4), specifically what an ethnographic methodology can reveal about organisational knowledge production which other methods cannot. This thesis addresses a key methodological gap in political geography and critical geopolitics, where discourse has not sufficiently been investigated ethnographically.

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1 Introduction

Geopolitics undeniably has a controversial past. Given damaging associations with the Third Reich, after World War II it became something of a pariah topic seen as an unscientific legitimiser of imperialism. As Simon Dalby (2001, p.423) put it, "the silence of geopolitics after the second world war was in part a matter of guilt by association" – the subject was downplayed or avoided because of its association with aggressive territorial strategies and ideologies that had contributed to the war's devastation. Prior to its regeneration under a 'critical' rubric in the 1980s, geopolitics operated as a tool for the 'intellectuals of statecraft' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p.194), its primary function to formulate theoretical frameworks explaining the impact of geographical variables on international relations and thereby guide the leaders of states in their competition with other states. Although the extent of real influence remains a matter of debate amongst scholars, it has been claimed that prominent German geopolitical scholars like Karl Haushofer supported the territorial expansion strategy of the Nazi state by providing its leaders with an intellectual language. They were held guilty – if only by association – of the horrors committed by Germany, thus fashioning the decades-long distrust and scepticism about the discipline that followed. Haushofer – drawing on the earlier language of his predecessor Friedrich Ratzel - provided the language and rhetoric for Nazi imperialism (Heske, 1987; Hippler, 1996; Wolkersdorfer, 1999).

The subsequent resurgence of geopolitics into mainstream foreign policy debate can be attributed to some significant degree to the United States Secretary of State under Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, who began openly using the term in the 1970s. Kissinger believed that a geopolitical framework which prioritised containment of the Soviet Union and the maintenance of strong ties with allies was essential to achieving strategic dominance for the United States in its global rivalry with the USSR. A renewal of academic discussion of geopolitics brought with it a poststructuralist reaction, a new discipline principally shaped by Gearóid Ó Tuathail, John Agnew and Simon Dalby, who sought to critically examine the prevailing narratives of traditional geopolitics rather than contribute to them. A primary focus of this emergent field was discourse – how the language and imagery employed by political elites, shapes and perpetuates geopolitical narratives. This new endeavour scrutinised the power structures inherent in discourse and how Cold War actors discursively constructed the types of geopolitical knowledge that perpetuated a hyper-dangerous superpower standoff.

The preoccupation with discourse within the field of critical geopolitics is a justified area of inquiry, although this focus has focussed more on examining the outcomes and ramifications

of it than explicating the processes through which it is created. Thus, there exists a dearth of accounts within critical geopolitics concerning knowledge production within institutions and organisations which act to produce policy-focussed geopolitical knowledge. In the relatively few instances when they have sought to look at the actual processes of knowledge production, scholars have generally utilised a combination of interviews and textual analysis to scrutinise the mechanisms of knowledge creation and transmission. Yet we know that these approaches have both methodological and epistemological limitations, given that interviews are laden with power relations and create artificial environments in which abstract questions are posed on the assumption that there are given answers waiting to be harvested. What is lacking are accounts of how knowledge is created in real life, accounts that can best be obtained through detailed ethnographic participant observation. An organisational ethnography can reveal insights about the hidden dynamics of the social and political structures of institutions, through immersive examination of everyday practices of knowledge production (Billo and Mountz, 2016).

The time investment required to conduct ethnographic research has been one substantial reason for this absence. Furthermore, Merje Kuus, an advocate of 'slow', interview-based research into knowledge production, raises concern around the formidable barriers that exist for ethnographic researchers of foreign policy organisations. She questions whether high-level foreign policy professionals would ever entertain the prospect of participating in such a study, asking us to imagine one "allow[ing] an academic to shadow them for the sake of geographical scholarship" (Kuus, 2011a, p.423; 2011b). Whilst not disputing that some institutions may be out-of-bounds for foreign ethnographers, ethnography possesses a key advantage over interviews and textual analysis in studies of knowledge production. It provides a far richer contextual understanding of the conditions in which the knowledge is produced, and the depth of data achieved exceeds that of an interview transcript. A key argument in this thesis is that an ethnographic methodology yields insights that would have been unattainable had I relied solely on interviews and textual analysis. This thesis endeavours to tackle the fundamental question of how geopolitical knowledge is produced within organisations, specifically think tanks. Whilst accepting Kuus' reservations about the applicability of ethnographic research concerning large international bureaucracies or national governments, think tanks are far more accessible to ethnographers, yet are still important players in policy debates. There are many examples of think tanks having a significant influence on government rhetoric and policy decisions as discourse formulators (see 2.3). The second key contribution of this work is its exploration of how geopolitical knowledge is produced in think tanks, specifically through the use of ethnographic methods. In December 2018, the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), a small research institute with only fourteen permanent

employees, agreed to host me. The organisation's head office is in Flensburg, a town in northern Germany situated just five kilometres from the Danish border. The ECMI is a research institute, or think tank, that focuses on what they term 'autochthonous' minority issues in Europe. This thesis represents the first ever scholarly study of this organisation. Autochthonous minorities are cultural or ethnic groups that are indigenous to a specific region where their historical presence predates the current nation state's modern borders. They are crucially distinct from immigrant populations, and the study of them of is enshrined into organisation's founding Statutes.

The ECMI exists as a result of the successful resolution to the so-called 'Schleswig-Holstein question', where the status of autochthonous minorities on both sides of the German-Danish border formed a significant part of the problem. The historic region of Schleswig-Holstein was, for around a century, the site of what was seen as Europe's archetypal 'unsolvable' conflict, with Danish and German-speaking populations holding incompatible ethno-territorial objectives (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Nonetheless, a complex solution began in 1920 with the Treaty of Versailles and continues to evolve to this day. As part of the peace process, new, innovative resolutions were developed that helped to firstly end violence and discrimination, secondly begin reconciliation, and finally, celebrate each other's national identities. Both Germany and Denmark host national minorities which are considered to be amongst the best protected in the world (Becker-Christensen, 2014; Kühl, 1998; Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014). The lessons learned from the region inspired the German politician, Kurt Haber to suggest in the early 1990s, the formation of a research institute which would look specifically at autochthonous minority issues in Europe, having noted that no such organisation existed. He argued this was especially timely in light of the majority-minority conflicts that were re-emerging on the continent with the breakups of the pan-ethnic socialist federations of Yugoslavia and in particular, the Soviet Union. Given that the borderland town of Flensburg was the centre of Germany's Danish minority and thus emblematic of the peace-making success, it was decided that the town would become the headquarters of this new venture, with the ECMI opening in December 1996. Today, they continue to receive a large majority of its funding from its three founding bodies, the national governments of Denmark and Germany, and the German state government of Schleswig-Holstein.

My arrangement with the ECMI enabled me to assume the role of a 'visiting researcher', an unpaid position, at their main office in Flensburg. The organisation produces both policy and academic knowledge. Following a significant delay caused by coronavirus pandemic travelling restrictions, I eventually begun my fieldwork in October 2021, and spent my last day at the ECMI office in September the following year. Here, I directly participated in the everyday activities within

the organisation, attending meetings, proofreading drafts, assisting with research projects, and writing material myself for publication on their website. Through actively contributing to knowledge production and transmission myself, my ethnographic participation enabled me to develop a deep understanding of and rich insights into how geopolitical knowledge was produced by the ECMI and one to see how organisational practices that shaped these narratives in a way that would have been impossible to do through a method such as interviews. Another crucial aspect of my fieldwork was understanding how the ECMI interacted within its broader environment and how it maintained and asserted influence and authority over autochthonous minority issues. Pierre Bourdieu's (1983, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1998) field theory provides the framework for this analysis.

By fully immersing myself within the everyday office environment, I got to know many researchers and other staff members personally. This ethnography revealed nuanced aspects of institutional practices which simply would not have been revealed otherwise. Whilst appreciating the inherent irony present by employing a Donald Rumsfeld quote to support my argument within a critical geopolitics thesis, the concept of 'unknown unknowns' strongly resonates with my experience conducting an organisational ethnography at the ECMI. This term became famous after it was used by the then United States Secretary of Defense during a press conference on the 12th of February 2002:

> Questioner: In regard to Iraq weapons of mass destruction and terrorists, is there any evidence to indicate that Iraq has attempted to or is willing to supply terrorists with weapons of mass destruction? Because there are reports that there is no evidence of a direct link between Baghdad and some of these terrorist organizations.
>
> Rumsfeld: Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns -- the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.

Though Rumsfeld's intentions in discussing 'unknown unknowns' were to serve a particular geopolitical objective in providing justification for military action in Iraq, my intent with drawing attention to this concept is to underline the fact that as researchers, we simply do not

know everything worth investigating prior to beginning fieldwork. A critical epistemological flaw of interviews as a research method is that they often a presume a simplistic view of informational retrieval, assuming that there is a single correct answer that the interviewer needs to extract from the interviewee. Additionally, some questions may not have definitive answers, and nor may the interviewee themselves be fully aware of their unconscious thoughts, motivations, or biases. There also exists similar problems in textual analysis. Without having a strong contextual understanding of the conditions within which a particular text was produced, the researcher risks misinterpreting jargon and terminology, overlooking implicit or unwritten rules, and being unable to identify subtle nuances. These nuances and unconscious thoughts are 'unknown unknowns' – and I argue that ethnographic methods are best suited to uncover what these unknowns are.

In reflecting on the period over eleven months I spent at the centre itself, and my ongoing interactions with ECMI staff since leaving, in the planning of my fieldwork I had no idea what my research would find. The central question I was seeking to answer was 'how is geopolitical knowledge created at the ECMI?'. My expectations around what I thought I would learn and how did not come to fruition, my fieldwork continually made unexpected turns. In many cases it was the lunchtime chatter, afternoon strolls when needing a quick break, trips to local bars until the early hours, and Christmas parties, where some of the most interesting things I learned were revealed. I had anticipated that it would be the meetings and conferences where the fundamentals of knowledge production strategy at the ECMI would be discovered, and of course a lot was. However, it was by participation in the activities and conversations of ECMI staff beyond the strict office environment and planned meetings that the implicit and unwritten rules of knowledge production became apparent to me as a researcher. These insights were only achieved because of the relationships that developed between me and staff members, fostered over a long period of time. It was not during interviews or textual analysis that unknown unknowns became known unknowns or known knowns. Whilst I conducted fourteen interviews and analysed dozens of publications as part of my methodology, the contextual understanding of the organisation I achieved by actively participating within it shaped what I asked, and what I looked for in the textual material. Thus, ethnographic methods provided the basis for answering my research questions. In so doing, I advocate for researchers to take a similar approach elsewhere.

1.1 Research Questions and Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

Understanding the practices of knowledge production within think tanks, particularly those dedicated to peace, through an organisational ethnography of the ECMI, is the primary objective of this thesis. Given the ECMI's role in the academic and political spheres of

autochthonous minority issues, and the level of access to the organisation I was afforded, my research questions reflect my intention of investigating the specific knowledge production practices that exist at the ECMI, as a window more generally on the strategic problems that face geopolitical think tanks seeking to exert significant policy influence. As well as this, the use of detailed immersive ethnographic research in this study contributes towards widening the field's methodological diversity and so this thesis champions the benefits that increased use of ethnography could further enrich political geography. The overarching question of this thesis is 'how is geopolitical knowledge created by a policy-focused think tank?'. Each of my four analysis chapters take on one of my four research questions:

1. In what ways is the Schleswig-Holstein model used by the ECMI as a discursive tool or authority signifier?
2. How does the ECMI negotiate its position in academia as a publicly funded think tank?
3. How does the ECMI determine the value of action-orientated versus research-orientated knowledge projects?
4. In what ways can an organisational ethnography of the ECMI contribute to the literatures of political geography and critical geopolitics?

The thesis proceeds to answer these questions as follows. Following literature review and methods chapters, in Chapter 4: "The Schleswig-Holstein Model: A Discursive Tool or Authority Signifier?", I take a detailed look at the history of the Danish-German borderland region and the 'model' of majority-minority relations that emerged following the innovative solution to the 'Schleswig-Holstein question.' This included creative innovations such as the post-WWI plebiscites to decide the location of the boundary, and the 1955 mutually beneficial Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations which laid the foundations for irridentist attitudes to subside and a 'positive peace' to form. Many initiatives have been established in the region aimed at increasing minority political participation and cultural expression. Given that the ECMI was founded on the assumption that these lessons could be useful elsewhere on the continent in light of the emerging minority issues following the break-ups of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the thawing of 'frozen conflicts' in those territories, it was surprising to learn during my research that the ECMI had only conducted very little original research on their home region due to a 'gentlemen's agreement' that existed with another organisation whose remit did include the Danish-German borderlands. Following the dissolution of this organisation, the ECMI changed their statutes in

2020 to allow themselves to research the region once more. The most important development since this change has been the opening of a new research cluster dedicated to the Danish-German borderland region. As this cluster opened only two weeks before my fieldwork at the ECMI concluded, it is unclear how this development will go towards answering the central question of the chapter: in what ways is the Schleswig-Holstein model used by the ECMI as a discursive tool or authority signifier? Nonetheless, prior engagements with the Schleswig-Holstein model are examined, including those which have involved the ECMI being a direct influence on the implementation of aspects of the model to places elsewhere in Europe, with the DialogForumNorden and the Minority Commissioner being initiatives adapted elsewhere. These instances have contributed towards another argument made in this chapter, that the practice of 'geopolitical scripting' and the export of models from one place to another, can actually be a positive, or even desirable exercise. The prevailing literature on geopolitical scripting has generally considered it to be a negative practice and has focused primarily on dominant political settings. However, in some situations, such as to provide legitimacy for well thought-out and adapted models designed to improve political participation for autochthonous minorities, scripting can be useful outside of the settings scholars of critical geopolitics usually examine. I argue for its reclaiming as a peace-making rather than simply a war-making or reductionist move. This chapter moves to re-scale this analysis of the practice and argue that discourse produced in settings outside of very elite political structures like the United States government should hold a greater prevalence in the literature of critical geopolitics. This chapter provides a crucial starting point by introducing the foundational context of the ECMI, with its establishment directly linked to the Danish-German borderland region and its history. Moreover, an understanding of the ECMI's overall mission sets the stage for understandings its position as think tank in the field of minority issues.

In Chapter 5: "Navigating Bourdieusian Fields: Unpacking Symbolic Capital and the Objectives of the ECMI", using Pierre Bourdieu's framework, I examine what forms of capital are important to the ECMI's institutional strategy. The ECMI's unique funding situation in having two countries (Denmark and Germany) and a regional governance structure (the federal German *Land* or state of Schleswig-Holstein) means the presumed objective of think tanks, to have discernible influence on policymaking, is reduced somewhat. As the ECMI was created to conduct and disseminate research on autochthonous minorities and this is inscribed in its statutes, the funding bodies have been resolute in preserving this thematic direction. This is despite autochthonous minority issues being what I term an 'unfashionable niche' – with other kinds of minorities and refugee studies winning much of the research funding the ECMI competes for. Secondly, this chapter also examines the ECMI's publication strategy, which has undertaken a

huge transition since the new director began his role in 2020. Many of their old, internal publication series have been discontinued, in favour of a push towards ECMI researchers submitting to external peer-reviewed scholarly journals to influence the debates in academia more and positioning the organisation better within a scholarly context. The new publication strategy includes a blog, which is much more attuned to readers without in-depth knowledge of autochthonous minority issues and allows the ECMI to react much quicker to the prevailing issues of the time, able to publish work within weeks of a substantial event in their field occurring. The third ECMI strategic objective examined is the promotion of itself as an international and inter-disciplinary organisation, advertising the diversity in its staff, both in terms of their national heritage and thematic interests. This chapter provides a crucial framework through which institutional strategy can be understood by using Bourdieu's theories around capital. The introduction of this framework allows for the ECMI 'identity crisis' to be explored.

Chapter 6: "The ECMI Identity Crisis: Reflections on Knowledge Production Strategies", concerns the organisation's dual mandate which encompasses both 'action' and 'research' orientated projects. Action projects focus on implementing practical initiatives or activities that bring about tangible changes within a specific context. These may be in the areas of policy implementation or community development. Research projects are more academic-orientated, the main objective is to generate new insights through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. New theoretical frameworks are formed, though results of such projects are more indirect. Since the change of ECMI leadership in 2020, an external evaluation conducted in, and the coronavirus pandemic, knowledge production has shifted more away from action projects and towards research projects. This chapter examines how different actors at the ECMI perceive this change, and what they want to see the ECMI as being in the future. The debate about action vs research projects marks an 'identity crisis' at the organisation, as (according to its Executive Board) it inhibited by its small size from achieving continental reference status – and the external evaluation marked research projects as being more suited to the objectives outlined in the statutes, than action projects.

In the final analysis chapter, "Understanding think tank knowledge production through organisational ethnography", I argue in favour of using of ethnographic methods to study organisations and their institutional practices. In experiencing the everyday environment of the office and participating in these institutional practices myself, I show that much richer data is gathered using these methods than what could be obtained through more common methods of exploring knowledge production in institutions, such as interviews or archival research. The length of time spent in a location allows close working relationships to develop, producing the informal

conversations where many of the most interesting insights can be found. For this reason, the chapter also argues that ethnography is an underutilised method in political geography and critical geopolitics. Analyses of discourse formulation in critical geopolitics have typically focussed on 'elite' political settings, those which hold immediate political power or have a very large presence and influence in public debates. The evidence I present in relation to the ECMI, a small research institute, indicates that discourse exists and has real effects outside of the settings it has mostly been studied in, such as the European Union or International Monetary Fund. Thinks tanks, as public policy institutions, can have a significant impact on national and global politics and are much more accessible to ethnographic researchers. A significant benefit of this way of conducting ethnography lies in the level of immersion it entails. Having participated in this knowledge production personally as part of my role as visiting researcher at a think tank, I obtained a unique insight into how such organisations both seek to win 'the war of ideas' in the academic setting, as well as develop their direct policymaking goals. This chapter discusses my experiences at academic conferences representing the ECMI, the process of publishing work with researchers, and the many other meetings, workshops, presentations, research seminars and staff parties that I was privy to. As the closing analysis chapter, it brings together the other three by exploring how the methodological underpinning of this thesis, organisational ethnography, generated rich data and insights. It argues that this approach should be used in other contexts, bringing researchers closer to the knowledge production they are studying.

Overall, these chapters each contribute towards answering the overarching question about how geopolitical knowledge (and thus discourse) are produced within think tanks. By setting out ethnography as the best method to do this, I outline how contributing to the think tank's knowledge production as a participant observer gave me a unique insight into the organisational practices themselves, and the people behind them. This immersion fostered the development of a deep understanding of the financial, ideological and bureaucratic pressures that shape how think tanks and other research institutions adapt their strategies to fulfil prescribed policymaking influence objectives. Given the ECMI's unique history as an offspring of Schleswig-Holstein's complex history of majority-minority relations, it has a geographical claim over the Danish-German model by virtue of its physical location. I explore the ECMI's interaction with it, which allows me to critique the prevailing narrative of geopolitical scripting and the use of models of best practice as being damaging, in the literature of critical geopolitics. I examine the ECMI's engagement with geopolitical scripting, challenging the prevailing narrative in critical geopolitics that this practice is always and inherently damaging. I instead present it as a beneficial exercise, with practical examples relating to the ECMI's own work.

Together, these chapters explore how geopolitical knowledge is produced within a peace-orientated think tank. Though my organisational ethnography took place in a specific context, there are much wider implications for critical geopolitics and peace geographies. Firstly, geopolitical scripting should not always be considered a negative practice, as ECMI policy work indicated that scripts can have a positive influence. Peace is indeed a geographical concept; it looks different to different people in different places. However, the 'anti-geographical' (Agnew, 2009) practice of geopolitical scripting can provide the legitimacy needed in some policy interventions. Secondly, my ethnographic fieldwork shows that think tanks are valuable and accessible field sites for researchers to study knowledge production. Utilising immersive ethnographic methods generates much rich data than what can be achieved using only interviews and archival methods. To begin this thesis, I examine and synthesise the existing literature of critical geopolitics, think tanks and peace geographies to provide a coherent framework through which I analysed by field data.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis is ultimately situated within critical geopolitics, utilising the conceptual basis of Pierre Bourdieu's 'field' theory to analyse how the ECMI, a think tank, produces and transmits geopolitical knowledge and navigates the multiple spaces and spheres it operates within. The chapter opens with a discussion of geopolitics – how it moved from its 'classical' roots towards its 'critical' iteration today. One of the key concepts introduced by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, two of the most prominent scholars in critical geopolitics, was the notion of 'geopolitical scripting' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). This practice refers to the processes through which dominant geopolitical narratives and discourses are constructed, transmitted, and enacted by powerful actors within international relations. These 'scripts', which may also be termed 'storylines,' shape perceptions of geopolitical reality across all levels of states and societies – with analyses of these scripts emphasising the role of symbols, representations and language in constructing these narratives. Little academic literature exists about the use of geopolitical scripting outside elite political contexts – by these I refer to national governments like the United States of America, or major international organisations such as the United Nations. The meetings rooms at the UN are indeed inaccessible for an ethnographic researcher, however, think tanks are not. Though they lack the autonomy to enact policymaking changes directly, think tanks are influential public policy institutions which undoubtedly do impact public and elite political imaginations about geopolitical events and dramas (Lerner, 2018). They have been notably active in United States foreign policy – for example the RAND Corporation were key developers of the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) (Sokolski, 2004) and the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) were an important advocatory force behind the U.S. invasion of Iraq (Altheide and Grimes, 2005). The policies of British political parties are frequently developed using think tanks (see Pautz, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014) – in Germany, "each major party has its own research institute, funded federally, to foster its policy development" (O'Neill, 2008, p.10). What the literature on geopolitical scripting lacks most significantly, however, is a thorough investigation into this practice – one which employs *in situ* observation of geopolitical knowledge being created, and, moreover, an account of the researcher themselves participating in this knowledge production.

There is an abundance of literature on think tanks, particularly analyses and contributions to the typology of these organisations. The consensus in the literature identifies three main types of think tank – academic, contract, and advocacy. Each of these exhibit distinct variations in their organisational structures, funding, strategic objectives and knowledge outputs. These

categorisations are crucial to understand and outline not least because they provide a strong basis through which to analyse the general purpose of think tanks and their goals, but it also allows the ECMI itself to be placed in a category and what the expected activities of the organisation are as a result. The work of Pierre Bourdieu and his 'field' theory is then introduced to provide a framework that explains decision-making at the ECMI through its pursuit of attaining 'capital' (Bourdieu, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This capital can be in the form of resources or assets which the ECMI can use to gain influence and other advantages. The ECMI operates in multiple arenas, each with corresponding forms of capital which are highly valued and sought by those in these fields, and with it the literature on think tanks is synthesised to establish a theoretical basis through which to analyse the ethnographic, interview and archival data generated during my time with the ECMI. Following this, the literature on the geographies of peace is examined. The central objective of the ECMI is ultimately to improve the lives of autochthonous minorities in Europe in often precarious positions under relatively new states pursuing nationalist agendas. Development in peace geographies, however, have crucially challenged the concept of 'peace' and what it means to different people in different places. The knowledge produced by the ECMI, particularly relating to the Schleswig-Holstein model (see Chapter 0) or policy consultancy can have a significant impact on majority-minority relations, and may be problematic if the local context and perceptions of peace are not properly understood. Geopolitical scripting has usually been denigrated in political geography because it is argued that it erases geographical particularities by depicting one place in the light of another. In minority policy implementation, efforts that neglect to fully consider the context in which they are applied can lead to disastrous outcomes. The literature of the geographies of peace is utilised within this thesis to critically examine policymaking efforts at the ECMI, and in fact to reclaim scripting as a hopeful practice of peacemaking. Moreover, it will facilitate discussion about what kind of activity (action-orientated or research-orientated) the organisation should pursue in relation to its strategic goal in advocated for minority issues and the implementation of best practices.

2.2 Critical Geopolitics

2.2.1 Origins: From 'Classical' to 'Critical'

The 'classical' iteration of geopolitics was one "taken to be a domain of hard truths, material realities and irrepressible facts", claiming objective political analysis of how physical geography influenced the distribution of power between countries and how this geography shaped their diplomacy and strategies in war (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p.192). Halford Mackinder

was a pioneering scholar of the field, positing his 'Heartland Theory' concerning the Eurasian landmass and identifying control over this region as the key to dominating the world (Mackinder, 2020 (1904)). A.T. Mahan, an American naval officer, emphasised the importance of controlling the water regions of the world as central to maintaining and expanding empires (Mahan, 1905; 2012 (1894)). However, it was the influence of the work of German professor Karl Haushofer which led to 'geopolitics' almost vanishing from academia until the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hepple, 1986). His concept of *Geopolitik,* which incorporated Friedrich Ratzel's idea of *Lebensraum*, or 'living space', was substantially capitalised on by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime (Bassin, 1987; Diner, 1999; Herwig, 1999, 2016; Heske, 1987; Smith, 1980). Haushofer's work lacked the universal theory prescribed by Mahan and Mackinder and avoided a concrete theoretical basis, writing specifically on advancing his nation's power and upturning the established world order which was dominated by Britain and the United States (Jacobsen, 1979; Haushofer, 2003 (1942); Heske, 1987; Mosse, 1964; Murphy, 2014). Following the defeat of the Axis powers, the association of 'geopolitics' with the horrors of the Second World War saw it viewed with suspicion and even contempt in academia.

The intellectual origins of critical geopolitics go back to the 1960s and 70s and the emergence of the poststructuralist movement of Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and others – but most influentially to geopolitics, Michel Foucault and his use by Edward Said. Poststructuralism, overall, questioned traditional structuralist approaches to universal truths and systems. The structuralist approach seeks to identify and analyse the universal underlying structures that shape human experience, culture, and language, emphasising that binary oppositions and formalising models should be the methods we use to uncover meaning across different contexts.

A central concept in Foucault's critique of structuralist thought is discourse, which he defined not simply as language or speech but as a system of knowledge that governs what can be thought, said and known within a particular historical and social context:

> We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history; the problem is not therefore to ask oneself how and why it was able to emerge and become

> embodied at this point in time; it is, from beginning to end, historical—a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself. (Foucault, 2002, p.131)

To Foucault, discourses are complex and interconnected systems of language, knowledge, and power, and identified it as playing a crucial role in shaping how people perceive various aspects of the world:

> We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1990, p.101)

Foucault's concept of discourse is inextricably linked to his broader theory of power-knowledge, which posits that knowledge is never neutral but always shaped by power relations. He challenged traditional understandings that separate knowledge from power, arguing instead what societies accept as truth is determined by the power structures that shape discourse. While knowledge refers to the content or 'truths' that are produced, discourses are the overarching systems that define how knowledge is constructed and legitimised. Van Dijk (2003) argues that knowledge consists of what people know or believe to be true, whereas discourses refer to language use in context. Discourses express or reflect knowledge, and that critical discourse analysis should examine how power and ideology affect who gets to control knowledge. Therefore, in knowledge production, there is no knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute power relations (Foucault, 2002). Discourses function as mechanisms of power-knowledge by regulating and structuring knowledge across institutions, determining which ideas are accepted as legitimate and which others face marginalisation or exclusion:

> Knowledge is that of which one can speak in a discursive practice, and which is specified by that fact: the domain constituted by the different objects that will or will not acquire a scientific status. (Foucault, 2002, p.201)

In wider society, Foucault explored how discourses in medicine about mental illness shaped how those affected understood themselves and how society treats them; in law, legal discourses establish and reinforce the concepts of criminality and innocence. He asserts that each

society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth, that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true. Regimes of truth are not fixed; they shift as power relations change (Foucault, 2002). This thesis understands discourse in its Foucauldian sense – as a system of statements, knowledge and power relations that shape meaning and define reality.

Foucault had been a structuralist until the 1970s, when United States foreign policy was dominated the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who served under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Kissinger had revitalised geopolitical strategy with his 'realpolitik' approach, with Leslie Hepple (1986, p.S24) arguing that the changing international circumstances that saw decolonisation, revolutionary movements, and the Sino-Soviet split among other things, had complicated international politics so greatly by the 1970s, that the existing US global strategy which relied on a 'bipolar USA-USSR world-view' discourse had become obsolete. This provided the conditions for a revival of geopolitics, led by Kissinger, who used the term 'geopolitics' extensively, and "not only signalled the rebirth of Western geopolitical writing, but also gave it substantial impetus in new directions" (Hepple, 1986, p.S25):

> Hepple also demonstrated the possibilities of such an approach by critiquing the geopolitical traces embedded within the international relations and strategy of the 1970s' cold war world. In particular, he focused upon Henry Kissinger's cavalier, frequently vague, but high-profile use of the term 'geopolitics', and teased out the spatial arguments underpinning Kissinger's world-view. The critique was extended to other 'security intellectuals' and exposed their spatialization of global politics into places of threat or danger, and their assumptions of geography as a natural and immutable category within this world. (Atkinson in Dalby, 2001, p.426)

The "desire to dissociate political geography from geopolitics, the general decline of political geography in the face of the 'new geography', and a retreat away from worldwide and overseas studies towards intranational urban and regional specialisms" are given as reasons by Hepple (1986, p.S30) for the lack of involvement of geographers in the revival of geopolitics, though this came about soon after when scholars such as John Agnew and Gearóid Ó Tuathail in particular, were inspired by the poststructuralist movement to examine and critique the classical perspectives of geopolitics in seeking to understand how imagery and narratives influence perceptions of space and place. Ó Tuathail (1986, p.73) explicitly acknowledged the return of geopolitics in political geography, drawing attention to the construction of "a materialist framework for political geography". Rather than serving the strategic interests of geopolitical elites,

the discipline was reorientated to interrogate the processes by which such concerns materialise. Writing with Ó Tuathail, Agnew conceptualised a discipline of 'critical' geopolitics, which challenged the representations of "particular types of places, peoples, and dramas" by the "intellectuals of statecraft" (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p.192). This new discipline emerged in the wake of the Cold War because traditional political analyses failed to predict the fall of the USSR, making it necessary to develop new ways of thinking about power and geography (Medby, 2020). The concern of Ó Tuathail and Agnew was with discourse, as described by Foucault – tangible constructs whose existence is discerned through their manifestations in activities, texts, and speeches. In the realm of practical geopolitics, encompassing statecraft and foreign policy, the strategic and effective use of discourse holds particular advantages (Ó Tuathail, 1986, 1992a, 1992b, 1996, 2002; Dodds, 1994). Discourses, in essence, empower those who propagate them:

> Geopolitical discourses, emanating from institutions such as the IMF, supply the interpretive framework by and through which the political world is comprehended. In doing so, they define the limit of what is possible, normalizing the existing geopolitical structure (on whose behalf they are deployed). Put another way, geopolitics can be seen as a series of 'writings', as rules and practices which construct a particular view of the world. These constructions can be thought of as a 'scripting'-the writing of a script, which defines the issues, assigns specific roles and creates and legitimates the actors within the geopolitical community. (Popke, 1994, p.257)

Early writings in critical geopolitics particularly examined the actions of the United States government, amidst what Simon Dalby termed 'the Second Cold War' (Dalby, 1990). During the Reagan government, there were many who campaigned for the renewal or continuation of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The discourse Dalby was interested in was how these security intellectuals employed geopolitical narratives to advocate for the policy of containment militarism, perceiving the Soviet Union as an inherently aggressive and expansionist state. The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was a prominent interest group/think tank promoting this agenda. Dalby, in a groundbreaking book discussing this period which helped establish critical geopolitics as a recognisable body of scholarship, wrote:

> The Cold War period produced many experts, or 'security intellectuals' in Luckham's (1984) apt phrase, in various fields involved in consulting and research for military agencies, the air force's RAND corporation being only the most famous of the new

> institutions (Kaplan, 1983). In the US public realm these experts often dominate, or attempt to dominate, public debate using their supposedly superior expert, and often classified, knowledge to specify the 'issues' in ways that maintain the foreign policy themes of containment and nuclear deterrence of the 'Soviet threat'. (Dalby, 1990, p.11)

In exploring the role of security intellectuals during the Cold War, Dalby establishes the foundational influence of these experts on public discourse, highlighting how their classification of threats shapes policy. He subsequently critiques the underlying ideological frameworks, illustrating how these narratives create a stark dichotomy between the self and the Other:

> The whole exercise is inscribed within a Manichean portrayal of axiological difference. We are virtuous, they are evil. We are responding to an evil threat and therefore, even if we are doing exactly what we accuse them of (i.e. intervening around the world and building military arsenals) it is legitimate for us to do these things. Thus the CPD draws on the theme of Otherness in many ways to construct their Other in the USSR. In Todorov's (1984) scheme, they use all three axes: the axiological, in terms of the Manichean contest; the epistemological, in terms of how well the CPD 'knows' the Other; and the praxaeological, in that the CPD supposedly advocates a policy of distancing themselves from the USSR - except that their logic drawn from the other two axes prevents them from doing that. Their distinctions lead them to policy recommendations that are identical with that to which they object in the Other. (Dalby, 1990, p.58-59)

Ó Tuathail and Agnew's (1992) third thesis in their four examining 'geopolitical reasoning' concerns the geographical dimension to the process of formulating discourses of place, as centred upon the 'particular state' within which knowledge is produced. Examples offered relating to this analysis in critical geopolitical literature concern British imperial scripting of Tibetan statehood (Anand, 2009), Bosnia as a 'Vietnam script' to US foreign policy (Ó Tuathail, 1999) and 'Balkanisation' (Agnew, 2009; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2015). Eiki Berg (2003) provides an outlier in analysing a more 'bottom-up' examination of discourse creation in Estonia, having studied the uncoordinated production of maps and cartoons in relation to the country's relationship with Soviet Union. However, critical geopolitical analyses of discourses frequently display a predisposition to focus on elite discourse, analysed from the outside. This contextualised understanding of knowledge production was a key goal of Les Hepple's article about the revival

of geopolitics, though by 2001 this had not yet been realised – specifically, there had been a lack of interrogation into the subject itself:

> So most of my 1986 hopes for critical analysis and for careful historical reappraisal of geopolitics have been fulfilled. Are there any avenues that I think remain more neglected? Yes, there are, and perhaps I can identify some using the lens of Donna Haraway's term 'situated knowledge'. It is a commonplace of critical geopolitics that geopolitical representations are always such situated knowledges, rather than the naturalistic, objective 'views-from-nowhere' they are often sold as. Here, however, I want to focus on critical geopolitics itself as a situated knowledge – situated in academe, in the political values of its practitioners, and in their linguistic and cultural world. (Hepple in Dalby, 2001, p.429)

The feminist intervention in critical geopolitics which begun in the early 2000s contributed greatly to this, with early works in this field focusing on shifting the scale of analyses, promulgating in "a multi-scalar approach to analyzing relations" that "include[d] the security of state but in relation to the security and well-being of people who live in and across its borders" (Hyndman, 2004, p.319). The 'body' was formerly perceived to be an apolitical site (Fluri, 2013), though feminist initiatives offered an epistemologically embodied portrayal of war, more effectively conveying the anguish and loss experienced by those affected (Hyndman, 2007). This re-scaling of geopolitical analysis consequently introduced new sites of geopolitics:

> Feminist geopolitics has established itself as a distinct branch of critical geopolitics by noting the need for a more grounded critique of geopolitics—one that adds women but also goes beyond this and attends to the gendered, racialized, classed, sexualized, and otherwise differentiated everyday spaces previously ignored in geopolitical analysis (Massaro and Williams, 2013, p.570)

The idea of 'everyday' geopolitics amounts to a very different analytical approach to that set out by Ó Tuathail and Agnew – which was more conducive to distanced interrogations of speeches. Whilst this thesis does not see the 'body' as the primary geopolitical site of interest, an ethnographic methodology, one that incorporates everyday activity and its effect on discourse production, is ultimately inspired by the development of feminist geopolitics. Discourse formulation is something that can observed at different scales, albeit those that could still be considered elite political spaces. The ECMI can be termed an elite institution, considering its direct

annual funding from national and German state (*Länder*) governments, and project grants from major continental institutions, it remains distinct from conventional power centres. All senior research personnel possess PhDs, and many junior researchers are in pursuit of them. Operating in Germany, an affluent country, there still exists a notion of what I will call 'ivory tower-ness' in which the geopolitics it enacts is involved. This study also does not directly answer Hepple's concern about the lack of examination of the situatedness of critical geopolitics itself. However, what this thesis does advocate is for a minor re-scaling of the prevailing approach to discourse analysis in critical geopolitics. The ECMI staff are not 'intellectuals of statecraft', as in those who shape geopolitical reasoning and discourse within national governments, but the organisation nonetheless does hold a significant place in relevant European policy debates, and notably several ECMI employees have an intimate knowledge of the geopolitical contexts of their research – which offers a composite of knowledge production that has not been interrogated before in critical geopolitics. Think tanks like the ECMI are accessible to researchers, yet they also represent institutions with tangible geopolitical influence where knowledge production can be experienced first-hand. This represents a critical contribution of this thesis.

The ECMI is particularly interested in debates about minority issues, and within this the organisation exhibits a marked interest in identifying models of best practice. Knowledge of best practices for managing majority-minority conflicts can be highly influential in peacebuilding interventions. The Danish-German minority model, which the ECMI has a strong institutional interest in, exemplifies this. Understanding and conceptualising this model allows it to be used for analysing other European situations and drawing lessons from the Schleswig-Holstein experience. This process is intuitively geopolitical, because whatever the intentions of the researcher are, the parallels drawn between different conflicts are based on the transfer of knowledge, influenced by the individual's own predispositions and biases, as opposed to an innocuous transfer of facts.

The ECMI's involvement in policy debates and its utilisation of the Danish-German minority model should be viewed within a broader geopolitical context outside of the specific context of their analyses, as their work can be seen as both a reflection and an active component of geopolitical dynamics, such as in how space, culture, and territorially are understood and addressed. The knowledge production process at the ECMI is highly geopolitical, whether this relates to the ways in which the Danish-German Schleswig-Holstein model is explicitly used or not used. One of the early developments in critical geopolitics concerned geopolitical scripting – a discursive practice that shapes how people perceive specific events or places by evoking certain images and associations.

2.2.2 Geopolitical Scripting

One of the seminal concepts introduced by Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1992) was 'geopolitical scripting', formulated as a development of Simon Dalby's investigations of 'geographs' and can be described as the discursive practice of "domesticating the exotic", through the crucial use of images (Dalby, 1990; Dodds, 1994; Agnew, 2009, p.427). The term 'geographs' refers to the spatial and geographical representations present in the narratives of foreign policy articulated by political elites, emphasising the strategic portrayal of places and their geographic attributes within political discourse. Geopolitical scripting involves the use of a predetermined set of "representations, a collection of descriptions, attributes and scenarios deemed necessary to define a place" and is notably utilised by foreign policy elites (see Dodds, 1993, p.72; Ó Tuathail, 1993; Power, 2003), though scripts must be "performed convincingly to maintain and secure legitimacy" (Ó Tuathail, 2002, p.620). This form of geopolitical reasoning "involves the recycling [of] geographical names in new contexts", exported geopolitical analogies such as 'balkanisation', described as "the fission of a multiethnic empire in southeastern Europe into successor national states", evoke strong emotive responses (Agnew, 2009, p.427). Scripts have gained widespread usage among politicians and scholars to purportedly clarify situations that extend way beyond the original context of the term – other scripts include:

> "Finlandization" (neutralization in the face of a hostile and more powerful neigh-boring state), "beyond the pale" (referring initially to the area inhabited by the native Irish beyond a fenced district conquered by the English around Dublin-the Pale of Dublin-and later to the area within the Russian Empire to which most Jews were confined), "Dutch disease" (the macroeconomic consequences of a sudden resource bonanza), "the Switzerland of this or that world region]" (a country whose once-severe internal ethnic conflicts have been resolved institutionally), [and] "Macedonian syndrome" (the prospect of irredentism and subsequent unstable borders leading to intractable ethnic conflict) (Agnew, 2009, p.427)

This geopolitical reasoning is problematic for three crucial reasons. Firstly, the portrayal of an entire region in a comprehensively negative fashion can perpetuate neo-imperialistic and exploitative actions (Said, 1978). During the Scramble for Africa, for instance, the European powers used geopolitical scripting to frame Africa as uncivilised, and in need of European intervention. These structuralist narratives and binary distinctions of the "common-sense type" are deeply colonial, contrasting "between white and non-white, civilized and backward, Western

and non-Western, adult and child" (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p.194). Scripts function as "public performances that impart a regularized way of viewing a situation or region", thus the portrayal of colonised places as being in need of European intervention justified it (O'Loughlin and Talbot, 2005, p.26).

Secondly, when geopolitical dramas are scripted using the language of prior situations, they can be used to justify acts of warfare or unsuitably radical measures if the situation can be construed as being similarly threatening to the target population:

> Expanding on the theme of a grave and growing danger, the [U.S. Government's] geopolitical script of fear came to include repeated statements about over-whelming evidence combined with an ongoing appeal to Americans to imagine another 9/11 made much more deadly with the help of Iraq's WMD. (Sparke, 2007, p.340-341)

Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1999) examined the significance of scripts in relation to the Bosnian War 1992-95. There were two dominant scripts within the Pentagon, one script was the Vietnam War, which sought to portray Bosnia "as a potential quagmire for US foreign policy", i.e., they should not get involved, and the other a Holocaust script, portraying Bosnia "as the scene of a contemporary mini-Holocaust that demanded a strong moral response by the United States and the international community" (Ó Tuathail, 1999, p.517). Myers *et al.* (1996, p.25), in overviewing 'frames', which they regard as being conceptually similar to scripts, outline that "scripts give meaning to US foreign policy and the places to which it describes", and "just as frames structure and order information in the news, scripts help citizens to interpret events, especially in countries deemed important by US policy-makers".

Thirdly, even when scripting is not being used for such negative and nakedly aggressive purposes, the distinctiveness of a place is lost and policy is less likely to succeed as a result (Doyle and Sambanis, 2000; 2006). The danger a geopolitical issue may pose can be exaggerated unintentionally by scripts and can justify political actions that follow (Ó Tuathail, 2002). Thus, geopolitical scripting can consequently and paradoxically be labelled as an 'anti-geographical' practice, as it ignores geographical specificities in favour of generalisations (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). According to Ó Tuathail (2003), the significance of possessing adequate knowledge of specific places when dealing with international politics cannot be understated and therefore political geography should reinforce the emphasis on rich and comprehensive regional geographical knowledge and reject the use of broad universal theories. The application of geopolitical reasoning can obscure different possible explanations and lead to certain issues being

overlooked without investigation (Dalby, 1996). According to analysis by Dalby, this type of reasoning was especially prevalent in the *New York Times'* reporting on the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, whereby the coverage centred on the actions of U.S. President and other elite political figures, employing traditional 'developmentalist scripts' when addressing development-related topics, portraying "modern political and economic arrangements as normal and inevitable" (Dalby, 1996, p.597). This marginalised alternative commentary as it "could have been reported differently, as the largest international conference ever devoted to pressing human development concerns, or as an environmental wake-up call to a world that no longer needed to devote its political attention to matters of superpower rivalry" (Dalby, 1996, p.598).

There has been some engagement with the practice of geopolitical scripting in political geography across numerous contexts. These include British imperial scripting of Tibet as having bolstered Chinese territorial claims (Anand, 2009), the American Manifest Destiny in outer space (Sage, 2008; Maclaren, 2021), the framing of Estonia by its intellectuals of statecraft as a 'successful learner' (Kuus, 2007, p.104), news coverage of the 1990s conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia (Myers *et al.*, 1996), the construction of Russian identity in a post-Soviet landscape (O'Loughlin and Talbot, 2005), and in the Georgian mining industry (Swann-Quinn, 2020). In one of the most significant engagements with scripting, Jeffrey Popke (1994, p.258) explored "the discursive forces" and "strategies which script the IMF as the expert on an increasingly wide range of issues". The result of these IMF programmes that serve as the mechanism for exerting influence was that they pushed the narrative that heavily indebted countries were ignorant and ultimately at fault for their situations. Geopolitical scripts as tools for conveying particular images has been a popular approach in critical geopolitics, however Popke's study elucidates on how they can be used to insinuate knowledge, expertise and authority in a particular field. For the ECMI and their pursuit of attaining academic prestige, the use of the Schleswig-Holstein model to signify authority on autochthonous minority issues is something explored in detail in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**.

In analysing geopolitical scripting, scholars such as Jouni Häkli have argued scripts should not purely be analysed "in order to provide 'better' or 'truer' ones, but to problematise the relationship between academic research and political practice, and to document the forces of power/knowledge that are in operation in the discursive practices of intellectuals, administrators, and politicians" (Häkli, 1998, p.336). However, as is clear from the studies listed above that engage with geopolitical scripting, there exists no detailed study of the institutional practices that underpin the use of geopolitical scripting, and little mention of the concept at all outside the actions of

government officials. Concerning its use in organisations, aside from the limited amount of literature, critical geopolitics generally has typically utilised analyses of texts, images, and video as the primary method, although scholars such as Merje Kuus favour interviews (Kuus, 2011, 2015, 2020). This may be attributed to issues of access to the organisations studied – though Dalby could not participate in any meetings of the Committee on the Present Danger as it had disbanded long before he did his research. Geopolitical scripting has also universally been seen as a negative practice, yet the policy interventions of the ECMI suggest this should not be the case as they have contributed a positive example in their policy work (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

2.2.3 Reflections on Limited Methodological Diversity in Critical Geopolitics

The political geographer Klaus Dodds (2001, p.473) stated that methodologically, critical geopolitics had been "very disappointing". In 2006, Nick Megoran advocated for ethnography, arguing that the research method had been "neglected by political geographers", with the preoccupation with texts erasing everyday experiences and understandings of the phenomena in question, and consequently resulting in the repetition of existing patterns (Megoran, 2006, p.263). Even discussions from two decades ago about the limited methodological diversity in this field remain relevant today. With a similar objective to this thesis in aiming to understand organisational practices, Alun Jones (2022) described a more varied methodology than that which exists in other literature, in his study of interpreters at the UN, EU and NATO. This goes against Merje Kuus' claim that conducting ethnography in such institutions is not possible. Occupying an interpretation booth with interviewees, he discussed with them its socio-material context and their interpretative practices. As well as this, he conducted "unobtrusive multiple observation within the organisation" and scrutinised "video recordings of key meetings in which interpreters have been at work" in order to gather insights into "the atmospheres, performances and emotions of interpretating geopolitics". The important practice of reflection, he argues, can be obtained through the transcription of interviews. Overall, he affirms that:

> Through these mixed poly-cognitive inside methods I argue that a comprehensive understanding can be obtained of the diverse organisational spaces in which geopolitical knowledge production and circulation take place, as well as the particular organisational routines by which interpreters and political/diplomatic actors are brought into frequent, and often contested, interaction. This methodology thus exposes the similarities and differences between the organisations in how they organise interpreting and helps reveal the 'nitty gritty' of the organisational 'everyday'. For example, this is achieved by observing

> preparation for meetings by interpreters; exchanges with them pre and post interpretation over feelings and emotions associated with interpreting practice, as well as discussions with managers over routines and work schedules. This approach helps contextualise interpreting within the organisation and shows the ways in which specific organisational challenges are met. Interviews with diplomats provide an additional user group perspective on interpreting. (Jones, 2022, p.4)

Although the application of ethnographic observation methods to understand organisational routines is justified, it is an overstatement to claim that this approach unveils "the nitty gritty of the organisational everyday", as it can only be truly experienced through prolonged immersion. Reflecting on interview transcripts is another valuable practice, but, going back to Rumsfeld, there are too many unknown unknowns of the everyday, when the everyday (i.e., months of participation within the office environment) has not been experienced. This pluralistic definition of what constitutes the 'organisational everyday' seeks to give the impression of extended exposure to an organisational environment that is suggested by using 'ethnographic' methods, however the insight gained in comparison to continual involvement over months within that environment is small. Since the early 2000s, others aside from Dodds and Megoran have argued for more ethnography in political geography, such as Martin Müller (2008). In relation to Gearóid Ó Tuathail's (2009) work on the Beslan attack, Erinn Nicley (2009, p.19) argued the need for "ethnographic thick description to understand how place-based actors experience and contextualise the attack"; and Cletus Nwankwo (2020) has recognised that ethnographic methods have been neglected in discourse studies within critical geopolitics – though neither of these works allude to how the very construction of discourse takes place within non-political elite institutions and organisations. In reflecting on the twenty-five years since Gearóid Ó Tuathail's 1996 book *Critical Geopolitics*, Rachel Squire (in Koopman *et al.*, 2021, p.4) acknowledged that:

> Throughout this time, it has also been exciting to see how the boundaries of critical geopolitics have been pushed, extended, and punctured in different ways. Often spearheaded by feminist scholars challenging what does and does not 'count' as critical geopolitics (Mountz, 2018), hegemonic norms have been unsettled and the realms of the political expanded. To borrow the words of Toal (1996), this forms 'a small part of a much larger rainbow struggle to decolonise our inherited geographical imagination so that other geo-graphings and other worlds might be possible'.

While the re-scaling of geographical inquiry is welcome discourse is most powerful when employed by organisations with the greatest reach and influence. I concur with the assertion that the EU and UN are unsuitable for ethnographic inquiry, as no one would ever let a researcher spend months simply observing. However, there are politically influential organisations that are accessible, as demonstrated by this study. For my fieldwork, this involved gaining access to, and working within, a think tank. The purpose of this next section is to explore how the ECMI fits within the prevailing typology of think tanks, as it provides a framework for understanding its institutional structure and how that impacts the everyday geopolitical knowledge production at the organisation. Discussing the typology of think tanks is useful for analysing the ECMI because it provides a framework to understand how its operational characteristics, funding sources, and strategic objectives influence its overall approach to knowledge production. By examining the parallels with established typologies, we can better grasp the complexities of the ECMI's role within the broader landscape of think tanks.

2.3 Think Tanks

2.3.1 A Brief History of Think Tanks

The very first 'think tanks' as we understand them today began to appear in the United States in the early twentieth century, centred on the idea that "the expertise of scholars and managers" should be brought together to analyse and bring forth resolutions to the social and economic problems of the day (Smith and Smith, 1991, p.120). James McGann chronicles the earliest significant direct involvement of think tanks in public policy to the 1920s – the tendency of United States foreign policy until the end of First World War was one of isolationism, yet pressure from these groups was placed upon political elites to take a greater role in international politics (McGann, 1992). During the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (more commonly known by the name of its headquarters' building, Chatham House) was established as a mechanism to promote Anglo-American cooperation (Khan, 2021). The early twentieth century had given rise to the United States' emergence as a global power, thus institutes with an emphasis on foreign policy and the role the United States should have in international relations were established – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1910, Foreign Policy Association in 1918, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace in 1919, and the Council on Foreign Relations in 1921 were amongst the most prominent (McGann, 1992; Cox, 2022). This 'first generation' of think tanks essentially "institutionalised the link between

academics in various disciplines of the social sciences and policymakers in Washington" (McGann, 2019, p.27).

The etymological derivation of the term 'think tank', much like many of the organisations that exist today, is military in origin – think tanks were "military jargon for a secure room where plans and strategies could be discussed" (Bland, 2020; Denham and Garnett, 1996, p.44). The label was used for research organisations such as the RAND Corporation that obtained their funding on a contract-by-contract basis – though until the 1960s think tanks still commanded only a low profile in the United States (Denham and Garnett, 1996; Rich, 2004). This 'second generation' of think tanks can be classified as 'contract researchers' because they received significant legal, financial, and administrative support directly from the United States government, who were "compelled to allocate resources to scientists and researchers, because of the Cold War" (McGann, 2019, p.27).

The founding of the Heritage Foundation in 1973 revolutionised think tank function in the United States and abroad, bringing forth an entirely new strategy of obtaining visibility and influence (Campbell and Pedersen, 2014; Rich, 2004). Heritage pioneered the dual objectives of forcefully driving public debates and developing close relationships with government officials. The organisation enjoys tax-exempt status and derives its funding primarily from philanthropic contributions sourced from affluent individuals, corporations, and charitable foundations, displaying a robust alignment with the Republican Party. The adoption of an aggressive quick-response policy research strategy came in light of the understanding that members of the United States Congress only had "a finite amount of time each day to sift through dozens of reports", thus timely, concise and relevant policy research was a necessity that university professors could not provide (Abelson, 2014, p.137). The Heritage Foundation actively promoted US exceptionalism and is considered by the "American military-industrial complex" as "a key tool to influence foreign policy" (Abelson, 2006; Efferink, 2012, p.6).

Similar institutions have emerged in the United Kingdom, albeit their substantive impact on affairs beyond foreign policy commenced only during the 1980s (Arshed, 2017). Chatham House had demonstrated active involvement with foreign policy prior to think tanks generally taking on a greater role in British politics. According to Christian Haase (2007), the institute exerted substantial influence on the public perception of Germany during the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in regard to the adoption of parliamentary democracy there in the aftermath of both World Wars. Moreover, Chatham House assumed a prominent position in the context of the Cold War, performing back-channel diplomacy with a Soviet counterpart, who were called the 'Institute of World Economy and International Relations' (Wallace, 1990). The history

of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) precedes even Chatham House, having been founded by the Duke of Wellington in 1831. In its earlier history, RUSI served as a forum for military debate, advocating the modernisation of the military in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and providing insights on strategy and intelligence during the First and Second World Wars respectively (O'Connor, 2012).

2.3.2 The Objectives of Think Tanks

Think tanks serve as pivotal sites of knowledge generation relating to policy, wherein the formulation, discussion, assessment, and evaluation of public policies transpires (Salas-Porras and Murray, 2017). Many intellectuals of statecraft are located within think tanks, and some hold significant influence over national discourse – as they may "narrate the dominant story of the nation's place in the world" (Kuus, 2008, p.2064). This makes think tanks a valuable subject of study for those in critical geopolitics and political geography, because of their level of influence and greater accessibility to researchers. Scholars of think tanks have generally favoured Thomas Medvetz's Bourdieusian framework of think tanks, which is utilised "for gauging think tanks' liminal place across the fields of the economy, academia, politics and the media" – Medvetz recognises how there are many goals of these knowledge-producing institutions, and "that their position within one field can affect how actors in others perceive them" (Gonzalez Hernando and Williams, 2018, p.194). Think tanks face a unique challenge, in that they are typically involved in academic debates, but must also possess a degree of political acumen and a pivotal accessibility aspect in disseminating their work – excessive scholarly tone is deemed detrimental (Medvetz, 2010). Hauck (2017) underscores that think tanks consistently endeavour to distinguish themselves from universities, advocacy groups, governmental agencies, and lobbying firms to establish autonomous authority in their chosen research domain. Andrew Rich contends that such differentiation bolsters their autonomy, a quality critical to their credibility. This is partly due to the fact that the credibility of think tank research hinges on its perceived independence from specific financial interests (Rich, 2004). Pautz (2014, p.136) underscores that the portrayal of think tanks as 'quasi-universities' is strategically constructed. The ultimate task of think tanks, generally, is to produce material that has a discernible effect on policymaking.

A comprehensive grasp of the rationale behind think tanks' knowledge production and dissemination necessitates an understanding of their overarching purpose. These organisations specialise in diverse areas of expertise (Medvetz, 2010), entwining themselves with policymaking by generating policy-relevant knowledge for political, business elites, and the public (Ahmad,

2008). Conservative political movements have harnessed think tanks as platforms to elucidate and debate the very principles underpinning their ideology (Medvetz, 2006a).

Think tanks adopt a wide spectrum of strategies and amalgamations of research activities, advocacy, and activism to assert their analyses and perspectives before public officials, legislators, and political elites (Salas-Porras and Murray, 2017). Though often categorised as low-profile actors in the policymaking arena (Rich, 2004), they have evolved into advocacy-orientated entities, emphasising the marketing of their ideas (Pautz, 2014). To indirectly influence policymaking, think tanks often disseminate accessible knowledge to the general public (Medvetz, 2010). The growing prominence of transnational networks of think tanks, as highlighted by Raymond Struyk, underscores their focus on appealing to the public domain, rather than exclusively targeting public officials and policymakers (Struyk, 2002).

Multiple actors contribute to think tank knowledge production, with certain links to business, labour, or other interest groups playing a role in advocating and championing policies while building consensus around them (Salas-Porras and Murray, 2017). This interconnectedness, along with recurring critiques of being overly political, ideological, erudite, or journalistic, raises the question of how think tank intellectuals craft knowledge that is both policy-relevant and credible (Tchilingirian, 2018). Tchilingirian (2018) underscores that during the evidence-gathering stage of policy research, think tanks mitigate risks to their credibility by cultivating coalitions and communities attuned to receiving their work. This process involves formulating specific questions and ensuring relevant parties engage, with academic and political legitimacy being pivotal to knowledge transmission. The networks offer think tanks opportunities to gain, in the Bourdieusian sense, 'capital' – Christina Garsten (2013, p.118) sees the 'economy of connections' as a system where relationships and networks are cultivated and exchanged as valuable resources, intertwining social capital with organisational structures to create mutually beneficial exchanges and investments.

Bajenova (2016, p.86) proposes that think tanks occupy a niche in policy knowledge production distinct from academic channels that typically foster disciplinary discussions rather than policy debates. This nuanced space, described as an 'interstitial field', hinges on mediation between academic knowledge production and politics, while prioritising policy influence (Medvetz, 2012b; Graizbord *et al.*, 2017, p.328). Despite pursuing academic legitimacy, think tanks seldom engage with leading academics directly; when such collaboration occurs, academics' influence may be symbolic rather than substantive, though this varies considerably from think tank to think tank (Tchilingirian, 2018, p.168).

Scholarly credibility during the knowledge production phase is often challenged by funders wielding substantial control over findings (Tchilingirian, 2018). Think tanks are cautious about over-reliance on individual sources of finance, especially academic ones, which seek multiple funders to safeguard the independence of their research agendas (Ahmad, 2008). However, the multifaceted nature of think tanks as intermediaries between intellectual and political realms challenges easy categorisation (Salas-Porras and Murray, 2017). Salas-Porras and Murray (2017) further posit that think tanks accumulate varied forms of capital, including academic prestige, argumentative proficiency, fundraising acumen, quasi-entrepreneurial style, media presence, and access, to bolster their influence within the field of power, shaping their knowledge transmission characteristics.

Increasingly, think tanks are prioritising indirect modes of influence, striving to shape the context of understanding and policymaking rather than intervening directly (Osborne, 2004; Graizbord *et al.*, 2017). This shift is reflected in their pursuit of crafting materials suitable for a public audience, as underscored by Ahmad (2008). Medvetz (2010) similarly contends that the utility of a policy report lies more in its functionality within policymaking than its scholarly rigour. Consequently, think tanks often employ media specialists who balance scholarly expertise with legislative and public accessibility (Medvetz, 2010). Think tanks have therefore, in turn, been described as presenting themselves as 'quasi-universities', strategically disengaging with "big long studies, fat studies and volumes, and so forth" and sequentially writing in a less scientific manner so not to "undermine their own livelihood" (Misztal, 2012, p.136; Medvetz, 2010, p.552).

There is no one universal organisational and funding structure for think tanks, nor does each one operate under the same overarching objectives. Scholars have attempted to create typologies of think tanks to provide a framework of comparison, with Adeosun (2019) and Aydin (2006) proposing that academic, contract and advocacy are the three main categories. *Academic think tanks* employ researchers with strong research credentials and produce knowledge with a purported scientific methodology, usually in the form of articles in high impact academic journals, and monographs, usually for an audience of university academics and government agencies (McGann, 2016; Adeosun, 2019; Ruser, 2018, p.186). They strive to be seen as objective bodies, and typically pursue independence through the diversification of funding, which typically comes from "corporations, individuals, and foundations" (Adeosun, 2019, p.133). *Contract think tanks* are broadly similar in that their staff also have strong academic credentials, however their research output is rather different in its form, and funding is usually restricted to whichever organisations want to commission studies from them (McGann, 2016; Karlhofer, 2006). This means financial independence is not a factor of organisational strategy, and funding bodies have a strong role to

play in the agenda setting at contract think tanks (Ahmad, 2008). The output of contract think tanks is more pitched at policy relevance rather than generally influencing the debates in a particular field (McGann, 2016). *Advocacy think tanks* differ significantly in their make-up compared to the other two, in that they may be considered as outright political lobbyists (Abelson, 2014). Advocacy think tanks place a great emphasis on 'winning the war on ideas' through quick and concise response the time sensitive issues, and rarely attempt to publish in academic journals (Pautz, 2014; Weaver, 1989; Ruser, 2018). There is also a debate to be had around whether this typology of think tanks is useful, given the inevitable overlap that will exist with some of these organisations. Nonetheless, think tanks are powerful actors in geopolitics, given how broad their influence can be in academia, political parties and governments – with much of their strategic focus being on influencing policy.

2.3.3 The Prevailing Think Tank Typology

Despite Thomas Medvetz's contestation that a definition for the think tank is a defiantly elusive entity, scholars have nonetheless attempted to establish universalities in the characteristics of organisations dubbed 'think tanks' (Medvetz, 2012a). Strategy differs depending on the organisation, a think tank's purpose is to inform public debate and influence the governmental policymaking process (Seo *et al.*, 2021; Sherrington, 2000; Tchilingirian, 2018; Weidenbaum, 2010). Kubilay Yado Arin (2013, p.9) remarks that whilst "an exact definition of the term think tank is problematic", they achieve their aims through "organising seminars and conferences, publishing books, papers, reports and journals and encouraging their fellows to write op-ed articles for newspapers on public affairs".

For Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, the issue for the lack of an accepted definition is a consequence of "the sheer number and diversity of private research groups" (Denham and Garnett, 1996, p.44). The lack of a universal classification of what a think tank actually is, has led to scholars using alternate definitions depending on their geographical context. Hartwig Pautz (2011, p.191), in discussing the influence of think tanks on British 'New Labour' policy, typifies this debate – considering that think tanks are "non-governmental institutions, independent from government, political parties or organised interests. They want to influence policy but have no formal decision-making power; they lay claim to political neutrality while often not making a secret out of their ideological standpoints". Pautz's definition would exclude practically the entirety of the Netherlands or Germany's think tanks from being such – as the institutions there "often have close political and financial ties to political parties" (McGann, 2016, p.13). Politicised think tanks are the norm in Germany, each political party usually has multiple organisations directly associated

with them and tend to have a "high profile, ample resources, and their staff members sometimes become widely known" (Aydin, 2006; Hasan, 2010; Jezierska and Sörbom, 2021; Kelstrup, 2017; Miragliotta, 2018; O'Neill, 2008, p.10). It is universally accepted that the nature of a think tank's funding has a great effect on "the shape and content of the knowledge they produce" (Gonzalez and Williams, 2018, p.193).

As we saw above, scholars like Adeosun (2019) and Aydin (2006) have proposed a three-fold typology of think tanks as academic, contract and advocacy. Extending this three-fold typology, Gong *er al* (2020) have proposed a fourth category – political party think tanks, which would include these institutions outside the Anglo-American world. However, the exclusion of political party-affiliated think tanks from the prevailing typologies rests upon the dominant notion that a "primary objective" of think tanks resides in their deliberate effort to maintain a certain degree of detachment from their parent organisations or funders (Hauck, 2017, p.14). It is worth acknowledging, however, that this assertion does not hold universal applicability, as evidenced by the unique circumstances prevailing in China, where such dissociation is outright disadvantageous (Hayward, 2018). In addition to the think tank landscape in the Netherlands and Germany, these nuances shed light on the notion that the commonly accepted character of think tank activity may not necessarily hold the same pragmatic significance beyond the contexts of Britain and the United States. This realisation underscores the potential limitations in the utility of this prevailing definition extended to a more global scope.

Classifying the European Centre for Minority Issues within a distinct category is not readily straightforward, a phenomenon encountered when categorising other think tanks, however its unique funding situation particularly accentuates this difficulty. Consequently, this necessitates a comprehensive overview of each typological category, accompanied by an examination of the parallels to be drawn with the attributes of the ECMI. It will emerge that the ECMI may reasonably be positioned as primarily an academic think tank, albeit marked by certain discernible traits akin to those found within the contract think tank classification.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the exercise of classifying and analysing think tanks under these distinctions can present challenges, an exploration into how these entities navigate the intricate domains of academic, politics and the public sphere does afford an avenue of meaningful comparative analysis. By identifying similarities, this can facilitate a more nuanced comprehension of the ECMI's distinctive positioning within the broader ecosystem of think tanks.

2.3.4 Academic Think Tanks

Academic think tanks, also known as 'universities without students', are characterised by the qualifications and expertise of their staff, their pursuit of independence and challenging of existing policy (Weaver, 1989, p.564). They employ policy researchers with strong academic credentials – usually those who are PhD holders, and produce knowledge through a purported scientific methodology, with their research output consisting of monographs and journal articles, but also "scientific reports for government agencies/contractors" (McGann, 2016; Adeosun, 2019; Ruser, 2018, p.186). Of all types of think tanks, academic ones are most likely to support or challenge existing policy and be published in high-impact journals (Adeosun, 2019; Cadier and Sus, 2017). The ECMI even runs its own academic journal, *JEMIE* (see 5.5). Academic think tanks strive to be "perceived as objective and credible by a broad audience" (McGann, 2016, p.16) – for Alexander Ruser, academic think tanks derive their authority on policy issues from the "individual prestige of its researchers", who produce "scientific blueprints and 'objective' assessments" at "high standards" of academic inquiry (Ruser, 2018, p.186, 187). The pursuit of independence is vital for academic credibility, thus academic think tanks claim strong agenda-setting autonomy by emphasising the diversification of their funding sources, which are typically "corporations, individuals, and foundations", with further project-specific funding also acquired (Adeosun, 2019, p.133; Jezierska, 2018; Jezierska and Sörbom, 2021). Financial independence grants the additional benefit of allowing the think tank maximum control over its own agendas, which tend to be constructed internally in a 'bottom-up' fashion, are presented as ideologically neutral, and claimed to be of benefit to "the entire human race" (McGann, 2016; Adeosun, 2019. p.134). Financial independence may not necessarily mean full reign over their own agendas, rather it implies a broader spread of funders as opposed to a small number of powerful individuals. A perception and/or principle of objectivity achieved through a vigorous scientific methodology is proudly a feature of an academic think tank's activity (McGann, 2016).

For example, in his study, Eric Haas (2007) classified the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), headquartered in Washington, D.C., as an academic think tank. The EPI actively pursues a prominent position within the pro-union movement and demonstrates a pronounced interest in garnering academic citations, a feat it has indeed successfully delivered upon (Trimbath, 2005). The institute's funding derives from a diverse array of sources, encompassing contributions from fifteen distinct foundations amounting to over $200,000 in 2021, as well as numerous individual donations, each below that threshold – cumulatively, foundations account for 78% of the funding, while labour unions contribute 14% (EPI, 2022). These financial statistics align with the conventional funding patterns observed in academic think tanks.

Within the United Kingdom, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) can also be characterised as an academic think tank, given its multifaceted research income derived from various sources, comprising of 45.1% from ESRC projects and the ESRC Centre, 22.3% from UK government departments and 20.2% from foundations and charities. Nevertheless, the IFS also exhibits certain attributes akin to a contract think tank, as it receives substantial project-based funding. Its impartial political orientation, diverse funding origins, and emphasis on academic citations incline it more towards the academic think tank classification in the typology.

Whilst the standard of scholarly rigour and persistence with ideological objectivity are commendable features of academic think tanks, they are often criticised as refusing to consider the practical consequences of their research, leaving consumers of the produced knowledge unsatisfied (Ruser, 2018; Pielke, 2007). A "strong tension" therefore exists within academic think tanks concerning the "completeness and policy relevance" of transmitted knowledge (McGann, 2016, p.17). The scholarly rigour required to produce material of academic standard invariably causes further issues of policy relevance when considering the quick turnaround in policy debates (Abelson, 2014). Additionally, policymakers tend only to have limited time to engage with the wider policy debate, preferring concise briefs "free of ambivalence" to monographs (McGann, 2016, p.17). Thus, academic think tanks tend to lack the direct engagement with policymakers enjoyed by organisations producing more consumable material (Abelson, 2014). A further, related problem is that funders are becoming "increasingly active in the agenda-setting process" (McGann, 2016, p,16).

2.3.5 Contract Think Tanks

The second main type are contract think tanks. They have a largely similar character to academic think tanks, in that staff with strong academic credentials are recruited and aim to be perceived as objectively scientific in their research methods, with research generally considered to be credible (McGann, 2016; Adeosun 2019). Nevertheless, they diverge significantly in terms of "their sources of funding, research agendas, and output" - unlike academic think tanks, contract think tanks do not prioritise asserting economic independence, as their research projects are determined and financed by specific agencies or organisations (McGann, 2016, p.16; Karlhofer, 2006). Consequently, funding agencies play a decisive role in setting the agendas of contract think tanks (Ahmad, 2008; McLevey, 2014; 2015). This phenomenon can pose significant challenges when financial backers seek to exert influence on the study's outcome or obstruct its publication in case it does not align with their vested interests (McGann and Weaver, 2002). The greatest challenge contract think tanks face is this tension "between the goals of scholarly objectivity and

the policy preferences of their clients, especially if contract researchers are heavily dependent on a particular client" (McGann, 2016, p.17). Contract think tank invariably develop close relationships to only a few agencies, typically governmental ones (McGann, 2016, p.14). They can be described as "bundles of policy experts conducting 'on demand' research" (Hart and Vromen, 2008, p.136). The inherent character of funding structures for contract think tanks engenders a persistent and entrenched tension between scholarly rigour and the source of funding – too often is the presumed impartiality of knowledge generation compromised (Tchilingirian, 2018).

Whilst striving to maintain the scholarly credentials associated with academic think tanks, contract think tanks do not produce material in the same manner, in that policy relevance (one of the perceived weaknesses of academic think tanks) is a great strength (McGann, 2016; Adeosun, 2019). The rationale behind this pertains to the fact that contract think tanks are typically engaged by particular agencies and organisations to conduct research and generate content focusing on specific policy matters - as elucidated earlier, policymakers demonstrate a preference for succinct and pertinent reports over lengthy monographs (Ruser, 2018; Pielke, 2007). Thus, policymakers generally outline "in fairly specific terms the questions they want answered" and therefore contract think tanks can be seen merely as a "useful external voice to supplement their clients' own work" (McGann, 2016, p.17, p.14). Or, according to Alexander Ruser, as a vessel of "providing evidence in support of favoured political paradigms" – thus, the "comprehensiveness of their research makes it less suitable for charting specific political action but may affect the range of solutions considered useful by politicians" (Ruser, 2018, p.188). The output of contract think tanks is not limited to policy reports, but includes other elements concerning public administration engagement, typically in the form of training (Cadier and Sus, 2017).

The RAND Corporation is one of the world's most prominent contract think tanks. Established in 1948 with the primary objective of safeguarding and advancing American security interests, RAND spearheaded the emergence of a new generation of think tanks devoted to providing research that directly catered to the needs of policymakers (Ahmad, 2008). The Cold War era assumed critical significance for the organisation, during which it solidified its identity as "security intellectuals," diligently upholding foreign policy narratives centred around containment and nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis the perceived "Soviet threat" (Dalby, 1990, p.11).

2.3.6 Advocacy Think Tanks

The third and final type of think tank identified by Adeosun (2019) and Aydin (2006) are advocacy think tanks, which can be described as outright lobbyists for political causes, linked particularly with specific and defined political agendas and causes (Abelson, 2014). For the ECMI,

there exists a strong advocatory element in their institutional strategy in promoting minority rights. Like academic and contract think tanks, influence on policymaking is a primary goal, though they differ significantly in terms of their funding, staff, output, and absence of non-partisanship (Adeosun, 2019). The knowledge produced in advocacy think tanks tends to be political charged and designed to impact specific, and often highly geopolitical policy issues. The output of advocacy tanks is often derided as "too political, ideological, erudite or journalistic" (Tchilingirian, 2018, p.162; Medvetz, 2012b). Unlike the staff of academic and contract think tanks, advocacy think tanks "more often than not" employ non-academics and instead draw their workforce from "government, political parties and interest groups" (Hasan, 2010, p.297). Though scientific credibility is also sought, their policymaking interest is more so focused on "winning the war of ideas" rather than an objective investigation into formulating the most effective policies (Christensen, 2020; McGann, 2016, p.16). The strategy of 'winning the war of ideas' hinges on the robust promotion of their agendas, characterised by "aggressive salesmanship", which notably contrasts with the 'science arbiter' function adopted by academic think tanks (Pautz, 2014; Weaver, 1989, p.567; Ruser, 2018, p.187).

The fundamental structure and objectives of advocacy think tanks diverge significantly from those of academic and contract tanks, prompting an academic discourse that advocates reclassifying them as a "sub-species of interest groups" (Kelstrup, 2017, p.128). In terms of knowledge production, their unequivocal ideology and pronounced political stance result in policy research being confined within the bounds of rigid values, which inherently impedes the attainment of objectivity in their endeavours (Lu *et al.*, 2021; McGann, 2016).

Advocacy think tanks tend to lack experts from multiple disciplines, therefore an absence of an interdisciplinary dimension is seen to further damage the academic prestige of advocacy tank output (Pautz, 2014). Whilst academic prestige is not a top priority for advocacy think tanks, they do employ strategies which signify scholarly influence. Due to their much stronger direct political influence than the 'ivory tower' of academic think tanks, "they transform knowledge to discourse and they then act as carriers of coordinative and communicative discourse […] legitimising political ideas to the general public when decisions have been taken and the time is right" (Ladi, 2011, p.212). Furthermore, Diane Stone concludes that advocacy think tanks are repositories of credibility of powerful corporations and foundations to "articulate their interests in the most legitimate way possible" (Stone, 2000b; McGann, 2019, p. 33). The production of original research is discouraged, instead the 'spin' of existing research (which holds objective prestige) is the method used to retain a sense of objectivity in their own work whilst maintaining the consistent value positions endemic to an advocacy think tank (Weaver, 1989; McGann, 2016; Ruser, 2018). This

'spinning' of existing research is a much more time efficient method of discourse formulation, which is necessary to advocacy think tanks as their principal advantage is the distribution of quick and accessible contributions to short-term policy debates (Adeosun, 2019; Arin, 2013; McGann, 1992, 2016). Advocacy think tanks are therefore very attractive to scholars with a focus on the implications of research on specific policy debates, as influence on policymaking is more concrete in comparison to academic tanks, in particular (Ruser, 2018).

The Cato Institute and Heritage Foundation rank among the foremost advocacy think tanks, displaying certain academic credentials but primarily focusing on promoting political stances, policy advocacy, and media engagements. A study conducted by Eric Haas revealed that neither organisation underwent external peer review for any of their publications, which predominantly comprised opinion pieces and a limited number of policy analyses, mainly addressing current issues (Haas, 2007). Heritage are considered to be a key tool in the American military-industrial complex, promoting US exceptionalism, outright declaring that "America holds a special claim to be a world leader" (Efferink, 2012, p.6). Haas describes them as a "second-hand dealer of ideas", conducting little original research of its own (Haas, 2007, p.73).

2.3.7 Overviewing the Prevailing Typology and Categorising the ECMI

In the preceding section, an examination has been undertaken of the primary categorisations intrinsic to the prevalent typological framework of think tanks. Pertinent aspects including organisational configuration, staffing character, financial arrangements, modalities of output, as well as the related advantages and disadvantages related to each type, have been summarised.

The delineation of an academic think tank resides in their scholarly prestige characterising their personnel, something which is resolutely advertised by them – with financial independence sought and manifested through the diversification of funding streams. This allows them to promote a non-partisan orientation, which is useful for publishing journals articles and other academic publications. Contract think tanks exhibit a broadly similar configuration in terms of scholarly distinction, albeit with a notable tempering of agenda independence stemming from the endemic impact of financiers' influence resultant from the way research is commissioned. These contract-driven organisations produce reports and policy analyses that are specifically commissioned, thereby attenuating the prominence of a strictly scholarly orientation. Nevertheless, their output boasts greater policy significance and exerts a more direct influence than their academic counterparts. Advocacy think tanks manifest prominent differences to their counterparts, characterised by their non-academic orientation and conspicuous and potent

political predispositions. Organisations corresponding to the 'advocacy' type ardently promote their distinct ideological stances, engaging in assertive campaigns aimed at prevailing in the 'war of ideas'. Their operational output takes the form of succinct and rhetoric-laden issue briefs, tailored for consumption by policymakers, meticulously designed not merely to convey information but principally to persuade (Adeosun, 2019).

This typology of think tanks is utilised in virtually all academic literature on think tanks because each category provides a general logic through which to understand the institutional strategy of an organisation. According to the prevailing literature, academic think tanks, in the Bourdieusian sense (see 2.4), view the academy as the field in which the accumulation of capital is prioritised. For contract think tanks, capital valued by policymakers and government agencies is most valued. For advocacy think tanks, it is whatever governments value. By conceptualising think tanks in this way, a large body of literature can be relied upon to analyse why particular decisions at the ECMI, such as thematic focus, publication strategy, or geographical scope of research activities (see Chapter 5), have been made. However, the limitations of this typology were discovered early on in my ethnography. The European Centre for Minority Issues represents a hybrid that amalgamates facets emblematic of both 'academic' and 'contract' think tanks. The delineation of its financial underpinning, characterised by the involvement of merely three permanent funding bodies – namely, the national governments of Germany and Denmark, alongside the state government of Schleswig-Holstein – impedes a claim of financial independence akin to the predominant modality observed in academic think tanks. Nonetheless, funding is not typically acquired on a purely contract-by-contract basis as one might expect from a think tank with so few benefactors. Each of the three governments provides money on an annual basis, with nearly 90% of the ECMI's 2022 funding coming from them. Contract-generated income accounts for a relatively modest fraction of approximately 10%.

Whilst I would regard the ECMI as being unique in its organisational and funding structure, the think tank Eurac Research also receives substantial permanent funding from governments – in their case, the Province of Bolzano, which is responsible for 49% of their annual budget. Eurac was founded in South Tyrol, Italy, in 1992, undertaking research on "Language and Law, Minorities and Autonomous Regions as well as the Alpine Environment" (Eurac, 2023). The organisation has since expanded its scope considerably, though minority issues are still an active department – ECMI actually competes with them on various grant applications (Interview 2, junior researcher).

The activity of the European Centre for Minority Issues confounds classification within a singular category of the pervasive think tank typology. The institution's intellectual contributions

span a spectrum encompassing scholarly output such as academic journal articles and book chapters, focused issue-centric reports conveyed through both monographic and blogpost formats, pedagogical initiatives through training programs, dissemination of video lectures and dialogues, quantitative research publications, and more. Although this illumination of typologies pertaining to think tanks holds utility, it is important to acknowledge that the ECMI operates as a distinctive entity. It is noteworthy that substantial divergence persists in the attempt to classify specific think tanks (see Haas, 2007), especially the impact of temporal considerations in this categorisation process.

Despite having established some utility in analysing think tanks through the lens of the prevailing typology, the wide spectrum of organisational structures and objectives visible within a single categorisation means relying on it alone in my investigation of the ECMI was not justified. Accordingly, the ethnographic activity of the everyday knowledge production at the ECMI was better analysed using Bourdieu's 'field theory'. Through analysing knowledge production and transmission as a means of accumulating social and symbolic capital, the logic of institutional strategy is revealed more deeply. Nonetheless, the prevailing typology of think tanks still appears as an analytical framework, though one synthesised with the work of Bourdieu.

2.4 Knowledge Production: Bourdieu and the Academy

The discussion on think tank typologies has established that existing literature theoretically outlines the institutional objectives and knowledge production expected at the ECMI. The organisation generally corresponds to the 'academic' think tank type, though it possesses some contract think tank characteristics, as well as a small advocatory dimension. Pierre Bourdieu's work on his sociological theory of the 'field' has been a popular framework for scholars of think tanks, and this thesis also utilises this work, though I introduce a specific ethnographical dimension. Through theorising ECMI's activity as a think tank navigating the struggle within and between different 'fields' ethnographically, the everyday practices of geopolitical knowledge production can be revealed and understood. Synthesising with the work of Foucault and the literatures critical geopolitics and think tanks, Bourdieu's social framework can explain how knowledge production is shaped by the socio-political context it is created in. Pierre Bourdieu (1990) describes a 'field' as a network of social relationships in which individuals or organisations compete for resources and the principal objective of actors within a field is to accrue and control capital. Capital is a resource or form of power that plays a crucial role in the definition of value within a field, and each field values different forms of capital. This capital may be social, cultural, symbolic or in another form (Bauder *et al.*, 2017). Bourdieu (1991, p.185) himself defined 'the field' as a "system of deviations

on different levels and nothing, either in the institutions or in the agents, the acts or discourses they produce, has meaning except relationally, by virtue of the interplay of oppositions and distinctions", or more simply "a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning" (Bourdieu, 1993, p.162). In other words, meaning is constructed through the interactions, oppositions, and distinctions that occur within the field. The field is seen as a dynamic system where deviations from norms and hierarchies occur at various levels, shaping the overall structure and functioning of the field. They are of varying sizes and exist in relation to each other, but may also contain other fields (Grenfell, 2004). Bourdieu himself studied the field of academia utilising this sociological framework, regarding the struggle to accumulate symbolic capital as what "drives the academy and the nature of the scholarly, intellectual profession" (Putnam, 2009, p.129).

Whereas Foucault's understanding of discourse centred on how knowledge and power are intertwined, shaping what narratives are considered to be acceptable within particular institutional contexts, Bourdieu's concept of the field operates similarly, though his work incorporated a more structured and relational approach to the study of knowledge production. Think tanks exist within a field of power where they compete with other institutions for legitimacy and influence, thus Bourdieu's field theory provides a framework through which the social and institutional forces that shape think tank knowledge production can be mapped out, with 'capital' used to measure power within and between fields.

For the ECMI and their academic discipline of autochthonous minority issues, this field sits within the field of minority issues more generally, but also the field of academia, or 'the academy'. There exists competition within a field, through the struggle between members accumulating the valued capital; but also between fields, though this competition is mainly for economic or social capital. Rowlands *et al.* (2013, p.1276) asserts that there "is a direct relationship between field, habitus and capital, with the value ascribed to the capital being derived from the social and cultural characteristics of the habitus of the relevant agent or agents within a particular field or fields". By 'habitus', Bourdieu refers to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions which shape an individual's perceptions and actions unconsciously. It is shaped by and shapes the social environment, guiding behaviour across various social contexts. By 'capital', this may refer to economic assets and resources like money and property; cultural assets like education, academic credentials and skills; or social resources like networks, relationships and connections. A fourth type, symbolic capital, can be any form of capital when recognised within a given social context. The direct relationship Rowlands *et al.* (2013) discuss between field, habitus and capital refers to how individuals and groups navigate social arenas (fields) using their ingrained dispositions (habitus) and assets and resources (capital) to further their status and accrue further capital.

The characteristics of the ECMI correspond most greatly with that of academic think tanks, and with the organisation having strategically pivoted towards embracing the field of academia more closely as opposed to 'action' project work (Chapter 6), the ECMI has correspondingly re-evaluated the form of capital it seeks to accumulate. it has not moved from one field to another, rather because it operates across multiple fields and sub-fields, the field of academia has been prioritised. Like other fields, the academy has its own institutional and social distinctions, infrastructures, professional hierarchies, rules and conventions (Bauder *et al.*, 2017; Bourdieu, 1988). Linda Putnam, in her exploration of Bourdieusian capital in the academy, argues that symbolic capital "functions as a kind of meta-capital – the power to determine what counts as capital […] It is the power to determine what counts as knowledge, or what forms of knowledge are taken to be authoritative. So while cultural capital helps explain why Princeton grads are likely to get good jobs, symbolic capital helps explain why a book published by Princeton University Press will be taken to be more authoritative than a text from the Church of Scientology" (Lavin, 2024, p.9). Symbolic capital is thus a form of power that signals legitimacy, which includes reputation, status, and authority.

The use of geopolitical scripts, or at the very least referring to them implicitly, can be an effective way of providing legitimacy to knowledge transmissions, and thus, accruing symbolic capital. Take Jeffrey Popke's (1994) investigation into the IMF discursive strategy of portraying itself as an expert of expanding range of economic and political issues. Through scripting involved countries as being at fault for their situations, they advance their own authority and perceived expertise of the relevant issues. Viewing this scripting as part of a struggle for symbolic capital in the Bourdieusian sense aids the understanding into why an organisation has opted for a particular knowledge production and transmission strategy. For the ECMI, by using scripts relevant to the Bourdieusian fields in which it operates, they may advance their goal of achieving significant status and authority within academia and autochthonous minority issues.

For academic think tanks, which as established share many characteristics with the ECMI, these attributes are essential to attain. Whilst scripts are useful in some contexts, to be perceived as objective and credible in the monographs and journal articles they produce represents a different task (Ruser, 2018), and the challenge is to establish precisely what this means within the fields they operate within. The literature on think tanks, as established in Section 2.3, has pointed towards the importance of financial independence (see Adeosun, 2019; Jezierska, 2018; Jezierska and Sörbom, 2021; McGann, 2016) and vigorous scientific methodology (McGann, 2016), however one of the most critical elements is missed.

In examining the importance of 'visibility' as assessed through citations, Desrochers *et al.* (2018, p.239) found that while "recognition and scientific capital remain the foundations upon which the reward system of science is built and the academic field operates, this system is revealing itself to be more and more multifaceted, extremely complex, and facing increasing tension between its traditional means of evaluation and the potential of new indicators in the digital era". Since the digitalisation of academic journals, statistics including viewership and citations have been much easier to quantify, with the calculated 'impact' of work becoming a significant form of symbolic capital, as high impact factors have been utilised to indicate the supposed strength and importance of that piece. Thus, impressive 'infometrics' statistics have become a valued form of symbolic capital within the field of academia given they can be construed to relate to the scholarly expertise of its author, and therefore the authority they have over their subject. Quantitative indicators "can be easily compiled based on data from platforms such as Google Scholar or ResearchGate, and with little effort", meaning they also serve an even greater importance to controllers of economic capital, who may hold a significant influence over the knowledge production strategies of an organisation such as the ECMI. The growing importance of these Journal Impact Factors, or JIFs, have not gone uncriticised, with a group of academics known as the Analogue University (2019) arguing that they create misleading comparisons between fields, as larger disciplines naturally generate more citations and higher impact factors. They assert that such metrics do not accurately reflect the true impact of research, particularly disadvantaging smaller sub-disciplines. Nonetheless, I witnessed the seriousness as to which JIFs were taken first-hand at the ECMI and the importance they regarded them to have within the academy and the field of autochthonous minority issues. My organisational ethnography also revealed other forms of symbolic capital that were regarded with high importance at the ECMI, such as international experience (see Bauder *et al.*, 2017), and these are discussed at length in Chapter 5.

The field of minority issues is highly inter-disciplinary (with this multidisciplinary aspect considered itself to be a form of symbolic capital in the ECMI's fields) and thus incorporates a diverse array of other scholarly fields. Ultimately, the purpose of the ECMI's work is to improve the lives of autochthonous minorities in Europe and, therefore, makes a twofold contribution to the literature on the 'geographies of peace' (which we shall go on to next). Firstly, this literature serves as an instrument to critique the impact of ECMI activity. Secondly, scholars of peace geographies have pointed out that political geography has focused too greatly on war, in contrast to the dearth of engagement with peace. This literature is explored, and this thesis serves as response to this call.

2.5 The Geographies of Peace

Over the past 15 years there has been a vibrant new interest amongst geographers in peace – in part, as a counterbalance and to move beyond the interest in violence and war which energised the field of critical geopolitics (Megoran, 2011; McConnell and Williams, 2011; Flint and Dempsey, 2022). In his 2011 paper Megoran used the absence of geographical research on what he deemed the remarkable story of peacebuilding in Schleswig-Holstein as evidence that political geographers are more interested in, and better at, studying war than peace. In this section, I will consider some of the contributions of this field in so far as they help us understand the work of the ECMI as producing a specific type of geopolitical knowledge, seeking to promote peace by scripting the resolution of the Schleswig-Holstein question as a model for post-imperial ethno-nationalist conflicts in post-Cold War Europe and beyond.

Figure 1: A screenshot of the homepage of the ECMI's website

The advocacy aspect of the work of the ECMI is exemplified by their motto – "Because Minorities Matter" (Figure 1). Ultimately, the purpose of the research conducted by the organisation is, directly or indirectly, to improve the lives of autochthonous minorities in Europe. Using Johan Galtung's terminology, fostering 'positive' peace involves ending systemic injustices and promoting reconciliation and cooperation (Galtung, 1990). Peace is often seen merely as the absence of war and violence, which Galtung refers to as 'negative' peace (Brock-Utne, 1995; Butcher and Hallward, 2017; Gonzalez-Vicente, 2018). This distinction between negative and postive peace is underpinned by Galtung's broad definition of violence, which "is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations' (Galtung, 1969, p.168). The extraordinary scope of what now can be

termed as violent constructs a vision of peace (if we define it as an absence of violence) that is 'unreal and utopian', in turn making an agreeable definition of peace almost impossible (Grewal, 2003, p.23). The moral framework with which to conceptualise peace has been the topic of significant discussion, as characterised by an exchange between Nick Megoran and Simon Springer (Megoran, 2013; Springer, 2014a; Megoran, 2014; Springer, 2014b).

Whilst the need for more methodological diversity in political geography and critical geopolitics has been raised (Section 2.2.3) and is intended to be addressed by this thesis, so too is another dimension in the literature. The ECMI itself is a product of post-Cold War peacebuilding, one of the critical factors in its foundation was the assertion that the successes of the Schleswig-Holstein peace could be utilised as lesson learned elsewhere. Political geography as an academic field has long been concerned with violence; or, as Nick Megoran puts it, geography has been "better at studying war than peace" (Megoran, 2011, p.178).

The philosopher John Rawls argued that a just society is one where that, if you knew everything about it and had a choice about where you could be born, you would be willing to enter it in a random place because opportunities were equally distributed. For many autocthonous minorities in Europe, full economic, social and political participation in society is not apparent, systemic injustices continually exist, and marginalisation occurs within their host country. Peace geographies as an academic field examines how geographical factors such as territory, borders and resources intersect with social, political, economic and cultural dynamics to shape peace processes and outcomes. Scholars of peace studies have endeavoured to offer comprehensive definitions of peace and violence, however the geographical contribution made to the field has been an introduction of the complexities that challenge the universality assumed by traditional peace studies. Geographers assert that peace is inherently situated and spatially contingent and have thus offered alternative conceptualisations of what peace actually means. Firstly, scholars see peace as a precarious socio-spatial process which is engaged with in the everyday (Koopman, 2011a). Secondly, is the assertion that peace simply means different things to different groups of people in different times in different places (Koopman, 2011b). There exists no universal ideal of what peace actually is, instead scholars of peace geographies look at what peace means specifically in relation to specific places (Koopman, 2017). The mainstream literature of peace studies has generally critiqued the universalist concept of 'liberal peace', consistently pointing towards the poor quality of peace in post-conflict environments (Richmond and MacGinty, 2015). Thirdly, peace is not a static endpoint, instead it is a phenomenon reproduced in the everyday; nor is it something that can occur only after violence (Williams, 2015). The dichotomy of before-and-after peace is thus problematic, as there is never a guarantee violence or at least disruption to a positive

peace will occur again (see Hughes *et al.*, 2020), as well as the ignorance to the everyday violence that shapes politics and hegemony and the institutions maintained by them (Koopman, 2017).

Peace therefore means different things to different groups of people in different times, with situated geographies having a significant impact on these meanings. Nick Megoran (2013, p.190) expressed this notion by deliberating over historical meanings of peace:

> "Rome's 'Carthaginian Peace' refers to a strategy of preventing future violent conflict by razing and salting Carthage; Westphalian, to a system of territorial state sovereignty; Pax Britannica and Pax Americana, to hegemonic leadership of the global capitalist system enforced by naval power; The Hague and Geneva conferences codified the development of the laws of war over previous centuries to limit its destructiveness; Paris was where the 1919 Peace Treaty created a nascent international system of obligations binding members to act for collective security; Rome was where the 1956 Treaty fused warring European states into 'ever closer' economic and political unity that would make future war unthinkable; and so on".

For the Romans, it was the suppression of a great enemy which would bring peaceful times – in fact militarism is an aspect of cultural violence used to justify an inherent evil, war (Koopman, 2017). The Treaty of Westphalia credited different principles as the pinnacle of peaceful times, emphasising the importance of territorial sovereignty which granted nation states the ability to decide their own religion, influenced by no other power and encouraged the defence of their people and values from dangerous outsiders. Philippa Williams and Fiona McConnell (Williams and McConnell, 2011; McConnell *et al.*, 2014; Williams, 2016) made an important early contribution to the recent geographies of peace literature by underlining the importance of place-specific ideals of peace when investigating places. They consistently argue throughout their individual and collaborative works that geography make an important contribution to peace studies. Williams and McConnell (2011) by "questioning what is meant by peace, how it is understood within different contexts, who is peace for, and in whose image is it reproduced?".

Penu and Essaw (2019) examine the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict in Ghana, which arises from a boundary dispute over farmland between two agrarian communities. While they acknowledge the limitations of traditional notions of negative and positive peace, they adhere to Galtung's theories without critically engaging with the critiques, opting instead for a spatial reorientation of peace that emphasises the cultural histories of the region. Penu and Essaw advocate for Diehl's (2016) 5-point peace scale to be used in conjunction with Williams and

McConnell's (2011) ideas around the concept of 'peace'. This argument suggests a 'script' (see Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992; Ó Tuathail, 1996; 2002) through which positive peace is achieved. The prevailing view of geopolitical scripting within the existing literature would suggest this is problematic, however Penu and Essaw's approach limits the issues of generalising the concept of positive peace for the three reasons: Firstly, this peace scale is primed to encourage situated histories and its influences on cultural violence. Secondly, it concentrates peace processes on societal progression, on positive peace, on advancing peaceful institutional activity. Lastly, it provides an important re-orientation of traditional ideals of liberal peace. Instead of championing economic liberalisation and democracy, the concepts of "tolerance, friendship, hope, reconciliation, justice, humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism, resistance, solidarity, hospitality, care and empathy" are supported (Penu and Essaw, 2019, p.91).

Geographies of peace has not only focussed on rural conflict, but it also recognises the unique perspectives that cities bring to studies of conflict (Bjorkdahl, 2013). Bjorkdahl and Kappler's (2017) ambitious book analysing the links between peace, space and place, uses many diverse case studies and serves as an example for the necessity of radically re-orientating the concept of peace. The idea of peace used in this book is directly understood as a spatial practice and it demonstrates the impact that the features of space have on peacebuilding and conflict. Additionally, they directly state that "the overall ambition of this research endeavour is to emplace the analysis of peace, peacebuilding and agency in their appropriate spatial and temporal context", in other words, the work directly opposes a universal idea of peace (Bjorkdahl and Kappler, 2017, p.2).

The Kosovo chapter of the work offers an insight into the role of space-making in peacebuilding. Space is socially produced and the ways in which it is characterised by space-makers is particularly important in divided cities (De Certeau, 1985). The struggles experienced by the city of Mitrovica are characterised by its proximity to the Serbian part of Kosovo, acting somewhat as a bridge between the Albanian and Serb areas of the state. Bjorkdahl and Kappler (2017) highlight the importance of agency here, as Kosovo Serbs hold considerable autonomy there. This agency acts as a threat to Kosovo's identity and sovereignty as a predominantly ethnic Albanian nation, due to its history as once a part of Serbia. The authors researched this case study, like Penu and Essaw (2019), with a close attention and engagement to situated histories. Their arguments concerning the root causes of division in Mitrovica reference the unique conflict of Albanian and Serb ethno-nationalisms and the direct manipulation of city landscapes to display monuments perpetuating conflictive political messages (Bjorkdahl and Kappler, 2017).

The spatial dynamics of understanding peace in this work represent a significant departure from the traditionally dominant notion of peacebuilding, liberal peace. In work on Bosnia-Herzegovina, the authors find that positive piece initiatives such as cooperation of young people in Mostar have been used in the country as well as provocative commemorations for the victims of the siege of Sarajevo. This points them towards the localisation of peace, as zones of conflict do not experience peacebuilding in the same ways. Springer (2011) argues that as culture, in the Galtungian sense, determines what direct and structural violence is acceptable, perceptions of what violence is acceptable also varies within places. Cultures are never confined to exclusive spaces, so the geographies of violence can be highly variant within geographically small spaces (Penu and Essaw, 2019). People in surrounding communities, as well as those generally not part of the dispute but residing in the main conflicting communities, have become embroiled in it due to cultural association, complicating things even further (Penu and Essaw, 2019).

Scholars such as Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Roland Kostić (2017) argue that knowledge about conflicts and interventions is often shaped by power dynamics and interests of dominant actors such as international organisations and governments. They highlight the influential yet potentially biased role of experts and academics, the tension between local and international perspectives, and the challenges in achieving objective knowledge. The authors advocate for inclusive approaches that incorporate diverse viewpoints, particularly from local communities, to ensure more accurate and comprehensive understanding of conflicts and interventions. Kostić (2018) has also explored how informal networks and knowledge production within peacebuilding efforts often operate in the shadows of formal diplomatic and institutional structures. He argues that these informal networks are crucial for shaping policies and strategies in peacebuilding, as they allow for more flexible, adaptive, and context-specific responses that formal mechanisms might overlook. Other scholars have also explored these local-international tensions in peace approaches – Christine Goetze (2019) asserts that top-down approaches are often constrained by rigid structures and power dynamics, making it difficult to effectively learn and adapt to local contexts. Elisa Randazzo (2021) offers an alternative suggestion, warning that the efforts to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of peacebuilding by incorporating local and indigenous methods can encounter significant limitations. The most significant of these is that such efforts can sometimes romanticise or oversimplify local practices, ignoring complex power dynamics and the potential for local elites to manipulate these processes.

The outcomes of peacebuilding efforts are not purely shaped by external forces and mandates, but also by the interplay of social forces within the organisations themselves (Goetze, 2020). The social and cultural capital of international actors, in turn, privileges Western

perspectives over local knowledge, perpetuating global power imbalances, leading to the imposition of knowledge and practices of peacebuilders from the Global North (Goetze, 2016). Goetze's observations are crucial and can be built on through an organisational ethnography of an institution involved with peacebuilding-related work. The tendency towards standardisation of peacebuilding practices, such as the imposition of formal institution-building without adequately addressing the underlying issues of legitimacy and local context, is an issue of the forms of symbolic capital prioritised in the field of peacebuilding (Goetze, 2016). This is where a Bourdieusian framework of understanding 'fields' and capital accumulation is crucial – it can help us trace why peacebuilding policy decisions have been made. Bliesemann de Guevara and Goetze (2019) together explored the power of myths and their role in providing coherence and justification for these complex and contested actions, and how they often lead to an oversimplification of the challenges at hand. In a sense, the resolution to the Schleswig-Holstein question has been mythologised – to an extent, even by me (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

For autochthonous minority issues, the literature of peace studies and peace geographies provides a critical framework for understanding the geopolitical models used and minority-majority conflicts that are the subject of ECMI analyses. Minority rights are a part of the general human rights framework, but organisations such as the ECMI regard specific protections for these groups as necessity to mitigate conflict. Or, as Tina Kempin Reuter (2012, p.359) argues:

> Minority protection is based on the recognition that minorities are in a vulnerable situation as compared to other groups in the society. Special protections are needed in cases in which the group is subject to injustice, namely when the rights of the group and each member's individual rights are violated. Minority rights abuses are often at the heart of ethnic conflict.

The crucial contribution of peace studies and peace geographies to this thesis is, therefore, its direct link to the field of autochthonous minority issues. From having spent nearly a year at the ECMI office, peace was certainly understood to be geographically situated by the researchers there, and the assertions of scholars like Kempin Reuter above taken seriously and embraced. The following section explores the legal instruments that underpin autochthonous minority issues research and are analysed using the literature explored in this section. This is essential to this thesis because these legal instruments are central in the ECMI's own analyses.

2.6 Autochthonous Minority Issues

The central thematic focus of the ECMI's work is autochthonous minority issues. Autochthonous (also known as 'old' or sometimes 'national' minorities) are indigenous populations that have a long-standing historical presence in a specific region and are typically present in borderland regions (Markusse, 2011). These groups maintain unique cultural, linguistic, and social practices that differentiate them from the majority population within the nation-state and are distinct from immigrant populations (Crepaz, 2016; Pásztor, 2006). Much of the contemporary situation for national minorities can be traced back to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points which played a pivotal role in reshaping the geopolitical landscape of post-World War I Europe (Williams and Bufon, 2020; Vasilevska, 2020). The principle of self-determination advocated for the right of national groups to govern themselves, leading to significant boundary changes intended to align political borders with ethnic and national identities, however, the redrawing of borders often resulted in significant minority populations being left within the new states (Vasilevska, 2019). Wilson's vision sought to dismantle the multi-ethnic empires of Europe, such as Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, creating new nation-states based on ethnic lines – the much-vaunted principle of national self-determination, which of course immediately created a whole new set of populations defined as minorities who fitted in problematically with the new nationalistic projects of these nascent states. Countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia emerged, intended to provide self-governance to their dominant national groups. The new borders did not perfectly align with ethnic distributions, leaving substantial minority populations within many of these new states. For instance, Germans in the Sudetenland became a significant minority in Czechoslovakia, and Hungarians found themselves in Romania and Yugoslavia. While the League of Nations included mechanisms for the protection of minority rights, these were often inadequate and inconsistently enforced (Vasilevska, 2019). Many autochthonous minorities faced discrimination and marginalisation despite the nominal commitment to their protection.

Split between Denmark and Germany, the region of Schleswig-Holstein was one of the very first places in the world to experience the development of a 'positive' peace between minorities and majority (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Continent-wide developments, however, came later and without explicit and significant reference to national minority issues until the 1990s. The United Nations 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* were welcomed by peacebuilders in Europe– with the latter's Article 27 specifically addressing the rights of minorities, stating that individuals belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their

own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language. Nonetheless, the ECMI justifies its existence and derives most of its analytical basis from two more recent, and continental, legal instruments. These are the 1994 *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* and 1992 *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*.

2.6.1 The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

The ECMI identifies the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) as the most suitable mechanism to realise its objectives within Europe. A senior researcher at the ECMI told me that the organisation's activities are mostly influenced by the principles of the FCNM, wherein the minority rights that the ECMI seeks to highlight are outlined – they emphasised their point by saying "almost everything the ECMI does is guided by the Framework Convention". Adopted by the Council of Europe in 1994 and coming into effect in 1998, the FCNM is a legally binding treaty that mandates state parties to incorporate its stipulations into their domestic laws and policies (Pentassuglia, 1999). This convention is heralded as the "first legally binding multilateral instrument dedicated to the safeguarding of national minorities by creating conducive conditions for their cultural preservation and identity retention" (Hrustič, 2018, p.454).

Inspired in large part by the 1990 "Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE" (known as the Copenhagen Document), issued by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the FCNM's drafters opted for a non-judicial approach to oversee its effective implementation. This approach is fundamentally aimed at encouraging state parties to adequately implement the convention, rather than imposing punitive measures on those who violate it (Pentassuglia, 1999, p.422). The Copenhagen Document was said to have been agreed with "euphoria and optimism" until the minority rights agenda was overshadowed by the developments in Yugoslavia and elsewhere in eastern Europe (Craig, 2020, p.202).

The FCNM establishes a universal standard for the rights of national minorities while allowing each state to independently identify its own national minorities through formal recognition. Early critiques of the convention pertained to its absence of a concrete definition of 'national minority', leading to divergence among countries, such as some recognising Roma/Sinti individuals as national minorities, while others do not (Craig, 2020; Ringelheim, 2010). Moreover, signatories are not obligated to fund or actively contribute to the establishment of religious institutions or organisations (Topidi, 2021). These factors are all part of an overall criticism that because the FCNM has no legally binding obligations, the political commitments that existed in

the Copenhagen Document were weakened as part of this process, including the establishment of autonomous administrations as a means of protecting and creating conditions for the promotion of minority identity" (Craig, 2020, p.202).

The FCNM's monitoring mechanism is overseen by an Advisory Committee, comprising stages such as a 'State Report', an 'Advisory Committee delegation visit', an 'Opinion' containing the delegation's recommendations, 'Government comments' addressing the 'Opinion', and concluding with a 'Resolution' at the end of each cycle (Roter, 2015). Each signatory is "obliged to present with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe with full information concerning legal and other measures taken in order to implement the obligations determined in the Convention" within the first year of enforcement, with periodical reports to be sent in cycles of every four or five years (Doliwa-Klepacka, 2019, p.64). The core tenets of the FCNM encompass state parties ensuring (Council of Europe, 1994):

> (1) the convention applies to everyone who belongs to a national minority and lives within the territory of a state party;
> (2) they recognise the existence of its national minorities and respect its right to culturally, linguistically and religiously develop its identity;
> (3) they guarantee that its national minorities may participate in public life through exercising their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association;
> (4) they promote and encourage the participation of its national minorities in everyday economic, social and cultural life;
> (5) they implement measures which allow for national minorities to have reasonable access to education at all levels, and in their own language;
> (6) they protect the rights of national minorities to use their language in public and their private lives;
> (7) that national minorities have the right to use their own naming customs and display their national symbols and flags;
> (8) they implement measures to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding to prevent discrimination, intolerance and violence.

Notably, some countries that may be considered part of the ECMI's remit have not signed and/or ratified the FCNM. France signed it in 1995 but did not ratify it, due to political discourse of 'universalism' which emphasises assimilation of everyone into a common French identity. This is particularly related to their overseas départments of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, La Réunion

and Mayotte. Greece also signed the FCNM but have not ratified it, because of their objection to the term 'minority', as Greece does not recognise any ethnic minorities within its borders aside from the Muslims of Thrace. Perhaps due to these reasons, the ECMI has produced very little research on each of these countries relative to some others. A 2014 publication by the ECMI described such countries as France and Greece as 'so-called Denial States' who "have chosen to stand outside the European minority rights regime adopted by European inter-government organisations" (Malloy, 2014, p.1).

2.6.2 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (also known as the Language Charter or ECRML) is the second legal instrument of particular prominence at the ECMI. The purpose of the Charter is to promote and protect the regional and minority languages spoken within the territory of the signatory states. It was officially adopted in 1992 by the Council of Europe, and current has thirty-three signatories. François Grin (2003) considers the Language Charter to be a development of the principles outlined in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), which stipulated that the free use of one's own language was a right everyone held. The next major initiative in the domain of minority or regional languages was the "Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, now known as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which convened a public hearing, entitled "Towards a Charter of European regional and minority languages" (Grin, 2003, p.57). Once this Charter came to fruition, measures included in it concern the facilitation of regional or minority languages in public life, such as in education, media, political services and cultural activities. Language proficiency is a key facet, as is the encouragement of positive attitudes towards the use of these languages in the wider community (Woerhrling, 2005). According to the preamble of the Charter, a regional or minority language is one "traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and (ii). different from the official language(s) of that State; it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants". Like with the FCNM, France has not signed the Charter, though it has taken into account regional or minority languages (Määttä, 2005). The issue of France represents just one part of the problem the ECMI faces in deciding what does, and what does not, form part of its remit. These instances provide a challenge for the ECMI because if a country does not recognise a group of people as being an autochthonous minority for reasons of nationalism, then it is unlikely that producing policy knowledge about these

groups would have an impact. Moreover, there is a question around the definition of what constitutes an 'autochthonous' minority. These contentions are explored in section 5.3.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review has provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding how geopolitical knowledge is produced in the ECMI. The main purpose has been to synthesise the literatures of critical geopolitics, with that on think tanks, and how the activity of the ECMI can be seen as a negotiation between different Bourdieusian fields, and the accumulation of capital within these. Discourse has long been the fascination of scholars in critical geopolitics, yet its formulation has rarely been analysed outside the contexts of powerful national governments or large media organisations. Think tanks offer an important context for critical geopoliticians to utilise as they are much more accessible institutions to researchers. Their influence is significant in public policy debates, and they conduct many of the same practices – such as geopolitical scripting. Scripts are important constructions in discourse, and through ethnographic observation in an everyday knowledge production setting, the ways they are created can be investigated.

Through analysing the prevailing typology concerning think tank classification, it was argued that the ECMI exhibited characteristics of all three types, but it aligns most closely with the 'academic' category. This categorisation was important to explore because it can help clarify the ECMI's strategic goals and its pursuit of symbolic capital within the fields it operates. This particularly significant in Chapter 5, where four institutional, strategic objectives are analysed in terms of the capital they are designed to accumulate.

The literatures of the geographies of peace and autochthonous minority issues were important to overview because of their critical contextual significance to this study. The work in peace geographies has challenged the obsession in political geography about war and violence, and this thesis will also advocate that peacebuilding is worth researching too. This literature also provides a critical lens through which to assess the ECMI's knowledge production about minority issues. By examining the two legal instruments relating to autochthonous minority issues that the ECMI regard as guiding much of their work, this ensures the reader understands the context which the organisation works within.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In studies of organisations, knowledge production as a subject of research has not typically been studied ethnographically. The leading scholar in this field, Merje Kuus, advocates for what she terms 'slow research', an approach which involves conducting dozens of interviews over an extended period (Kuus, 2011b, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). Having undertaken ethnographic research previously in Germany for my undergraduate dissertation studying collective memory within East Berlin's football fan communities, I had learned first-hand the benefits of doing research in this way. Ethnography presented itself as an alternative to Kuus' approach to 'slow research', as active involvement within the knowledge producing community itself could generate insights that interviews, and textual analysis alone cannot. Given that one of Kuus' most significant criticisms of ethnography was the difficulty of gaining access to the organisations themselves (see Kuus, 2011a, 2013), a think tank was an obvious target for me to explore as a site of study. As significant but smaller players in policy development as public knowledge institutions, they were much more likely to grant me access because in return there were tangible benefits for them to hosting me. My ethnographic research was beneficial to them in that it enabled them to reflect on their own practices, but more immediately I served as another – but unsalaried – researcher at their disposal. Merje Kuus is quite right to question why the EU or UN would ever grant such access, but this is because of security reasons and there being no incentive for them to become involved in such research.

Two of my supervisors were aware of, and suggested, the European Centre for Minority Issues. With strong links to the Council of Europe, OSCE and European Union, there was a clear pathway of influence. Their website revealed a great diversity of projects and publications – in terms of the objectives as well as geographical diversity. After discussing the idea with the director of the ECMI herself, whom my supervisor knew personally, the organisation agreed to our proposal for me to spend a minimum of six months as an intern, contingent upon a successful application. The working language of the ECMI is English. Following the approval of my PhD application, I established regular communication with a senior researcher at the ECMI, which included periodic updates about their activities and a video call where I could express directly to them what I was interested in. In 2019, my supervisory team and I learned that the director with whom we had negotiated our arrangement would not be continuing in their role, with a new individual taking the post. Fortunately, the new director was amenable to upholding our established agreement. In addition to this, the intended start date of the fieldwork, September

2020, was not possible due to the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, the ECMI agreed to delay my visit until conditions allowed for it happen.

Figure 2: A photograph of the Kompagnietor building

The research site for my organisational ethnography was the Flensburg office of the ECMI, situated in the Kompagnietor building on Schiffbrücke, a listed building positioned just feet away from the harbour. The ECMI headquarters is thus only three kilometres from the German border with Denmark. The Kompagnietor encompasses a primary building, which houses the majority of the office space, along with the kitchen and conference room. Additionally, an annex is present, which comprises three single-occupancy offices, an upstairs area capable of accommodating four individuals, and a compact kitchenette. The larger space in the annex was assigned to two or three permanent employees, as well as any interns who were not situated in the main building. Initially, I worked in one of the single-occupant offices in the annex. With the coronavirus pandemic restrictions in place until March, I relocated to a four-person office in the main building, colloquially known as "The Dungeon". Apart from the ECMI office premises, other research sites included the *Dansk Centralbibliotek for Sydslesvig* (the Danish Central Library of South Schleswig) *Europa-Universität Flensburg* (Flensburg's university), and the ECMI video conferencing room. Due

to the ongoing restrictions, only a few in-person activities were held prior to March. One of the most significant events which took place before the measures were fully retracted was the celebration of the ECMI's 25th anniversary of its founding, which took place in the conference room (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

This chapter expounds upon the research methodology that I employed on my fieldwork. My approach was characterised by a tri-method framework, with organisational ethnography serving as the foundation. In tandem with this, interviews were employed for clarification of specific issues that arose during the ethnography. These interviews also facilitated engagement with significant stakeholders of the ECMI whose involvement with the organisation was beyond the daily operations observed at the Kompagnietor in Flensburg. Finally, given that textual materials constitute the most prevalent form of knowledge dissemination at the ECMI, I incorporated interpretative policy analysis into my methodology. This enabled me to thoroughly examine the multitude of publications generated by the organisation over its quarter-century of existence. This multi-method approach was carefully designed to encompass various facets of the ECMI's activities and interactions, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of its functioning and impact. In total, I conducted fourteen interviews, attended twenty research seminars, two academic conferences, five workshops, seven general staff meetings, and many more events over 11 months.

3.2 Ethnography

This section provides an overview of the origin and development of ethnography with a specific focus on the work of Bronisław Malinowski, who produced the first modern study of this kind. Malinowski argued for the importance of observing the everyday activities of a community to gain insights into their everyday sensemaking – he is credited with the term 'off the verandah' to describe this idea (Malinowski, 1978 (1922)). He advocated for anthropologists to abandon the practice of calling locals into the anthropologist's milieu – for example, summoning them to their verandahs and interviewing them out of context – and instead to engage directly with the local community, emphasising participant observation as part of an immersive fieldwork experience to cultivate a more emic understanding of the culture being researched:

> It is very nice to have a base in a white man's compound for the stores, and to know there is a refuge there in times of sickness and surfeit of native. But it must be far enough away not to become a permanent milieu in which you live and from which you emerge at fixed hours only to "do the village". (Malinowski, 1978 (1922, p.15)).

The approach has evolved from initially concentrating on rural societies in Europe's colonies or subsequently lower income parts of the world, to the broader study of human societies anywhere including industrial work and labour relations to the life and functioning of organisations in the metropole (Krzyworzeka and Gaggioti, 2021). The section also addresses the concepts of positionality and reflexivity, emphasising the importance of an ethnographic researcher's continuous reflection on their own positionality and how this may impact the data produced and insights drawn from it. Furthermore, the ethical considerations of conducting an ethnography are discussed, including the specific concerns related to my own research. Two modes of ethnography that were not conducted as part of the principle methodological framework of this study, but nonetheless made an important contribution to my fieldwork process are discussed in autoethnography and digital ethnography. The literature on autoethnography provides an important reflection on reflexivity and positionality, whereas some aspects of digital ethnography were conducted during my time with the ECMI when pandemic restrictions were at their most severe.

Specifically, what is termed in the literature an organisational ethnography was adopted for my fieldwork, and the literature on this method is examined in greater detail. This section delves into the concepts of 'entry' and 'access', highlighting how these concepts are continually evolving during the research process. I acknowledge that simply being present in the field does not guarantee being privy to all activity and experiences of a community, nor does it offer an unmediated lens on reality. In this sense, I reflect on some of the limitations of my research.

3.2.1 Origins of Ethnography

The research method of ethnography as used today is primarily derived from the anthropological study undertaken by Polish-British academic Bronisław Malinowski in 1922, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.* The study focussed on the Kula ring, a ceremonial exchange system of necklaces and armshells in the Trobriand Islands of modern-day Papua New Guinea (Damon, 2016). The circulation of these goods was initially perplexing, as these gifts had little material value, required treacherous journeys to exchange, and there was an expectation for them to be re-gifted within a few years. Items would frequently return to a specific tribe, for them then to be re-gifted and the cycle to continue (Ziegler, 2012; Irwin *et al.*, 2019). Malinowski is widely regarded as the first person to have conducted a modern ethnographic study, as he distinctively set out to explore and document "the everyday life of the islanders" (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, p. 249; Watson and Till, 2009; Feldman, 2011). Although the language he used to describe his research is now outdated, he introduced the modern conceptualisation of ethnography by recognising the

importance of understanding the values and impulses of the group being studied (Malinowski, 1978, (1922), p.24):

> This goal is, briefly, to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world. We have to study man, and we must study what concerns him most intimately, that is, the hold which life has on him. In each culture, the values are slightly different; people aspire after different aims, follow different impulses, yearn after a different form of happiness.

Previous studies of this nature, such as Alice C. Fletcher's "Life among the Indians: First Fieldwork among the Sioux and Omahas" (1887) and Hudson Stuck's "A Winter Circuit of Our Arctic Coast" (1919), each utilised an extensive, observational methodology, though Malinowski's unstructured style allowed the Trobriand Islanders themselves to guide his research and inform his understanding of their culture. Immersion was the defining factor of the modern ethnographic study, with Malinowski criticising the "white man's compounds" that hindered researchers from fully understanding the perspectives of the 'native' people (hence his scorning of research that took place on their verandahs). In his view, retaining home comforts and distancing oneself from the culture being studied, obstructed the researcher from realising their empathetic potential (Malinowski, 1978, (1922, p.15)). Ethnographic study had developed in light of the colonisation of the 'New World', where anthropologists became increasingly interested in exploring cultures outside of Europe (Ryan, 2017).

Ethnography is widely considered to be a key anthropological methodology due to its adaptability (Kozinets, 2018). Numerous studies have followed the principles established by Malinowski, including research on: human relations in industrial workplaces (Gardner and Whyte, 1946; Bendix and Fisher, 1949; Homans, 1949); multinational corporations (Nash, 1979); the social structure of a restaurant workplace (Whyte, 1949; Crang, 1994); witchcraft in rural France (Favret-Saada, 1980); work culture in a mental health centre (Schwartzman, 1987); the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of a dilapidated tourist district in Hong Kong (Mathews, 2011); the rigid caste hierarchy of an Indian village (Srinivas, 2012); race relations in the United States (Hughey, 2012); the social and educational experiences of young women at a large American university (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013); the lives of indigenous people removed from their ancestral land in Brazil (Ewart, 2013); views on climate change in Canada and Kiribati (Callison, 2014); beliefs about the afterlife in Cote d'Ivoire (Gottlieb, 2015); 'deviant' students in China (Liu and Xie, 2017); young adults with intellectual disabilities in Japan (Tokunaga, 2018); courtrooms (Faria *et al.*, 2020;

Spiegel, 2021); industrial pig farming (Blanchette, 2020); and gender-affirming medical centres in Canada (MacKinnon *et al.*, 2021) – to name just a few.

All ethnographic studies rely on meticulous fieldnote taking. As Emerson *et al* (2001, p.353) write, "fieldnotes are intended to provide descriptive accounts of people, scenes and dialogue, as well as personal experiences and reactions, that is, accounts that minimize explicit theorizing and interpretation".

3.2.2 Positionality and Reflexivity

Despite the undoubted power of ethnography, ethnographers have long recognised, as David Tedlock (1991) explains, that participant observation and the resulting fieldnotes are limited by the researcher's preconceptions about the community they are studying. The dual concepts of positionality and reflexivity have emerged as vital components to consider when conducting an ethnography (Neyland, 2007; Powell, 2022). Positionality is generally considered to be the social and political context of a researcher's identity – one's age, gender and class are just some of the factors that influence their perceptions and biases, but also how others perceive them (Miled, 2019). Incorporating this information is crucial because it aids the reader in comprehending how the data and interpretations being presented may be influenced or biased by the researcher's identity. Reflexivity is the measures a researcher takes in understanding and being aware of these assumptions and "exploring the questions of how social positions may influence our knowledge claims" (Lichterman, 2017, p.36; see also Atkinson *et al.*, 2001). The importance of being reflexive in ethnographic research is almost ubiquitous in guides of how to do ethnography (Atkinson, 2015; Bloomfield, 2021; Butz and Besio, 2009; Dupont, 2014; Garsten and Nyqvist, 2013a; Herbert, 2000; Howell, 2018; Kostera and Harding, 2021; Kostera *et al.*, 2022; Moeran, 2009; Pink, 2020; Sutherland, 2022; Watson and Till, 2009; Wolcott, 1999). A researcher's positionality can open up avenues that would be closed to others, in that participants may be more open and easier to establish an understanding with a researcher to whom they are similar (Flores, 2016; Miled, 2019). Conversely, the dynamics that arise from when a researcher interacts with those of different socio-political backgrounds and different inclinations can yield equal or even richer data (Deodhar, 2022; Wallman, 2019). Yiannis Papadakis in his book *Echoes from the Dead Zone*, set out to explore 'the other', in his case, Turks living to the north of the UN buffer zone which divides the island of Cyprus. A Greek Cypriot, Papadakis captured the benefits of being reflexive in the field when discussing a conversation had with residents of Tahtakallas, a village in the majority Turkish *de facto* state of The Turkish Republic of North Cyprus:

> Regarding my name, for some reason, as if by quiet conspiracy, everyone in Tahtakallas had chosen to call me 'Yiannaki', even though I always introduced myself as 'Yiannis' and was twenty-six years old. 'Yiannakis', the diminutive of 'Yiannis, meant 'little Yiannis'. Perhaps this was because they were much older than me. Perhaps they wanted to make clear who was going to learn from whom (Papadakis, 2005, p.47-48).

Papadakis' reflections on his fieldwork reveal that positionality is not something managed by the researcher alone, but a complex dynamic echoing the context the researcher finds themself in (Henriksen and Schliehe, 2020). Karen Fisher explored this in her reflections on an autoethnographic fieldwork study she conducted in the Philippines, where she "was generally perceived as being a 'big, rich, white Americana'", despite being a multiracial Western woman of New Zealand Māori/Pākehā[1] descent and never having experienced such a perception prior to travelling there (Fisher, 2015, p.456). Fisher's experience only strengthens the assertion that ethnographic research should not solely focus on data collection and analysis – taking into account one's emotional response to the field is all part of it (Pandeli *et al.*, 2022). I found myself most reflective when digitalising the detailed fieldnotes I had written during the day. Following each visit to the office, I would spend time after getting back to my apartment poring over the notes I had taken throughout the day about what I did and saw. Annika Björkdahl and Stefanie Kappler (2017) remind researchers that knowledge is context-bound, an important notion to have in mind when being reflexive.

However, despite this, Kassan *et al.* suggest that the literature of ethnography does not always identify the process of being continually reflexive as being one that is beneficial to the researcher (Kassan *et al.*, 2020). Jennifer Robertson (2002, p.789) contends that the positionality practiced by anthropologists evokes a kind of 'cultural relativity' which in actuality has the tendency to perpetuate 'the West' as "the supreme change agent and 'the Third World' the irreversibly changed reactant". Additionally, she argues that 'positionality' can be merely a form of 'self-stereotyping' that reduces sensory human beings with unique personal histories to "one or several 'ready to wear' identities" (Robertson, 2002, p.789). Merje Kuus (2013) adds that scholars do not become automatically reflexive when conducting an ethnography.

Whilst I tried not to fall into these traps, it is nonetheless important to examine how my own positionality shaped my ethnographic approach. As a white, mono-lingual, British young man, I was not a member of a national minority or minority language community – therefore I lacked

[1] In New Zealand, 'Pākehā' is a Māori term used to refer to people of European or non-Māori descent.

an intimate, lived experience of the issues ECMI seeks to address. However, many ECMI staff were all not part of these communities, so it would be superficial to consider my non-belonging to such communities as being a significant influence on how I perceived the ECMI and how they perceived me. Victoria Reyes (2020) critiques the traditional approach to reflexivity for its narrow focus on limited socio-demographic factors like race and gender. Instead, she argues that considering multiple social positions offers a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of positionality. My experience at the ECMI aligned with this view, as I found that my position as a PhD student at a prominent university in the United Kingdom played a more significant role in shaping my research interactions and access, especially as the purpose of my presence was outrightly to observe their activities. This was particularly evident in my first encounters with ECMI staff (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). My institutional affiliation lent me a degree of credibility, granting access to certain spaces and conversations. As an academic researcher conducting an ethnography of an institution such as the ECMI, my shared professional identity with those working there facilitated this access, rapport and meaningful engagement. The common ground of being researchers created an immediate sense of legitimacy and mutual understanding, making it easier for me to establish trust and navigate professional spaces. At conferences, for instance, my credentials and familiarity with these events proved highly advantageous (see 7.5).

Whilst Anderson (2021) asserts that the assumption that conducting ethnography in a familiar setting automatically grants the researcher insider status is a myth, my time with the ECMI contrasts with the scenarios she describes, where the role of a 'returning resident' is analysed. The pursuit of insider status is facilitated greatly by the commonality in professional identity between ethnographic researchers and their think tank or academic institution participants. While these advantages facilitated my research, my familiarity with these spaces, combined with my political inclination to support minority issues, may have affected my objectivity in analysing ECMI's activities. This could have made me less inclined to critically question their knowledge production processes and more likely to accept their dominant discourse (Ybema and Kamsteeg, 2009).

In addition to my professional identity granting me access to research spaces, my relative youth and comfort in social drinking settings unexpectedly opened one of the most valuable yet unforeseen research environments: bars. Many insightful conversations took place in these settings (see 7.2). However, two key positionality considerations arise. First, other ethnographers may not feel comfortable or be able to engage in these spaces in the same way. Second, within my own ethnographic research, not everyone I studied was equally comfortable or accessible in these settings, meaning that certain perspectives may have been underrepresented. Walford (2001)

observes that researchers often choose sites to which they have easy access, without adequately considering how these sites align with the theoretical objectives of their studies.

While the Kompagnietor building offered a conventional ethnographic site within the professional environment – providing direct access to all participants – many rich ethnographic encounters unfolded in unexpected, informal spaces beyond the workplace. Although bars emerged as particularly revealing sites where I gained valuable insights, they were not universally accessible or comfortable for all participants. Thus, I made a conscious effort never to decline invitations to spend time with participants outside the office. These informal settings: ferry rides, apartments, picnic benches by the fjord, and even Danish castles, each became meaningful ethnographic sites. They illustrate how fieldwork often extends beyond formal boundaries, emphasising the importance of fluidity and responsiveness in ethnographic practice, and the importance of continual reflexivity about research sites.

3.2.3 Modes of Ethnography

Ethnography has become a far more pluralistic practice since the early 1990s, affording to the heightened recognition of the importance of reflexivity and the critical examination of a researcher's positionality (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992; Schwartzman, 1993c). There are now many different modes of ethnography, as well as an expansion of the very definition of ethnography which may now include fieldwork which does not involve a traditional *in situ* field (Hammersley, 2018; Schatz, 2013). Two modes of ethnography, autoethnography and digital ethnography, each influenced my methodology alongside my main approach, organisational ethnography.

Autoethnography combines personal experience and cultural interpretation to explore one's own cultural experiences and their relationship to the cultural context (Butz and Besio, 2009). The approach requires a careful consideration of issues of power and privilege, and the potential for the researcher's positionality to influence the research process (Hearn, 2014; Kamlongera, 2021). It allows the researcher to develop an emotional connection between themselves and the research site, which can help to reveal hidden emotions and experiences (Boğaç, 2020). Through combining autobiography and ethnography, the intention of an autoethnographer is to produce texts that are personal, introspective and analytical (Dupont, 2014; Ritchie, 2019). Whilst rich and evocative data is produced (Bochner and Ellis, 2016; Poulos, 2021) as well as being useful for accessing hidden or difficult-to-reach populations (Adams *et al.*, 2015), autoethnography lacks generalisability due to its deeply subjective observational view and therefore cannot easily be applied to other populations and contexts (Chang, 2016). As a key aim of my project was to offer

broader suggestions about the production and transmission of geopolitical knowledge, a deeply personal account offered by autoethnography defeats the key reason I chose to do an ethnography in the first place.

This second influential approach was digital ethnography, which emerged as a viable alternative at a time when conducting in-person, overseas research was not feasible due to the biopolitical controls introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. This method involves studying online communities and digital communities as a way of producing ethnographies of the internet (Beaulieu, 2004; Garsten and Nyqvist, 2013b; Tunçalp and Lê, 2014). Murthy (2018) notes that digital ethnography can involve using various digital tools, such as social media platforms, to study online communities, and practices. Merill *et al.*'s (2020) study of public commemorative atmospheres utilised digital ethnography to observe the reaction to the Manchester terrorist attack in May 2017. The development of digital ethnography has also brought forth a call from Duggan (2017) that digital ethnography needs to be critically examined, especially in an era of ubiquitous computing. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted much of our lives even further online and has only amplified this concern. Duggan (2017) argues that this omnipresence of the digital in our lives means that digital and non-digital methods need to be integrated in a more meaningful way. Despite being in the ECMI office itself, I attended many meetings in an online setting, with the other participants joining calls from their respective working spaces as opposed to all being together in the conference room upstairs. Of particular interest to my own project is Christine Hine's work on what she terms 'virtual ethnography', as the methods she described were at points during my fieldwork, vital to utilise. Hine (2008, p.261) argues that "in the questions of presence and role, virtual ethnography need not entail drastically different dilemmas from more traditional face-to-face ethnographies", and indeed from my experience, I found this to be the case in terms of debating when or whether I should speak up, or whether I should even be there. Though virtual ethnography the broader method of digital ethnography are each pitched at observing internet communities, the use of online interviews, online participant observation and web page analysis still contributed a significant amount of data for my project, despite my *in situ* presence at the ECMI. In addition to general meetings, there were seminars, workshops, presentations and conferences that took place via an online meeting room.

3.2.4 An Organisational Ethnography

In conducting my fieldwork at the European Centre for Minority Issues, I employed an organisational ethnography, a variant of traditional ethnography that involves a researcher immersing themselves into a specific administrative context to gain a nuanced understanding of

the complexities of everyday life within an organisation (Anderson, 2012; Boll and Rhodes, 2015; Pandeli *et al.*, 2022; Schwartzman, 1993a; van der Waal, 2009). During my time at the ECMI, my title was 'visiting researcher', and I was featured with a dedicated profile on their official website, explaining my own qualifications and research interests. While I did not have any formal obligations, my hosts were very supportive in facilitating my research by granting me substantial autonomy to pursue my interests during my stay. Among the various roles I undertook was proofreading written material in progress (my native English proficiency was deemed an advantage here). Additionally, I reviewed internal and external reports, extracting relevant information to serve as valuable data for an assortment of projects.

Advocates of ethnography contend that it is necessary for researchers to fully integrate themselves into the daily routines and rituals of the organisation, which enables them to observe the intricacies of everyday organisational life that are not evident from an outsider perspective (Mikkelsen, 2018; Moeran, 2009; 2013). Ethnographies of this nature entail more than mere observation, as relevant texts and other data are also analysed to produce insights into organisational practices (Kostera and Harding, 2021; Warren, 2012; Ybema *et al*, 2009). Numerous scholars assert that organisational ethnographies are well suited not only to comprehend the practices of a single organisation but also to scrutinise how these practices are interconnected with broader social and cultural phenomena, in line with traditional ethnography (Bennett, 1999; Gaggiotti *et al.*, 2017; Mosse, 2004; Nicolini *et al.*, 2009). Using ethnographic methods, researchers can generate rich, detailed accounts of the day-to-day practices of organisations, as well as the social and cultural contexts that shape them (Bergman, 2003; Parr, 2000; Smircich, 2007). It is important to remember, however, that ethnography is not a passive process of data collection (van Maanen, 1979). Silvia Gherardi (2019) adopts this concept in her development of 'affective ethnography', a theoretical framework aimed at delving into the emotional intricacies within organisational contexts. Her approach ventures beyond conventional boundaries, seeking to unravel the emotional tapestry that influences human lives within these settings. It is an exploration into how emotions, moods, and sentiments are interwoven with individuals' conduct, behaviours, and the intricate social dynamics they participate in. Furthermore, Gherardi extends the scope of her analysis to include the researchers themselves, recognising that the establishment of deep and profound relationships during fieldwork can significantly impact the researcher's perceptions of the studied environment.

One of the first organisational ethnographies was Melville Dalton's (1955) study of the role and function of managers in modern US industrial organisations, that the managerial practices he observed reflected a general concern in the United States of the necessity to carefully balance

efficiency and productivity with the well-being of workers and the larger community. June Nash's (1979) study found that multinational corporations operate according to a logic of their own, and she concluded with a call for greater dialogue between multinationals and the communities they serve. Aihwa Ong (1988) has also performed ethnographic research on multinational corporations, focussing on the ways in which globalisation and modernisation intersected in such organisations in Malaysia. Each of these studies reflect the attitude of many ethnographers that the method is an instrument to challenge dominant narratives and power relations by capturing and centring the voices of marginalised individuals, in addition to its function as a research tool (Akdeniz, 2022; Brodkin, 2017; Ferretti, 2017; Heyman, 2005; Humphreys and Watson, 2009; Shah, 2017).

There is also substantial agreement that organisational ethnographies should not only serve the researcher's goals, but they should be collaborations with the organisation itself (Down and Hughes, 2009; Garsten and Nyqvist, 2013c). The time spent by a researcher conducting organisational ethnography may represent a quite significant investment by the host in terms of office space, time, equipment, places at the staff Christmas parties, and the like. Therefore, it should be the aim of a researcher to benefit their host organisation. To this end, during my ethnography, I undertook proofreading work and provided various assistance such as editing and analysing reports or journal articles. My most significant contribution was writing material with colleagues for the ECMI's website and presenting a paper representing the ECMI at an academic conference towards the end of my time there (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Like other modes of ethnography, organisational ethnographies require extensive fieldwork to allow the time to establish rapport with members of the organisation (Schwartzman, 1993b). The eleven months spent at the Kompagnietor in Flensburg with the ECMI was enough time to build those relationships and produce the unexpected findings which characterise organisational (or indeed any) ethnography (Bloomfield, 2021). For example, Jean Cushen's (2009, p.104) marvellous participant ethnography within a human resources department at a workplace in Ireland saw her attend "corporate events, management meetings and team 'away days' with various departments", with her travelling daily on the employee bus and having her own desk at the office over a period of six months. Meetings are seen as being one of the most valuable opportunities for observation (Thedvall, 2013). This level of immersion was necessary to nurture the relationships and uncover the informal and implicit aspects of organisational culture which would later be instrumental in producing her findings (Ouroussoff, 2020; Schwartzman, 1987). Sierk Ybema and Frans Kamsteeg (2009) conversely propose that traditional ethnography, whereby a researcher is fully immersed, can actually limit the potential insights gained from the

research because they are more likely to accept the organisation's dominant discourses and practices without due question.

Establishing rapport with members of an organisation is a critical endeavour that begins even before the commencement of fieldwork. After the initial agreement was established, regular contact was maintained between myself, my supervisors, and the ECMI. In 2019, we were made aware that the position of Director was to be opened up as it is supposed to be every five years. Expecting Prof Dr Tove Malloy to retain the position, no threat to my ethnography going ahead was anticipated. However later that year a new director was appointed which placed the original agreement at risk as the rapport I had developed was with another party and there was no obligation for on the ECMI side for the agreement to continue. Thankfully, the new director, Prof Dr Vello Pettai, was willing to honour the initial agreement, however this instance pointedly reveals the power gatekeepers have over organisational ethnographies (Reeves, 2010). The ECMI hosts a regular influx of interns and occasional visiting researchers – the latter role was the one I had listed on my profile on the ECMI's website. Throughout its existence, the ECMI has consistently hosted a few interns each year, with the organisation even owning an apartment in Flensburg which it uses to house them. I myself was offered use of it, though I sorted my own accommodation. Nonetheless, this apartment itself served as a site of ethnography where I got to know the cohort of ECMI interns very well. The organisation's well-established function of accommodating outsiders facilitated my initial entry relatively unproblematically. My experience therefore differed from the reflections of Vicki Smith (2001) concerning the difficulties researchers can encounter when seeking access to workplaces. In this context, gatekeepers wield the capacity to erect formidable barriers, obstructing the progression of a researcher's endeavours. Whilst initial entry was achieved, the power of organisational gatekeepers extends beyond this time.

The concept of 'entry' involves more than simple access. It also requires researchers to navigate complex power dynamics and establish meaningful relationships to gain the deeper understanding sought in an ethnography. Thus, it can be said that access is something navigated and negotiated throughout a period of ethnographic research (Gartsen and Nyqvist, 2013; Hart, 2004; Schwartzman, 1993b). However, as illuminated by Kostera and Modzelewska (2021), delving into the realm of ethnographic research often uncovers a complex landscape where the task of gaining access to certain members within an organisation can prove to be a challenge. This difficulty can stem from a confluence of factors that intertwine to create a hesitancy among some individuals to actively participate in such research endeavours. One compelling factor I found was that there was a reluctance among some to comfortably discuss controversial or sensitive organisational matters in front of me – or if they did, I would be explicitly told not to write about

it. Ethnographers must traverse complex ethical considerations throughout, about what is acceptable to write about and what is not. There were also issues relating to those outside of the office, with members of the Executive Board and Advisory Council not actually being around in the day-to-day activity of the ECMI. My only organic opportunities to see them in action were at the ECMI's 25th anniversary event and conferences where some of them were attendees. This illuminates the limitations of ethnography, where other methods need to be utilised as well to augment it. In recognising that I did not have enough ethnographic access to some individuals, interviews were used as a suitable alternative.

One of the critical elements to selecting ethnography as the principal research method for this project is its strengths in studying the 'everyday'. Ethnography opens up avenues for data collection, and greater nuance and depth, particularly at different scales. In political geography, Fiona McConnell's work exploring constructions of statehood as performed by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGiE) employed a tri-method approach (ethnography, interviews and archival research) to construct an understanding of how such an administration can construct itself as a legitimate government, despite 'ruling' from India (see McConnell, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2016). An ethnographic focus revealed two critical elements – firstly that the everyday practices of these entities challenge and undermine traditional understandings of territorial sovereignty, and secondly it underscores the enduring influence of the ideal of the sovereign territorial state. Despite international norms like territorial integrity and state recognition preventing some non-state entities from achieving full statehood, their persistence and ability to gain a degree of international recognition raise thought-provoking questions about alternative forms of political organisation and sovereignty detached from territory (McConnell, 2010). Though tied to a study on legitimacy, McConnell's work has nonetheless "widen[ed] the methodological tools" in critical geopolitics (Jeffrey *et al.*, 2015, p.178). Whilst the ECMI represents a very different context to the TGiE, the ethnographic methods I utilised in this research revealed the everyday practices of knowledge production. I was able to participate within contexts where the processes which drive institutional strategy such as funding pressures and thematic objectives could be unpacked with a greater understanding of how these were experienced by staff.

It was vitally important to maintain *in situ* ethnographic research as part of my methodology because I considered these experiencing these everyday practices as crucial to research questions. Upon my eventual arrival at ECMI in October 2020, thirteen months after originally planned, the COVID-19 pandemic was still raging and governments had to react flexibly and at short notice to control outbreaks. This effect was even more evident in the university system, where there was unwillingness to approve overseas fieldwork for doctoral students and staff. Considerable pressure

had arisen to transform my project into an online ethnography, prompting the establishment of a contingency plan to address this potential scenario. To address the concerns related to *in situ* research, my overseas fieldwork application included a commitment to predominantly work in my own single-occupancy office aimed at mitigating the risk of contracting the virus. In addition to this, Schleswig-Holstein and Germany's coronavirus policies allowed office employees the option for home working should they wish to. Thus, my organisational ethnography at ECMI began without full immersion and an atypical office environment which was not fully populated. It was also the original intention of my research fieldwork for me to participate in a field study of ECMI work in Transnistria, but this turned out not to be possible due to the coronavirus pandemic. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine had significant impacts on Moldova and thus killed any lingering hope that the plan would be revived.

Whilst initial 'entry' had been achieved, by no means was I privy to everything I considered relevant or useful to observe in my research. Within the first two weeks of being at ECMI, the ECMI staff departed for Denmark for a "Strengths Retreat" in which the team engaged in delicate discussion about some quite severe workplace issues that had existed in the past few years (and of which I had no prior knowledge). The interns and I were not privy to this event as we had just joined and it had been planned months in advance. Although it would have probably yielded fascinating data, my presence would certainly have been obstructive to the process as I had not even met some of the participants in person at that stage. Having since discussed this event with attendees, it is clear this would have been a substantial opportunity for me to understand contemporary ECMI working practices. Activities included a test on which kind of working practice suited each person – such as whether they preferred a boss who encouraged employee ingenuity and a more hands-off approach, or one who specifically assigned tasks and had a more hands-on managerial style.

Another, but more regularly occurring event I was not invited to, were the senior researcher meetings in which the activity and research strategy of each cluster was discussed. Junior researchers were not invited to these meetings either, though it was suggested to me by them that they would like to be, at least as observers. Outside of the employee environment, I was also unable to attend the biannual Executive Board meetings whereby matters of funding and institutional strategy were the main agenda. Containing representatives of each of the governmental funders, this would have been an ideal opportunity to understand the strategic expectations of the funders directly, as funding bodies have been gathering greater influence on think tank agendas in recent years (Adeosun, 2019). It can thus be seen that my position as a visiting researcher both enabled and limited my access. This discussion of entry and access only emphasises the assertion that even

as an ethnographer and ethnographic interviewer, you are never presented with a full picture and any knowledge gained is context-bound (Heyl, 2007).

From this discussion, it has been established that the purpose of an ethnography in an organisational setting is to gather a more intimate, everyday understanding of its working culture than could be achieved by a more outsider approach, like the interviews-based 'slow research' method advocated by Merje Kuus. Whilst it is important to consider how a researcher's positionality may affect data collection and the formulation of insights, it is clear from the work of scholars such as Jennifer Robertson and Karen Fisher that there is equally a danger of essentialising when considering positionality, and superficially rationalising that participants will all see a researcher in the same light. In ethnographic research mere permission to enter a particular space does not always equate to the complete access required for comprehensive research. The concept of access remains in a constant state of negotiation, seldom reaching a state of absolute fulfilment. Throughout my fieldwork, I was granted insight into aspects that I deemed valuable for observation. While not every facet of the ECMI was accessible to me, it is crucial to recognise that meaningful insights could still be derived from alternative sources. Equally, this reflection should certainly not be considered a complaint against my host – my ethnography provided me a great deal of rich data.

A participant aspect of my methodology involved actually contributing towards knowledge production and transmission at the ECMI. During my time as a visiting researcher, I co-authored two pieces for the ECMI Minorities Blog with two other colleagues, presenting this work at the International Conference on Minority Languages (ICML) at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Carmarthen, Wales[2]. In addition to this, I had a solely authored piece rejected by the blog. I was able to view a large amount of material prior to its submission or publication and discuss work with ECMI researchers as they were conducting or writing it. Aside from the permanent

[2] Links to these articles can be found here:

Willis, C., Hughes, W.R.A., Bober, S., 2022. National and Linguistic Minorities in the Context of Professional Football across Europe: Five Examples from Non-kin State Situations. ECMI Minorities Blog. URL https://www.ecmi.de/infochannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blognational-and-linguistic-minorities-in-the-context-of-professional-football-across-europe-five-examples-from-non-kin-state-situations.

Willis, C., Hughes, W.R.A., Bober, S., 2023. National and Linguistic Minorities in the Context of Professional Football across Europe: Five Examples from Kin-State Situations. ECMI Minorities Blog. URL https://www.ecmi.de/infochannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blog-national-and-linguistic-minorities-in-the-context-of-professional-football-across-europe-five-examples-from-kin-state-situations.

staff, I was even able to assist an intern with her draft of an article for the in-house journal, the *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (known as *JEMIE*).

The practice of ethnography requires a heightened level of ethical consideration compared to other research methods (Kostera, 2007). While signed consent documents may suffice when conducting interviews, the ethical issues of consent and confidentiality are more complex in ethnography (O'Neill, 2020; O'Reilly, 2005). Researchers repeatedly encounter the challenge of balancing the need for confidentiality with the desire to share findings with a broad audience, with this occasionally requiring ethnographers to disregard even the richest and most insightful data and analyses to avoid negatively affecting the lives of their participants (Kostera and Średnicka, 2021). Though in some instances a participant may outright tell an ethnographer not to include something in their project (this happened frequently at the ECMI), the issue of consent in ethnography is wrapped in complexity, particularly when studying vulnerable populations or sensitive topics, as it is not a one-time event but an evolving process requiring continual renegotiation (Fine and Shulman, 2009; Schwartzman, 1993b). Given the absolutely unique nature of the ECMI (how many other think tanks work on minority issues in the Danish-German borderlands!) it would be impossible to 'anonymise' the name of the ECMI in my research in the way that Phil Crang did with his ethnography of 'a restaurant in South East England' (Crang, 1994). Confidentiality, in regard to the protection of participants' identities, is difficult, especially in such a small organisation (Watson, 2012). Including interns, the ECMI had fewer than twenty staff members, each with public profiles on their website and each maintaining a significant presence in the field of minority studies – so whilst I make no mention of names aside from directors in my thesis, it is with the understanding that an outsider would quite easily be able to figure out identities with enough time and will. Therefore, completely guaranteed anonymity has not been possible, and in fact may be a fiction in most circumstances. To remedy this lack of control over confidentiality, I ensured that any ethnographic material that constituted criticism of the ECMI by its employees would not be able to be traced back to one individual. Spending a significant amount of time in an organisation, especially one ECMI's size, usually leads to the development of strong, personal relationships that can pose a challenge to maintaining impartiality (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). Navigating these complex relationships with participants is crucial in maintaining some sense of detachment (Beech *et al.*, 2009; Weller, 2022). Because ethnography is by its nature immersive it can be difficult to truly exit the field once fieldwork has concluded (Monties, 2022).

All ECMI staff were very aware of the precise reasoning for me being there, as my arrival was anticipated for over three years and in my first week a memo was circulated explaining exactly what I was interested in studying. However, this did not negate all concerns around data collection.

The Kompagnietor building which housed the ECMI office, the Danish Library, and academic conference locations were clear research sites. However, my interactions with ECMI staff went beyond these places and extended well outside professional settings. Therefore, this led to situations whereby people may not have been aware that I was still technically collecting data. To address this concern, I ensured that anything I learned in these settings that I felt was relevant and interesting for my research would have to be corroborated elsewhere. The most common way I dealt with this was by asking direct questions in an interview setting.

3.3 Interviews

To compliment the ethnographic research that took place, I conducted fourteen interviews with ECMI staff and associates. These took place between February 2022 and June 2022, four months into my fieldwork. This was for three primary reasons. First, I wanted to gain a thorough contextual understanding of the ECMI to refine interview questions to be better suited to actual organisational dynamics. Second, I wished to build trust and rapport with potential interviewees to gather more rich insights. Third, I wanted ethnographic observation and participation to inform my initial understandings, and for interviews to be utilised to clarify uncertainties and get views and opinions 'on the record'. Interviews with ECMI staff primarily concerned their personal activities at work, their thematic interests, and opinions about the strategic direction of the organisation. Those I was interested in interviewing outside of the staff whom I saw in the everyday office environment at the ECMI were the Executive Board, Advisory Committee, and assorted former employees. The Executive Board are responsible for implementing the ECMI Statutes and it is composed of nine representatives of the three main funding bodies of the ECMI and prestigious individuals involved in the field of autochthonous minority issues. This organ of the ECMI has a great influence over the strategic direction of the organisation, thus I was interested in hearing directly from members of it, as well as their reasons for some of the decisions they made. The Advisory Committee held no authority over decision-making at the ECMI, however it was filled with individuals who had been associated with the organisation for a very long time, and I found their insights regarding the progression of the ECMI throughout the years very interesting, particularly in regard to the thematic direction of knowledge production. I also interviewed some former employees of the ECMI for similar reasons.

3.3.1 The Purpose of an Interview

Initially, interviews in social science research were primarily seen as a means to gather information from individuals involved in the study. Notably, Odum and Jocher (1929) identified key informants or gatekeepers as suitable interviewees possessing valuable insights. However, Young (1939) made a significant contribution by recognising the value of life histories and personal experiences in understanding case studies. This pivotal moment marked a transition, as interviews began to be regarded as a tool for quantitative research rather than solely qualitative methodologies. Cannell and Kahn's book (1953) further emphasised this perspective, accenting the interviewer's role in administering standardised questionnaires to ensure uniform stimuli for quantitative data collection.

The 1960s witnessed a significant philosophical debate regarding the interviewer's role in establishing rapport and redefining the dynamics between interviewer and interviewee. This period marked a growing inclination in the social sciences towards qualitative research. Sjoberg and Nett (1968) advocated for perceiving the respondent as an equal, rejecting hierarchical, exploitative, and emotionally detached approaches to interviewing. The authors emphasised the need for researchers to critically engage with their theoretical assumptions and criticised unreflective research for its limited perspective. This paradigm shift in interviewing prompted a move towards a more adaptable and open-ended structure to fulfil the interview's objectives. Whilst this may never be attainable practically, keeping in mind these ideas were beneficial in devising interview strategy. Selltiz *et al.* (1965, p. 576) promoted semi-structured interviewing, highlighting the interviewer's responsibility to steer the conversation and discourage irrelevant tangents while guiding the respondent towards the central focus.

Flexibility and dynamism are fundamental principles in modern qualitative interviewing. Researchers are encouraged to acknowledge their own theoretical assumptions and recognise the influence of the interview environment on both the interviewer and interviewee. Additionally, participants are considered active contributors to knowledge creation, and great importance is placed on incorporating their personal experiences (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Darlington and Scott (2002, p.21) summarised the ideal interview as succeeding in "getting in, getting on, getting out". Successfully concluding an interview and leaving the situation in a way that maintained rapport ensures a positive experience for the interviewee. Although short and simple, these principles provide a solid basis through which to design a methodology appropriate in its knowledge producing and ethical senses.

3.3.2 Gaining Access

Gaining access to 'elite' individuals – defined as those occupying prominent positions or possessing high status (Liu, 2018) – presents a significant challenge for researchers. The visibility of elite interviewees sets them apart from less powerful individuals who may require gatekeepers to even identify them (Mikecz, 2012). Despite the relative ease of locating potential participants, the study of elites remains limited due to their ability to wield power and shield themselves from scrutiny (Hunter, 1995). Moreover, elites can erect barriers that isolate them from the rest of society, despite their disproportionate influence on societal trajectories compared to the majority (Laurila, 1997; Welch *et al.*, 2002). For researchers, these initial access challenges can impede data collection altogether. Juha Laurila (1997, p.411) argues merely arranging interviews does not guarantee successful research engagement, necessitating measures to ensure the recording of quality data from trustworthy participants. Shenton and Hayter (2004) posit that access is the foremost threat to obtaining high-quality and reliable data, as "research cannot proceed without gaining access" (Cochrane, 1998, p.2124).

While solutions to the accessibility issues surrounding elites are currently lacking, alternative methodologies would likely encounter similar challenges or prove entirely unsuitable or unfeasible for this particular research project. Approaches such as relying on biographies or previously published interviews to glean insights from targeted individuals would not offer the specificity required, nor do such materials always exist. At the ECMI, access to current employees was ensured through the fact I was working in the same building as them, however contact with those in wider ECMI association, such as the Executive Board, Advisory Council and former employees, was more difficult to establish. The Executive Board, for instance, is made up of individuals who sit in the German Parliament and the European Parliament. Others have prestigious positions at European universities and other institutions. Meeting on average twice a year, their responsibilities as members of the Executive Board, despite its highly influential position at the organisation, merit relatively little thought for them. I approached all Executive Board members for interview; however I was turned down or received no response whatsoever to nearly all of my approaches. I also struggled to obtain interviews with some former researchers who I had identified as being valuable to speak with. Some respectfully declined, others offered careful explanations regarding why they did not want to be involved with my research project. I came to learn that from about 2017 until shortly before my arrival the ECMI had gone through a tumultuous period that severely damaged the relationship between the organisation and some former employees and associates. Therefore, some of my approaches to them were declined by those who did not want to revisit that time in their careers. Others, incidentally, were very keen to

express themselves in this regard. Depending on the individual, I calculated whether it was best that I contact someone using my university email address, my personal email address, or my ECMI one. For some individuals, I was aware that they may simply completely ignore my email due their poor personal history with the ECMI, therefore using my organisational email address would not have established a line of communication. Using my university address, I made clear in my first contact that I was a visiting researcher with the ECMI, so my association was apparent. This was important to do as the ethical implications of not disclosing my agreement with them were obvious, it was crucial that participants knew the full purpose of me wanting to interview them.

3.3.3 Positionality as an Interviewer

I interviewed individuals from across the ECMI power spectrum. This meant speaking with interns as well as government officials, and in each case it was important to be mindful of the positionalities of both oneself and the interviewee. This section delves into the concept of positionality and its impact on data collection, while suggesting steps researchers can take to address certain issues. Positionality refers to the social and political stance of the researcher in relation to the participants of the study, influencing every aspect of the research process, from idea formulation to the final analysis (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). According to Mikecz (2012, p.483), the researcher's positionality is not fixed but instead fluid, changing depending on the context.

The location of the interview is a variable that researchers can use to establish the optimal conditions for a formal conversation to take place. I utilised this factor in my interviews, often regarding the staff member's personal office space as the best location. On other occasions, I reserved an office room at the Danish Central Library in Flensburg – I did this especially for those who might not feel comfortable speaking with me in the Kompagnietor, in addition to its importance in the town's minority landscape. The site of an interview embodies micro-scale socio-spatial relations, intersecting with broader power dynamics (Elwood and Martin, 2000, p.650). The importance of this is emphasised by work on affect, which explores the connections between individuals, objects, and material space, as well as challenges assumptions of objective rationality derived from the Enlightenment (O'Grady, 2018; Duignan, 2019). Scholars of emotional geographies, who also sometimes draw upon the geographies of affect, highlight the significance of the interview site as a powerful element influencing the interview process (Delaney and Leitner, 1997; Elwood and Martin, 2000). There were some occasions where more control over the interview was needed, and I found this mainly to be required with those in the wider ECMI community whom I was often meeting for the first time.

When interviewing elites like government officials (which I was able to do twice), researchers must be cautious of being manipulated by their knowledge and prestige. Conducting interviews in an elite's office may lack neutrality, potentially undermining the researcher's control (Ostrander, 1995; Mikecz, 2012, p.483). However, in the case of many of my interviews, this loosening of control was beneficial to me, as this gave the interviewee the power to explain their work to me in great detail. As I had established a strong rapport with many of my interviewees in the months prior, the perceived power difference between interviewer and interviewee was smaller as I was considered more of a colleague than an outside researcher at some points. I deliberately did not conduct any formal interviews at the beginning of my visit to the ECMI. I arrived in October 2021 and my first one was in February 2022. This meant that my ethnographic experience actively informed the content discussed in the interviews, and I felt this was a necessary methodological decision to make for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to develop rapport as a colleague rather than being seen as an outsider, which took time. Secondly, because I did not know what I would find it would have been inefficient to interview near the start, and what I was interested in analysing at the ECMI changed considerably over the course of my stay. I wanted interview questions and content to reflect my own experience and informed observations as much as possible, to reflect on and probe into what I had been finding.

In whatever location I conducted an interview including online, they were also done in a manner which reduced the chance of distractions and interruptions (Ostrander, 1995). Meah and Jackson (2016, p.511) innovatively reimagined the kitchen as a site of memory when researching older women and how their kitchens "serve as places where valued items are displayed and material artefacts are curated as part of the construction and reproduction of personal memories and familial identities", with the researchers displaying the power that the location an interview takes place in has on its outcomes. Aside from the practical benefits of holding interviews in the Kompagnietor building, the fact that it was the site of where much of the activity I was interested in speaking to people about took place, meant that the ECMI office was a site of memory that benefitted the interview process. Some interviewees even pointed out things that were hung on the wall as reference points in our conversations. I considered holding some interviews in public places, such as on park benches along the harbour in Flensburg, however this raised concerns about the privacy of the interviewees (Ecker, 2017). Procedural challenges, such as difficulties in recording conversations, as well as ethical considerations, arise when discussing sensitive information that may impact the interviewees' position or status, particularly among elites. Furthermore, certain aspects of positionality remain beyond the researcher's control.

Characteristics like race, sex, gender, and sexuality can significantly influence research interactions, sometimes leading to outright refusals to engage based on these characteristics (Galam, 2015; Rhodes, 1994). As far as I was aware, I was not declined for any interview nor did I experience any of my immutable characteristics being an issue in any interview interaction. However, the researcher's own cultural influences can also impact participant interactions, potentially leading to self-censorship to avoid offense. I attempted to treat all interviewees with the same respect.

All in-person interviews with ECMI staff exclusively took place in the Kompagnietor building or annex, though they took place towards the end of the day when most people had left and myself and the interviewee could have relative privacy. It made little sense to conduct interviews elsewhere, as the office provided a familiar and comfortable environment for our conversations to take place. The Danish Library served as a location for interviews where did not currently work at the ECMI, as this allowed them to more freely express their thoughts.

3.3.4 Interview Structure

Opinion on how interviews in social science research should be structured has undergone significant evolution, with a consensus that there is no singular correct approach but rather varying structures suited to different circumstances. When interviewing elites, researchers need to be mindful of the elites' attempts to dominate the interview and challenge the researcher's views (Mikecz, 2012, p.384). Aberdach and Rockman (2002) argue that highly structured interviews, relying primarily or exclusively on closed-ended questions, are more suitable when the researcher possesses extensive knowledge about the situation and has predetermined the specific information they seek from the participant. Structured interviews can also limit the elites' ability to steer the conversation away from relevant topics, though this can also be a disadvantage to using them, as them doing so is potentially useful and interesting. Furthermore, structured interviews face criticism for confining participants to predefined discussion paths, potentially hindering their ability to fully articulate their responses (Aberdach and Rockman, 2002).

Notably, Aberdach and Rockman (2002, p.674) do not address the downsides of unstructured interviews, simply stating that "in our experience, the advantages of conversational flow and depth of response outweigh the disadvantages of inconsistent ordering." Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that structured interviews are susceptible to the researcher's theoretical biases. As subsequent sections will elucidate, structured interviews offer greater control over practical and ethical aspects of data collection. Moreover, the limitations of structured interviews do not negate their relevance in researching elites.

Structured or unstructured, the coronavirus pandemic restrictions that existed during my time on fieldwork forced the need to use video interviews. Applications such as Skype and Zoom offer an alternative for researchers, though Janghorban *et al.* (2014) usually regard them as being more of a supplemental choice. For my study, they indeed took that role, being utilised for participants who were not in Flensburg. In-person interviews have been shown to be marginally superior to video calls in that the interviewees were more revealing, however time and budget constraints often mean that video calls become the practical solution – especially when my interview topics did not relate to particularly sensitive issues, which would be more appropriate for an in-person meeting (Krouwel *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, with the large distance required to meet some participants to meet them in person, only a video call was viable in some cases.

I also used email interviews on two occasions when organising a live interview was not possible. Though I considered them purely supplementary to my other research rather than a replacement for face-to-face interviews, the email interview is a useful resource and indeed was in my research (Bampton *et al.*, 2013). I utilised them for follow-up questions where the participant had suggested they did not have the time to conduct a further traditional interview. "Email interviewing evolved because of what participants desired, not the researchers", as the participant can take as long as they like to formulate a reply and be as precise in their answers as is possible (Nehls, 2013, p.312). Email interview answers also do not require any of the "clean up" that is inevitable with face-to-face interviews, as transcription can often involve making slight changes in order quotes to read properly, and this is especially useful when interviewing those who do not have English as a first language (Nehls, 2013, p.307). Email interviews were used in this project for ECMI outsiders whom I never met in person or had more of a distant connection to the organisation. The greatest disadvantage of relying on email interviews as a medium is that they are incredibly easy for a potential participant to simply ignore or lose interest as the interview progresses, which may be over weeks or even months (O'Connor *et al.*, 2008). This did materialise as a real issue in my research, as my exchanges with interviewees in this way only needed to last a few emails.

3.3.5 Questions of Validity

The issue of interviewing elites such as members of the Executive Board raises concerns regarding the identification of specific individuals to be interviewed. Baxter and Eyles (1997) argue that studies often overlook the issue of sample size and given the unrealistic expectation that all identified potential participants will grant an interview, the validity of my research is at risk due to the limited number of participants. Interviews were used as supplementary data for my study,

which principally relied on ethnography. I interviewed fourteen individuals in total, three of whom were part of the Executive Board. I decided that in the case of all interviewees, I would not use any names, instead referring to their association with the ECMI, whether this be as a member of the Executive Board, Advisory Council, or staff member.

Validity in qualitative research, in general, is a topic that has been addressed in a somewhat unsatisfactory manner within methodological discussions. Jackson (1985) suggests that the relationships between characteristics of case studies should be evaluated based on the strength of the analysis of the broader social context, considering the case as part of a larger picture rather than a singular instance. However, this observation lacks justification for the validity of the underlying theory used to analyse the wider social context, as researchers' explanations are heavily influenced by their chosen theoretical framework. It is Baxter and Eyles (1997) who present the most convincing argument among these perspectives, striking a balance in their claims by emphasising that qualitative validity can only be achieved through rigorous engagement with the interpretations made. In my case, this involved using email to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of an interviewee's statements. Furthermore, since much of the interview content frequently referenced legal instruments such as the Framework Convention and Language Charter, I had to repeatedly review these documents to ensure a clear understanding of the interviewees' discussions.

While this argument may seem unsatisfactory in comparison to the more established notion of validity in quantitative research, they demonstrate that a certain degree of validity in the qualitative realm can be attained through rigorous self-reflection. It is important to note that this does not disregard the validity challenges present in quantitative research; rather, these challenges are more identifiable and manageable in that domain (Adcock and Collier, 2001; Noble and Smith, 2015). As Baxter and Eyles (1997) highlight the issues surrounding the misinterpretation of meanings expressed through interview conversations, it is not always easy to recognise where one's misapprehensions may be.

Qualitative research methods, notably interviews and ethnography, facilitate an exploration of phenomena that transcends the confines of other qualitative approaches like textual analysis, and also of quantitative methods. Interviews, in particular, may provide a window on accessing participants' perceptions and interpretations. A multifaceted approach to validating these interpretations serves as a crucial endeavour to bolster the credibility of the research data. This section has underscored the challenges inherent in qualitative research and accentuates the pivotal significance of introspective examinations of the validity of interpretations. The steps undertaken encompass participant debriefing, involving comprehensive elucidation of interpreted meanings

to participants; cross-referencing statements on specific topics among interviewees; and incorporating external sources, notably the FCNM and the ECRML, to ensure the accuracy of interpretations. These reflective insights underline the methodological challenges of qualitative inquiry and highlight the paramount importance of self-reflection in engendering interpretative validity. Although I would not claim to have obtained an unmediated or unfiltered or flawless grasp of knowledge production at the ECMI, these measures helped maximise the validity and reliability of my data and minimise the inevitable errors and distortions that creep in.

3.3.6 Ethical Challenges

Ethical considerations vary greatly depending on the participants involved in the research. As Cormode (1999) suggests, 'studying up' and 'studying down' present distinct ethical challenges. 'Studying up' involves researching those in positions of power such as policymakers, whereas 'studying down' involves researching people with less power, such as marginalised communities. My research at the ECMI generally constituted 'studying up', though as an outside researcher I had a level of responsibility in ensuring that ethical challenges were considered. One common issue faced by both less powerful individuals and elites is the potential consequences participants may face for discussing certain topics (Sieber and Stanley, 1988). Research subjects can pose risks for participants, as discussing certain matters may even endanger them (Lee, 1993). Whilst the discussion of such sensitive topics was not part of my research, some elements of the interviews I conducted were potentially traumatic for the participant. This relates to the tumultuous period in ECMI's history, which took place in 2017. In short, a toxic workplace environment developed, which led to considerable staff turnover.

Confidentiality has long been a topic of discussion in methodological literature (Boruch, 1971; Woods and McNamara, 1980; Morse, 1998; Wiles *et al.*, 2008). However, the delineation between confidentiality and the researcher's own research remains an ongoing debate. Ensign (2003) advises researchers to inform participants that maintaining complete confidentiality may be impossible, even when pseudonyms or acronyms are used. In my case, participants understood that I could not completely guarantee anonymity, though they were happy to partake provided their name was not used. Even in cases where attaching a name would have been beneficial for me, I accepted that not removing names would have made my participants less open about their opinions. For this reason, I did not use any names when referring back to data collected from interviews. Cowburn (2005) suggests that researchers should develop an action plan, including clearly communicating the boundaries of confidentiality and what information will not be held as confidential. In my interviews, the participants were required to sign a consent form which allowed

them to review sections of the transcript which I intended to use. With the 'clean-up' required in transcribing interviews, participants had the opportunity to ensure their words were not misinterpreted, or if they regretted saying something they could retract it.

Concerns about confidentiality impact the structure of interviews for several reasons. Firstly, if confidentiality is a significant concern, researchers may be compelled to adopt a more structured interview format, deliberately avoiding certain topics if necessary. It was my intention for participants to be able to discuss what they wanted, with myself only interjecting briefly and sporadically. Whilst it was in some cases impossible to ensure someone's words could not be connected to them in any way, such was the small size of the organisation, some topics were avoided. The second reason for more structured interviews is that when discussing topics or expressing opinions that may readily identify participants, researchers must carefully consider how to present the data to fulfil research objectives while maintaining confidentiality. In some cases, no material from an interview can be used due to confidentiality concerns, although this is usually a result of inadequate preparation (Kaiser, 2009). Participants knew in advance that complete anonymity was not realistic, so the ethical challenge was mediated prior to engagement. The presence of such confidentiality constraints does not diminish the value of interviews as a research methodology, as confidentiality is an essential component in all types of research.

Interviews and focus groups are often compared as research methodologies (Merton, 1987; Longhurst, 2003; Secor, 2010). While both methods require the management of interviewer-interviewee relations, the ethical challenges in social science research are more manageable when conducting interviews rather than focus groups. Focus groups introduce the additional complexity of interactions among group members, making it difficult to guarantee confidentiality among participants (Kitzinger, 1994). It was also my intention to delve into the personal histories each participant had with the ECMI – how they first heard about it, when they started working there etc., questions which would not quite work in a focus group format. For this reason, I did not employ any focus groups, deciding individual interviews would better serve my enquiries.

3.4 Textual Analysis

According to Müller (2008, p.328), "texts constitute the fibres in the fabric of narratives". In a thesis whereby discourse formulation is a key facet of analysis, a methodology designed to understand the content of textual material was crucial to adopt. Policy analysis is an interdisciplinary field that aims to generate and transform policy-relevant information to address societal challenges (Dunn, 1981, p.35). Within policy analysis, Interpretative Policy Analysis (IPA) focuses on understanding the meanings that shape actions and institutions and how they influence

policy processes (Bevir and Rhodes, 2004, p.130). Unlike traditional positivist approaches, IPA offers a situation-specific analysis that examines the underlying meanings behind policy proposals, going beyond mere technical blueprints and rational actor models (Yanow, 2000, 2007).

As virtually all publications of the ECMI have an underlying or explicit relation to policy, IPA was an obvious method through which I would analyse the interpretations of meanings in these documents. This policy-orientated material, like all texts, is open to interpretation as they are implemented by various actors. Understanding these interpretations is central to an IPA study. However, the ECMI's unique organisational context posed a challenge, as existing conceptual frameworks within geopolitics were insufficient to contextualise and interpret the meanings within such an organisation. To address this, I drew upon Bourdieu's concept of the 'field' to situate the ECMI's work in relation to peace studies and the historical and situational context of the organisation. Having adopted a tri-method approach, I found that Bourdieusian interpretations of 'the field' could tie together each of the research methods I utilised to create an overall integrated methodology led by ethnography. In viewing the ECMI as a participant in multiple 'fields', textual analyses can be situated within the environment they were produced in and for what purpose, with different fields considered depending on the context of the document. Organisations never occupy a space in only one field, and a Bourdieusian ethnographic outlook can tie together the multiple distinct fields that the ECMI is part of (Grenfell, 2011). Scholars such as Loïc Wacquant (2004) and Jan Blommaert (2014) both argue that Bourdieu's analytical framework was directly informed by ethnography, with Wacquant investigating two early field studies conducted by him in his early career:

> Bourdieu's paired field studies of Kabylia and Béarn gain greatly from being read together, or better yet across one another. Their (re)coupling spotlights the fact that they were conceived and carried out as the two moments of a single bold experiment in social-scientific reflexivity and, in so doing, helps us track the twinned ethnographic rooting of Bourdieu's theoretical enterprise on the two sides of the Mediterranean. (Wacquant, 2004, p.395)

Blommaert goes further, declaring Bourdieu himself explicitly recognised the ethnographic underpinnings to his theories:

> The backbone of Bourdieu's own work is ethnography, and remarkably, he is consistently explicit about this. His use of ethnographic vignettes in his works (e.g. *The Logic of*

> *Practice* or *Homo Academicus*) is more than a stylistic feature of his writing, it is a crucial ingredient of his theorizing. Throughout his work, whether discussing Algerian workers, immigrants in the Parisian banlieue, French academics or the French middle class, there is a sense of lived and experienced reality. Bourdieu starts from a fully ethnographic attendance to microscopic detail of human activity and works his way up to generalizable patterns of behavior and social organization. (Blommaert, 2005, p.224)

With the connection between Bourdieu's theory of 'the field' and its ethnographic roots established, viewing think tanks, specifically the ECMI, as participants within fields, provides an ideal analytical framework through to investigate the practices of geopolitical knowledge production. Bourdieusian analyses of think tank exist already – with leading think tank scholars such as Thomas Medvetz employing such a framework to highlight "the need to recognise that the goals of knowledge-producing organisations are manifold and that their position within one field can affect how actors in others perceive them" (Gonzalez Hernando and Williams, 2018, p.194).

The prevalence of Bourdieu's theories in analyses of organisations and think tanks specifically is unsurprising, as it places a great emphasis on engaging with how participants within a field compete for influence and legitimacy. Each field has its own set of rules and hierarchies considered valuable and prestigious within that particular social space. Symbolic capital, for instance, is essential to accrue through transmitted knowledge in order to obtain greater policymaking influence and increase the chances of successful grant applications. In the case of the ECMI, one its strongest examples of symbolic capital is its authority over the Danish-German minority model, and how it appears in distinct analyses of other minority issues or as part of its promotional material constitutes discourse. Textual analysis informed by Bourdieusian analyses of fields can uncover the implicit discourses that underpin knowledge production practices.

The dynamism of IPA made it a suitable choice for this project because it allowed me to avoid superficial interpretations by engaging with the specific context in which policy proposals were produced – an example being continual reference back to the legal frameworks such as the FCNM or ECRML that many texts concerned. My project employed a textual approach to IPA, drawing inspiration from the works of scholars such as Porter and Barry (2015), Chaney (2017), and Stafford and Marston (2019). While the precise method followed Dvora Yanow's framework, some modifications were made to the established four steps. The purpose of the method was not to assess the validity or projected success of policy recommendations but rather to understand

how the ECMI identifies issues and prescribes solutions, as I was interested in the geopolitical processes of knowledge production.

The four steps of the IPA method used in my study involved identifying the artifacts carrying significant meaning for the interpretative communities and considering the situational context of the policy community. This was followed by identifying the community for whom the policy was intended and understanding their interpretations of the policy issue. The next step was to identify the relevant discourses within the policy community, highlighting the anti-positivist and situation-specific nature of IPA. Finally, I specified the themes and positions of conflict, allowing for a conceptualisation of the sources and exemplifiers that shape policy processes.

While some scholars in geopolitics advocate for ethnography as an alternative methodological approach (Megoran, 2006; Müller, 2009), I acknowledge that a comprehensive study of bureaucratic processes does not always require physical proximity to the institutions under examination. In fact, gaining close access to a bureaucracy does not automatically guarantee a nuanced analysis of it. However, there were instances where extensive conclusions could not be drawn solely from the IPA analysis of documentary evidence. Drawing back on my interview data and ethnographic insights continually cultivated a fully integrated tri-method approach.

The ECMI has produced a large array of material in different publication series (Table 1). Having previously examined a significant portion of this literature during the completion of my master's degree dissertation, I was already acquainted with the content of each publication series. The ECMI Book Series; ECMI Fact Sheets; ECMI Newsletter; Kompagnietor News; and Minorities in Action series did not feature at all in this thesis for varying reasons, relating mainly due to being written in languages I could not read, or because they were series that were discontinued too long ago for them to be useful in understanding the organisation's current operations. In addition to the material described in Table 1, I had access to the ECMI One Drive, which contained material not available to outsiders. Some of the most useful material I found were grant applications, promotional materials for ECMI events, and project materials that had been removed from the website since publication. Grant applications were full of references to Bourdieusian symbolic capital, highlighting ECMI's key achievements and diversity, in particular. Promotional materials such as leaflets and brochures were readily available to collect around the Kompagnietor building itself, as well as at events such as workshops and conferences. These materials were designed for an audience without any real familiarity with the work and objectives of the ECMI, and thus provided a useful insight into how the organisations wants to position itself. Some documents that were particularly useful to me were those that were originally completely unknown to me, and I discovered these through a combination of being sent them by

colleagues and browsing out of curiosity. Some of this material had been removed from their public archives due to its inaccuracy or displayed an opinion which institutionally they no longer agreed with.

Series	**Description**	**Number**
Annual Reports (1998-present)	Overview of the year's projects and updates	22
Books (1999-2019)	Academic volumes on issues related to the ECMI's operations	36
ECMI Fact Sheets (years unknown)	Collection of brief overviews containing statistics and information related to projects	1
ECMI Handbooks (2002-22)	A series featuring lectures and detailed information on projects and places	17
ECMI Minorities Blog (2019-present)	A blog publishing material concerning current legal and political issues in minority issues across a range of fields	51
ECMI Newsletter (years unknown)	E-mail newsletters providing updates to subscribers	18
ECMI Studies (years unknown)	Studies conducted by the ECMI on detailed topics of interest	10
European Yearbook (2003-present)	Critical and timely reviews of contemporary relations between the majority and minorities	19
External Publications (1997-present)	A wide range of materials produced by the ECMI and others published elsewhere	31
In Focus (years unknown)	Detailed works on topics of interest	4
Issue Briefs (1998-2019)	Overviews of the issues facing the ECMI in places of operation	44
JEMIE (Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe) (2000-present)	A peer-reviewed journal edited by the ECMI	57
Kompagnietor News (-2004)	Danish and German language news	4

Minorities in Action (years unknown)	German-language productions featuring minority communities at work	4
Perspectives (formerly Annual Programmes) (1999-present)	Overview of the years new projects and aims	14
Reports (1998-2018)	Official reports produced by the ECMI on their projects	70
ECMI Research Papers (formerly Working Papers) (1998-2021)	In-progress journal articles written by academics associated with the ECMI	126

Table 1: A table showing internal publication series produced by the ECMI (figures correct as of May 2024)

3.5 A Tri-Method Approach

Each of my three methods, ethnography, interviews and textual analysis, were utilised in tandem. Ethnographic data was the bedrock of my data collection and was used to inform interview questions. As I said earlier, my first interview took place in February 2022, four months after I arrived at ECMI. I chose to do this because I wanted the everyday office environment to be the central data generator. Even then, the first interview I did was with a member of the Executive Board, an individual I met just once at an ECMI event and did not have daily encounters with unlike the staff at the Flensburg office. There were three main purposes for conducting interviews, these were: (1) clarifying my understanding about specific projects; (2) getting thoughts and feelings 'on the record'; (3) accessing individuals I did not have regular access to. My ethnographic and interview data each informed my textual analysis. ECMI publications and other documents were full of quite inaccessible language and terms which would not have been adequately understood without having immersed oneself within the organisation and the field of autochthonous minority issues. I arrived at the ECMI without a great deal of academic knowledge about minority issues, and part of my ethnographic experience was understanding the field through the understandings of the ECMI researchers themselves. Though I would still not consider myself to be expert on autochthonous minority issues, I was able to garner such a knowledge that I was able to present at a minority languages academic conference (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated a comprehensive overview of my innovative tri-method research methodology. The rationale for crafting this multifaceted approach stemmed from its capacity to thoroughly address the many facets that warranted analysis within the context of my research. This tri-method framework was thoughtfully designed to encompass and dissect the multifarious dimensions essential to my fieldwork.

The first component of this tri-method approach was organisational ethnography. This immersive methodology was selected as it inherently encompassed an exploration of the day-to-day office environment. Through active participation and close observation, it allowed for the discernment of both explicit and implicit practices that organically emerged within this dynamic method. The organic nature of these practices, derived from active engagement and participation, provided profound insights into the inner workings of the ECMI.

The second facet of my tri-method approach entailed interviews. This methodology strategically expanded the scope of my research engagement by facilitating interactions with a diverse array of individuals connected to the ECMI. Beyond the confines of the everyday office environment, interviews provided a platform to engage with both internal and external stakeholders, broadening the spectrum of voices and perspectives that enriched my research.

The final element in this comprehensive tri-method approach was the utilisation of interpretative policy analysis (IPA). This analytical tool was harnessed to scrutinise the extensive array of documents and publications generated by the ECMI. These texts served as the primary form of knowledge transmission within the organisation. The methodical application of IPA fostered an examination of the organisation's policy orientation and the means by which knowledge was disseminated to a broader audience.

Collectively, this tri-method approach was carefully designed to provide a well-rounded and nuanced exploration of the ECMI's multifaceted landscape. By encompassing the day-to-day dynamics, diverse perspectives, and textual underpinnings of the organisation, this methodology offered a robust framework for comprehending the complex interplay of factors that define the ECMI's role in the realm of autochthonous minority issues in Europe.

4 The Schleswig-Holstein Model: A Discursive Tool or Authority Signifier?

4.1 Introduction

Every organisation has its story, and the ECMI's is endemically linked to its home region. The Schleswig-Holstein model represents such a critical element of the ECMI's identity in that the organisational itself exists because of it, and much of their activity in some way can be linked to the region's history. Whilst almost universally viewed as a reductive and problematic practice within political geography, the question of how the Schleswig-Holstein model could be 'geopolitically scripted' to analyse the many other majority-minority conflicts that exist in Europe arises. Scripts such as 'balkanisation', 'Finlandization', "Dutch disease", and "Macedonian syndrome" each evoke images which when presented through discourse can strategically portray a place in a particular way (Agnew, 2009, p.427). More well-known scripts used by world leaders have included President George W. Bush's famous 2002 State of the Union Address, where he famously referred to an Iraq as being "part of an 'axis of evil' alongside Iran and North Korea", the language used was a clear demonstration of an attempt to justify a forthcoming invasion by provoking images of the Second World War's Axis powers – Germany, Japan, and Italy (Sparke, 2007, p.340). But what about a Schleswig-Holstein script? Whilst not immediately recognisable to most of the public at the same level as the "axis of evil", there certainly is at least a surface-level knowledge amongst scholars of autochthonous minority issues – the field of which the ECMI is an explicit part of. In discussions that I had with participants of the conferences I attended representing the ECMI, I frequently outright asked them what they knew about Schleswig-Holstein. I learned that a 'Schleswig-Holstein script', essentially amounted to evoking an image of a region in which two nations committing egregious offences against one another's minority, becomes one whereby the respective minorities enjoy the freedom to use their own language and express their national identity freely without fear of violence.

This chapter thus faces two questions: Should geopolitical scripting always be considered a problematic practice? And in what ways does the model strategically impact ECMI activity? The purpose of this chapter is to explore the significance of the Schleswig-Holstein model in the activity of the ECMI. There are fundamentally two functions of the model to the organisation, one as an discursive tool that guides how different actors at the ECMI process and analyse information about other European minority issues; and the other as a mere authority signifier – to use the language of Bourdieu (1984), as a vessel of 'symbolic capital', how the ECMI presents its history and geographical location to give the perception of expertise about one of the world's most

successful models of majority-minority reconciliation, tolerance, and peaceful cooperation. This symbolic capital has some significant benefits, such as on grant applications or for academic prestige more generally. In reflecting on my time working as a visiting researcher, observing and participating in the production of knowledge, this chapter deliberates over the strategic re-orientation at the ECMI concerning the model and its place in knowledge production, which I witnessed first-hand and saw develop throughout the eleven months I spent at the organisation itself.

Without any consideration as to whether the model is actually used implicitly or explicitly by ECMI researchers in their analyses, it certainly has the potential to be a very powerful intellectual tool. The resolution to the Schleswig-Holstein question is considered to be one of Europe's greatest diplomatic achievements (see Hughes *et al.* 2020) and was the very reason that ECMI itself was founded – the lessons learned from the region could be useful for understanding and analysing the many majority-minority conflicts that were re-emerging in Europe in the 1990s with the break-ups of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. This chapter begins by providing a detailed history of Schleswig-Holstein, narrating its key steps so that the subsequent model itself can be understood.

4.2 The History of Schleswig-Holstein

The so-called 'Schleswig-Holstein question' was an ethno-territorial dispute which rose to prominence during the nineteenth century between competing Danish and German interests. The sheer complexity of the conflict has led to scholars universally claiming the question to be one of the most difficult to truly understand. Wendell Holmes Cook Jr. (1970, p. vii) wrote that it "has rightly been called one of the most complicated questions in European history" – another, K. B. Mowat (1932, p.480), commented that the Schleswig-Holstein question "remained almost as baffling to historians after it was settled as before". Most famously, Henry John Temple, who was the 3rd Viscount Palmerston and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1859-65 and notable for his foreign policy achievements, was said to have quipped that just three people understood it – one was the Prince Consort (Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband), who was dead, a German professor who had been admitted to a lunatic asylum, and himself – though he had forgotten everything he knew about it (Becker-Christiansen, 2014).

The origins of the question were in the Middle Ages, though it was perceived to be "nothing more than a continuing quarrel between the royal families of Denmark" (Cook, 1970, p.vii). The union of the two Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein took place in 1386, when the Counts of Holstein also became the Dukes of Schleswig. The King of Denmark, Christian I, was

elected Duke of Schleswig-Holstein in 1460, on the condition that Schleswig and Holstein were not to be separated and would remain together forever. This was the first official connection formed between the Duchies and Denmark, though "their relations were never any[thing] other than dynastic or personal, of the same kind as those which formerly subsisted between Hanover and Great Britain" (Prange, 1864, p.6). The united Duchies were governed by separate boards, known as Collegium, established in Copenhagen.

It was during the seemingly unrelated Napoleonic Wars that the first signs of real conflict emerged, during which the Kingdom of Denmark had attempted to remain neutral. The Treaty of Kiel, 1814, was disastrous for the nation as Denmark lost Norway by cessation to Sweden as part of "a ploy by the British to disarm the Scandinavians and retain British Naval access to the Baltic" (Briggs, 2005, p.4). At this point in history prior to the 1840s, the residents of the Duchies, though highly diverse ethnically, "were politically passive" (Short, 1969, p.7). Besides Danes and Germans, there was a third relatively large ethnic group, the Frisians. Schleswig was the most diverse of the two Duchies, and scholars even now are not able to truly distinguish what the dominant language was, though north Schleswig spoke mostly Danish, and those in the south mainly Germanic languages. From the Treaty of Kiel, Denmark had become progressively frightened of invasion by an increasingly powerful and imperialistic Prussia. The lack of Scandinavian unity made Denmark even more vulnerable and insecure (Briggs, 2005).

Revolutions broke out "more or less simultaneously in Germany, Denmark and the duchies" in March 1848 (Cook, 1970, p.vii). Like elsewhere in Europe during the 'Springtime of Nations', the revolutions in Denmark and the German states were largely inspired by the rise of romantic nationalism. Each revolution did, however, have a distinctive character; in Denmark it was the wish of revolutionaries to abolish absolutism, in the German states a push for national unity. Non-ethnic feudal polities were dominant in Germany at this time, a system whereby land ownership was intertwined with political power – allegiance and governance were structured around obligations between lords and vassals as opposed to shared ethnic or national identities. Unsurprisingly, these entities were the target of German revolutionaries.

In Denmark, whilst the only link between the country and Schleswig-Holstein was the common sovereign, a succession crisis laid the seeds for war to later occur:

> In Denmark the female line could succeed, whilst in the Duchies the right of succession was confined to the male line. Now, in 1846, the imminent danger of a disruption of the Monarchy, by a failure of heirs in the direct line, inspired King Christian VIII with the desire to avert it, by introducing the Danish law of succession into the Duchies; and he

> issued the famous letters patent announcing his determination to this effect. He wanted to make it out that the homage paid to Denmark in 1721, by a portion of the Duchy called the Gottorp part, applied to the whole of Schleswig, and that England and France had guaranteed his possession of the whole. (Prange, 1864, p.6)

When Christian VIII died on the 20th of January 1848, his successor Frederick VII agreed to reduce his power from absolute, to constitutional, to avert the possibility of a bloody revolution. The Eider-Dane party took to power, and "the new King Frederick VII was obliged to accept a Ministry" that wanted Holstein separated from Schleswig, with the latter incorporated into Denmark (Prange, 1864, p.7). This was formally decreed, but the united Duchies rose up against this, and the Prussian-led German Confederation sent an army to Schleswig-Holstein to assist them. After "an act of unheard-of treachery" in the Prussian government, Denmark was victorious in the First Schleswig War despite having been on the brink of defeat (Prange, 1864, p.7). Secret instructions were conveyed to the Prussian general in Holstein, instructing him not to harm the Danish forces. Simultaneously, assurances were given to the Danish King that actions would be taken to facilitate the submission of the rebellious subjects in Schleswig-Holstein. As a result, the insurgents fighting in Holstein, misled and betrayed into believing in Prussian assistance, suddenly found themselves abandoned by their supposed allies. On July 2nd, 1850, a separate peace agreement was reached between Prussia and Denmark, reinstating the status quo of 1846, effectively leaving the Duchies unsupported and exposed to the Danish forces. This betrayal, orchestrated by the conservative, reactionary government back in power in Berlin, was seen as a shameful desertion of the Duchies by the German nation (Prange, 1864). The London Protocol of 1852 was signed following the end of the war in 1851. This agreement (which the German Confederate Diet never recognised) stipulated that both duchies were joined by personal union to the King of Denmark, though Schleswig had no more constitutional affinity to Denmark than Holstein did – preserving the union that had existed since 1386. However, the 'peace' that existed from 1852 was nothing but a label:

> The Danish rulers governed arbitrarily and tyrannically, more particularly so in Schleswig. Almost all the civil officers and judges of the country were dismissed, and Danes were appointed in their places. The suppression of the German language, and the substitution of the Danish in its place, was especially aimed at. In more than fifty parishes the Danish language was introduced into schools where German had hitherto been solely in use. The

> German names of a great number of places were abolished, and Danish names substituted. (Prange, 1864, p.11-12)

German revolutionaries such as Karl Blind (1862, p.6) regarded Schleswig-Holstein as being "enslaved [by Denmark] so long as the petti fogging[3] Cabinet policy of thirty tyrants is in vogue". Another contemporary source, the Englishman Francis Prange, also believed Denmark to be the provocateur. Publishing his commentary just weeks prior to the Second Schleswig War starting, Prange objected to the present British "sneer[ing] at Germany", questioning why Denmark had not respected the rights of Germans as Holland had in Luxembourg, "where the Germans under Dutch rule are perfectly content and happy" (Prange, 1864, p.16-17). Otto von Bismarck had been planning to annex both Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia even before the London Protocol, with the Diet ordering an invasion the year following in Holstein, but this was delayed. In 1860, France and England intervened, however Denmark continually reneged on their promises to comply with the London Protocol – with the King of Denmark, Frederick VII eventually decreeing a complete separation of Holstein. On the 16th of January 1864, Austria and Prussia sent what was to be an unanswered ultimatum to Denmark on Schleswig – a German army subsequently invaded. Frederick had died in 1863, though his successor Christian IX signed the new constitution and thus an Otto von Bismarck-led coalition marched into the region the following year in February 1864. Lasting for nearly nine months, the Treaty of Vienna ended the war and with the Austro-Prussian forces victorious, both Schleswig and Holstein were ceded to Prussia (Briggs, 2005).

[3] Meaning to "place undue emphasis on petty details".

Figure 3: Left: A map showing the boundaries of the two Duchies and Denmark prior to the Second Schleswig War; Right: A map showing the boundary between Germany and Denmark following the 1920 plebiscites.

The formal unification of Germany occurred in 1866, with the entire territory of the former duchies of Schleswig and Holstein incorporated within it. There were no territorial changes in the region until 1920, where a crushing defeat for Germany led to the 1919 Treaty of Versailles being agreed between Germany and the Allied powers. The Treaty stipulated several territorial changes, though notably in Schleswig, two different plebiscites were held in established zones in which the public was presented with two options, Danish or German sovereignty. Section XII, Article 109 of the document had declared that "The frontier between Germany and Denmark shall be fixed in conformity with the wishes of the population". In the Zone I (Northern Schleswig) vote, 74.9% voted for Denmark, and in Zone II (Central Schleswig), 80.2% chose to remain a part of Germany. Though decisive results, the plebiscites did not end the conflict. Nearly 13,000 people had voted to join Denmark but remained living in Germany, and over 25,000 wanted to remain a part of Germany, but following the vote, were now living in Denmark. Additionally, the electorates of Sonderburg (Danish, Sønderborg), Tondern (Tønder) and Hoyer (Højer) had voted for Germany, but being in Zone I, were transferred to Denmark. No vote was ever held in Zone III

as there was a universal understanding that the area would want to remain a part of Germany. There was deep dissatisfaction and resentment on both sides, with substantial national minorities existing, and some new ones created in Denmark and Germany but without any rights and their national identities under attack.

Though the established boundary itself was not seriously challenged, it was not until 1955 that the geopolitical conditions of the time allowed for a definitive solution to the conflict to be attempted. The Federal Republic of Germany (also known as West Germany) wanted to join NATO, however each of the existing members held a veto over the admission of any new member. To force West Germany into dealing with the situation, Denmark threatened to prevent their membership and thus negotiations ensued which resulted in the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations. These declarations were signed in each of the two cities by German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Danish Prime Minister H.C. Hansen, focussed on promoting friendly relations and co-existence between each of the populations. The principles outlined in the document crucially ensured that people could freely affiliate themselves to Danish or German nationality and culture without barriers by authorities. Additionally, members of each of the two minorities were granted the right to use their preferred language without restrictions, even allowing for each of them to provide schooling in their own languages. The declarations were not legally binding, rather they aimed to establish a reciprocal relationship in which cultural autonomy, kinstate connections and kinstate support were encouraged. Included in the agreements was a recognition from the German minority that their collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Second World War was a terrible mistake, in turn pledging loyalty to the state of Denmark and relinquishing the idea of revising the established 1920 border. Though the German majority in South Schleswig continued to be suspicious of the Danish minority and Danish nationalists' long-term aims, Denmark's accession to the European Community in 1973 improved relations further, continuing the transition from a 'negative' to a 'positive' peace in the region that had begun with the 1949 Copenhagen Protocol and Kiel Declaration (Klatt, 2023; Hughes *et al.*, 2020).

The Schleswig-Holstein model exists for two reasons in particular. Whilst many border regions shared the same characteristics as Schleswig-Holstein following the post-First World War boundary changes, the success seen in Denmark and Germany is, in large part, down to the fact that the people from the region itself were presented with the decision as to where the border between the two countries would be. This democratic decision meant it was much more palatable to those who voted for the losing side in each of the plebiscite. In some cases, even though they identified themselves as Danes, many voters opted to vote for the place they lived to remain in Germany. The second reason relates to post-Second World War politics. Denmark was on the

winning side, and as Schleswig-Holstein belonged to the British-administered area of Germany, it was they who presented Denmark with four options as to the future of the region. The British informed Denmark that they should definitively state the territory it desired to annex without holding another plebiscite; hold new plebiscites; agree and conduct an exchange of populations akin to the partition of India; or finally, leave the border unchanged but reach a mutual agreement of full rights for their respective minorities (Popova *et al.*, 2016). Denmark overcame its revisionist aspirations to opt to preserve the boundary as it was, deciding not to take advantage of a devastated Germany and chose the fourth option, because overall, changing the border would have been extremely destabilising. This decision was enormously unpopular amongst most of the Danish minority in South Schleswig. The 1949 Kiel Declaration was the first progress in the establishment of minority rights, though it is the later Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of 1955 that forms the bedrock of the Schleswig-Holstein model. Whilst the 1920 plebiscites were innovative and crucial, the Declarations allowed for a 'positive' peace to form (Hughes *et al.*, 2020). In 1955, strong irridentist mentalities still existed on both sides of the border, though the agreements allowed for minorities to express their cultural identity freely, particularly in the key area of education:

4. In Schleswig-Holstein general schools and (also specialist) adult education centres as well as kindergartens may be set up by the Danish minority in line with the relevant legal provisions. At schools where teaching is in Danish adequate teaching shall be given in the German language.
5. Parents and persons legally responsible for a child's education may decide freely whether their children are to attend schools where teaching is in Danish.

Section III, articles 4 and 5 in the "STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF THE DANISH MINORITY"

The Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations were an impressive diplomatic solution that provided a win-win situation and laid the foundations for a cooperative future. They set a precedent of seeking mutually beneficial outcomes for both countries and consequently improving the lives of their respective minorities. The declarations both encouraged cultural expression and self-identification with a minority and promoted harmony between the majority and minority populations. Each of these concepts appear frequently in ECMI publications, whether the Schleswig-Holstein model is explicitly mentioned or not. After Bonn-Copenhagen, irridentism gradually subsided as both minorities (particularly the Danish one) began to understand, after a

generation, they had a secure future outside of their kinstate. A crucial factor in the solution was the fact the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations were not legally binding. They were both incorporated into the national law by both countries, however the basis of these declarations was trust. The Danes in Germany and Germans in Denmark are some of the most secure minorities in the world, so the lessons learned there can be extremely valuable elsewhere.

The holding of the plebiscites in 1920, the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of 1955 and each of Germany and Denmark's memberships of the European Community (now European Union) comprise the key, defining features of what now can be considered the 'Schleswig-Holstein model'. The election of candidates from the previously irridentist Danish nationalist party, the SSW[4], in council, state and national elections in Schleswig-Holstein and Germany is a testament to the recent successes of the model. The SSW are now a regionalist party, though it still holds a close association to the Danish and Frisian minority populations. The party is exempt from the 5% threshold requirement for seats decided by proportional representation in elections for the state parliament and the federal German parliament. In 2012, the SSW formed part of the Land government of Schleswig-Holstein for the first time, as part of a coalition with the Social Democrats and Green Party, and in 2021, the party won one seat in the Bundestag. No serious political movement exists that would see South Schleswig return to Denmark if it were to succeed. Aside from political representation, the Danish population in Schleswig-Holstein celebrate their heritage and 'Danishness' at the annual *årsmøde* (in English, 'annual meeting') festival, with the endorsement of local and state politicians from the majority German population. Flensburg is the centre of this event, where it receives widespread coverage in the local Danish language newspaper, *Flensborg Avis*. This newspaper receives funding from both Germany and Denmark, as does *Der Nordschleswiger*, the German-language newspaper for the minority in North Schleswig, on the Danish side of the border. The newspapers represent only a portion of the cultural investment each of Denmark and Germany provide to their respective minorities.

4.3 How does the ECMI itself conceptualise the Schleswig-Holstein model?

In addition to the three key features within the Schleswig-Holstein model there are many other political agreements, minority institutions and participatory structures in the Danish-German borderlands. These have transformed the region from being one hampered by irridentist nationalism and a dearth of minority rights in the early twentieth century, to one where diversity

[4] In English, they are known as the South Schleswig Voters' Association. In German: Südschleswigscher Wählerverband; Danish: Sydslesvigsk Vælgerforening; North Frisian: Söödschlaswiksche Wäälerferbånd

is encouraged and celebrated, and each minority community accepts and enjoys their life outside of their kinstate in the twenty-first century. Schleswig-Holstein can therefore be considered as an example of a 'positive peace' (2.5), and though the ECMI does not explicitly use the terminology of Galtung (1969), its conceptualisation of the model reflects it. Despite scholars of the geographies of peace regarding there to be no universal idea of the concept of 'peace' (Koopman, 2017), the existence and use of models challenges this, and the ECMI's conceptualisation of the Schleswig-Holstein model suggests that there are conditions for a positive peace that may be considered universal. What these conditions look like in practice does not contradict the idea of universal conditions or the assertion that peace holds varied meanings for different groups of people across various times and places (Koopman, 2011b). Rather, models should adapt to their relevant geopolitical context but with the aim of replicating prerequisites – the fundamental conditions needed for a positive peace.

Considering the geopolitical situation in Europe during the 1990s, with the dissolutions of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia commanding most attention in their creation and re-creation of national minorities, the importance of best practice examples in dealing with these kinds of conflicts brought the region of Schleswig-Holstein to the centre of these debates. Kurt Hamer, who was the 'Representative for issues relating to the Danish and German minorities and Frisian affairs', said in 1991 that: "I am convinced that a resolution to the problems of the minorities in Europe is essential for peace on this continent. However, our knowledge of the minorities and of the reasons for their problems is not sufficient for us to base current political decision making. The academic community may contribute to fill this gap". It was Kurt Hamer who first conceptualised the idea of the ECMI as an organisation.

On my second day at the ECMI, I spent the whole afternoon with a senior researcher who was able to articulate, in his opinion, what he perceived to be the key reasons for the Schleswig-Holstein model's existence. Interestingly, this provided my very first *in situ* understanding as to the level of expertise relating to the model that existed at the ECMI. They remarked on the plebiscites as being a crucial beginning, as they provided a democratically decided foundation. This was an unsurprising response, as the ECMI had hosted a conference on the 1920 plebiscites the previous year, marking their 100th anniversary. As part of the same conversation, I discovered something that shocked me considerably. Throughout the years I had known of the ECMI's existence, right through the planning of my fieldwork, I had been under the impression that the model was a crucial part of knowledge production at the organisation, especially considering the founding story. This was even despite of my master's dissertation which explicitly looked at their use of the model in their publications and concluding that it did not appear as a reference point significantly often.

The senior researcher informed me that the ECMI was actually prohibited from conducting original research on the region in which it is based. I explored the full story of this at a later date in an interview with a member of the Executive Board, who told me that across the border there existed an organisation known as the Danish Institute of Border Region Studies, and one of the provisions of the ECMI's founding was that they would not infringe upon the work of the Institute, with the Danish-German borderland region a part of their remit. A so-called 'gentlemen's agreement' existed with them from 1996. A private entity, the Institute was funded by the Danish government, however in 2004, the *Folketing*, the Danish parliament, voted to cease funding organisations like them that existed outside of the university structure. The Institute then became an official department of the *Syddansk Universitet* (University of Southern Denmark), though it eventually dissolved and what is left is a research group called the Centre of Border Region Studies, though their focus is not specifically minority issues. The German part of the border region is especially neglected by them, thus voiding the 'gentlemen's agreement'. What was therefore required, was for this provision to be removed from the ECMI Statutes. In 2018 and 2019, the ECMI underwent an external evaluation which was performed by The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). One of their recommendations was for the ECMI to review its embargo on Danish-German border research – the Executive Board voted with over three-quarters of its members to approve a change in the statutes to allow research to be performed by personnel at the organisation. 2020 marked an appropriate time to adopt this new approach, considering the 100th anniversary of the plebiscites and their importance in what was the become known as the 'Schleswig-Holstein model' (ECMI, 2020).

Despite no original research into the contemporary situation in the border region being conducted during this time, there have nonetheless been instances where the Danish-German model has been analysed. In the ECMI 'Working Paper' published 2016 entitled "Intercultural Coexistence and Cooperation: Is the Model of Schleswig-Holstein Transferrable?", the authors directly investigated the exportability of the successful reconciliation and intercultural cohesion mechanisms from Schleswig-Holstein to other contexts, in the case of the paper, Nagorno-Karabakh. The minority model of Schleswig-Holstein is considered to be "the most comprehensive and advanced of its kind not only in Germany, but also in Europe" and is characterised by the following factors (Popova *et al.*, 2016, p.17, with added notes in *italics*):

- the Referendum of 1920 *(establishing a democratically agreed boundary between the two countries)*
- the recognition of the border despite other temporary irredentist aspirations *(Denmark deciding not to take advantage of Germany after WWII)*

- no violence/displacement *(Denmark rejecting the suggestion of population exchange)*
- the legal settlement
- cultural autonomy
- functional autonomy
- voluntarily self-identification with a minority *(as part of the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations)*
- possibility for political participation *(as part of the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations, SSW exemption from the 5% threshold rule)*
- institutionalised dialogue *(existence of the Minority Commissioner of Schleswig-Holstein and other official institutions)*
- moderating forces *(the United Kingdom and France in particular)*
- the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of 1955 *(a win-win agreement which encouraged mutually beneficial cooperation in the future as well as establish and protect minority rights)*
- shared values since 1945 *(reconciliation following the Second World War)*
- common security interests *(Germany joining NATO following the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations)*
- international cooperation *(Council of Europe, European Union etc.)*
- kinstate and kin-minority *(The German and Danish minorities in the region each have a kinstate)*
- fiscal surplus *(minority institutions are commonly the first to lose funding in economic crises)*
- reciprocity *(win-win agreement in protecting one another's minorities)*
- voluntariness
- from subject to object *(minorities at the forefront of debates)*

These features are vitally important to consider when applying the model to other situations, as Denmark and Germany are both members of the European Union and Schengen Area (implemented in Denmark, March 2001, and Germany, March 1995), which mitigates some of the restrictions that might be present in other minority borderlands. In Schleswig-Holstein, there are nineteen defined pre-conditions "to enable the process of building a multi-cultural society and achieving lasting peace and sustainable development" (Popova *et al.*, 2016, p.18). These are: international involvement as a guarantor for peace; enforced international law; vision for the future; responsibility to people; political will; shared responsibility; rule of law; minority rights; supportive institutions; active civil society; wide participation; supported and promoted diversity; common interests; economic cooperation enhancing interactions; platforms for dialogue; intensive grass-root level contacts; changing mindsets; symbolic unification; and identity building. The authors (Popova *et al.*, 2016) consider that the current Schleswig-Holstein model of inter-cultural

dialogue is maintained at both grassroots and official levels through the active involvement of stakeholders on both sides of the border, political will to implement and safeguard the protection of the democratic rights of all citizens through legal frameworks, continued common economic and security interests, preservation of minority electoral opportunities and active involvement of minorities in the decision-making process in stable institutions, and an active civil society which fosters an overarching regional identity that emphasises common ground over differences. Conditions of a positive peace such as "the recognition of the border despite other temporary irredentist aspirations" and "self-identification with a minority" may have been central to peacebuilding in Schleswig-Holstein, but the ECMI, in this piece, has conceptualised the conditions for the positive peace in the region as general factors of successful peacebuilding. Though the Schleswig-Holstein version of these conditions might be different to that which might exist in the future in Nagorno-Karabakh, the criterion itself can be viewed as a universal ideal – contrasting Koopman's (2017) assertion that there is no universal ideal of what peace actually is. The ECMI is considered to be a leading authority on non-territorial autonomy (NTA), of which the Schleswig-Holstein model is considered to be an example (Klatt, 2022; 2023). It is a concept which refers to autonomy arrangements in which a minority group is granted certain rights without being restricted to a defined geographic territory (Coakley, 1994, 2016a, 2016b; Malloy, 2019; Nimni *et al.*, 2013; Smith, 2014, 2013). No separate geographic region is required to be established, rather NTA agreements work within existing systems (Coakley, 2016a).

Of the many minority institutions in Schleswig-Holstein that relate to NTA, a recent innovation has been the DialogForumNorden (DFN), a platform established at the suggestion of the Minorities Commissioner in 2004. This initiative unites delegates from various organisations and institutions in the area that are affected by minority issues. Its primary aim is to promote mutual information sharing and jointly advocate for minority concerns as needed. By consolidating interests, minority groups can more effectively assert their interests through collective action (DialogForumNorden, 2017). DFN is one of many institutions that might be replicable in other minority contexts in Europe. They meet twice a year and discuss issues such as the ongoing border controls reintroduced by Denmark in 2016, as a result of the refugee 'crisis'. They see these border controls as being especially damaging to the minority stakeholders of the border region. It is important to note, however, that the Schleswig-Holstein model has its limitations in terms of its applicability to other situations, and these were relayed to me by multiple researchers at the ECMI. Firstly, the two largest minority communities, Danish and German peoples, each have a kinstate. This is important because a kinstate can be a significant source of political and economic support for a minority. A kinstate can provide the minority with a greater sense of security in that many

members of minority communities are frightened of assimilation and the loss of their cultural heritage:

> Without both of the minorities having a kinstate, the shape of the borderland situation changes completely. […] you cannot use the Danish-German model for the Roma, for instance. In Germany, many of the minority institutions here are just paid for by the Danish government, not Germany. Where does this money come from with the Roma? It does not exist. (Interview 11, former employee)

In Schleswig-Holstein, the Danish government supports the minority through the *Dansk Skoleforening for Sydslesvig* (Danish School Association for South Schleswig), among other institutions such as cultural centres and libraries. More generally, in majority-minority landscapes where there may be a risk of violence, a kinstate provides an obvious safe haven in this regard. With a minority such as the Roma, no such kinstate exists to offer this kind of support, as illustrated by the comment from a former ECMI researcher. Moreover, the Roma are not a recognised minority in every European country despite their presence, with one of these countries being Denmark. The response I received regarding my query about the applicability of the Danish-German model to other majority-minority issues in Europe reflected the general opinion of others I had approached – there was a distinct recognition that despite its considerable success, there are so many variables that make researchers hesitant to comment on its applicability elsewhere.

The second consideration to make, is that the Schleswig-Holstein model comes from a borderland region in which the two countries operate a relatively open border, even before the Schengen Agreement – and are both members of the European Union. However, innovations such as the DFN can bring minority interests to the forefront of political debate – and a platform such as this would be even more needed in a minority landscape where these groups are without kinstates. The DFN can therefore be considered a part of the Schleswig-Holstein model that could have significant benefits when exported elsewhere, and indeed the ECMI was involved in a project in North Macedonia where an adapted version of the forum was implemented in the city of Tetovo.

The fundamental essence of the Schleswig-Holstein 'script' can be encapsulated as follows: The region encompasses diverse groups characterised by distinct national identities that have traversed a history marred by instances of violence and conflict. Notably, these groups embarked on a democratic resolution of a border dispute when the political conditions allowed it. This process culminated in the execution of mutual trust-forging agreements between the two nation-states, designed to safeguard the interests of minorities situated on either side of the border. This

was a win-win solution for both countries. Central to this arrangement is the accord that grants these minorities the right to self-identification and unfettered cultural expression. Furthermore, these groups benefit from substantial investments aimed at bolstering their societal and political presence. Noteworthy are the shared concerns among the stakeholders within the region, which are effectively solidified through legally binding agreements. In addition, institutions characterised by notable minority representation actively engage in dialogues with state authorities through a multitude of initiatives, including forums and dedicated governmental representatives. Facilitating this collaborative environment is an open border that enables cross-border cooperation and interaction between the two countries.

4.4 The Schleswig-Holstein Model as a Discursive Tool

Although the contemporary situation in the Danish-German borderlands was not a part of the ECMI's knowledge production strategy until 2020, the gentlemen's agreement did not explicitly prevent the model itself from featuring in journal article submissions, book chapters, or reports. This section explores the use of the Schleswig-Holstein model as a discursive tool, that is, how conceptualisations of parts of the model have been used in ECMI knowledge transmissions. Peacebuilding scripts such as that of Schleswig-Holstein can emphasise the construction of formal institutions, providing legitimacy to interventions (Goetze, 2016). This legitimacy serves as a form of symbolic capital in the field of minority issues. With coverage of geopolitical scripting within the literatures of political geography consisting primarily of how foreign policy elites "domesticat[e] the exotic" (Agnew, 2009, p.427) for the purpose of maintaining and securing legitimacy (Ó Tuathail, 2002), this section offers a different suggestion – that scripting can be a beneficial practice. Scripting a majority-minority region as being in need of grassroots minority institutions, institutionalised dialogue, or international cooperation is very different to drawing comparison between the Axis powers of the Second World War and the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein (Sparke, 2007). The most obvious contrast is that the purpose of scripting Schleswig-Holstein – in using it as a discursive tool for peacebuilding purposes, is a much more positive reasoning than justifying military invasion. The second reason geopolitical scripting should be seen a more positive light is that peacebuilding policy interventions which utilise an aspect of an existing and successful model like Schleswig-Holstein, may hold more legitimacy than measures introduced without it. In the Bourdieusian sense (see Bourdieu, 1990, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2013; Putnam, 2009), the symbolic capital attached to the Schleswig-Holstein model can be repurposed in majority-minority regions outside of the Danish-German borderlands. This section explores a key ECMI action project, "Minorites in the Western Balkans", which I argue is

an example of geopolitical scripting of the Schleswig-Holstein model in a peacebuilding intervention.

Amongst the large catalogue of ECMI publications are various references to the model. The 2021 version of the ECMI's annual "Perspectives" brochure outright mentions the Schleswig-Holstein model as serving as a "best practice example for both research and action projects". In the 2022 version, it claims that the ECMI has "always had a finger on the pulse of this region", and in "monitoring debates in local-language media, maintaining collaborative contacts with minority organisations, sponsoring dialogue events and conducting regional policy research, the ECMI has built a strong foundation for both conveying this best-practice abroad as well as deepening it on location" (ECMI, 2022, p.22). The extent to which this "finger on the pulse" resonated within actual ECMI knowledge production, or as an authority signifier, was of deep interest to me throughout my time at the Kompagnietor. Explicit examples of the ECMI transmitting expertise on aspects of the minority situation in the region are rare, though a 2018 conference paper provides a direct instance in which original research was conducted. Entitled "National Minorities vis-à-vis Political Developments in their Kin States. The Case of Flensborg Avis Newspaper", it examines how minority media presents information regarding political, economic and social developments in their kinstates. Focusing on *Flensborg Avis*, the Danish-language newspaper of the minority in Schleswig-Holstein, it looks at whether it passively conveys political content or actively involves itself in the debates in Denmark, its kinstate, by analysing three-years-worth of publications. Following this, the same researcher and another have published in external academic journals about minority language media in the region, including work on *Der Nordschleswiger*, the German-language newspaper for the minority in Denmark. None of these pieces, however, signify any conceptualisation of the Schleswig-Holstein model as something to export.

While the work under consideration here does not overtly script the Schleswig-Holstein model as something to export, it is evident that the authors are actively interacting with the region, and it is informing their work. Moreover, the dissemination of aspects of the Schleswig-Holstein model within academic forums like conferences and other scholarly interactions underscores its growing influence. By presenting insights related to the Danish-German minority landscape, the authors contribute to the dissemination of knowledge pertaining to the model's underlying principles and real successes. These presentations not only underscore their engagement with the model but also contribute to the larger discourse around it within the academic community. Importantly, the act of exploring the Danish-German minority landscape resonates with the

ECMI's broader claim to expertise in the region, and thus, increases the organisation's symbolic capital in academia (Bourdieu, 1998).

Whilst the ECMI work on minority-language media has not served as a medium to promote Schleswig-Holstein as an exportable model, there have been other projects which have done just that. An action-orientated example of the Schleswig-Holstein model being exported to other contexts was the "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project, which was launched by the State Chancellery of Schleswig-Holstein in collaboration with the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), along with their implementation partners, the ECMI and FUEN (the Federal Union of European Nationalities, who also have an office in Flensburg) (ECMI *et al.*, 2018). The purpose of the project was to enhance Roma peoples' access to municipal services by introducing local actors to the Schleswig-Holstein model. The report describes the inspiration for the project, whilst also arguing against simple geopolitical scripting:

> The project, Minorities in Western Balkans, was designed by its partners with the clear aim to transfer the knowledge and best practices to partners in the Western Balkans. Through different stages and activities during the project, bit by bit, the local partners could learn about the minority protection model in the state Schleswig-Holstein. The real "break-through" followed the study visit to Schleswig-Holstein in October 2016, where the representatives of the Municipality of Bijeljina, the NGO Otaharin and the social centre Bijeljina, learned different models and instruments for minority protection. The direct contact with many relevant stakeholders during their stay in the region was very important to understand that the German-Danish border region is as unique as it is the Western Balkans region. Demonstrating that no model can be simply copied and implemented in any other place. (ECMI *et al.*, 2018, p.39-40)

In asserting that models should not be directly transferred, this indicates further that the ECMI prescribes to the ideas set out of by geographers of peace such as Williams and McConnell, who underline the importance of place-specific ideals of peace (Williams and McConnell, 2011; McConnell *et al.*, 2014; Williams, 2016). The ECMI was involved in the project because of their active involvement "in sharing the Schleswig-Holstein experience" (FUEN, 2017). The project comprised training sessions for local municipality representatives and non-governmental organisations who deal with Roma issues, aiming to establish networks and promote the Schleswig-Holstein model to them. The Roma minority of Bijeljina faces very different issues to those who live in the Danish-German borderlands, with "social protection, citizenship status, reintegration

of returnees, [and] school drop outs" given as four primary concerns (ECMI *et al.*, 2018, p.40). The second stage of the project involved a delegation visiting Schleswig-Holstein and holding meetings with the State Chancellery, local institutions, and minority organisations in the area. An intensive workshop then followed, before five project proposals were drafted. Crucially, the Minority Commissioner role that exists in Schleswig-Holstein was then adapted and created for the city of Bijeljina in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

Schleswig-Holstein Model (Original)	**Bijeljina Model (Adapted)**
Political figure (political appointment) – reports to the Schleswig-Holstein Prime Minister and Parliament	Employee (permanent position within the City Administration) – reports to the Head of the Social Services Department at the Municipality and the Mayor
A link between the Schleswig-Holstein government and the minorities and between bodies responsible for minority issues at regional, national, cross border and European levels	A link between the local government and the minorities
A contact point for the minority communities and their members	A contact point for the minority communities and their members
Purpose: To ensure and maintain close contacts with the minorities and to enable their access to the Schleswig-Holstein government	Purpose: To support the planning and provision of services to the vulnerable groups and minority communities in the region
Functions: • Provides advisory service to the Schleswig-Holstein Prime Minister and government • Represents the Schleswig-Holstein government before the minorities • Conducts dialogue-meetings and consultations with minorities	Functions: • Maintains close contacts with stakeholders and target groups • Receives complaints and answer enquiries • Collects data and monitors developments within communities

Table 2: A table showing a comparison between the Schleswig-Holstein version of the 'Minority Commissioner' with the adapted version in Bijeljina, Bosnia-Herzegovina. (Minority Monitor, accessed 2023)

The main similarities of the two models are that both Commissioners serve as a link between minority groups and government, and that their advisory and support functions have the purpose of ensuring the needs of minorities are heard and addressed. Conversely, the differences

are much more pronounced. Notably, the Bijeljina Minority Commissioner operates only at the municipal level, as opposed the Schleswig-Holstein version which may take matters to the continental level. Additionally, the adapted model's primary purpose is more focused on supporting the planning and provision of services, rather than the original's aim of maintaining close contact between minorities and their access to government. With these differences and others, this suggests that, as opposed to an intellectual tool, the Schleswig-Holstein model instead serves as a script – by associating this policy implementation with an existing successful best practice model of peacebuilding between minority and majority, the Bijeljina innovation holds greater legitimacy, provided it is "performed convincingly" (Ó Tuathail, 2002, p.620). Geopolitical scripts generate emotional responses evoking particular images (Dodds, 1993) – in the case of the Schleswig-Holstein model, these are positive. Through reasoning the Bijeljina Minority Commissioner as an 'adapted' version of Schleswig-Holstein's, the Bosnian city is in turn scripted as a minority-majority landscape similar to the Danish-German borderlands, and consequently one which can develop into a positive peace through measures which promote a vision for the future; responsibility to people; political will; supportive institutions – and many other aspects such as those outline by Popova *et al.* (2016) in their conceptualisation of the model.

The perspective on this policy intervention being that it should be viewed more as geopolitical scripting as opposed to the model serving as an intellectual tool, is only extrapolated further when considering their main partner's own commentary on the project. On its website, FUEN (2024) also criticises the general practice of transferring models, aligning itself with the prevailing understandings of peace outlined by peace geographers:

> The success story with the transfer and adaptation of the Schleswig-Holstein model of Minority Commissioner to the city of Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, can be viewed as an isolated case of a project achievement rather than as a regular international practice.

Having interviewed one of the individuals on the ECMI side involved with the project, the key changes made to the Schleswig-Holstein version were clearly a result of the political situation in the city. The most obvious demonstration of this concerns how the Commissioner is appointed – with the Bijeljina version essentially a civil servant as opposed to a politician, owing to the political instability in the region. Political crises do indeed occur in Schleswig-Holstein (see Hughes *et al.*, 2020 on the events of the 2010 *årsmøde*), though in Bosnia-Herzegovina the situation is different:

> In Schleswig-Holstein, human rights are not a relative issue. For this project, the concern in Bosnia [wa]s that polarisation of the political establishment means no political appointment can bridge these gaps and support for the entire thing would collapse. (Interview 11, former employee)

Indeed, FUEN recognise this as well in their writings about the project, stating that "in the context of the unstable political situations (as in the Western Balkan countries), it is of major importance that the establishment of a new structure at the local level is supported by the different political parties so that it is seen as a public and not as a political endeavour" (Minority Monitor, 2023)[5]. From the discussion thus far about the development of the Minorities in the Western Balkans project, three critical observations of this thesis about the political geography are evident. Firstly, the discursive activity of think tanks like the ECMI highlights that geopolitical scripting can indeed be a positive practice, in contrast to the prevailing narrative that its minimising of geography and would suggest, especially in peacebuilding policy interventions. The argument is not that the transfer of models is a desirable practice. Instead, it is that a powerful story can be told through a script like the resolution to the Schleswig-Holstein question, which can serve as a powerful form of symbolic capital, in that it provides legitimacy to a policy in an 'unstable' region where political developments are often lacking in it and are therefore more likely to fail. Secondly, analysing peacebuilding policy interventions like in Bijeljina emphasises the importance for political geographers to engage more so with peace, as opposed to the general obsession with war and violence. Discourse, the typical focus of scholars in critical geopolitics, is very much still prevalent in geopolitical knowledge production about peacebuilding, and this new direction of attention should be further welcomed in this academic field as well. Thirdly, this re-scaling of analysis highlights the importance of analysing the activities of organisations outside of formal governmental structures and elite media organisations, entities which have previously been the primary focus of studies of geopolitical scripting.

The Bijeljina Minority Commissioner represents one of the two policy interventions from the Western Balkans project of interest to this thesis. The other, the implementation of a dialogue forum in North Macedonia inspired by a Schleswig-Holstein innovation, also represented an opportunity for the ECMI and its project partners to conceptualise to the Danish-German model and apply it to another context.

[5] See: https://minoritymonitor.eu/practice/TRANSFORMING-A-VISION-INTO-REALITY-BIJELJINA-MINORITY-COMMISSIONER

Dialogue Forum Norden (DFN), Schleswig-Holstein Model (original)	Social Dialogue Forum (SONCE), Tetovo (adapted)
• Non-formal structure; non-hierarchical cooperation and communication Forum • Information exchange between minorities - facilitate the information flow between the participants and agreements regarding any relevant issues • Meetings are called and chaired by the Minority Commissioner of Schleswig-Holstein • Members – the Schleswig-Holstein Parliament, public authorities, Universities of the region, NGOs, minority organisations • Indirect impact on developments • Informal organisation functioning as a consultative body external to the state-level public administration	• A formal structure of the City Administration of Tetovo • Public-civic partnership for the socio-economic development of the community and better planning and provision of support to vulnerable groups • Regular meetings chaired by the Major of Tetovo • Members - public authorities, NGOs, minority organisations • Direct impact (decision-making powers) • Since 2019, merged with the LG Social Council (mandatory by law structure to the local level public administration)

Table 3: A table showing a comparison between the Schleswig-Holstein version of the Dialogue Forum, and the adapted version in Tetovo, North Macedonia. (Minority Monitor, accessed 2024)[6]

In a further example of direct policymaking influence by the ECMI, the transfer of the DialogForumNorden to Tetovo, North Macedonia, also demonstrates that the power of the Schleswig-Holstein script can be used for effective peacebuilding. Moreover, as an action project, the discussion of the impact the interventions in Bijeljina and Tetovo had, reflects the ongoing

[6] See: https://minoritymonitor.eu/practice/TETOVO-FORUM-FOR-SOCIAL-DIALOGUE-AND-COOPERATION-The-Societal-Benefits-from-the-Minority-Majority-Cooperation

debate at the ECMI in regard to what kind of work and projects the organisation should pursue (see Chapter 6). It was identified that Tetovo needed something similar to the DialogForumNorden (DFN) in Schleswig-Holstein by the government of the city and the project partners. The implemented result was the "Forum for Social Dialogue and Cooperation" (FORUM), a platform designed to promote minority-majority cooperation. The non-governmental organisation SONCE, who describe themselves as a Roma Democratic Development Association, visited Schleswig-Holstein to learn about the model there, before then implementing an adapted version in Tetovo and serving as a permanent secretary of FORUM. Like explored in Bijeljina, the adapted model in Tetovo also saw a number of significant changes with the Schleswig-Holstein version. One of the most significant adaptions was that FORUM was designed to be part of a formal structure in the city administration and conducting regular meetings, as opposed to them being called at the pleasure of the Minority Commissioner. FORUM was also granted some direct decision-making powers, whereas as material political autonomy is not something which exists in the DFN. The FORUM innovation also marks an example of aspects of the Schleswig-Holstein model being adapted for contexts without kinstate minorities, as the project was guided by SONCE who focus primarily on Roma issues. Amidst the Schleswig-Holstein context, where the matters concerning the Danish and German minorities command the most significant attention, it is worth noting that the non-kinstate Frisian minority also holds representation within the DFN. This additional aspect underscores the parallels existing between FORUM and the DFN.

> In the summer of 2017, the project partners from ECMI and FUEN attended a planning meeting it Tetovo with and extended team from SONCE. The idea around the adaptation of the positive practice from the region or Schleswig-Holstein was further clarified based on the detailed information provided by SONCE, regarding the challenges that the implementation of the minority rights in the country and the region in particular. An agreement was reached that the structure that would be established in Tetovo and should aim at fostering the better provision of social support to the vulnerable groups in the municipality, by creating a space for a regular dialogue with the local authorities and by promoting cooperation among minorities and their organization. (ECMI *et al.*, 2018, p.45)

The "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project is the most recent example of the ECMI being directly involved in policy implementation directly inspired by the Schleswig-Holstein model, though it was an action-orientated project which in the last few years, is the kind of which

ECMI has moved away from in favour of more academic-focused work. Nonetheless, the coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact in the halting of action-orientated work. It was the original intention of my project to accompany the ECMI on an action project in Transnistria, where I would have been able to observe this activity ethnographically (see 3.2.4). In analysing this particular project primarily through textual evidence, this brought me to question what the current staff at the ECMI think about the model's application to research-orientated projects. However, it was clear that researchers at ECMI did not consider the Schleswig-Holstein to be of use in their own research agendas. Generally, the staff recognised and reiterated that they understood it was a part of the ECMI's history, but their personal expertise lay elsewhere, and they were not able to see how the model could be useful in their geographical area, though there was a generic use of it in project applications. A junior researcher, whose geographical specialism is in Central Asia, regarded the Schleswig-Holstein model to be too alien to the issues faced by minorities there:

> We are funded by the German and Danish governments, so I think there is a natural interest in covering the region. For a long time, this has been one of our features which we always refer to and this is one of the very reasons that ECMI exists, with the success story of the arrangement with two minorities. German and Danish co-existing, reaching agreements, solidifying this example in the form of a research centre. We use references to the Danish-German border region mainly in action-projects, for the Ukraine projects or the Balkans. We had a project idea to bring Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs over so they could learn about the model that is in place here. But in research I am not sure because that was not necessarily on the agenda of most researchers, or it was not in their research interest. […] I never really refer to this in my research, I don't know how I would apply this to the Central Asian context, while in action projects it has more implication, more added value there, because then you can refer to documents, legal arrangements, taxation, work arrangements and so on. Taxation and language in this region, many arrangements to make it easier […] Schleswig-Holstein was more prominent at the beginning of ECMI, for many reasons the topic was dead. The team got bigger, the geographical focus began to expand. (Interview 2, junior researcher).

For this staff member, the Schleswig-Holstein model, in terms of research-orientated activity, offers only few benefits. What this interview revealed to me instead was another iteration of the observation that the ECMI symbolises the model itself, in that the organisation only exists because of how successful the resolution was. This further exemplifies the symbolic capital the

ECMI holds through its insistence on the geographical connection the organisation has the borderland region and is also interesting because researchers (not just this interviewee) were consistently describing the ECMI in this way. Even though I was with the ECMI for nearly a year, I was still an outsider and in an interview environment, the occasion could be considered an opportunity to promote the organisation in their own words. To keep reiterating the organisation and the region's history in tandem suggests that the model, even if not used as an intellectual tool, holds significant symbolic capital. Whilst acknowledging the Schleswig-Holstein model was also not beneficial for them to utilise "at all", a senior researcher informed me that in a project they were doing about how schools deal with bullying (in the context of the Roma), research would be starting with a few schools in Schleswig-Holstein so some knowledge about the local borderland region would be created and utilised for another context (Interview 4, senior researcher).

Though these interviews with current staff suggest they have little use for the model, other developments have suggested otherwise. The Popova *et al.* (2016) piece, for instance, was a crucial element in the ECMI's involvement with the Minorities in the Western Balkans project – the conceptualisation of the model as something exportable was followed only a short time later with actual policy implementation. This points towards the ways in which research-orientated knowledge production can inform action-projects (see Chapter 6). This piece, which concerned the model's applicability to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the Armenia-Azerbaijan borderlands, provides an example of the kind of work that the ECMI can do about Schleswig-Holstein that relates specifically to its exportability:

> Despite the current circumstances and the lack of a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, there is still a way forward. The model of Schleswig-Holstein clearly indicates that the key player in the process of reconciliation is the civil society. The active grass-roots level has the potential to go beyond the political stalemate and to make a significant contribution to bringing people together. The bottom-up approach to fostering inter-cultural dialogue and the will for cooperation and living together is, however, dependent on the political support coming from the national government. Without this, trust towards organisations involved in reconciliation activities would be minimal and the scope and impact of their activities would be limited (Popova *et al.*, 2016, p.29).

In the case of the Danish minority especially, irridentism only began to subside amongst the most nationalistic once the grassroots institutions which promoted reconciliation began to come to fruition. Thus, the authors here conclude that in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, similar

institutions to those in Schleswig-Holstein which concentrate on bottom-up inter-cultural dialogue are needed. After all, many of the international standards of human rights which the ECMI considers to be the legal bedrock of minority rights still apply in Nagorno-Karabakh, yet the situation for each minority is far worse than in Schleswig-Holstein. This suggests that the Schleswig-Holstein model is therefore only applicable to places which already have the basics of 'negative' peace established. For the Danish-German borderlands, the first step was the democratic establishment of the border.

In 2021, the ECMI held a conference marking the 100th anniversary of plebiscites which were held in Schleswig following the Treaty of Versailles. Schleswig was not the only region in Europe to have held such votes, with Allenstein and Marienwerder (Western and Eastern Prussia), Upper Silesia (German-Polish borderlands), Carthinia (Austria and Slovenia border) and Burgenland (Austria and Hungary border) all holding similar plebiscites. The purpose of the conference was to highlight the significance of the plebiscites and their influence on the present-day circumstances faced by national minorities in the concerned regions. Moreover, the conference aimed to elaborate on the idea of self-determination and the legal structures that emerged after the First World War. The conference was an opportunity for the ECMI to authoritatively claim the Schleswig-Holstein region as an academic specialism, as well as to teach the participants at the event about the history and model. Many of the papers and talks were directly pitched at understanding the history of Schleswig-Holstein and conceptualising how a region afflicted by war and then irridentist resentment could provide lessons in applying the 'model' to other contexts. Some titles included: "Plebiscites, minorities and the right of self-determination – some lessons from 1920", "Pax Populi? On the Conflict Resolution Potential of Self-Determination Referendums", "Principles and Politics: Flensburg and Klagenfurt in the Plebiscites of 1920", "Where is Schleswig? Danish, German and International Conceptions of the Schleswig Plebiscite", "Plebiscites and the Difficult Transition to Peace after the First World War" and "Referendum and conflict: what makes the losing minority more likely to accept the result?". This conference demonstrated further the potential of the Schleswig-Holstein model to be used elsewhere, particularly in regard to boundary disputes and the problems that occur even after a border is democratically established.

This conference also served as a showcase of the Schleswig-Holstein model's viability for application in other contexts, particularly in the realm of boundary disputes and the persistent challenges that ensue even after the democratic demarcation of borders. Although many of the presentations were delivered by external parties, the ECMI nonetheless utilised the event to bolster its symbolic capital through establishing its authority over the model. This suggests another

purpose to the model, in that the Schleswig-Holstein resolution is well known to scholars of minority issues as a model of best practice, and by successfully holding a claim over expertise on it, by extension, the ECMI can be seen as a more valuable authority over minority issues more generally.

Whilst the "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project and the article concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh region were explicit engagements with the model concerning its export capacity, there is little else to discuss regarding publications in this regard. Nonetheless, the Western Balkans project provided valuable evidence to the claim that the use of the Schleswig-Holstein model to mediate issues in other places can be a very positive one, and that there is demonstratable evidence in the fact the versions of the Minority Commissioner and DFN in Bijeljina and Tetovo respectively have worked well and benefitted the minorities they serve. Despite the lack of engagement with the model prior to 2020, the situation changed drastically during my fieldwork, when a new research cluster dedicated to minority issues in the region was announced. The following section details the development of the innovation.

4.5 "Minority Issues in the Denmark-Germany Border Region": A New Research Cluster

In January 2022, it was publicly announced that a new ECMI research cluster focusing on Danish-German minority issues would be established, and applications for the head of the cluster were invited. The creation of this cluster was the result of an external evaluation process that took place in 2018 and 2019 by a panel of four people representing The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), which recommended that the ECMI adopt a renewed academic approach to the border region. The evaluation drew upon the wishes of the funding bodies to suggest that the ECMI focus more on the Danish-German minority landscape. The representatives of Denmark, Germany and Schleswig-Holstein provide over 90% of the ECMI's, thus this pressure meant a change of thematic direction in the organisation's research (Chapter 6).

For this reason, since 2020, the research focus on the German-Danish border region has become more overt and pronounced, not only in the establishment of the new cluster, but also their participation in networks such as the Minderheiten-Kompetenz-Netzwerk (Minority Competence Network of Schleswig-Holstein/South Denmark), a newly established organisation which includes the other two minorities of the border region (Sinti/Roma and North Friesians) in their work. I was informed during my interviews that the German and Danish representatives on the Executive Board have been very keen for the ECMI to concentrate on the region much more.

These representatives directly represent each government – some are members of parliament, some are civil servants, and others are senior academics.

Among the research staff, the debate around the German-Danish borderland region revolves around how they can increase their visibility and add value. While some believe that the contemporary situation in the borderland region requires greater engagement, others consider the minorities of Schleswig-Holstein to be among the best protected in the world and argue that the ECMI's attention should be directed elsewhere. These discussions were part of the 'identity crisis' debates at the ECMI I observed during my ethnography, forming part of the broader discussion as to whether the institution should focus primarily on producing or one which focuses more on action-orientated projects that involve policy advising, on-the-ground and out-in-the-field work with minority groups, or policy implementation (Chapter 6). Whilst the Schleswig-Holstein model has rarely been explicitly referenced in their academic publications over the past decade, the new cluster signifies a substantial change in institutional strategy regarding the region, one where the Danish-German borderland region is the central focus.

In the 2023 version of the annual "ECMI Perspectives" brochure, the Schleswig-Holstein model is signposted as a best practice model for minority borderlands regions. The 2023 document is the first to discuss the cluster in operation. An upcoming workshop scheduled for the latter half of 2023 is noted as a significant milestone, with its focus dedicated to showcasing the results of a series of consultation exercises aimed at generating discussions on policy matters. In addition to this event, the section provides details as to the thematic direction of the cluster in the form of four research questions:

(1) What are the key elements of minority accommodation, empowerment and inclusion in the model?
(2) What conflicts and issues remain to be resolved given the political climate that acknowledges and supports national minorities?
(3) How does this create new spaces for cross-border region-building and for developing border regions as attractive living spaces?
(4) What will be the impact of these developments on minority life?

It is interesting that both research questions (1) and (3) are directly pitched at conceptualising the minority situation in Schleswig-Holstein as a model. Additionally, in specifically outlining border regions as the context in which it will do this, this is a clear indication that the Schleswig-Holstein model will be methodically applied. Though the cluster promises some

interesting developments, it launched on the 1st of September 2022, just two weeks before my fieldwork ended on the 15th. Therefore, my experience of the cluster is in its conception, having observed the hiring process, discussed with the staff their views on its existence and goals before it begun its operation.

The inception and establishment of the cluster can be attributed in entirety to the directives of the Executive Board, rather than originating from a grassroots initiative by the ECMI research staff. In one conversation I engaged in with a researcher before conducting interviews for the open position were conducted, they expressed reservations regarding the necessity of this undertaking. Their perspective was rooted in the existence of an extensive body of literature about the model already existing and the contemporary status of the minorities in the region being, according to them, "extremely good". This viewpoint is intriguing considering one of the foundational reasons for the ECMI's establishment was its potential to offer vital insights following the dissolutions of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which led to the emergence of numerous new minority borderland regions. The individual found it puzzling that the Executive Board's focus seemed to deliberately shift away from Eastern Europe, especially given the fact that the status of minorities in the Balkans as a whole, is "not extremely good". This discrepancy underscores the fact that while the organisation has indeed made notable strides in more prominently integrating the model into its research output, this shift has been motivated by the preferences of the funders' representatives, who emphasise a "narrowing of the geographical" particularly towards the region from which the funding originates (Interview 1, Executive Board member). The Danish-German borderlands, as exemplified by the recent research cluster, have only garnered significant attention in recent times, contrasting with the previous minimal emphasis on the model in this context.

4.6 The Schleswig-Holstein Model as an Authority Signifier

Authority signifiers can be crucial for think tanks in their pursuit of attaining symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998). These authority signifiers serve as markers or signs that indicate the legitimacy, competence and power of those using them in that field. These may appear in the form of academic qualifications or prestigious job titles, but in the case of the ECMI, the Schleswig-Holstein model is an important authority signifier and converts symbolic capital into social recognition within the field of minority issues. This section explores how the ECMI advertises its close relationship with the three governments most associated with the Schleswig-Holstein model to claim authority over it, but also position itself as an expert on European autochthonous minority issues more generally. Symbolic capital is itself a form of authority that is recognised and accepted by society and includes things like prestige, honour, and reputation – it demands recognition and

legitimises its holders' power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2013). For a think tank such as the ECMI, claimed expertise over the Schleswig-Holstein model could be considered "misrecognition, or of the belief […] by virtue of which persons wielding authority are endowed with prestige", as it lacks evidence for it, given its absence of consistent and detailed engagement with the model for most of its history (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2013, p.299). I had to opportunity to ask almost everyone at the ECMI about the ways in the Schleswig-Holstein model influenced their work as an intellectual tool, and frequently I would be told that no, it did not impact their analyses in any way at all. One researcher, who echoed this feeling, told me that "I am not sure we even know if the Schleswig-Holstein model even works" (Interview 14, junior researcher). Nonetheless, the symbolic capital carried by being an authority over the model was widely recognised, as it is by those in the field of minority issues. A member of the Executive Board told me about a time when a delegation from South Tyrol were visiting the Centre and they were expecting them to ask "about what's going on in Kosovo, what's going on in Ukraine and other places, but the surprise was this delegation was not interested at all and they wanted to know in depth about the Danish-German minority model" (Interview 1, Executive Board member). At the conferences I attended with the ECMI, especially the one held in the Danish Library in Flensburg, the keynote speakers and presenters each made sure to reference the importance of hosting the event in a location with so much symbolic significance to minority issues.

In writing on the IMF's power-knowledge disseminations, Popke argues that they exert power through its programs which "are justified through a narrative constructing the countries concerned as ignorant and ultimately at fault for their situations" (Popke, 1994, p.258). Whilst the ECMI does not propagate a discourse that other organisations do not have knowledge or authority over the model, it does geopolitically exert its authority over the model through its geographical connection and governmental associations, in particular. These strategic decisions contrast with the prevailing understandings of academic think tanks in regard to symbolic capital attainment. The prevailing literature on think tanks has continually emphasised financial and political 'independence' as the most crucial component in establishing 'authority' for a think tank (see Adeosun, 2019; Ahmad, 2008; Arin, 2013; Jezierska, 2018; Jezierska and Sörbom, 2021; McGann, 2016; Misztal, 2012; Rich, 2004), yet the case of the ECMI suggests this assertion does not have universal applicability (see 5.5). In contrast, the ECMI's clear and specific promotion of its alignment with just three bodies (Figure 4), its founders and primary funders, actually enhances its symbolic capital. This stronger association with the governments of Germany, Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein deepens its connection to the borderland region and, by extension, to the Schleswig-Holstein model.

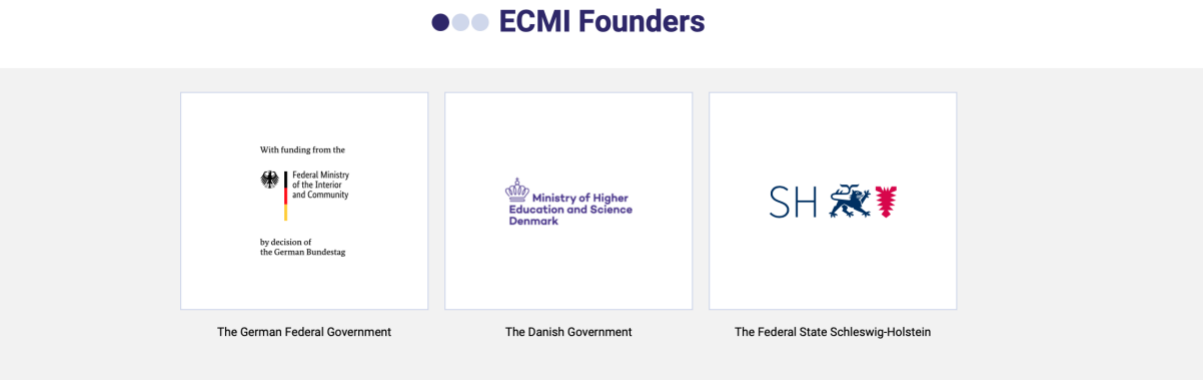

Figure 4: A screenshot showing the bottom header of a webpage on the ECMI's website. This features at the bottom of every section of their website.

Indeed, in an interview with one of the communications staff members in Flensburg, I was informed that their association with the founders appeared on all grant applications submitted by the ECMI (Interview 7, staff member). The association with these three governments is proudly declared, and in each such application a description of the Centre is featured, which advertises this connection to potential new project partners. This text is almost identical each time, with this excerpt from the ECMI Perspectives 2022 document providing an example (ECMI, 2022, p.2):

> The ECMI conducts academic and policy-oriented research, provides information and documentation, and offers advisory services concerning minority-majority relations in Europe.
>
> The Centre was founded in 1996 by the governments of Denmark, Germany, and Schleswig-Holstein. As an independent research centre, it is based in the German-Danish border area and occupies a historic building, the Kompagnietor, in the centre of Flensburg. A highly specialized library on interethnic relations, cultural-linguistic diversity issues, and ethnic conflict in Europe, with more than 3,000 items in over twenty languages, is affiliated with the Centre.
>
> The ECMI sees ethnic diversity as a European heritage and cultural pluralism as a human asset. Aiming to facilitate respect for diversity in all aspects of society, the ECMI is committed to improving the situation of Europe's national minorities through heightened awareness of minority rights and minority issues among all relevant actors. The Centre maintains active relations with other academic institutions and NGOs involved in conflict

> resolution and inter-ethnic relations, and engages in collaborative projects in these fields. The ECMI's specific purpose is to provide actors with new knowledge and toolkits that empower and equip them to mitigate differences and exchange views through constructive dialogue about how to build a peaceful and diverse Europe.

The association with the governments of Denmark, Germany, and Schleswig-Holstein lends the ECMI significant legitimacy and credibility in positioning it as a trustworthy institution not blighted by opaque private money, with the connection also serving as an endorsement of its strategic objectives and authority over autochthonous minority issues. Aside from conferences and grant applications, the ECMI has utilised its geographical association with the model for the purposes of increasing its symbolic capital in other contexts, most notably in their annual ECMI Summer School. This event has important fixture in the ECMI since its inaugural edition in 2011. It is attended by MA students, PhD candidates and minority issues scholars from a diverse range of fields and is a week-long programme bringing together specialists on minority and human rights. Each edition has an overriding topic and features lectures, seminars, workshops and field trips to contextualise the content of the event. Based in Brussels, the Coppieters Foundation share the funding 50:50 with the ECMI. Like the ECMI, they are a think tank which aims to promote the ideas of democracy, human rights, and the diversity of European cultures and societies. One of the organisers of the 2022 event acknowledge that the summer schools are "good promotional opportunit[ies] for us to show people what we have" (Interview 2, junior researcher). Many participants in ECMI Summer Schools have eventually ended up as employees of the organisation, so the event plays a crucial role in expanding their network.

In the brochure for the 2020 Summer School that took place at the Danish Library in Flensburg, the ECMI describes the venue as a "city of two cultures", before remarking that the "coexistence of the German and Danish minorities on both sides of the border is considered to be one of the most successful models for minority protection throughout and beyond Europe and its border regions". This signposts the ECMI as being embedded in the successful minority region and thus having the requisite expertise on minority issues, this is especially evident when the organisation advertises its history. Each Summer School has a different theme, and in 2020 this was "Minorities and Referendums: Shaping or Being Shaped?":

> Alongside this, in recent years the issue of self-determination through referendums has resurfaced particularly in the context of Catalonia and Scotland, and in the last decade self-determination has been brought into focus in geopolitical situations around the world. As

> the border itself undergoes transformations in response to political pressures and worldwide emergencies, this centennial provides a pertinent opportunity for examination, reflection, and discussion of referendums as democratic tools in a time when democracy is facing new challenges and threats. How have the lessons of the last 100 years influenced forms of autonomy and self-determination today? What does the future of the German-Danish border region hold, and what might its successes and difficulties teach other border regions? And how are political landscapes affecting both minority communities and referendums across Europe and beyond? (ECMI, 2020, p.3)

During a conversation with an intern who had participated in the 2020 Summer School, they provided insights into the field trips that were an integral component of the event. The programme featured numerous visits to significant sites located in the German portion of the borderlands, with an emphasis on the historical context leading up to the contemporary situation. By situating the content firmly in the border region, the organisers sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the general issues at play concerning self-determination through referendums, in Scotland and Catalonia as highlighted by the programme overview. According to the intern, each of her fellow participants displayed a commendable level of knowledge and comprehension of the Schleswig-Holstein by the end of the programme. Notably, it is important to acknowledge that at that time, the ECMI did not have a specialist research staff member on the Danish-German borderlands, but these visits contributed to the perception among the participants that the ECMI was an expert authority on the region without having this deep expertise themselves. Moreover, this provides further evidence of the way its home region is used to elicit certain feelings about the organisation, in outlining the history of the area and the reason for the ECMI's founding.

4.7 Conclusion

The history of Schleswig-Holstein and the minority model which emerged in the post-Second World War geopolitical environment provides a golden case study for scholars of peace geographies. The development of a successful 'positive' peace, whereby reconciliation in civil society occurred alongside a strong legal settlement, means the model deserves its ECMI-prescribed label as "the most comprehensive and advanced of its kind not only in Germany, but also in Europe" (Popova *et al.*, 2016, p.17). Political geographers should note that peace is worth studying too, it can tell us about geopolitics just as much as researching war and violence does (Megoran, 2011). Though not explicitly referencing the literatures of peace studies or peace

geographies, the ECMI's own conceptualisation and use of the model reflects the assertion that there is no universal idea of peace, and that it looks different to different people in different places (Koopman, 2011b, 2017). It may also reflect the opposite suggestion; however, their displayed understanding and use of the Schleswig-Holstein model indicates that like Koopman (2017), peace means different things to different groups of people in different times in different places. The successful use of the model as a discursive tool as part of the "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project strongly indicates that, contrary to the prevailing argument in critical geopolitics, the use of geopolitical scripts has proven to be a beneficial and positive practice. The adapted models of the Minority Commissioner in Bijeljina, and the DFN in Tetovo, each demonstrate they that they bear little resemblance to the original Schleswig-Holstein versions. The power of these policy implementations, therefore, lies in the symbolic capital that the Schleswig-Holstein model commands. However, unlike Goetze's (2016) criticism of using standardised peacebuilding scripts that fail to adequately address underlying issues of legitimacy, in the interventions in Bijeljina and Tetovo, the local context was explicitly considered. The adapted versions of these two aspects of the Danish-German model were carefully crafted with the geopolitical context they were in mind – suggesting that indeed, a universal ideal does not exist. However, it does suggest that while what peace looks like may differ between places, there are prerequisites for a positive peace which, crucially, *all* need to be addressed.

In analysing the ECMI's publications, interviewing its researchers and actively participating in ECMI knowledge production myself, I can definitively assert that the organisation does not have the intimate, deep knowledge about the Danish-German model that is suggested by its vocal association with its foundation purpose and geographical location. From my time at the Centre, the model had little utility as an intellectual tool. Instead, it served as an accumulator of symbolic capital in the field of minority issues. Through hosting events and emphasising its history, the ECMI has discursively crafted a reputation as an expert on Danish-German minority issues in claiming it has "always had a finger on the pulse of this region" (ECMI, 2022, p.22). The existence of the 'gentlemen's agreement' with another research institute makes this statement difficult to justify. For most of its history, the ECMI has been prevented from conducting original research on the region. The opening of a new research cluster dedicated the minority issues in the borderland region will undoubtedly address these gaps. However, from my experience at the ECMI with this research cluster only opening two weeks prior to me leaving, the model has served the ECMI, almost entirely, as an authority signifier.

5 Navigating Bourdieusian Fields: Unpacking Symbolic Capital and the Objectives of the ECMI

5.1 Introduction

The European Centre for Minority Issues operates across multiple fields, and its knowledge production strategy reflects its objective in obtaining the capital relevant within these corresponding fields. Through the lens of the prevailing literature on think tanks, the ECMI generally resembles an academic think tank, though this distinction cannot go without an understanding that it exhibits contract and advocacy think tank characteristics as well (2.3.7). Whilst there are differentiations in typical strategy between the three dominant classifications, the pursuit of policymaking influence is retained within each – think tanks strive, either directly or indirectly, to shape decision-making at a governmental or international level (Seo *et al.*, 2021; Sherrington, 2000; Tchilingirian, 2018; Weidenbaum, 2010). Academia, or more precisely, the academic field of minority issues represents the dominant field directing ECMI strategy, it is the objective to obtain relevant capital within this field above all others. The accumulation of capital is crucial for think tanks in bolstering their influence, with academic prestige and argumentative proficiency some of the important forms to the ECMI (Salas-Porras and Murray, 2017). Their role in the field of German-Danish politics holds a significant influence as well, given their funding situation and foundational roots. Through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with ECMI staff, I established four principal factors that guide the ECMI's knowledge production strategy, and this chapter will analyse how each of these contribute towards the accumulation of the capital that increases their influence within the academic field of minority issues, in particular.

The first objective analysed is the organisation's insistence on maintaining the academic focus on autochthonous minority issues, as set out in its founding statutes (see Article 2). In comparison to migration, race, gender, and refugee studies, autochthonous minority issues hold a far weaker presence in the foremost debates within the social sciences, and consequently this is reflected in the make-up of university departments and articles in the leading journals. Achieving financial independence through the diversification of funding streams and avoiding over-reliance on a limited number of sources is a cornerstone of academic think tank strategy, yet the ECMI's persistence in maintaining its focus on autochthonous minority issues considerably reduces its potential in obtaining further grants and collaboration opportunities. Moreover, any transmitted knowledge garners less interest in the form of 'infometrics' than that of other sub-disciplines, meaning outreach is more limited (Desrochers *et al.*, 2018; Garfield, 2006).

The second objective relates to the ECMI's ambition of being one of the most valued authorities on European autochthonous minority issues. A surprising challenge for the organisation relates to how it defines the boundary of the continent – with some of its key collaborative partners and potential grant funders using definitions of Europe which include countries in Central Asia and North America. The internal debate over 'defining Europe' also comprises a deliberation over whether the ECMI should confine itself to only whatever 'Europe' is considered to be. Some actors at the ECMI have suggested the ECMI should be more than just a 'continental reference' – and should expand its gaze to include minority issues across the world.

The third objective of the ECMI relates to its publication strategy. Academic think tanks face a significant quandary, in that they must balance the credibility that scholarly tone and detail brings in a publication, with the aspects of political acumen and accessibility which are crucial for visibility and outreach (Medvetz, 2010). Influencing policy debates, like in other think tanks, is a primary objective of the ECMI, but the ECMI's niche in policy knowledge production requires mediation between academic knowledge production and politics (Medvetz, 2012; Graizbord *et al.*, 2017). Since the 2018-19 external evaluation, the ECMI has adopted steps towards delivering a new publication strategy which is intended to be accessible, academic and influential.

The fourth objective concerns the importance to the ECMI of being seen as a diverse organisation. This 'diversity' relates to two different aspects and is seen as being a significant form of social capital within academia, the field that the organisation prioritises the accumulation of capital within the most. The first form of diversity relates to it in the demographic sense – that is promoting the organisation as one with people from many different countries and backgrounds. The second type is disciplinary diversity. By advertising itself as a highly interdisciplinary organisation, this increases the ECMI's academic authority and legitimises its discourse further.

The chapter starts by discussing the Bourdieusian fields in which the ECMI operates and explores the resulting forms of capital that are significant to the organisation. This provides the critical background required to understand why each of the four objectives of the ECMI exist.

5.2 What forms of capital matter to the ECMI?

The demarcation of fields, in the Bourdieusian sense, can be a problematic practice in that hierarchies and participation often overlaps between these defined spaces. For instance, the ECMI operates within the field of the academic sub-discipline of autochthonous minority issues, but also the wider field of academia more generally. Additionally, the role the ECMI plays within Schleswig-Holstein and the Danish-German borderland minority landscape corresponds with the wider European bureaucratic political field. Across these fields, the capital which participants strive to

obtain varies, though in an interstitial sense, these demands combine to form a unique milieu that the ECMI operates within (Medvetz, 2012; Graizbord *et al.*, 2017). The capital requirements of each field intersect to both prioritise and deprioritise different forms – a contention familiar to think tanks that attempt to balance the rigour and academic prestige garnered from publications in journals and book chapters with the speed and policy relevance that comes from shorter-form knowledge transmissions (Medvetz, 2012). For the ECMI, these debates have transformed its knowledge production strategy significantly since the external evaluation of 2018-19, and through my ethnographic observations, interviews and textual analysis, I identified various forms of capital important to the organisation: specialist knowledge and distinct focus on autochthonous minority issues; the establishment and maintenance of academic partnerships and networks; participation at, and hosting of, prestigious academic conferences; publication in high-impact journals; strong 'impact' and visibility of said publications; attainment of grant and projects from international organisations such as the OSCE and Council of Europe; international experience; perception of intersectional diversity; perception of scholarly diversity; and a feeling of connection to the local majority-minority landscape.

These defined forms of capital important to the ECMI generally combine to form four distinct strategic objectives that guide knowledge production and transmission outlined above, however even between these objectives there exists conflict in their outcomes. The demands of the fields of the sub-discipline of autochthonous minority issues and the political landscape in the Danish-German borderlands from which the ECMI receives the vast majority of its funding are much aligned in terms of the scholarly focus, yet at the same time the broader academic field values achievements in infometrics, which as explained in Section 5.5, are contrasting.

The ECMI operates within a distinctive framework of inter-governmental funding, wherein the organisation's foundation and existence are viewed as a substantial contribution by the respective governments in fulfilling their obligations toward their hosted minority populations, or, perhaps more dismissively, the ECMI is a tool of self-promotion for the funding bodies. Notably, the financial support from Denmark stems from the budget allocated to the *Ministry of Higher Education and Science*, while Germany's contribution originates from the *Ministry of the Interior and Community*. Additionally, the Schleswig-Holstein government's backing is drawn from the broader state budget. Given the dependable nature of this funding, the conventional emphasis on exposure in securing financial backing is significantly mitigated at the ECMI. This stands as a departure from the prevailing trend for academic think tanks, which typically target a funding strategy that utilises many different sources, granting them a greater level of autonomy over knowledge production approaches. As the vast majority of ECMI funding comes from

governmental organisations, this corresponds more greatly with contract think tanks, however the money received by the ECMI is not contingent on specific contracts – it is a specified annual amount which in the case of Denmark, is decided in parliament. This raises questions about the utility of the prevailing typology (2.3.7).

The escalating significance attributed to 'infometrics' within academia and think tanks to judge 'impact' has nevertheless driven debates within the ECMI about the importance of visibility and outreach. A senior researcher at the ECMI informed me that many publications on their website, especially project reports and monographs of over fifty pages, received extremely limited attention from those in the field of minority issues, bringing actors within the organisation, and the authors of the external evaluation of 2018-19, to question whether the ECMI was delivering on its objective of promoting research on minority rights effectively.

Whilst accepting that only a few views on works that had taken perhaps several months to publish was detrimental to their strategic objectives, evaluating impact based on infometrics is controversial. This practice generally involves quantifying a publication's influence gauged by its 'impact factor', which is contingent on the cumulative citations and page views garnered by articles within its issues (Garfield, 2006). These impact factors can appear as just a single number, with The Analogue University (2019, p. A4), an assembly of academic geographers affiliated with Newcastle University, taking issue with Journal Impact Factors (JIFs), stating that they "invite egregious and misleading comparisons between fields. Their primary argument is that larger fields with more academic working in them to produce higher impact factors because they produce more citations". They contend that JIFs foster distorted and misleading comparisons across academic disciplines, as larger fields possessing a higher density of scholars are predisposed to yield elevated impact factors due to the augmented volume of citations they generate. For a sub-discipline such as autochthonous minority issues, it is an impossibility for it to match the impact factors of more prolific domains like general medicine, exemplified by publications such as *The New England Journal of Medicine*. These assertions by The Analogue University underscore the absence of a direct correlation between these metrics and actual impact. During my time with the ECMI, matters of infometrics were generally reserved for discussions about the new ECMI Minorities Blog – in regard to academic publications, the main goal was simply to achieve successful submissions to relevant journals. Consequently, the question of the organisation's 'impact' within the ECMI assumed a different character, diverging from a heavy reliance on citation metrics. This multifaceted construction of impact is considered differently by various stakeholders within the ECMI (discussed in Chapter 6), however the focus of this chapter is to establish and analyse how

the ECMI navigates social and economic capital attainment within and between the fields it operates.

Standing outside the formal university system, think tanks do not possess the endemic academic prestige associated with institutions which are part of this structure. Symbolic capital in the form of academic prestige is central to a think tank's perceived credibility and attaining a significant level of it bolsters influence significantly (Salas-Porras and Murray, 2017; Tchilingirian, 2018). This form of symbolic capital must be achieved in a different manner, such as drawing upon geographical and historical associations to the Schleswig-Holstein model to align the organisation as being an expert on one of the most successful examples of majority-minority peacebuilding (Chapter 0). Another way it can be achieved is through specialisation, focusing all efforts on bolstering expertise in a particular area, which for the ECMI is autochthonous minority issues. As a small organisation with funders insistent on maintaining the focus on autochthonous minorities, this elevates this specialism to a top priority, as diverging from the demands of its financial supporters threatens its very existence. Even if potential collaborative partners, project grant bodies, and the largest academic journals are not as interested in this specialism, infometrics and prestigious grants which are not specifically related to autochthonous minority issues do not have the same capital potential as they might with other think tanks, because of the ECMI's funding situation. The debate at the organisation is, therefore, who constitutes part of their research remit? The term 'autochthonous' specifically denotes minority groups indigenous to a particular geographical area, whose presence traces back to ancestral lineage within that same locality. This delineation explicitly excludes migrant populations, as well as minority groups defined by sexual, gender, or religious affiliations. However, there is a significant blurring of these even within defined autochthonous minority groups.

An additional salient aspect pertaining to the ECMI relates to its employee salary structure. Despite its distinct positioning outside the formal university structure in Germany, a significant shift in the remuneration system for staff occurred in 2020, marked by the ECMI's adoption of the *Tarifvertrag für den öffentlichen Dienst der Länder* (commonly referred to as TV-L). The TV-L system represents a standardised tariff structure for civil service employees within Germany and finds application across numerous institutions, including academic establishments such as schools and universities. Under the guidance of TV-L, there exists a uniform collective bargaining arrangement encompassing aspects such as remuneration, working hours, and paid leave. Each designated grade within the TV-L structure corresponds to specific occupational categories and tenure, exemplified by Grade 13 encompassing doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers in university and research institute contexts. Within each grade, hierarchical levels are demarcated to correspond to

varying degrees of experience level (time spent) at that employer. It is noteworthy that the TV-L system extends nationwide, with the exception of the state of Hesse (German, Hessen) where it remains unimplemented. Though two of the ECMI's three founding entities, the federal government of Germany and the state government of Schleswig-Holstein, contribute to its financial support and each operate using the TV-L system, the organisation itself retains an independent standing outside the realm of the civil service, instead being classified as a private entity by technical definition. Consequently, the TV-L system functions ultimately as a framework of reference, diverging from its application within the public sector. Nonetheless, official job postings by the ECMI prominently feature the TV-L grade within the titles of the respective webpage sections (see Appendix A). The adoption of the TV-L system by the ECMI materialised as a result of negotiations led by employees to revise terms and conditions of employment, culminating in a substantial remuneration enhancement for staff members. Despite incurring heightened financial costs for the organisation, the emulation of a compensation structure akin to that prevalent in academic institutions augments the allure of the ECMI as an appealing workplace for scholars. This enticement is further fortified by the sustained visibility of the organisation's tripartite governmental benefactors in promotional activities. This adapted use of the TV-L system places the ECMI closer to academia, and consequently increases their scholarly credibility as a result.

5.3 An Unfashionable Niche: Maintain the Founding Focus on Autochthonous Minority Issues

"Because Minorities Matter" – this is the phrase my eyes so often found whilst merely getting a cup of coffee from the office kitchen. The ECMI motto really was everywhere: on all pamphlets and leaflets, on posters, flags, folders – anything ECMI branded. The prevalence of this tagline around the Kompagnietor and their online spaces is testament to the ECMI's commitment to conducting and distributing research about autochthonous minority issues. As a small think tank, concentrating on one academic sub-field means they can offer specialist policy knowledge expertise. They receive considerable backing from their three funding bodies to do this, and the Executive Board are consistently in favour of retaining this specialism. As a small organisation with funders insistent on maintaining the focus on autochthonous minorities, this elevates this specialism to a top priority, as diverging from the demands of its financial supporters threatens its very existence.

The term 'autochthonous minority' is less commonly used than 'national minority,' which dominates both academic and legal discourse. Both were used at the ECMI; however, the two

terms are not entirely synonymous. European law does not always differentiate explicitly between them, but various legal instruments and conventions apply them in different ways.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities primarily uses the term 'national minority' but does not provide a formal definition, instead allowing individual states to determine which groups qualify for protection. Similarly, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages focus on linguistic and cultural identity. Not all national minorities and are also autochthonous minorities.

For example, the Danish minority in Germany qualifies as both an autochthonous and national minority, whereas the Roma/Sinti are typically considered only as an autochthonous minority. Conceptually, autochthonous minority is the broader term, encompassing all groups with deep historical roots in a region, regardless of their political recognition or connection to a kin-state. By contrast, national minority is often more politically charged, implying a link to a broader national identity, which can shape state policies and international advocacy (Garsten & Nyqvist, 2013). Notably, national minorities do not necessarily need to have been present in a region before the establishment of modern borders, whereas autochthonous minorities are specifically defined by their longstanding historical presence.

At the ECMI, additional terms were occasionally used. 'Traditional' minority was also employed and often synonymously with autochthonous minority. 'Old' minority was used in contexts where it was necessary to distinguish between community members with ancestral ties to the region and 'new' minorities – individuals who share a national identity with an existing minority but have migrated more recently. Another term, 'indigenous', was used sparingly. Like autochthonous, it denotes groups with a long historical presence predating modern nation-states. Its infrequent use was largely down to the fact they are typically defined by their historical continuity with pre-colonial societies and their retention of distinct social, cultural, economic, and political institutions. The European Union, for instance, recognises only one indigenous population within its borders: the Sámi of northern Scandinavia. Additionally, the concept of indigenous status is often associated with territorial sovereignty, further distinguishing it from the broader use of autochthonous.

In the ECMI Statutes (see Appendix A), the minorities outlined as being in scope for their research are "within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups". In an interview with one member of the Executive Board, who ultimately ensure that the objectives outlined within the Statutes are delivered, I questioned whether the organisation would ever waiver and include other types of minorities within their remit, but their response was clear:

> I don't think it's going to happen. The funders are totally clear about their message, and they were totally clear after the most recent evaluation [2018-19]. All three governments are actually funding research on other minorities in other contexts, most in the university setting, so the unique thing about the ECMI is that it's solely devoted to autochthonous, to traditional, national minorities… (Interview 1, Executive Board member)

Think tanks which have a funding structure reliant on only a few bodies experience more interference in their research agendas, in spite of what the researchers themselves might favour (Gonzalez Hernando and Williams, 2018; Haas, 2007). Despite the message from the funding bodies being so unequivocal, the ambition of some actors within the ECMI to adopt an expanded remit is largely a result of the want to analyse the roles of gender and sexuality and their intersectionality more directly with autochthonous minority identities (Interview 10, senior researcher), as well as infometrics and 'impact' concerns. Issues of 'exposure' for think tanks principally surround the strategic pursuit of being listened to by the right people and organisations, and it encompasses a comprehensive range of other factors including high click-through rates and substantial usage of their publications; involvement in academic conferences; sizeable and distinguished participation in their own events; and the cultivation of a strong presence across social media platforms (Galuschko and Djordjevic, 2018). The acquisition of significant exposure holds particular significance for think tanks that operate within the academic sphere, as they strategically channel their efforts toward indirect forms of influence, notably manifested through the dissemination of monographs and contributions to esteemed, high-impact scholarly journals (Adeosun, 2019). Adopting the right publication strategy is one part of this effort (see 5.5), however the topics of publications and events is another. Ultimately, knowledge transmissions need to be interesting and relevant to enough people – notwithstanding the fact they also need to match the demands of funding bodies.

During my time at the ECMI, it became evident that individuals involved in the field of autochthonous minority issues, a category that extends beyond the confines of the ECMI, acknowledge the limitations of their domain, characterised by a compact and interrelated community grappling with persistent challenges tied to funding and sustained interest – it was described to me simply as 'a small world'. This is not unlike other academic disciplines, though one ECMI researcher remarked that they considered autochthonous minority issues to be facing a distinct challenge as "even at the European [Union] level, sometimes they do not see the difference between old and new minorities" (Interview 13, senior researcher). This means that

funding opportunities and highlighting the unique challenge autochthonous minorities face is a difficult task because research areas like refugees, asylum seekers, gender, and sexuality often compete for the same funding and are apparently prioritised:

> There is no doubt that there is an issue for us in delineating autochthonous issues and that events in Europe over the last ten years have challenged traditional minority issues. The refugee crisis, the rise of populism and right-wing radicalism, the pandemic – these are all big events that have captured much academic imagination. (Interview 13, senior researcher)

A keynote speaker from FUEN, another national minority-related think tank in Flensburg, was invited by colleagues to deliver a presentation at the ECMI international conference "Multi-platform and Connecting Communities: Contemporary Challenges for Minority Language Media", held at the *Dansk Centralbibliotek for Sydslesvig* in Flensburg (31st of March and the 1st of April 2022). He encapsulated the field's ongoing struggle by bluntly declaring "there is no money", an assertion reinforced by the prevailing trend of allocating funding prioritisation to research focused on migration, refugees, and asylum seekers, thereby inadvertently relegating autochthonous minority issues to a lesser status. The 'trendier' research areas of migration and refugee studies, in particular, do not undermine the significance attributed to autochthonous minority research by practitioners in the field; rather, it underscores the recognition that these other domains garner substantially more academic recognition, often meriting dedicated university departments and prominent high-impact scholarly journals. Correspondingly, I perceive autochthonous minority research as an 'unfashionable niche' within the European academic landscape. Consequently, the ECMI finds it imperative to embrace the quintessential objective inherent to advocacy think tanks, which involves proactively elevating these issues to a noteworthy position on the academic agenda. It is important to note that 'autochthonous minority issues' is a field that is known under different names and labels, particularly outside of Europe. In countries such as Ukraine, minority issues are known as 'ethnopolitical issues', and do not conceptualise the term 'minority' in the same way as the prevailing Western European definition. This is crucial because the field of autochthonous minority issues is seen in many places as indistinct from other minority issues (old and new, migrant, refugee or other), and the challenge the organisation faces of even defining which minorities constitute being part of their remit and those that do not. An additional challenge for the ECMI and its peers, therefore, is the struggle to demarcate autochthonous minority issues as

a distinct field from minority issues more widely. This difficulty is only amplified when actors within the ECMI challenge this demarcation themselves.

Even within the organisation itself, there is a significant debate concerning this adherence to researching only autochthonous minorities, yet the *"Statutes of the Foundation 'European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)'"* which established the guiding principles of the organisation, is clear on the organisation's direction:

> 1) The Foundation shall exclusively and directly pursue objectives of a non-profitmaking character within the meaning of the section of the Tax Code on "Objections entitled to tax relief". The activities of the Foundation shall be altruistic, profitability shall not be its prime objective.
> 2) The objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional autochthonous ethnic groups. (Article 2, ECMI Statutes)

Consequently, it is ultimately the funding bodies whose defined notion of 'impact' matters most; however, this is not without substantial exceptions at the ECMI. Nonetheless, the Danish Evaluation Institute, who conducted the 2018-19 external evaluation, outlined the fact the ECMI should continue to focus on national minorities only, produce and disseminate research on these issues for policymakers, and concentrate on their definition of 'Europe'. During interviews with members of the Executive Board, they were continually keen to justify their positions through referring back to the ECMI Statues, and the recommendations made by the EVA have been taken seriously by the Executive Board and were 'instrumental' in the strategy alterations of the past few years (Interview 9, Executive Board member):

> Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes is narrowly worded. For a teleological extension and dynamic interpretation of the minority term mentioned there, the ECMI Statutes do not provide any clues. The views of the founders, which are voiced in meetings with ECMI staff, clearly oppose the application of a broad and dynamic concept of minorities; a comprehensive and open-ended definition would carry the risk of diluting ECMI's originally euro-centric purpose and background, and it would seriously exceed the centre's financial capacity. (EVA, 2019, p.21)

It is the Executive Board's responsibility to ensure the staff carry out these objectives, therefore on one side of the debate are the defenders of the founding principles, and on the other are those suggesting expanding the scope of ECMI's activities may be necessary and rightful. The latter side argue that more fruitful funding opportunities could be sought; they express concern that defining an 'old' minority can be problematic; or reject the necessity to separate the issues new and old minorities face entirely. It is this debate about the problematisation of categorising a minority as 'autochthonous' and others as not, that reveals how the ECMI compromises on its ideal to research only 'old' minorities when lines are blurred. The term 'new minority' is applied to any groups considered to be immigrants, delineating them from 'traditional minorities' who have a longer history in an area and whose existence preceded current national border iterations. However, even within so-called 'old' minorities, such a delineation is not clear, with this difficulty recognised by those in the Executive Board:

> There's plenty to do about traditional minorities for sure, but without needing to go into new minorities. There are several university institutes in Germany alone doing things on new minorities, but of course the problem is, the challenge is, and I've also been discussing this with the ministry in Berlin, is that it's not that clear, there is no sharp division about when some minority is a new one, or whether it is old. (Interview 1, Executive Board member)

> There are certainly issues with the definition of an 'autochthonous' minority. I have known of the ECMI for a long time before I became of member of the Executive Board and the Centre's purpose has usually concerned minority groups who are defined by the country that they live in as being a national minority. The external evaluation also suggested a re-focus on minority issues around Western Europe, so we have acted on this. (Interview 6, Executive Board member)

These responses concerning the inclusion of new minorities beyond the occasional project received further elucidation within the context of the hiring process of a new researcher at the ECMI at the end of 2021. Subsequent to the announcement of the successful candidate, the rationale behind the rejections of certain candidates became evident. These individuals, despite some having strong support amongst the research staff and having impressive qualifications, did not have expertise that aligned the stipulated objectives of the founding statutes. One candidate,

whose rejected application was discussed at length in and outside of the meetings I attended, was an expert on the Turkish population in Germany. The vast majority of this migrant population comes from the *Gastarbeiter* work programs that were introduced following labour shortages in West Germany that were mostly significant in the 1960s. Accordingly, this population in Germany is definitively not considered to be autochthonous, though during my opening weeks at the ECMI, I was unsure of what constituted the official categorisation of a traditional, autochthonous minority – whether this was a distinction based on European law or the country – or countries themselves. Essentially, the most popular answer from the ECMI staff, and echoing the views of the Executive Board, was 'whomever the host country says is one'.

Each country recognises its autochthonous minorities in different ways within their distinct national contexts, exemplified by Germany's recognition of four distinct national minority groups: Danes, Frisians, the Sinti/Roma, and Sorbs. However, a more complex scenario exists in Denmark, where the recognition of autochthonous minorities takes a more nuanced turn. In this context, a singular minority population, primarily situated in South Jutland, is officially recognised – the German minority. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the Danish linguistic landscape encompasses the Faroese and Greenlandic languages, which are afforded specific safeguards. While the recognition of Denmark's German minority is distinct and lends itself to be a viable subject for ECMI's potential research, there are debates in terms of how closely the German minority aligns with the mission of the ECMI as outlined in the Statutes (Appendix A).

In the same interview with the Executive Board member, they described the interesting situation currently developing within the German minority organisations in Denmark and the Danish institutions in Germany:

> They are both considered to be autochthonous, and are old minorities, traditional minorities created by the border itself. But a substantial part of the membership, even at high-ranking positions aren't autochthonous, they are from in the case of the Danish minority, from Denmark – or in the case of the German minority have moved there from Germany and actually this last year, the German minority has been extremely proactive trying to convince the many, many Germans that are moving to North Schleswig to try to get jobs or because of housing, this is so much more affordable than that is in the Flensburg area and they're trying to integrate them into the German minority. […] Can we only look into the traditional minority, what happens? I mean the case of the Danish Association for the Danish minority. The vice-chair is a German from Bavaria. Okay, he has moved up here and then eventually has joined the Danish minority, but that's not a

traditional minority – so it's blurred in certain respects. (Interview 1, Executive Board member)

Even when using the accepted ECMI definition of an 'autochthonous' minority, performing research on their local minority communities does not necessarily mean adhering to the statutes. The Danes in Germany and Germans in Denmark are autochthonous, but not all Danes in Germany and Germans in Denmark are. Despite the temporal difference, the issues faced by the 'old' minority and its 'new' members may be the same – language rights, minority language media, schooling etc. Moreover, the imperative of formal acknowledgement existing as a prerequisite for inclusion with the ambit of ECMI's mandate introduces a potential complication that intersects with the fundamental construct of an autochthonous minority as conventionally conceptualised by the organisation. The Sinti/Roma people, for instance, are recognised by Sweden and Germany, but not by their neighbouring country of Denmark. This prompts an inquiry into the potential scope of ECMI research in this area, whether they would conduct such research in Sweden and Germany, but not in Denmark. Additionally, some recognised national minorities are certainly not 'old' minorities. In Communist Czechoslovakia, Vietnamese workers were invited to the country (a move encouraged by the government of Vietnam), and many stayed and settled after the scheme's conclusion. In 2013, the Czech administration's *Government Council for National Minorities* accepted members representing the Belarussian and Vietnamese minorities in a move widely considered *de facto* recognition (Kascian and Vasilevich, 2015). In recognition of these instances, the Executive Board has recognised a move "towards a neo-minority sense and the intersection between all the old and the new minorities" as being valid, though "the external evaluation was totally clear about that it has to focus on national minorities" (Interview 1, Executive Board member).

Not only then, does the ECMI have to compete for stronger place in the hierarchy within the field of autochthonous minority issues, but it must also fight to differentiate autochthonous minority issues as a sub-discipline from minority issues generally, especially as this is not entirely clear how to clarify the 'blurriness' within recognised 'traditional' minority groups. This understanding of the 'blurriness' of who constitutes an 'old minority' is remedied, however, by the two other important factors, each purporting the same principle. A key part of the success of the efforts to settle the 'Schleswig-Holstein question' was the 1955 Bonn-Copenhagen Agreements' pledge to protect the capacity for the self-determination of an individual to identify with a national minority without the requirement to legally prove it. This aspect of the Schleswig-Holstein model was crucial in setting the conditions for a 'positive' peace to form (see 2.5 and **Error! Reference**

source not found.). The right of self-identification is also a central tenet of the *Framework Convention for National Minorities*, though the document instead suggests that "their decision must be based on objective criteria connected with their identity, such as their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage". Such does the *Framework Convention* function as a major angle of analysis in ECMI knowledge production, so long as 'new' members of an 'old' minority match these loose 'objective' criteria, it seems the blurriness within Schleswig-Holstein's minority communities is inconsequential.

5.4 Defining Europe: Be a Continental Reference on Autochthonous Minority Issues

Two further challenges for the ECMI came to the fore during the course of my fieldwork, specifically relating to Article 3 (Appendix A), which stipulates that "The Foundation will carry out activities on a European basis". This limits the ECMI's hold on the field of autochthonous minority issues in reducing its geographical scope, which is seen as an issue by some given the burgeoning emergence of research addressing minority concerns beyond the confines of Europe. The second challenge concerns what counts as 'Europe'. This debate emerged during a brainstorming session during February 2022, in light of the decision to re-introduce the Advisory Council and make significant changes to its membership. This structure within ECMI is invitational and intended for "ECMI self-promotion; to provide authors and participants for ECMI events; partnership in external funding applications; and help in the dissemination of publications" (Meeting Document). It is an invitational council which provides no monetary benefit to its members. The principal objectives of this meeting were to establish who the research staff wanted to remain and join, but also what the strategic purpose of the Advisory Board should be. Concerning the geographical scope of the council, some argued that academics or practitioners with an African or Asian focus should be included to assist with potential future projects.

The ECMI has been working on the Caucasus region for most of its existence, and Central Asia since at least 2017 and the minority language media conference in March/April 2022 featured talks on Bolivia, Canada, Pakistan, the United States and New Zealand. Nonetheless, one of the recommendations from the external evaluation which took place prior to the tenure of Prof. Dr. Vello Pettai as director beginning in March 2020 was "to narrow down the geographical [scope]" (Interview 1, Executive Board member). This contrasts with the mood of some at ECMI, who favour a geographical broadening instead - a participant in the Advisory Council brainstorming meeting noted "we are not forbidden from leaving the continent, but it would have to be in a comparative context at least. The ECMI name shouldn't just mean a narrow focus on Europe". Whilst being the 'European' Centre for Minority Issues, various organisations who are intimately

linked with the ECMI through partnership or authority in the field, have alternative definitions of where Europe begins and ends. It was noted by a member of the Executive Board that if referring to membership of the OSCE, a frequent collaborator with the ECMI, then minority issues in the United States and Mongolia would qualify. The Council of Europe definition would arguably include Canada, Mexico, Israel, and Japan as well, who each possess varying observer statuses. From my interviews with the members of the Executive Board and conversations with researchers, it is clear the funding bodies would prefer the ECMI to focus on Western Europe and abandon Central Asia as a geographical focus.

Augmenting outreach by utilising an expanded definition of Europe on one hand broadens the number of potential collaborative research partners and employs the research specialisms of the current staff, as is the case with Central Asia, however due to the organisation's modest size, an intrinsic issue emerges concerning the feasibility of engaging with such an extensive number of regions, inevitably resulting in the wide dispersion of resources across many avenues. Consequently, a valid concern arises regarding the potential dilution of the ECMI's scholarly proficiency across these numerous domains, potentially leading to the erosion of its academic standing. Moreover, the expansion into new territories could potentially engender conflicts between the research staff of the ECMI and the representatives of its funding bodies. Conversations with members of the Executive Board made evident their inclination to "narrow down the geographical", a strategic intent that has found concrete manifestation through the establishment of a dedicated cluster centred on Danish-German minority issues (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The vast majority of ECMI funding emanates from the governments of Denmark, Germany, and Schleswig-Holstein, and the funding entities' representatives advocate for a heightened focus on Western Europe (Interview 14, junior researcher). Therefore, with only a few funding sources, this places them in a very different situation to other academic think tanks where financial independence through diversification of funding allows for control over their own research agendas (Haas, 2007). An ECMI researcher who disagreed with the narrowing of their geographical scope told me during a meeting that this intention was down to the fact "they want to be seen as delivering on their obligations to their own minorities – we are not stretching our geographical focus too far because we all have different specialisms".

The contemplation of geographical expansion engendered further dialogues at the Advisory Council meeting (May 2022), regarding the future trajectory envisaged for the ECMI. The discussion so far on the field of autochthonous minorities has been around the problems faced by those in it regarding lack of funding, academic interest, and the quandary of even defining

what constitutes an autochthonous minority. The small size of the field does, however, entail one obvious benefit to what is a small research institute – it enables an organisation of that size the opportunity to be a highly-valued, central authority (both academically and practically) of that specialism. Given the "constraint", as it was described, delineated by the organisation's European mandate, an alternate perspective surfaced, proposing that the narrow scope of autochthonous minority studies endows the ECMI with the potential to assume a role as an international reference point rather than solely a regional or continental body. Their suggestion was to appoint a number of international scholars to the Advisory Council. These deliberations, in conjunction with my interactions with members of the Executive Board, collectively underscore a significant discordance existing between the ECMI researchers and the representatives responsible for the institution's financial support. This again points towards the funding bodies and their influence over the strategic direction of the ECMI.

ECMI-organised events, including conferences on minority-language media (March/April 2022), post-World War I plebiscites (June 2021), and the ECMI Summer Schools (5.6), have garnered significant attention, attracting distinguished speakers and presenters. Notably, the plebiscites conference assumed a significant role in affording the ECMI the opportunity to establish and propagate its specialised expertise concerning some of the most pivotal historical events related to autochthonous minorities. The event, particularly focused on the Schleswig plebiscites, resonated as a discernible claim to specialised knowledge owing to the ECMI's geographical locale and foundational mission. Beyond this, the conference encompassed additional plebiscite-related border settlements that transpired in the wake of the First World War, accorded equal prominence. Instances such as the border settlements in Allenstein and Marienwerder (West and East Prussia), Upper Silesia (along the German-Polish border), Carinthia (Austria and Slovenia), and Burgenland (Austria and Hungary) emerged as further domains of expertise as an outcome of the ECMI's stewardship of this event. These substantiated assertions of expertise prove instrumental for utilisation within funding proposals, concurrently augmenting the implicit value attributed to the entirety of the ECMI's activity.

5.5 Accessible, Academic and Influential: Deliver a Balanced Publication Strategy

The publication strategy of the ECMI has closely resembled that of an academic think tank throughout the twenty-five years of its existence. As the primary medium of knowledge transmission, written publications are the form in which the work and impact of the ECMI is promoted to its funders and audience. With ECMI activity focussing more on research-orientated projects as opposed to action-orientated work (see Chapter 6), their publication strategy which

now includes a greater academic element reflects the intention of the Executive Board to make the ECMI's impact be in the academy, rather than confined to specific places, as is typically of policy-focused work (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Each kind of publication brings different benefits and limitations, and especially since the 2018-19 external evaluation, there has been considerable debate and action in response over what the publication strategy should be pitched at achieving. Policy reports, albeit confined to a comparatively limited readership, cater predominantly to policymakers, a cohort vested with the authority to operationalise research findings. Monographs, journal articles and other academic publications have a larger, and scholarly audience, in theory are of very high quality and increase the institute's academic prestige, though do little to increase the general public's interest in minority issues. Blog posts and news summaries possess the advantage of quick delivery to a considerably wider readership; nonetheless, they are more deficient in scholarly credentials and wield a notably diminished impact on the formulation of policy objectives. Consequently, the ECMI produces and transmits knowledge for each audience. This section will explore how the ECMI endeavours to uphold and enhance its status as a venerable expert in matters concerning autochthonous minority issues, whilst at the same producing material which satisfies a less academic audience and be more accessible to policymakers or the general public. The symbolic capital accumulated through well-cited publications in high-impact journals satisfies their position in the field of minority issues, but the lack of policy relevance held by journal articles and book chapters reduces the ECMI's authority over policy, which is an important aspect of their position as a think tank.

Since 1998, the range and amount of material the ECMI has produced has been extensive, varying from monographs and specific policy reports to blog posts and annual critical overviews of minority issues (Table 4). The organisation has consistently published dozens of papers, reports, and other documents each year – even during the tumultuous times where, I was told anonymously, "it was incredible we managed to produce anything". Having read an extensive amount of this material myself, I found ECMI publications generally to be of a very high standard – though dense, typically very long, and not very accessible to a reader without expert knowledge on minority issues. A change in director from Prof. Dr. Tove Malloy to Prof. Dr. Vello Pettai also brought with it a substantial transformation in publication strategy. During my interviews, numerous participants contended that substantial challenges related to output were evident. These challenges predominantly revolved around constrained outreach efforts and a noticeable absence of enthusiasm among external parties to write material for them. One ex-employee of the ECMI encapsulated the organisation's outreach challenges by noting that a considerable portion of the content within the 'Issue Briefs' and 'Reports' series elicited interest from an extremely limited

audience, colloquially characterised as merely "three people" within the broader academic community (Interview 5, former employee). While pursuing a strategy angled toward a specific and restricted audience can be valid, it is worth noting that such audiences should consist of influential policymakers who have themselves instigated the commissioned material (Stone, 2000a). This was not the case for many publications, meaning there was no guarantee anyone would read them whatsoever. As elucidated in Section 5.3 of this chapter, the importance of achieving extensive visibility could be relatively unimportant, given that it may not be an indispensable prerequisite for the organisation's continued funding by its three founding bodies. However, it is important to acknowledge that the modest audiences generated by numerous publications failed to culminate in palpable policymaking influence, did not significantly enrich the academic discourse, and conspicuously lacked any notable resonance within the public sphere to effectively advocate for minority issues.

Publication Name	**First Pub.**	**Latest Pub.**	**Notes**
ECMI Research Papers (formerly Working Papers) 126 publications	1998	2021	**Discontinued.** Publications between 8000 and 10000 words in length, Research Papers "propose new questions, open new areas of enquiry and stimulate innovative debates on issues related to minorities and majorities primarily in a European perspective".
JEMIE 57 editions	2000	2024	"Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe". The journal is open access and electronic and is operated by ECMI. It is multidisciplinary and includes perspectives on "ethnopolitics, democratisation, conflict and diversity management, good governance, minority and human rights as well as participation".
Issue Briefs 44 publications	1998	2019	**Discontinued and replaced by Minorities Blog.** Critical engagement "with public policies and laws that offer protection of minorities and their crosscutting relevance". Issue Briefs discuss a specific issue in Europe, for example "Moldova: Four Priorities for Mainstreaming Minority Rights" and "Instigations of Separatism in the Baltic States".

European Yearbook 19 editions	2003	2023	A yearly, critical review of the "contemporary developments in minority-majority relations in Europe". Conflict management, international legal developments and domestic legislation are topics discussed in this series.
Books 36 publications	1999	2019	Books on a range of subjects, mostly written or edited by former ECMI director Tove Malloy. This series features a very wide range of topics.
Handbooks 17 publications	2002	2022	**Discontinued.** The Handbooks series are a selection of guides and overviews of particular minority issues. This series also contains two selections of lectures.
Studies 10 publications	1999	2017	**Discontinued.** The Studies series contains 10 publications of substantial size, each pertaining to a specific minority issue. Data is collected and evaluated in these publications.
Reports 70 publications	1998	2018	**Discontinued.** A series featuring reports on ECMI projects, workshops, seminars, and other events – as well as commentaries on European legal systems, specific majority-minority relations and preliminary research findings.
ECMI Minorities Blog 51 publications	2019	2024	An academic-standard blog post publication series with articles between 1500 and 2500 words in length. Anything of relevance to autochthonous minorities could be published here, submissions "may discuss relevant legislation and policies, flag issues of discrimination and inequality or outline other issues of relevance to minority communities".

Table 4: A table overviewing each of ECMI's publication series and a descriptor on their content and purpose (accurate as of May 2024).

Amidst the multitude of publication series initially hailed as "innovative" at their inception, there was recognition at the ECMI that the landscape of the field of academia had undergone a substantial evolution (Interview 13, senior researcher). The growing importance of infometrics is one of these things (see 2.4), but also any work published by the ECMI by an external contributor could not then be used by that individual for publication in a journal – which is critical when "[for academics in Germany] getting published is the ultimate goal, getting jobs requires these

publications" (Interview 13, senior researcher). This transformation led to the formal discontinuation or abandonment of nearly all these series.

In 2019, in lieu of the cancelled 'Issue Briefs' series, the ECMI introduced the 'Minorities Blog' to serve as a platform for "reflection and analysis of current issues, national or international, related to national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities" (Topidi, 2019; ECMI, 2022). Contrasting with the 'Issue Briefs', which assumed the form of monographs of varying lengths and incorporating numerous academic references, the 'Minorities Blog' posts generally incorporate only a modest number of references. Authors are advised to keep their contributions under 2,500 words (ECMI, 2022). Submissions to the Minorities Blog encompass contributions from the ECMI's internal research staff, with active encouragement for external contributions as well.

During my own participation in contributing to the Minorities Blog, I was told to generally avoid citing academic journals and books that were not freely accessible, and to instead reference other blog posts – both internal and external, news articles, and reports. This strategy was adopted to facilitate seamless access to references for readers without necessitating subscriptions to academic journals, as well as making blog posts more readable to audiences outside of academia. The ability for authors to swiftly generate potential blog posts, coupled with an efficient editorial process, has empowered the ECMI to disseminate materials pertinent to events that are either ongoing or of continued political significance. An illustrative instance occurred on the 1st of July 2022, when Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of Uzbekistan, proposed a constitutional amendment seeking to revoke the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan's right to secede from Uzbekistan through a referendum. Notably, Karakalpakstan possesses a level of autonomy akin to that of a U.S. state (Hanks, 2000). Subsequent to Mirziyoyev's announcement, there was an immediate eruption of violent protests. Despite the rescission of the proposals the subsequent day, the protests persisted, leading to the imposition of a state of emergency which endured until the 21st of the same month. Against this backdrop, on the 5th of September, a blog post titled "Is Uzbekistan Not Ready to Let It Go? Unrest in Karakalpakstan" was published. This post encapsulated the political climate, delineated the historical and contemporary position of the Karakalpak minority, expounded upon their minority rights, and provided a commentary on similar issues which have risen in the region of Central Asia (Berdiqulov, 2022a).

Based on my personal involvement with the Minorities Blog, which includes co-submission and the subsequent publication of two items, I observed that the editorial process mirrors that of an academic journal, albeit without external referees. While this might entail the absence of an additional layer of academic scrutiny, this editorial framework facilitates prompt publication – an attribute that is not representative of conventional academic journals. Given the

pressing need to contribute to ongoing dialogues, the incorporation of a highly rigorous editorial procedure becomes impractical.

During an interview with a blog editor, I was informed that a marked surge in the number of submissions had been observed, accompanied by impressive viewership metrics (Interview 4, senior researcher). Approximately half of the posts on the ECMI Minorities Blog are written by external authors who are experts in their field. Responding swiftly to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the ECMI promptly introduced a dedicated section within the blog titled "National Minorities and the War in Ukraine". By the following month, the inaugural post for this section was published. Drawing upon the ECMI's extensive expertise accumulated over more than a decade in the domain of Ukrainian national minorities, the institute expedited the release of five posts by the conclusion of June. Leveraging its expansive network and comprehensive knowledge base, the ECMI effectively contributed to the discourse surrounding the events following the Russian invasion.

Possessing numerous parallels with academic think tanks, ECMI publications are typically crafted to utilise impartial scientific inquiry, exhibit scholarly calibre, and fashioned to exert a tangible influence on ongoing policy discussions (Haas, 2007). The in-house open access academic journal, the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE), published its inaugural issue in the year 2000 and has since maintained a regular publishing schedule of at least once a year, apart from the interlude of 2005 and 2006 (refer to Table 4). Submissions to this journal predominantly emanate from external authors. The journal's self-proclaimed objective revolves around the publication of "critical analyses of developments and policies in European institutions and their member states", although the inclusion of non-European perspectives is also actively encouraged and featured (JEMIE, 2023). The journal forthrightly acknowledges its intention to cultivate discourse amongst a diverse audience, encompassing academics, practitioners, scholars across varying levels, and policymakers. It asserts that policy deliberations should invariably merge conceptual and practice-orientated analyses, thus rejecting the tendency often attributed to academic think tanks – namely, the adoption of a "pure science" approach to scholarly discourse, characterised by an inadvertent disregard for the pragmatic implications underpinning research (Ruser, 2018).

Nonetheless, JEMIE faces notable challenges. Initially heralded as a trailblazing platform by ECMI staff, the journal achieved considerable innovation during its inception period (Interview 13, senior researcher). The years between 2002 and 2004 witnessed the publication of numerous articles amassing over one hundred citations each, with notable authors such as Will Kymlicka contributing. However, the journal's trajectory experienced a notable shift since 2015, with only a

solitary article crossing the threshold of fifty citations. This decline can be chiefly attributed to JEMIE's exclusion from pivotal indices such as SCOPUS and other prominent databases, rendering it solely indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Since I departed from the ECMI, the journal has received indexing in SCOPUS, though throughout my time there the aspiration to achieve this was recurrently articulated in meetings, viewed as an imperative requirement. Irrespective of the reservations voiced by The Analogue University pertaining to infometrics and the predicaments surrounding JIFs, the glaring absence of, or minimal, impact factor for JEMIE has progressively hindered its presentation as an enticing publication venue. Conversations have indicated that alongside the "Research Papers" series, soliciting submissions has come to rely more heavily on reciprocal "favours" from individuals within the field known to the journal, rather than naturally appealing to academics or practitioners as a destination for their work. An added complication linked to publishing Working Papers resides in the discernible tendency of numerous academic journals to reject articles that exhibit close resemblance to content already disseminated elsewhere.

The dwindling output across most of ECMI's publication series has been paralleled by a surge in external publishing undertaken by ECMI researchers. Prior to the appointment of the current director, the prevailing expectation for ECMI staff necessitated the allocation of all office hours towards generating content intended for publication on the institution's internal platform, encompassing formats such as 'Working Papers', 'Issue Briefs', or 'Studies'. If a staff member aspired to publish elsewhere, they were mandated to do so during their personal time (Interview 4, senior researcher). Any external publications would have to, nonetheless, advertise their association with the ECMI. In recent times, this policy has undergone a relaxation, with researchers now being actively encouraged to pursue publication opportunities within external academic journals. During one of the initial general staff meetings I participated in, occurring in November 2021, the director explicitly conveyed that the recent publication authored by two ECMI researchers within a distinguished journal exemplified the kind of achievement the institution should seek to replicate further. This was because these publications were "getting [their] name out there" and would result in further invitations to conferences and improve their chances in grant applications.

The reason for this shift in publication strategy is partially illuminated by examining the transition from a diplomatic background of the former director to the academic orientation of the present incumbent. Diplomatic perspectives often prioritise strategic communication, tailored messaging, and discreet engagement, which could have influenced this approach. Conversely, an academic background emphasises rigorous research, intellectual engagement, and wider

dissemination of knowledge, which might have contributed to a more open stance towards publication to foster scholarly discourse and broader engagement. An Executive Board member confirmed the preference for hiring someone with a background in academia for the director position, stating to me that there was "quite a push towards more academically approaching things […] so we decided well, now we need to do something about it and it just happened to be around the time when the position of Director was opening again, which happens every time we have an external evaluation".

This change reflects the evolving ethos of the ECMI, aligning its strategy with the unique strengths and inclinations of its leadership, thus adapting to the evolving landscape of scholarly communication and public engagement. Furthermore, with the decline and dissolving of the Centre for Border Region Studies, a void emerged within the field of academic inquiry pertaining to the Danish-German border region, which the ECMI was suitably poised to occupy and address. The approach to greater involvement in the academic field extends beyond engagement with the local borderland region, though it would be incorrect to say academia as a strategic focus is a new approach for the organisation – rather, it is a revitalised one (Figure 5).

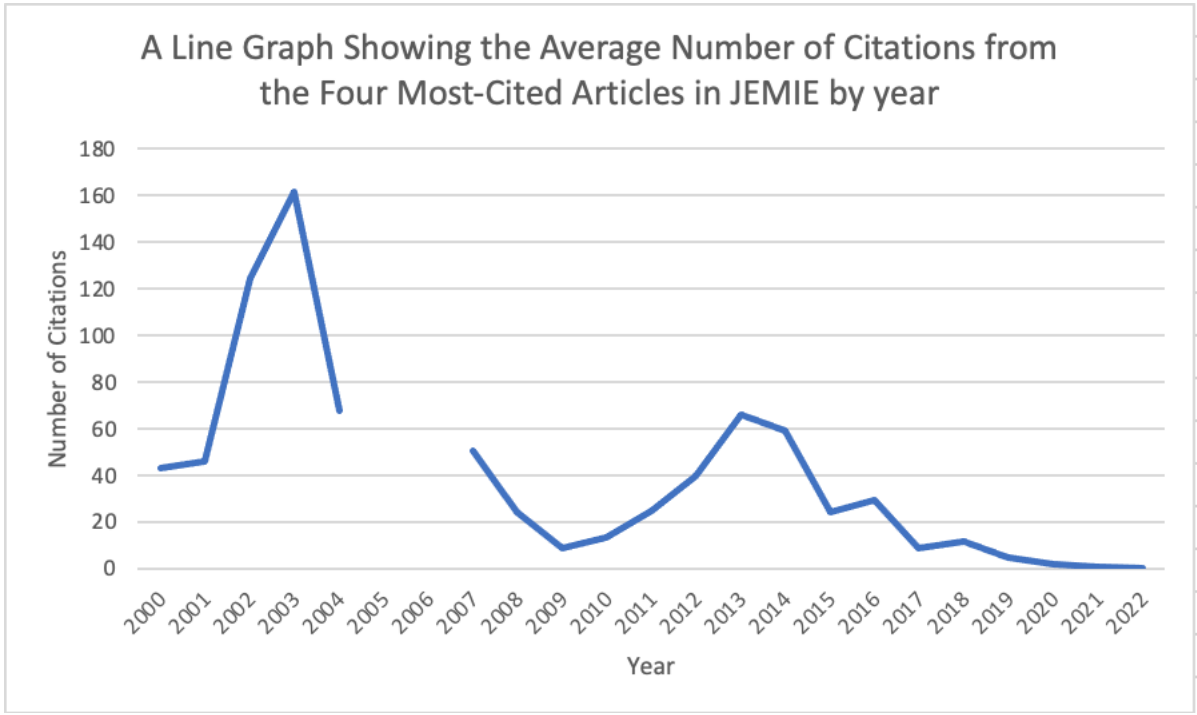

Figure 5: A line graph showing the average number of citations for JEMIE's top four-cited articles in each year. NOTE: no issue of JEMIE was released in 2005 or 2006.

The thematic dimension of ECMI's publication strategy warrants consideration. While autochthonous minority issues constitute a field with a limited outreach, it inherently encompasses a multidisciplinary spectrum of scholarly pursuits. In alignment with established patterns in other

academic think tanks, the composition and expertise of ECMI's staff significantly inform its output (Weaver, 1989). For instance, the two researchers specialising in minority language media (MLM) shared with me that their collaborative work commenced in 2018. During this period, prospective collaborators were reminiscing about ECMI's prior engagement with MLM in the early 2000s and were left pondering the reasons behind the apparent ending of such endeavours. In actuality, the rationale lay in the departure of personnel who had previously been active in this area within the organisation, thereby underscoring how the qualifications and expertise of staff can shape the thematic trajectory of ECMI's publications.

Despite the ECMI's funding situation reducing the necessity of achieving quantifiably large outreach, the recent transformation of the organisation's publication strategy shows the prevailing typology regarding think tanks and their focus on exposure is not completely missing from the activity of the ECMI. It was recognised that the exposure earned from the previous strategy of publishing almost entirely in their internal series was not influencing the academic debate enough, and the push from the leadership for researchers to submit to external academic journals highlights this strategy change significantly. The creation of the ECMI Minorities Blog also indicates that the organisation wants to be able to respond to the immediate minority issues that arise, which cannot be done effectively in academic journals or within a series that adopts a similar editorial process. This quick-response series has encouraged many submissions from individuals across the field, which has been very beneficial in broadening the ECMI network.

Like other academic think tanks, the ECMI publication strategy has the primary focus of satisfying an audience of university academics and some government agencies (McGann, 2016; Adeosun, 2019; Ruser, 2018). Likewise, the ECMI has prioritised more indirect methods of influence, aiming to shape the context of understanding and policymaking rather than intervening directly (Osborne, 2004; Graizbord *et al.*, 2017). The policymaking influence achieved through publishing articles in academic journals is not very tangible but going back to the ECMI's founding Statutes and the ideals of Kurt Hamer, the man whose original idea the organisation was, the priority is about impacting the academic debate. The funding situation of the ECMI means that it has reliable income without having to worry greatly about securing lucrative grant applications or maximising infometrics statistics – plainly because the funding bodies insist on this academic focus (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The newest venture of the ECMI Minorities Blog has achieved supposedly good viewing figures, but it is unknown precisely where this viewership has come from. It is unlikely that despite its greater accessibility to the general public, it has had much impact on promoting autochthonous minority issues as a distinct field. However, the main benefit of the Minorities Blog is that it has put the ECMI back in the minds of its peers, and getting

external people to contribute to it enhances their network and standing within the field of autochthonous minority issues.

5.6 The Symbolic Capital of Demographic and Scholarly Diversity: Be International and Inter-Disciplinary

The phrase "diversity is strength" does encapsulate an image which the ECMI is keen to promote about itself. This fourth objective relates to two distinct types of diversity. The first concerns demographic diversity, that is, relating to gender, national origin, sexuality etc. The debate around the merits of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) or the validity of intersectional theory is not of interest here, rather it is how the ECMI promotes its diversity in these ways, as it constitutes a significant form of symbolic capital in that it is highly valued in the field of autochthonous minority issues and academia more generally. The second type of diversity is scholarly – the field of minority issues encompasses geography, geopolitics, history, law, peace studies, political science, linguistics, security studies – and many more. At the conferences I attended with the ECMI were dozens of presentations encompassing many different disciplines, and this fact was continually discussed in keynote speeches, and marvelled at in general conversation during tea breaks or evening meals. Through active promotion of these two types of diversity, the ECMI has identified a form of symbolic capital that, relatively easily, it can accumulate without substantively matching these claims.

The ECMI does however, stand out as a highly diverse workplace, characterised by its extensive geographical representation. Over the course of my time there, the permanent staff encompassed fourteen individuals originating from twelve distinct countries. Furthermore, the presence of numerous interns further enriched this group, contributing to the representation of several additional nations. Within the researcher cohort at ECMI, most hold academic backgrounds in law or political science, although their collective expertise encompasses a wide spectrum of thematic and regional specialisations. The institute's deliberate emphasis on both geographical and scholarly diversity is evident, with active efforts aimed at promoting and nurturing these facets. This commitment substantively underpins the ECMI's distinct identity as the 'European Centre' within its sphere of designated expertise, as manifested through explicit references to the diversity of its personnel and its interdisciplinary orientation.

The importance of the organisation reflecting the values of diversity, equality and inclusion it promotes in its output and staffing is an understanding at the ECMI which encapsulates much of their operational strategy. The ECMI has historically functioned as an organisation of its nature; however, it is intriguing to observe how novel ideological discourse has been employed to

articulate this characteristic. Regarding staffing, a recruitment call for a temporary (one year) junior researcher role included a descriptor of ECMI and an explicit example of how the organisation wishes to be perceived[7]:

> The ECMI is an **international, multi-disciplinary research and competence institution**, working with governments, civil society, the academic community, and international organisations on minority issues in Europe. We aim to provide governments and the public with relevant research and analysis about national minorities as well as to influence the European agenda on minority affairs. The Centre offers a **multicultural, English-language working environment** with varied tasks and opportunities for professional advancement. Our management structure is flat with a high degree of autonomy in research work.
>
> The ECMI is an equal opportunity institution with a commitment to improving gender balances in academia as well as the advancement of researchers with disability and of minority backgrounds.

This job advert encapsulates the organisation's strategic approach to self-presentation and outlines a distinct paradigm for how the institution seeks to promote itself to potential candidates. By selecting "international, multi-disciplinary research and competence institution" and "multicultural, English-language working environment" as the emphasised descriptors, the ECMI consciously engenders a lexicographical framework that is designed to resonate with the aspirational inclinations of prospective applicants. This calculated utilisation of terminology related to the values of diversity, equality and inclusion serves as a rhetorical device intended to imprint a lasting impression upon its audience. It stands as a vivid demonstration of the manner in which the ECMI strategically leverages language to construct its institutional identity. The emphasis on language relating to diversity, equality and inclusion, given the assertion that it "is an equal opportunity institution with a commitment to improving gender balances" and referencing disability and minority backgrounds, this echoes contemporary socio-political dynamics, even though the ECMI was operating under these values before they became the dominant narrative generally.

[7] (Job listing for the position of 'Researcher for the topic "National Minorities in the Digital Age" (TV-L 11, 100%)') Terms **in bold** match the original formatting.

Within this extract, the organisation states its overarching mission to engage with governments, civil society, academia, and international entities on matters pertaining to minority issues within Europe. The stated aspiration to furnish "relevant research and analysis about national minorities" and to wield influence over the European discourse surrounding minority affairs is indicative of a distinct trajectory guiding the evolution of the ECMI's publication strategies. It implies a conscious recognition of its role as an information mediator, serving both governmental and public stakeholders with insights into minority-related concerns.

The job listing is also noteworthy for its portrayal of the ECMI as a nexus for scholarly activity, characterised by a "multicultural, English-language working environment". This depiction serves a dual function: it positions the institution as an alluring hub for diverse researchers, while simultaneously signalling its academic intensions. English, being the dominant language in academia, is important to highlight for this reason. Moreover, the declaration of a "flat" management structure coupled with a "high degree of autonomy in research work" augments the organisational ethos of empowerment and intellectual liberty that is emblematic of academic think tanks whose research agendas are often highly influenced by the innovation of their staff (McGann, 2016). In a similar vein, the promotional brochures for the various iterations of the ECMI Summer School consistently feature an annually updated segment elucidating that "over 200 young scholars and practitioners from all over Europe and around the world" (as evidenced in the 2022 edition) have actively participated in prior iterations.

Despite steadfast assurances from an organiser that arranging Summer Schools in Flensburg is notably more feasible, the historical trajectory of these events reveals a noteworthy diversity in geographical locations. Past editions have been conducted in locations as varied as Lviv (Ukraine), Berlin (Germany), Brussels (Belgium), and Oñati (Basque Country, Spain). This geographical variety can be construed as reflective of the ECMI's commitment to geographical exchange, such are autochthonous minority issues different in each of these places, and the dissemination of knowledge across geopolitical boundaries, and its engagement with localised contexts to foster nuanced discussions on minority issues. Such geographic dispersion echoes the institution's capacity to transcend spatial confines and convene stakeholders within distinct geopolitical contexts, thereby accentuating the multidimensional nature of its academic pursuits.

Furthermore, the profiles of the ECMI staff, presented on the institute's official website, serve as an additional avenue for corroborating the institution's intellectual standing and global orientation. These profiles provide insights into the linguistic competencies, focal areas of doctoral research, scholarly inclinations, and collaborative affiliations of the staff members. This feature not only accentuates the staff's academic prowess but also serves as a vivid illustration of the

institution's commitment to interdisciplinary discourse and international collaboration. Through the presentation of the staff's diverse linguistic proficiencies and their affiliation with collaborative networks spanning multiple avenues, the ECMI underscores its capacity to navigate linguistic, cultural, and scholarly barriers in its pursuit of advancing minority-related research agendas. This is particularly beneficial in their pursuit of contract funding for large projects for the High Commissioner for National Minorities, for instance.

The composition of the permanent staff at the ECMI serves as a tangible testament to the organisation's geographical diversity promotion. However, the proceedings of the Advisory Council brainstorming session provide a deeper understanding of the institution's aspirations to enhance this diversity even further. This concerted drive for expanded diversity gained prominence through the proposition voiced by a participant during the meeting. Specifically, the suggestion that "at least one new appointment [to the Advisory Council] should be a non-Westerner" resonated unchallenged and was subsequently acknowledged as the prevailing consensus within the group.

The Advisory Council, as enshrined in the ECMI statutes, assumes the formal role of bolstering the institution's mission by fostering connections with individuals, institutions, and organisations. It also undertakes responsibilities of representation while championing the ECMI's endeavours within European institutional spheres and specialised domains (ECMI, 1998). The membership of this council is readily accessible within the 'Network' section of the ECMI website. The list comprises numerous esteemed professors and academics hailing from prominent European universities, alongside directors of organisations dedicated to continental minority and minority language issues.

Remarkably, the Advisory Council had not convened for a span of five years, with its most recent meeting transpiring in 2017. A researcher, in discussing this hiatus, conveyed that being an Advisory Council member had progressively devolved into a mere credential for CV embellishment. This observation is underpinned by a recognition that advisory councils affiliated with think tanks and academic institutions are often harnessed as vehicles to elevate the professional profiles of their members. Inclusion of such affiliations can ostensibly amplify perceived impact within their respective fields, thereby improving prospects for securing research grants and other academic recognition. For the ECMI, this functional parallel holds true. By populating its Advisory Council with distinguished figures originating from reputable organisations, the institution strategically increases its symbolic capital through prestige and authority by association.

Moreover, a crucial dimension surfaces wherein a globally diverse composition of Advisory Council members can foster the perception of the ECMI as a global reference point for matters pertaining to autochthonous minority issues. This vantage point can potentially enhance the institution's standing as a definitive point of reference when applying for grant applications themselves. An additional promotional benefit for these applications concerns the cataloguing of internationally renowned scholars and practitioners as official partners on its website. This strategic move contributes to the institution's quest for prestige, aligning with the assertion that experts have a vested interest in establishing a positive reputation and cultivating a particular brand of authority (Aedo, 2016, p.162).

This all underscores the ECMI's meticulous cultivation of a diverse and reputable Advisory Council as a strategic move to bolster its scholarly credibility, visibility, and global resonance. This calculated deployment of the Advisory Council, aligned with broader practices across academic and research domains, highlights the institution's cognisance of the relationship between prestige, diversity, and the capacity to achieve further funding through grant applications, i.e. increasing its economic capital.

In a similar fashion, the ECMI further presents an array of partner organisations, yet the specific nuances and significance of these affiliations remain unelaborated. Predominantly comprising universities from across Europe, the list, during my time at the ECMI, offered discernible evidence of only a handful proving substantively fruitful. Among these, the Coppieters Foundation, headquartered in Brussels, stands as a notable collaborator, jointly orchestrating the annual ECMI Summer School. Similarly, the University of Flensburg emerges as a pivotal partner, initially stated to host the MLM conference, while the OSCE Academy consistently contributes interns to the ECMI, fostering an intermittent exchange of intellectual resources. Nonetheless, associating itself with all of these organisations and universities brings social capital by association.

The 'Minorities Blog' discussed in the previous section contributes significantly to the ECMI's promotion of its internationally diverse nature. The geographical breadth of topics covered thus far since its inception is impressive, with blogpost topics published to date including minority demonstrations in Tajikistan, Roma organisations in Sweden, Roma parliamentary representation in Hungary, German minority education funding cuts in Poland, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, multilingual signs, and the implications of Brexit on Celtic language speakers. Whilst the Executive Board has displayed its keenness to "narrow down the geographical", no such plan is evidenced by the thoughts of the researchers themselves.

The ECMI has an organisational structure which separates its expertise into 'clusters' (Table 5) Each of the clusters has just one member – its head, with the junior researchers often

working within multiple clusters at the same time. The research cluster structure is the clearest example of the scholarly diversity claimed by the ECMI, with interests crossing legal, sociological, political and historical lines. Virtually all publications involve some level of inter-cluster collaboration.

Cluster	Description
Culture & Diversity	Considers the question of whether diversity is "a societal asset or a key challenge to integration and social cohesion" through an examination of how societies and governments manage cultural diversity. The cluster's own description says it "departs from the presumption that cultural differences such as language, religion, traditions and ethnicity are non-negotiable".
Conflict & Security	Interested in and explores the "conflictual relationships in multi-ethnic societies from different thematic perspectives". Concerned with "the causes and consequences of violent and non-violent ethnic conflicts". Research agenda covers three topics: "Conflict dynamics in cultural identity conflicts; self-governance and power-sharing; as well as inter-minority relations".
Justice & Governance	Interested in the "various legal and institutional aspects of the protection of national minorities in throughout Europe". The cluster is concerned with the "legal guarantees of national minority rights in domestic legislation and their correlation with European standards".
Politics & Civil Society	Focused upon the "political and civic agency of different types of minority communities". Explicit interests include political and civic organisations established by minority communities; minority language media; ideologies of minority communities; actual influence of minority communities on their surrounding society; the fluctuating

	nature of political and civic interactions with majority groups.
Equality & Inclusion	Interested in the causes of socio-economic inequalities on national minority groups and understanding their prospects and the limits of policies in promoting equality of opportunity. Questions whether the vulnerable positions of minorities are due to "socio-economic underdevelopment, social or geographic peripherality, stereotyping, racism, or combination of these and other factors".
Danish-German Minority Issues	The newest cluster, established in 2022. It "reflects the ECMI's commitment to the Danish-German border region, which is widely perceived as a best practice example of conflict resolution and minority accommodation and inclusion". Critically examines minority experiences in the region and works in close cooperation with regional stakeholders.

Table 5: A table describing the purpose and aims of each of ECMI's six thematic clusters.

The establishment of research clusters within the ECMI can be chiefly attributed to their utility in bolstering grant applications, offering an efficient way to showcase the organisation's expertise in pertinent areas. From an organisational perspective, the clusters do not offer any particular use, and from my observations, did not function as research clusters do in other organisations. Each cluster is headed by a senior researcher. With six research clusters, that means six senior researchers. The junior researchers are intended to work with the seniors on projects together. Where I question the necessity, organisationally, of having research clusters at the ECMI, is that when I was there, there were only three junior researchers, meaning much of the work within each cluster was conducted by only one person. From an external perspective, prominently displaying this research cluster structure on the ECMI's website, as well as featuring them in grant applications signifies expertise across all these areas. This is critically important in the field of minority issues, which is inherently interdisciplinary and as discussed earlier in the chapter, is an important form of symbolic capital. The promotion of the research clusters also implies that

expertise on these disciplines is institutional, as opposed to individual. This interdisciplinary diversity can prove key in some grant applications, as discussed in section **Error! Reference source not found.**.

This analysis of the ECMI's strategic objectives reveals a twofold rationale behind the promotion of diversity. Firstly, it addresses the contemporary imperative of embracing inclusivity and diversity, thereby aligning with broader societal agendas of equality, diversity and inclusion. Gender, nationality and race were particular forms of identity of importance. Secondly, it serves as a means to enhance the organisation's grant-seeking efforts by substantiating its multifaceted expertise and providing a way of more easily advertising this expertise. This strategic positioning by the ECMI aligns with the interdisciplinary essence of the minority issues field, so it is necessary for them to advertise its expertise in the way of having research clusters, despite them effectively being only one individual.

5.7 Conclusion

The institutional strategy of capital accumulation for think tanks varies considerably depending on their type. Matching most closely with the definition of an academic think tank, forms of capital such as specialist knowledge, development and maintenance of academic networks, appearances at conferences, publication in high-impact journals, and strong 'visibility' and 'outreach' statistics of these publications are general goals of these organisations. However, the ECMI participates in more than one field, with its funding situation it also plays a role in German-Danish politics, so too is it part of the field of minority issues. Capital accumulation within and between these fields can be contradictory, therefore strategically, the ECMI has had to identify the fields it wants to make the greatest impact within. Since the 2018-19 external evaluation, the ECMI has focused most greatly on the academic field of minority issues.

Consequently, there are four institutional objectives that guide knowledge production and promotional strategy that I identified during my time with the ECMI. The first was a resolute upholding of the founding thematic focus of the organisation – autochthonous minority issues. Whilst the focus on how the ECMI attempts to make impact on these field – either through action projects or research-orientated activity is discussed in detail in Chapter 6, this chapter analysed why they have maintained the focus on the 'unfashionable niche' which struggles for funding and visibility in comparison to its academic disciplinary-counterparts. The reason for this is primarily for funding reasons – the founding three parties of the ECMI remain the primary funding organisations, and they are adamant on retaining this focus. Despite acknowledging the 'blurriness' between 'old' and 'new' minorities, these concerns are irrelevant because the Executive Board

wants the ECMI to research only 'autochthonous' minority issues – and the criteria for being an 'autochthonous' minority is intentionally loose.

The second objective concerned the ECMI's attempt to define 'Europe', especially important as the continent appears in their name. The Executive Board, as representatives of the funding bodies, want the ECMI to re-focus on Western Europe as they want the organisation to be seen as fulfilling their obligations to their respective minorities. However, the staff's own geographic specialisms and views on expanding their academic networks contrast the aims of the funding bodies. The symbolic capital associated with having a large and expansive network has meant little has changed in regard to "narrowing down the geographical".

The third objective related to how the ECMI has radically changed its publication strategy by achieving more academic publications, and making more conference appearances are significant forms of capital in the field of minority issues and the academy more generally. The principal benefit launching of the ECMI Minorities Blog has been its expanding of the ECMI's network, another crucial form of capital in academia. Whilst infometrics are considered important to the ECMI, they do not impact whether the organisation survives or not – the funding bodies are perfectly happy provided the focus on autochthonous minority issues remains.

The final objective identified focuses on diversity and how the ECMI has responded to the growing emphasis on DEI, but also the value of being seen commanding expertise on many different disciplines within the field of minority issues. This fourth objective focuses more on organisational promotion as opposed to knowledge production like the other three, but the discussion of it reflects significant attention the ECMI has placed on increasing its standing within the hierarchy of the field of minority issues.

6 The ECMI Identity Crisis: Reflections on Knowledge Production Strategies

6.1 Introduction

The ECMI operates within a distinctive institutional framework characterised by a dual mandate, that is, to conduct both 'action' and 'research'-orientated projects. Action-orientated activity generally refers to projects that focus on tangible and measurable outcomes, where the primary objective is to instigate meaningful change or achieve specific goals through actively implementing strategies or innovations. Research-orientated projects are endeavours primarily focused on generating new knowledge, insights, or understanding through systematic investigation, analysis, and exploration of specific topics or questions. Since the outcomes of the two types differ significantly in their impact on policymaking, this has sparked a prolonged debate at the ECMI. The discussion centres on the organisation's approach to knowledge production and the strategic objectives it currently has or should adopt. Early on in my ethnography, I learned of the so-called 'identity crisis' of the ECMI.

Various stakeholders at the ECMI, including junior and senior research staff members, the director, and the Executive Board, each hold differing opinions on what kind of activity the organisation should pursue. Visibility and impact – two crucial criteria for success for think tanks generally – are considered differently at the ECMI compared to other think tanks (Chapter 5). Instead, the real question concerned what *kind* of visibility and impact should be pursued. Considering the ECMI's size (it has fewer than twenty permanent staff), the organisation itself recognises there is a limitation on whether it can perform both action and research-orientated activities equally to its full potential. The appointment of a new director in 2019, with a strong academic background, and the reforms to the knowledge production strategy that followed have clearly pushed ECMI activity towards research-orientated endeavours. Historically, the ECMI has generally focused more on action-orientated projects, particularly during the previous ten years when Prof. Dr. Tove Malloy served as Director.

In observing debates related to this 'identity crisis' and interviewing different stakeholders about their assessments of the strategic direction the ECMI is taking, this chapter offers a reflection on how different actors within a think tank evaluate different types of knowledge production and, consequently, their perceived benefits. With an advocatory goal such as improving the lives of autochthonous minorities in Europe, the ways in which each kind of project is seen to contribute to this offers further consideration of how think tanks evaluate 'impact'. In terms of the Bourdieusian field of autochthonous minority issues, the field itself competes to be recognised as a distinct entity within academia and politics – there is a conviction within it that autochthonous

minorities face a unique set of challenges. The outcomes offered by action and research projects are critically different in this sense.

This chapter begins by establishing a definition of precisely what constitutes an activity being designated as 'action' or 'research'-orientated. The following section explores how the ECMI Statutes and the Executive Board influence knowledge production at the ECMI. As the Executive Board represents the three funders, their opinions and consequent direction have had a very significant impact. An overview of current ECMI projects is provided, and the next two sections concern action-orientated and research-orientated activity respectively, with each exploring the array of work conducted within these domains and the opinions of the ECMI staff themselves.

6.2 Defining 'Action' and 'Research' Projects

The staff at the ECMI were well acquainted with the binary distinction between 'action' and 'research' projects, as their work endeavours typically adhered neatly to one of these categories. Nonetheless, occasional instances of project overlap were noted. Throughout my time with the ECMI, I observed many instances in which staff members who exhibited a preference for one type expressed reservations regarding the efficacy of the other.

'Action' projects typically refer to initiatives undertaken by think tanks or similar organisations that involve direct engagement with real-world issues or challenges. These projects often aim to actively shape processes or have a defined set of goals that bridge the gap between research and civil society. Other activities may include advocacy, capacity-building, community outreach, or policy development. The principal quality of action-orientated projects is that they offer a more tangible impact, given that they typically aim to implement change and address pressing issues. Any governmental policy changes can be easily extrapolated to have occurred because of a think tank's involvement. Think tanks are often commissioned to produce research that "reinforce[s] government policy preferences," with governments requiring such an organisation to "produce knowledge that appears relatively unbiased and results from a process in accordance with professional norms and characterised by transparency and procedural fairness" (Stone, 2000b, p.164).

Not all work is conducted in this fashion; though the 'tangible impact' of an action project may consist of results that would have happened regardless of their involvement, these opportunities are nonetheless readily capitalised on by think tanks to promote themselves. For instance, in policy interventions deemed successful, think tanks will push for public recognition of their involvement to reinforce their authority and influence in the field by gaining symbolic capital.

Secondly, because they often respond directly to immediate needs in civil society, they shape real-world outcomes, and this direct relevance can provide actionable recommendations that may be implemented in a timely fashion. There exists a "strong tension" within academic think tanks regarding the "completeness and policy relevance" of transmitted knowledge, as the rigour required to produce material of scholarly quality consequently reduces the speed at which projects can be actioned from their initiation (McGann, 2016, p.17). In delivering direct input into the policymaking process, they also enhance a think tank's general influence on shaping public policy agendas.

Thirdly, largely linked to the previous two points, is the fact that influence and effectiveness can be more easily demonstrated in a think tank's drive to attract more funding. As "useful external voice[s]," think tanks can utilise apparently successful action projects for other funding applications as either arbitrators on particular issues or, more cynically, as reputable voices for hire (McGann, 2016, p.14).

Lastly, the stakeholders of policymaking, such as minority communities themselves, are more actively involved in engaging with policymakers than they would be in a research project. Think tank researchers mitigate risks to their credibility by talking to stakeholders early in the evidence-gathering stage of projects, by "asking questions designed to steer the policy debate, ensure they are remembered, and to build coalitions and communities during the research process, so that the audience is primed and ready to receive the product" (Tchilingirian, 2018, p. 170).

'Research' projects typically involve systematic investigation and analysis to explore specific topics or issues in depth. These projects aim to generate new knowledge, insights, or evidence that can inform policy development, academic discourse, or public understanding. Research activities may include literature reviews, data collection and analysis, surveys, interviews, case studies, or experimental studies, depending on the nature of the research question and the methodology employed. The findings of research projects are often disseminated through reports, articles, presentations, or other means to contribute to broader discussions and debates in relevant fields. Knowledge outputs for research-orientated activities therefore mirror those produced by researchers in universities, with academic think tanks consequently labelled "universities without students" (Weaver, 1989, p.564).

Research-orientated projects boast several highly regarded attributes in contrast to action-orientated ones. Firstly, they prioritise the generation of new knowledge and insights. The dedication that research-orientated projects have towards discovering the underlying causes, patterns, and trends means a much more comprehensive understanding of an issue can be attained. Research-orientated projects operate by exploring an array of diverse perspectives, thus producing

more comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of systemic issues. Analyses of research projects have a broader appeal, as applications of research can be interpreted in different ways, with research-orientated output being "commonly more involved in furthering disciplinary discussion" than specific policy debates, which action-orientated activity is pitched towards (Bajenova, 2016, p.86). Whilst university-produced research is generally orientated towards disciplinary debates, "think tank research is typically orient[ated] towards current policy debates and more accessible publications aimed at policymakers" (Christensen and Holst, 2020, p.226-227). This can accordingly lead to tensions between "the professional norms of academic researchers […] and relevance to policy debates" (Weaver, 1989, p.566).

Secondly, the more fine-tuned methodologies that research projects operate under enhance their credibility, thereby improving a think tank's overall reputation as an impartial and rigorous organisation. These are attributes that think tanks strive to be seen as holding (Jezierska, 2018). Christensen and Holst (2020, p.232), in their interview-based study of advocacy think tanks, found that respondents viewed academia as "having credibility that [they] also want", with many organisations of this nature ardently pursuing strategies that have others perceive them as being knowledge-based "to counter widespread suspicions that they were simply pursuing a partisan agenda". Whilst I did not witness the ECMI having issues with accusations of partisanship or any outsiders suggesting anti-intellectual knowledge production, the credibility associated with being published in academic journals and book chapters was undeniable.

Thirdly, action-orientated projects themselves are products of research-orientated work, serving as the foundation of evidence-based decision-making in policy formulation and implementation. Should a think tank focusing on influencing the academic debate be able to advertise their indirect role in actual policy implementation effectively, then research-orientated projects can afford an organisation such as the ECMI significant credibility.

6.3 The ECMI Statutes and the Executive Board

The organisational infrastructure of the ECMI is centred around the ECMI Statutes, which set out the fundamental principles and governance framework of the organisation. These have remained largely unchanged since the founding of the ECMI, and they define their objectives, mission and purpose – as well as setting out how the financial and organisation structure. It is Article 2.2 of the Statutes (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) that establishes European autochthonous minorities as the thematic focus:

> The objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous ethnic groups).

Most crucially for this chapter, Article 3 sets out the ECMI's 'Activities'. It stipulates that English is the working language of the organisation to strategically position itself within the global academic community. Recognising English as the predominant language of scholarly communication and dissemination, the ECMI aims to enhance its accessibility and visibility to a wider audience of researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders. Notably, over the past few years, the ECMI has published much more material in German and Danish in an attempt to "better connect with our local minority communities" (Interview 7, staff member). Article 3.1 outlines seven different kinds of activity that the ECMI should undertake:

1. The Foundation will carry out activities on a European basis within the following areas:
    a. Collection, promotion and communication of research work on issues of minorities (documentation centre);
    b. Construction of a European bank of data and models on minority issues and possible solutions;
    c. Compilation of research on minority issues and the creation of overall analyses and presentations;
    d. Participation in network research on minority issues;

Though not all work fits neatly within one category, the activities laid out in 'a-d' relate to research-orientated activity, given their focus on compiling and sharing knowledge. The ECMI Library is a significant endeavour relating to 'a', with the bulk of the physical collection being located at the Danish Library in Flensburg. Activity 'b' straddles both 'research' and 'action', as it involves data collection and analysis; however, the potential application of these models to other contexts, such as the "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), is one of the ECMI's most prominent examples of an action project. Activity 'c' synthesises existing research as an avenue to contribute to academic discourse, informing policy discussions more indirectly. Activity 'd' on the research side expands the ECMI's collaborative network, fostering knowledge exchange, though ensuing projects may be of either type. Activities 'e', 'f', and 'g' can be considered outlines of 'action' projects:

e. Promotion and communication of practical experience regarding protection of minorities through symposia, seminars and publications;
f. Creation of fora for mitigating conflicts;
g. Advisory activities regarding minority policies.

Involving the dissemination and advocacy efforts, activities 'e' and 'g' are each pitched towards raising awareness about minority issues, sharing best practices, and influencing policy and practice as defined goals. Providing expert advice as actionable guidance and recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders affords the ECMI a tangible impact, with this activity marked against defined project objectives. Activity 'f' involves establishing platforms or spaces for dialogue and conflict resolution, again with clearly defined intended outcomes.

Insofar as simple arithmetic goes, two can be considered purely 'research' ventures, two can be considered both, and three can be considered purely 'action'-orientated. This chapter analyses how different actors evaluate each type of activity and the strategic direction the ECMI should take; yet, nowhere in the Statutes exists a mechanism for defining which of these types of activity should be prioritised over others. Ultimately, this power is vested in the Executive Board. Though the Statutes state that money is to be obtained from other sources, such as grants from the European Union, public and private institutions, participant fees, and other donations (see Article 4), the vast majority of the ECMI's annual funding comes from the governments of Denmark, Germany, and the *Land* Schleswig-Holstein, with this figure being around 90% according to the 2022 Annual Report (ECMI, 2023). Membership of the Executive Board is defined by Article 6.1:

> The Executive Board shall be made up of:
>
> a) Three members nominated by the Kingdom of Denmark represented by the Ministry of Research and Technology, including at least one representative of the scientific community;
>
> b) One member nominated by the Federal Republic of Germany represented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior;
>
> c) One member nominated by the Land Schleswig-Holstein;

d) One representative of the scientific community nominated jointly by the Federal Republic of Germany represented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Land Schleswig-Holstein;

e) Three further members nominated by the founders at the suggestion of European institutions.

Of the nine members, six are nominated by the dominant funding bodies. Consequently, this strengthens the influence they have over organisational activity further, given that the formal organisational structure ensures a supermajority over decision-making. Furthermore, Article 4.3 states that the "funds of the Foundation shall be used solely for the purposes permitted under its Statutes," meaning the Executive Board can simply halt any activity they feel does not match their directive. It is the "supreme authority of the Foundation" (Article 7.1), and their opinion regarding the organisation's knowledge production strategy is the most important one.

The 2018-19 external evaluation conducted by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) was a significant turning point for the ECMI, as their report and the consequent actions of the Executive Board revealed the reasoning behind many strategic decisions that had taken place since I first learned of the organisation in 2017. Since the external evaluation, "the balance is definitely more on the research side" (Interview 14, junior researcher), and the question of what is considered a desired 'impact' by the Executive Board has heavily influenced this move. The generation of knowledge within think tanks is intricately intertwined with the specified objectives set out by funding bodies, which exert substantial influence over the nature and content of the knowledge produced, especially within organisations such as the ECMI, where there is a heavy reliance on a limited number of sources (Beaverstock *et al.*, 2004; Gonzalez and Williams, 2018). In their evaluation report, the EVA directly discussed the action vs research-orientated debate:

> In the Expert Panel's view, there seems to be some degree of strategic tension or ambiguity underlying the research and action-oriented activities. (page 7)
>
> Another issue raised by the stakeholders in the interviews is the balance between long-term research and short-term action-oriented projects. In recent years, regrettably, ECMI has produced less fundamental research and more specific action-oriented projects. One possible explanation for this shift, in the stakeholders' view, is that it has become increasingly difficult to attract funding for wider and longer research projects. (page 18)

> The actual action-oriented projects and advisory services conducted by ECMI vary a lot in substance, scope, and proportions, […] these activities mostly, but not fully, match the mandate laid down in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. The achievements in this area appear to be outstanding, and the work seems to have had a positive impact in the field. […] Research-driven projects are generally of higher quality and longer duration and have better chances of leaving a positive impact in the field. (page 24)

In the opinion of the panel, research-driven projects were perceived to be of a higher standard and should be prioritised in the ECMI's knowledge production strategy going forward. Action projects were seen to be narrow in their objectives and outcomes, recognising that research-orientated activity has a wider application. These observations had a significant impact, with members of the Executive Board I interviewed confirming that the EVA recommended the ECMI push for a greater research focus in meetings conducted about their report:

> There was quite a push that we needed to more academically approach it […] so we decided well, now we need to do something about it and it just happened to be around the time when the position of Director was opened again and that was part of new expectations which we do every time there's an external evaluation we take the recommendation and try to implement them. (Interview 1, Executive Board member)

The serving director of the ECMI, Tove Malloy, was not selected to continue in the role, with Vello Pettai chosen to replace her. The two individuals offered very different attributes, with Malloy's background in diplomacy favouring a predominantly action-orientated approach, while Pettai's academic experience shifted the focus at a managerial level. Consequently, in the Bourdieusian sense, the ECMI began to prioritise its position within academia and the accumulation of valued capital in that field (Bourdieu, 1988). With the agenda set at the board level and an appropriate director installed to implement this strategy, knowledge production has indeed shifted to a more research-orientated emphasis. However, this has not meant that action projects have halted entirely or that actors within the ECMI have all agreed with this change. The following sections of this chapter explore the knowledge production conducted during my time with the ECMI and analyse the thematic reflections of research staff concerning the organisation's identity.

There are two central questions about this 'identity crisis' at the ECMI: Should the ECMI be an academic-focused institution that influences European autochthonous minority issues through publishing in high-impact journals, appearing at prestigious academic conferences, collecting and distributing data, disseminating reports, and influencing debates, demonstrating impact through its influence on academic settings? Or should the organisation strive to become a

prominent policy advisor, involve itself with the implementation of policy proposals, and make a more direct impact on specific minority communities, demonstrating its impact this way?

6.4 Overview of 2022 Projects

In 2022, the ECMI experienced a notable transition that marked a step towards normality after the global travel restrictions and other disruptions that began in 2020 with the advent of the coronavirus pandemic. Ongoing action-orientated projects underwent significant disruption, as they typically require more overseas travel. While the full impact of the pandemic on the organisation, especially concerning action-orientated projects, will continue beyond the scope of this thesis due to the lead time needed for planning, applying, and securing funding, there was still a clear adjustment in the organisation's knowledge production strategy. While greater public visibility and faster response to pressing minority issues have become important goals with the establishment of the ECMI Minorities Blog in 2021, and a stronger position in the field of academia sought through the publishing of journal articles, reports, and the organisation of academic conferences, direct policymaking is something that is more challenging for the ECMI to achieve. This is because the most effective form of policymaking influence is to attain commissions from the institutions that have the autonomy to put research and policy proposals into action, with past ECMI projects in this domain including the "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project that they collaborated on with FUEN (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). There were four ongoing projects with varying degree of what could be considered policy influence during my time at the ECMI (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Project and Partners	Description
ENTAN – EUROPEAN NON-TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY NETWORK (ENTAN, 2023)	ECMI has one representative in the project's management committee. It is aimed at examining the concept of non-territorial autonomy (NTA), focusing on "arrangements for reducing inter-ethnic tensions within a state and on the accommodation of the needs of different communities while preventing calls to separate statehood".

AUTONOMY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE WORLD EURAC Research (Italy), Babes-Bolyai University (Romania) and the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (Romania)	"The core of the project is an online compendium of territorial and non-territorial autonomy arrangements in the world". Provides several case studies of autonomy arrangements, with the ECMI's contribution to supervise the case studies for the NTA arrangements.
GLOBAL PLURALISM MONITOR (Global Pluralism Monitor, 2023)	"Examines the treatment of diversity historically and comparatively across the globe". Aim is to evaluate inclusionary and exclusionary practices across society. It is a tool which will be used to produce assessment reports for thirty countries by the end of 2022. ECMI involvement from 2012 until 2019.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS IN CENTRAL ASIA Commissioned by OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)	"Purpose is to analyse the barriers for inclusion of minorities in Central Asia and enhance their participation in political life". Two topics focused on are "socio-economic participation of national/ethnic minorities" and "consultative mechanisms for national/ethnic minorities".

Table 6: A table explaining the four projects of 2022 listed on the ECMI's website.

The first of these projects to be discussed is that conducted with the European Non-Territorial Autonomy Network (ENTAN), an organisation funded by the European Union dedicated to non-territorial autonomy (NTA), a concept which promotes the collective rights of a minority, whereby a defined national group elects representatives who manage particular areas of life – for example, minority language schooling (Suksi, 2015). This is done within existing state boundaries and without this minority group holding power themselves. The ECMI has a representative on the Management Committee, though in total there are over a hundred members and substitutes. Additionally, the output of the ENTAN project does not have a clear pathway to influencing policy beyond a 'report' on NTA theory and practice. The previous director of the

ECMI was recognised as a world-leading expert on NTA, with the organisation itself holding a reputation as an authority on the concept. This was further explained to me by a participant of a conference organised by the ECMI, held at the Danish Library in Flensburg, who said that their first dealings with the ECMI were on a collaborative project concerning NTA over a decade prior.

Similarly, the Autonomy Arrangements in the World (AAW) project also places a great emphasis on research as opposed to the practical application of NTA. Each of the two project partners relating to NTA has no autonomy to implement research findings, further exhibiting the ECMI's now preferred strategy of influencing the overall academic debate rather than the direct policymaking influence that a contract and advocacy think tank would typically pursue. The third project listed is the Global Pluralism Monitor, in which the ECMI's involvement lasted from 2012 until 2019. Developed by a Canada-based academic think tank called the Global Centre for Pluralism, this project is again pitched more towards research-orientated work. The project with the most direct political influence is the fourth, titled "Socio-economic Participation and Consultative Mechanisms in Central Asia." This was commissioned by the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), a role which holds significant influence over addressing tensions involving national minorities considered to have the potential to escalate into violence. Generally, the HCNM focuses on identifying and addressing short- and long-term triggers and structural issues, providing analysis and recommendations to participating states and implementing best practices. Their remit includes fifty-seven member states, and though it has no legal authority, the HCNM has been invited by numerous governments to engage with minority-majority relations management.

These four ongoing projects listed by the ECMI reflect the continual movement from action-orientated work to more academia-based research. The ECMI previously produced material related to projects that involved actual implementation of policy. In 2017, a report on a project entitled "Minorities in the Western Balkans" was published, a project which involved inviting representatives from the Municipality of Bijeljina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, who were interested in the different models and instruments for minority protection in the Danish-German border region to Flensburg. From this visit, the Mayor of Bijeljina created a new Minority Commissioner for the municipality, inspired by the role that exists in Schleswig-Holstein (see **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**). This project has been the most obvious policymaking example the ECMI has been involved with in the last five years.

From this examination of the 2022 projects at the ECMI, there is an indication that research projects have gained greater prominence. This shift has not been a satisfactory transition for some actors at the ECMI, and having examined the Statutes and these projects, it is not clear

why this change has taken place. The following two sections examine how different actors associated with the ECMI feel about this.

6.5 Action-orientated activity at the ECMI

Prior to 2019, action-orientated projects held a more favoured position as sources of knowledge transmission at the ECMI. Following the change in leadership and the imposition of travel constraints due to the coronavirus pandemic, action projects have taken on a diminished role in recent times:

> At present, the balance is definitely more to the research side – a significant shift to when I first joined the ECMI in 2017. However, action-orientated projects are still present, such as the GIZ funded project in Serbia currently ongoing. I would also argue that aspects like us joining ELEN or attending events of MIDAS or FUEN are overlapping with action-orientated goals rather than strictly research endeavours. One shortcoming at present is the external offices, which after the closure of the Kiev one and whatever happened with Kosovo, are currently zero. We have a contracted person in Strasbourg doing things with Council of Europe, but in general perhaps this is an area which will be developed again. I would imagine this (and action-orientated projects in general) would likely be in the context of EU expansion. However, it could be a strategic goal to have someone in Brussels – like FUEN does – enabling ECMI to be closer to EU conversations, institutions and decision-makers. ELEN, Coppieters etc. all have Brussels representation. (Interview 14, junior researcher)

Despite this seemingly clear development in strategy, some at the ECMI questioned whether this move would be permanent. In an interview with a junior researcher who expressed a preference for action projects over research-orientated ones, they expressed confidence that their prominence would be reinstated once the prevailing restrictions eased (Interview 3, junior researcher). This has not taken place, as many of the partner institutions with which much of the action-orientated work was conducted are no longer in operation or cooperation has ceased. Furthermore, many of the ECMI staff who were involved with action projects no longer work there. One of the most important elements of ECMI activity was its field offices. ECMI Kosovo was the longest-running of these offices, but the association between the Flensburg office and ECMI Kosovo ended shortly before I arrived in October 2021. The knowledge production at ECMI Kosovo was centred upon drafting key minority rights legislation, including the Law on the

Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Communities and their Members, the Law on the Use of Languages, and the 'Rights and Interests of Communities' section of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. As part of the continuous process of decentralisation in Kosovo since 2008, ECMI Kosovo was continually involved in supporting this, principally through the establishment of new Serb-majority municipalities in the north. Other activities at the organisation included working with grassroots minority organisations and assisting them in strengthening their capacities to influence policy decisions at local and central levels in pursuit of defending their rights. Legal support and participation in advocacy campaigns were also provided.

The other field office, ECMI Ukraine, is still active, although the Russia-Ukraine War has severely disrupted its operations. One of the ECMI's most important projects (in which ECMI Ukraine was also heavily involved) was the Eastern Partnership Programme (EPP), which had the defined goal of promoting minority protection and participation in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. Beginning in July 2014, the project concluded in December 2017, with two reports published about it in 2022. Two objectives were outlined, which like the activity of ECMI Kosovo, epitomise action-orientated work:

1. Effective capacity building of public institutions in charge of equality and diversity policies with focus on anti-discrimination bodies
2. Development, institutionalization and enhancement of dialogue between public authorities and minorities

The EPP project consisted of fifty-two training events in the capital cities and regional centres of the three countries, with 2,218 beneficiaries claimed at these capacity-building and awareness-raising training activities. In assessing the outcome of the project, I was interested to hear from ECMI staff about how difficult it was to tangibly assess its merits. Given that the "enhancement of dialogue" and "effective capacity building" were key terms in the project objectives, it is not immediately clear how that impact can be demonstrated. Each of the two reports covers the Programme's implementation, but the main advertised delivery on the two objectives concerns these training events, as opposed to actual policy changes. In the first report, entitled "Ensuring Equality on Ethnic Grounds in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine: Normative Framework, Organisational Underpinnings, and Civic Mechanisms," several detailed recommendations are made about how public institutions should coordinate their activities to prevent discrimination; however, no indication is present as to whether any of the project findings were acted upon.

In the second report, "Participation of National Minorities in Public Life Including Their Interaction with Public Authorities," there were again issues in terms of demonstrable action resulting from the project. The report itself states that it offers "relevant general and country-specific information, summarizes the results of discussions, and puts forward recommendations about good practices to be borrowed and developed in appropriate areas" (Osipov and Vasilevich, 2022b, p.9). While the recommendations may be well constructed, there is no guarantee that they will be accepted or acted upon by relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the significance of a project such as this is very much limited to the specific context in which it was developed. This was a major criticism of action-orientated projects at the ECMI. In a discussion with an ECMI researcher, they outlined that the political institutions that projects such as the EPP were attempting to change are hampered by so much corruption and lack of political will that they were simply unenjoyable and frustrating to work on. Another researcher pessimistically described how these institutions regarded working with the ECMI on these projects as little more than a tick-box exercise, where they could advertise themselves as working to improve the situation for minorities without genuinely engaging with the findings, often being generally obstructive. Additionally, some historical overseas action projects were seen as "colossal wastes of money", with the auditing of some project work described as a "joke".

Nonetheless, action-orientated activity is still regarded by some actors at the ECMI as the preferred type of work. As displayed in this section, the impact of action-orientated projects diverges considerably depending on the project. Some are educational, others have indirect policy impacts, while others have direct ones. One ECMI researcher extensively illustrated how they preferred action projects because they provided a more grounded and tangible impact on minority communities. One project in Ukraine seemed to have made a real impression, with one recommendation resulting in the establishment of a new institution in the country:

> In this report, the Council of Europe report, I think there was actually a huge impact on the policies in Ukraine, even though it's very difficult to show this directly. So, when we produced this report, we said that Ukraine needs an executive body, or some state institution in the executive branch to implement minority policy, because before 2002 or 2005 we used to have a ministry, or a branch in charge of ethnopolitical issues, in Ukraine they do not call it minority issues, they call it ethnopolitical issues. […] in 2019 this institution was established – also with our youth project we managed to put minority issues on the agenda of the ministry of youth, because before that they had a civic education programme for Ukraine and was mainly about military education of what they call more

> of a promotion of nationalism. We managed to convince the ministry that they should focus on minority issues and this kind of institution was missing. (Interview 3, junior researcher)

The ECMI has had a long association with Ukraine and has thus been a significant arbitrator, or at least has witnessed first-hand the transformation of the government's and civil society's attitudes towards minorities. The fourth report published by the ECMI was titled "Inter-Ethnic Relations in Transcarpathian Ukraine" (1999). This project began following an idea from a conference held in May 1997, organised by the ECMI just a year after its founding, with the Baltic Academy in Lübeck-Travemünde. There were over fifty participants at the event, which featured "heated discussions" between Transcarpathian Hungarians and Roma on one side, and the Head of the Ukrainian State Committee for Nationalities and Migration on the other. From the 4th to the 7th of September the following year, the ECMI held a conference in Mukachevo, Ukraine, the regional capital of the Transcarpathian region. The purpose of this conference was principally to inform local minority organisations of recent national and international developments related to minority legislation, to examine the social and economic issues facing these local groups, and to agree on general principles for governing inter-ethnic relations in the region. This project epitomised the action-project focus of the ECMI at this time, as it dealt directly with stakeholders to achieve specific results. Additionally, the achievements of this kind of action project are much easier to establish—such as establishing institutional dialogues between minority organisations and, more impressively, government authorities that did not exist previously. The researcher additionally outlined how there were also more indirect results in the form of influencing the perception of minority issues as political rights concerns:

> We had another project [which] worked a lot on decentralisation in the context of minority issues. In each of the communities (not counties), there was a realisation that each of the communities needed a representative and I think the biggest impact with our work in Ukraine was a shift in minority rights from the realm of cultural rights where you just sing and dance and you have concerts, to more political rights, representation, language issues. People started thinking in a different way – changing the norms, changing the attitudes and a couple of years ago, ten years ago maybe, it was okay to call the Roma people gypsies. So now everyone is aware of this. I think our work in Ukraine did bring fruit. (Interview 3, junior researcher)

Associated with the aforementioned project was the "Future Minority Initiative in Ukraine and Moldova" project, spanning from June 2022 to December 2022. An action-orientated endeavour with the primary objective of empowering twenty-five young activists from the ethnically diverse areas of Ukraine and Moldova, a series of training workshops, an immersive study visit to Germany, and various online exercises were conducted. The original application, alongside the German Federal Foreign Office, outlined a comprehensive range of activities to be conducted primarily in Ukraine, although several planned activities had to be cancelled or modified. The core focus of this project seemingly revolved around raising awareness of minority rights and cultivating project management skills among the attendees, as during the event, the participants received extensive instruction on the principles and practices of activism, campaigning, and the legal frameworks governing minority rights. Similar in many aspects to the annual ECMI Summer School, which took place in Oñati in the Basque Country in 2022, it cost significantly more (€62,400 as opposed to an ECMI contribution of €8,334 for the Oñati event).

The level of investment in the project suggests that the ECMI perceives raising awareness about minority issues and teaching the project management skills required for their implementation as key components of the desired impact the centre wishes to have. Moreover, it further embeds the ECMI into the Ukrainian and Moldovan minority landscapes and thus enhances their apparent expertise in the region. However, the professed achievements of the project, as reported in the ECMI's 2022 Annual Report, primarily centred around educational outcomes. These achievements revolved around participants' opportunities "to network with the lecturers, trainers, and civil society representatives", learn "about issues such as activism, campaigning, and legal frameworks for minority rights", the German minority protection programme, and the Sorbian minority (ECMI, 2023, p.17). The cost of this project did not sit well with a significant number of ECMI staff, who questioned the cost-benefit analysis. One researcher informed me that they had 'no idea' what the money had paid for and questioned whether the event could have simply taken place online at a fraction of the cost.

Offering a very different kind of impact, the "Minority Protection for EU Accession" (MPA) project, funded by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), plays a pivotal role in supporting the government of Serbia in its bid to join the European Union. Serbia's accession to the EU necessitates the fulfilment of a comprehensive set of political criteria, which includes Chapter 23, pertaining to the judiciary and fundamental rights. The ECMI's specific role relating to Chapter 23 is the focus on national minorities, identifying four key thematic areas of the MPA project:

1. Monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan;
2. awareness-raising among civil servants;
3. strengthening of the Councils for Interethnic Relations in various Serbian municipalities;
4. capacity-building of National Minority Councils representing specific minority communities.

Commencing in 2016, the initial Action Plan for the Protection of National Minorities laid the groundwork for addressing pertinent issues, while a new Action Plan is set to be adopted in 2023, aiming to bridge any remaining gaps in implementation. The MPA project stands as a prominent example of the ECMI's direct engagement in frontline politics, actively working towards a momentous objective, namely Serbia's accession to the European Union. Notably, the strategic partner for this project is the Serbian Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. The significance of action-orientated projects like the MPA lies in their potential to effectively achieve advocacy objectives by directly involving policymakers who are actively working towards Serbia's European Union membership goal. Serving as a reputable client, a governmental department of a nation-state, the MPA project may not only enhance the ECMI's engagement in Serbia but also unlock potential opportunities for collaboration with other countries, such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Turkey, and Ukraine, which have initiated the accession process. Among these countries, Moldova and Ukraine, given their regional specificities, hold particular promise for future collaboration. It is highly plausible that the approval of this specific project was largely influenced by these considerations, as it aligns with the ECMI's strategic interests and geographic expertise in those regions.

The ECMI became involved with this project through the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), which was selected to be the general implementation partner of the Action Plan. The ECMI was subsequently chosen by the GIZ as part of an application process to undertake specific project tasks aimed at enhancing protections for national minority groups. Their involvement officially began in January 2023; however, I was privy to the discussions preparing for the project during my time in Flensburg.

> As someone who generally is not involved with action projects, I can see the benefits of the ones with the GIZ or [the OSCE] Minority Commissioner. It has always been a part of the ECMI identity to do policy consultation and the GIZ project is certainly an opportunity for this. (Interview 14, junior researcher)

> It is very different to the disasters of the old publication strategy where nearly no one was reading. If the objective is to change policy, then there is no need for 500 people to see this. This kind of work is for a specific audience and the general public probably isn't interested anyway. (Interview 13, senior researcher)

These interview responses from a researcher who preferred research-orientated activity clearly demonstrates that some types of action project are much stronger than others. The Minorities in the Western Balkans project discussed at length in Chapter 0 is a demonstration of an action project securing direct policy implementations for the ECMI. The ongoing work with Serbia's EU accession programme is another strong example of direct influence. Ultimately, the goal of both research and action projects is to influence policy; however, research-orientated activity requires substantial visibility in order to be consumed by those who have the autonomy to make changes — with findings often going through multiple steps (condensed into more digestible forms for politicians, perhaps by other think tanks) before emerging as a policy decision. It is not necessary for action projects of this kind to be seen by any more individuals than those who have specifically commissioned the work. What the ECMI's previous knowledge production strategy delivered was "the worst of both worlds" — it struggled to achieve a significant viewership, and those that did view these reports (without guarantee they were being read in their entirety) rarely had the autonomy to enact the recommendations suggested (Interview 13, senior researcher).

Originally known as the Global Pluralism Index, the Global Pluralism Monitor is an action-orientated project initiated by the Global Centre for Pluralism in Canada. The project's primary objective is to assess the dynamic interaction between institutional and cultural responses to diversity in order to evaluate inclusive and exclusionary practices within societies. The ECMI's involvement in this project commenced in 2019 and was successfully concluded in 2022. The report was due to be published in spring 2023, though it was not published until the summer of that year. As part of their contribution to the Global Pluralism Monitor, the ECMI conducted a comprehensive country assessment report focusing on Germany. The report to which the ECMI contributed had four distinct goals: to highlight and analyse the challenges faced by minorities in Germany; to assess Germany's efforts and policies in promoting diversity, integration, and pluralism; to evaluate the effectiveness of Germany's commitments to pluralism; and to identify the divides in German society along social, cultural, and religious lines. Adhering to the methodology employed by the monitor, the report presented recommendations based on a scoring system that assessed various criteria.

Interestingly, the report does attempt to evaluate aspects of the Schleswig-Holstein model quantifiably, and separate scores for "Ethno-religious, immigrant, and post-migrant groups" and "National Minorities" are given. Where aspects of the Schleswig-Holstein model are mentioned, Germany received "National Minorities" scores of 7 for "National Commitments", 6 for "Policy Implementation", 8 for "Claims-making and contestation", and 7 for "Representation" and "Prominence of Pluralistic Actors" in "News Media". The score of 8 for "Claims-making and contestation" was in large part due to "the political inclusion of some national minority groups, including representation of the Danish minority through the SSW […] in Schleswig-Holstein, which also achieved first-ever representation at the national level following the 2021 elections" (Global Pluralism Monitor, 2023, p.22). Involvement in an action project like the Global Pluralism Monitor shows the ECMI does command significant authority in the field of minority issues, but it also allows the ECMI to claim further authority over the Schleswig-Holstein model in their pursuit of symbolic capital (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The impact of the Global Pluralism Monitor and the other two projects is very different. I argue that the ECMI, as an organisation, should it continue to pursue action projects, would benefit more greatly from working on projects that can deliver a direct impact for autochthonous minorities.

The Future Minority Initiative in Ukraine and Moldova project focused on educating young activists about legal frameworks and encouraging networking between them and practitioners. The Minority Protection for EU Accession project is an example of the ECMI engaging with front-line politics by working with a department of the Serbian government to help them complete their application by assisting them in implementing the new Action Plan. The impact here is the direct promotion of minority issues to policymakers themselves, helping to achieve the centre's advocacy goals directly. The third project discussed, the Global Pluralism Index, also attempts to influence policymakers but in a more indirect sense, as the project itself has no autonomy in decision-making within the fifty-two countries it produces reports on.

With action projects, the main benefits are seen to be their more tangible impact in implementing change and addressing pressing issues, though just one of these three projects could be argued as being involved in implementing policies. However, assessing the attainment of goals in the MPA concerning this direct policy engagement is inherently challenging, as quantification is heavily reliant on subjective interpretation. "Monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan," "awareness-raising among civil servants," "strengthening of the Councils for Interethnic Relations in various Serbian municipalities," and "capacity-building of National Minority Councils representing specific minority communities" are the four defined objectives of the project, though it is difficult to assess the ECMI's impact in terms of whether the project could be considered a

success or not. Ultimately, if Serbia completes Chapter 23 of the EU acquis communautaire, then it would be; though the ECMI's influence on this is less clear. The diversity of 'impact' shown in analysing these projects suggests no organisation-wide definition of impact exists, nor does there exist an established direction as to the objectives action projects are intended to fulfil.

The impact of action projects is generally more discernible and thus more marketable, but the effects of these projects tend to be restricted to the region of focus, and thus the influence of the ECMI in wider debates about minority issues is less pronounced. Based on the Executive Board's guidance, it appears that the ECMI's identity should primarily serve as a general reference point, with research-orientated activities being more aligned with this goal. Nonetheless, I argue that the ECMI should continue to pursue action projects such as "Minorities in the Western Balkans" (**Error! Reference source not found.**) and the work with the GIZ on EU accession for Serbia. This is because even though the 'impact' the ECMI makes on minorities is constrained to a particular place, successful policy consultancy delivers on the demands of the ECMI Statutes and establishes the ECMI as a more important player in European minority issues.

6.6 Research-orientated activity at the ECMI

During the summer of 2022, an internal ECMI document for 2023-28 was released which provided a "very rough outline" of topics to be addressed in the new Strategy Document. In discussing this with a senior researcher, they explained that it explicitly recognised that there had been a strategic shift in focus towards prioritising research activity, particularly in terms of producing externally published peer-reviewed articles and edited volumes/monographs with international publishers – but also thematic focuses:

> [the shift] was almost entirely because the evaluation and others did not believe the quality was high enough. There was also a recognition that the topics that were worked on were inconsistent. For instance, I was at a conference recently talking about our work on minority language media and [a colleague] remembered us doing work on this in 2006, then stopped all of a sudden. Now we are doing it again fifteen years later! (Interview 13, senior researcher)

Though the greater focus on research-orientated projects was down to the 2018-19 external evaluation and the coronavirus pandemic (**Error! Reference source not found.**), most staff members of the ECMI have welcomed this change. Since then, research-orientated activity at the ECMI has included the production of academic journals and book chapters, the hosting of

academic conferences, seminars, presentations and workshops, and academic teaching activities – in addition to the projects in collaboration with funded by external bodies. In the year 2022, the ECMI had seven articles published in academic journals such as "Language Problems and Language Planning", "Nationalities Papers" and the "Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development". In addition to this, ECMI staff produced eight edited volumes and book chapters. This represents a significant increase in external publications, with just nine external publications in total coming from the time of period of 2014-18, most of which were books. The organisation has produced many high-quality publications throughout its history, however the vast majority of research articles produced prior to 2020 were published in the centre's internal series (Table 4, 5.5), thus do not fully qualify as academic research due to the absence of peer-review. Researchers only rarely published outside of the ECMI's internal publications due to the organisational strategy at the time. The impact these publications were having is difficult to assess, and they were rarely topical. ECMI's actual academic output, was therefore quite small. Partnered with more publications in external journals, many series were discontinued and the ECMI Minorities Blog brought in. A senior researcher at ECMI explained these changes:

> It came about during the co-directing stage […], we had issue briefs, there was JEMIE we had working papers, there were reports, handbooks etc. There was a realisation that actually we had to write issue briefs, but we didn't really know what was expected of us. There was never a clear answer. The new director [before he arrived] was very unhappy with how many different publications we had, we were reluctant to just cancel everything! […] An issue brief would normally be seven or eight pages long, but they would also have a research component, or some kind of policy analysis – it was very fuzzy. The Minorities Blog is short and can be very topical – if something happens in Europe you can react very quickly whereas with an issue brief there was so many reviews, and it was very scheduled – you would know when your next issue brief was due so there was a very vague connection with what was actually going on. In terms of visibility and flexibility […], the number of views we get, in my opinion, is quite high. […] At conferences, I have people frequently come up and offer to write a post. (Interview 4, senior researcher)

The publication strategy had been a key point of contestation between the researchers and leadership, with the insistence on in-house publishing seen as being restrictive on networking and

impact. It also evidences the suggestion that the staff within academic think tanks have strong convictions over agenda setting (Adeosun, 2019):

> You're doing a PhD, so you know that for research papers, you have to read a lot. You need to network. There are certain research activities which you cannot do without. You need time. To go to a conference, you need to prepare a paper. It was not impossible but very difficult, whenever I asked to go to a conference, the question would come about how long it would take to prepare. If I said I already had a paper and just needed to transform it a bit – but if it was the other way round and I had to write the paper it would be a problem. […] The absolute priority was that we produce ECMI publications, so we would write working papers, issue briefs, handbooks etc. – that's what you were paid for. Anything external to that would be done in your own time. (Interview 2, junior researcher)

> You know there was this focus on action-orientated projects, first of all there was never any budget for developing something [a research project] with the money ECMI has, there was never an opportunity for "I want to do research on X, so I need money for a field trip, I need money for interviews etc." – there was never any money for that. So that never really happened. You had to raise the money externally and the result had to be an ECMI publication. So then with action projects, you would say "let's have policy impacts" and that was acceptable. (Interview 4, senior researcher)

The heavy discouragement of producing work that was to be published outside of ECMI's own series was so great, that one former researcher described their job responsibility as producing "white noise" (Interview 5, former employee). The external publication statistics from the recent annual report illustrate a significant change in how 'true' academic work is now the expectation, rather than in-house publishing. In 2022, ECMI researchers had seven articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals, and eight edited volumes and book chapters (ECMI, 2023). The other research-related activity has changed in form too, with one of the largest projects the ECMI is involved with being "Sparking Events, Emotional Climates, and Cascades of Cultural Identity Conflicts", or "SPARK", which the ECMI is contributing €310,000 funding for. In collaboration with the Institute of Political Science at Heidelberg University, it is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and runs from 2022 until 2025. A research project, the intention of SPARK is to understand and explain the non-linear and short-term escalation dynamics of cultural

identity conflicts on a global scale, investigating how emotional civil climates, partnered with a trigger event, sparks collective mass behaviour. The eventual purpose of this research project is to explain the dynamics of these triggering events and emotional climates innovatively and comprehensibly. It will do this using a mixed-methods approach, which includes quantitative methods which the ECMI has rarely employed in the past. Firstly, using a novel dataset, they will qualitatively identify triggering events and "the measurement of cascade intensity and extensity of cascades". Secondly, the model will be quantitatively tested using data from Twitter to measure collective self-organisation and emotional climates. The final step uses a qualitative test through process tracing analysis. The overall model is known as the Forest-Fire-Model (FFM), which the project hopes will be able to comprehensively explain the dynamics of collective mass behaviour in cultural identity conflicts. The target audience for this project are scholars who are interested in better understanding the causes of cultural identity conflicts and their triggering events, who could then apply the model to understand specific conflicts. Overall, the anticipated impact is to shape the academic debate around events of this nature – so its impact is intended to be broad as opposed to being concentrated in a particular geographical region.

The ECMI has, over the years, had some notable research failures. Whilst every think tank has submitted unsuccessful funding applications, the Minority Map and Timeline of Europe (MMTE) project received substantial funding and time but has since been discontinued and forgotten, though the centre was encouraging internship applications to work on the project in May 2018. The website dedicated to the project has disappeared and during my time at the ECMI, I only heard of it for the very first time three months into my stay, which is surprising considering MMTE was one of the most important ECMI projects of its time. Its failure, having learned from my interviews, was largely down to the ECMI simply being too small of an organisation to create such a tool. It was also established that even if the project could be completed, the potential audience was not big enough for it to be worth doing. The MMTE first begun in 2001 but was altered significantly in 2010 and was intended to be an open-access, transdisciplinary digital research tool covering the fifty-two countries within Europe, presenting data and information, impartial perspectives and evaluations of minorities, minority issues and minority-majority relations. It aimed to provide high-quality, reliable material on minority studies to researchers and students. The project envisioned an interface based on interactive maps, timelines and related analyses that offered the user a novel experience of interpreting minority communities.

Interestingly, the 2018-19 evaluation was insistent that the MMTE fulfilled "a crucial part of the mandate of ECMI in terms of documenting minority situations and informing both the academic community and a broader public about minority communities and their associated main

issues across Europe" and remarked that the project is "without any doubt, the flagship project of ECMI par excellence" and "it is hoped that it will become operational in the very near future" (EVA, 2019, p.22). One ECMI staff member described to me how the project "was quietly discontinued" upon the appointment of the new director.

The debate around the ECMI's 'identity crisis' centres on projects such as this. There were only sixteen permanent staff at the ECMI during 2022, of which not all were researchers running these projects. Had the MMTE project been successful, the ECMI would have commanded a very significant space which practitioners, academics and policymakers could have frequently utilised in their endeavours. Whilst it would have increased the centre's intention to be a respected authority in the field of minority issues, it also revealed the limitations that exist for an organisation of that size. The research-orientated projects and academic re-orientation of ECMI activity reveals an interesting change in institutional strategy, in that the centre has largely followed the direction the Executive Board want them to go in. Ultimately, the Executive Board represent the funders. Unlike the action projects, there is a clearer overall direction in that research projects strengthen the ECMI's position in the academic community, and 'impact' can be defined as contributing to, and shaping, the academic debates on minority issues in academic journals, and at conferences.

The new research cluster on minority issues in the contemporary Danish-German borderland region also contributes to this push towards more research-orientated activity. However, there was considerable push-back from some researchers who objected firstly, to this re-direction towards Western Europe, and secondly the region itself, given that it hosts some of the best-protected minorities in the world and that much research on the area has already taken place.

6.7 Conclusion

The debate surrounding whether the ECMI should pursue more action-orientated work or research-orientated activity has been running throughout the organisation's existence, but with the 2018-19 external evaluation, this debate has been intensified and significant changes in institutional strategy have ensued. During my time with them, there was a distinct shift towards research activity, this change extrapolated by the fact the coronavirus pandemic halted much travel. The conclusions of the external evaluation of 2018-19 and the Executive Board's intention for the ECMI to be seen as a more general reference have meant that influencing the academic debate has become the main target of their knowledge production strategy. Whilst the symbolic capital accumulated through being published in high-impact journals and appearing at academic conference heightens the ECMI's place in the hierarchy of the field of minority issues, the tangible

'impact' the ECMI makes to improving the lives of Europe's minorities is less clear. Staff members favouring action projects expound this fact – direct policy interventions such as the Minorities in the Western Balkans project and the ECMI's work on the minority issues component to Serbia's accession to the European Union have a very defined effect. I argue that these kinds of projects should continue to be a part of the institutional strategy at the ECMI. Where action-orientated activity falls short in these goals, are when the typically small audiences action projects usually command comprise those without the autonomy to make a tangible difference. Educating people about minority rights is a valuable enterprise, but this is better suited to accessible, research-orientated activity. In regard to work such as the Global Pluralism Monitor, there is no guarantee that any government will take notice of a think tank arbitrarily ranking their performance. The difference between this project and implementing a Minority Commissioner in Bijeljina and a minority dialogue forum in Tetovo is stark, as these governments contracted the ECMI as a project partner to implement change for minority issues directly.

Having identified the academic field of minority issues as the field the ECMI prioritises for capital accumulation, getting published in academic journals and commanding an extensive network with researchers and universities is the most effective way of accumulating the symbolic capital components of perceived scholarly expertise, legitimacy and authority. With most ECMI staff preferring research-orientated activity, with all senior researchers coming from an academic background themselves, this change has mostly been welcomed. Researchers are now heavily encouraged to publish externally, meaning in-house publications are much less, however, given the three founding bodies value journal articles and collaborative research projects so highly, funding is not a concern for the ECMI existence. This means knowledge production at the ECMI is now mostly concentrated on contributing the overall academic debate in minority issues, even though the impact the organisation makes is less tangible.

These findings echo that of Chapter 5, which examined how the ECMI's institutional strategy for capital accumulation is influenced by its overlapping roles in academia and minority issues. The knowledge production strategy is primarily determined by its funding bodies. Unlike the typical goals of think tanks, direct policymaking influence is not the main objective for the ECMI. Instead, the institutional strategy leads knowledge production to focus on shaping academic debates, even though some action projects have had a notable tangible impact.

7 Understanding think tank knowledge production through organisational ethnography

7.1 Introduction: What can an ethnographic methodology reveal about knowledge production in think tanks?

The objective of this thesis is ultimately to understand how geopolitical knowledge is produced at the ECMI. By examining the everyday practices of knowledge production through active participation in them as a visiting researcher, I was able to attain a deep and intimate knowledge of how the ECMI operated. Outside of the specific ECMI context, the ethnographic research undertaken revealed how established institutional strategy permeated into everyday knowledge production at a think tank, and the related conflicts which emerged as a result (Bergman, 2003; Parr, 2000; Smircich, 2007). The development of close personal relationships with some of the ECMI staff also helped to generate valuable insights (Billo and Mountz, 2016; Brodkin, 2017; Kostera and Harding, 2021). It was often the case that some of the most interesting things I learned ethnographically were discovered in places I had not thought of as being research sites. These were areas outside of the established, professional office environment at the Kompagnietor building – and included football stadiums in Copenhagen, falafel shops in Malmö, ferry boats in the Baltic Sea, and friends' apartments. During the eleven months I spent at the ECMI, the level of immersion I experienced meant that almost everywhere was a research site. This of course had many benefits, however, it brought forth unique ethical concerns and other issues too.

There are three main objectives of this chapter. The first objective is to advocate for the greater use of ethnographic methods and organisational ethnography within political geography and critical geopolitics. The academic field of critical geopolitics remains one transfixed with interviews, and textual analysis in particular – yet discourse formulation and geopolitical knowledge production are things which transpire through everyday practices. Ethnography is ideally suited towards researching the everyday, as the researcher themselves can intimately observe, experience, and participate in these practices (Billo and Mountz, 2016; Megoran, 2006; Watson, 2012). Ultimately, there were many insights which could not have been generated without me having spent months working at the ECMI office in Flensburg. The close personal relationships I developed over time were essential to this process, as many valuable insights emerged outside the formal, professional settings of the office or official events. My pursuit of 'access' was not just about gaining entry into the organisation; it also required building strong, trust-based relationships with individuals across the ECMI (Gartsen and Nyqvist, 2013; Hart, 2004; Schwartzman, 1993b).

This deeper level of access allowed me to explore the everyday functioning of the organisation more thoroughly and to gather more nuanced information (Kostera and Modzelewska, 2021).

The second objective of this chapter is to argue that Pierre Bourdieu's 'field theory' should be used as a conceptual lens through which to analyse ethnographic fieldwork data. Other scholars have utilised Bourdieu in their work on think tanks (see Gonzalez Hernando and Williams, 2018; Landry, 2020; Medvetz, 2006b), however, this thesis brings a new dimension, in that it incorporates ethnographic data of everyday knowledge production. The ECMI predominantly struggles for capital accumulation within the fields of minority issues and the academy. Bourdieu's concept of the field emphasises the dynamic and relational nature of these spaces, highlighting how power dynamics directed by capital accrual guide everyday knowledge production practices. By analysing the interplay between internal ECMI dynamics and external influences, this unveils the underlying mechanisms driving organisational behaviour and decision-making processes. The importance of symbols, rituals, and discourses in shaping the ECMI's organisational identity and legitimacy can also be revealed.

The third objective relates to my experiences using organisational ethnography, overviewing and analysing the main challenges I faced, and offering insight into how these might be remedied. The chapter also reveals the strengths and weaknesses of an ethnographic approach focusing on knowledge production within organisations such as think tanks. The level of immersion and my positionality in having developed strong relationships with some staff made analysing my data challenging. The immersive nature of ethnography can also make it difficult to exit the field once research has concluded (Monties, 2022). Nine months after leaving the Kompagnietor building for the final time, I was still conducting research by presenting with the ECMI at an academic conference (see 7.5). The lines between fieldwork and analysis can blur, making it challenging to fully disengage from the research context.

Over the course of nearly a year of ethnographic research, one is likely to uncover information which may be very significant in its implications but unsuitable to use. The decision to withhold such sensitive data can protect the privacy and relationships of those involved, maintaining trust and ethical standards. However, not using this data does mean missing out on insights that could have limited the impact of my research. I offer my thoughts from experience in this regard, acknowledging that despite my strong advocacy for further use of ethnography, there are limitations.

The chapter begins by exploring my first encounters and initial experience with the ECMI, outlining how my visit was originally perceived given all staff were aware that I was there for the purpose of studying them. This section also provides the first indication as to the limits of

organisational ethnography, as much of what is learned and where that knowledge was obtained presents a challenging dynamic to research of this kind – some data, however interesting and relevant, cannot be used for ethical reasons.

7.2 First Encounters

I arrived in Flensburg for the very first time on the 7th of October 2021. In the previous weeks, I had already begun substantial interaction with some staff at the ECMI, as they had been assisting me with obtaining an apartment to live in for the year. Once they knew I was settled in, I visited the centre and was greeted at the doors of the Kompagnietor by my primary ECMI contact, with whom I exchanged humorous remarks about the extensive planning and protracted delays that had preceded my arrival. The planning process had been in the works for almost four years, and this light-hearted conversation revealed the level of anticipation surrounding my visit. I met two others at the door – one of whom expressed apprehension and nervousness about my arrival, even declaring they had "no idea" why anyone would be interested in studying them. This initial variation in reactions highlighted the diverse perspectives and attitudes towards my presence at the ECMI. Some colleagues I met on my first day were curious about my work and eager to get to know me personally, even inviting me out for lunch. With others, however, it took months before we had our first conversation, a delay that was partly due to my own hesitation as well. These initial encounters were indicative of the complexities of ethnographic research. On one hand, the eagerness of some colleagues to engage with me quickly facilitated relationship-building and access to information. On the other hand, the delayed interactions with others, compounded by my own hesitations, highlight the challenges of navigating social dynamics and building trust. These variations demonstrated how ethnographic research is influenced by both the researcher's own approach and their reaction to the social context they are in.

On the night before my first day, I familiarised myself with the staff profiles on the ECMI website and was rather intimidated by the extraordinary level of language skills and academic achievements of the ECMI members. The feelings I was experiencing were akin to imposter syndrome, heightened also by the unavoidable fact that I was a definite outsider. Though I was accustomed with the literature of autochthonous minority issues to a reasonable degree, it was immediately apparent that the level of expertise present at the ECMI was so high I was relatively speaking, a complete novice.

Margaret J. Robertson (2022, p.278) argues that auto-ethnographic methods can effectively address feelings of imposter syndrome and help researchers respond to them. She describes herself as "both an insider and outsider" in her research, a sentiment that resonates with my own

experience, as I too found myself in what she defines as "an uncomfortable position". It was immediately apparent to me, considering my comparative lack of expertise about autochthonous minority issues, as well as due to suspicions about me as an external researcher, that I would be some sort of 'outsider' throughout my time there. Contrastingly, there were ways I navigated feelings of imposter syndrome and 'outsider-ness' by focusing on aspects of my positionality that made it easier for me to establish myself at the ECMI. Most crucially, I was a PhD student, so was consequently familiar with the academic process and that way of working – this parallels the argument that participants can respond more positively if the researcher is similar to whom they are (Flores, 2016; Miled, 2019). For instance, I faced very few issues as a participant observer at academic conferences that I attended during my time at the ECMI because of this familiarity. Moreover, this further emphasises the need to consider more than just one or two socio-demographic factors in one's positionality and the dynamism of the importance of these factors depending on these particular spaces a researcher is in (Reyes, 2020). Whilst at times my professional identity as an external PhD researcher made me more of an outsider at the ECMI office, it had the opposite effect at conferences.

Within hours, I was assigned an office in the annex, a secondary part of the building that is connected to the primary building but does not have an internal access point. To move between the two buildings, one must walk under the archway outside. The annex houses three single-occupancy offices, one large area for four people upstairs, and a small kitchen space. The large area was occupied by two or three permanent employees, as well any interns who were not situated in the main building. The view from my window was of the Irish pub immediately next door and a ground-floor view of the harbour. Within the first hour of my second day, I was questioning whether the location of my office would negatively impact my ethnographic productivity and hinder the goals I hoped to achieve during my stay. In my earliest fieldnotes, I wrote about whether the isolation of my workspace was indicative of the organisational culture and working dynamics of the ECMI:

> I get the impression from my first two days that I will be working on my own most of the time – even if I am specifically working on a project with someone. I feel the meetings, online and offline, will showcase the 'office environment' more distinctively than my time in my own office space.

Again, in addition to feeling daunted and intimidated by the prospect of the next year, feelings of imposter syndrome were only amplified by the fact I was 'out of the action', as the main

activity was taking place in a separate building. Nonetheless, my first experience feeling like I was a part of the team came with the provision of a phone extension number, personal email address, and access to the ECMI OneDrive, which contained numerous documents spanning years of the centre's work that were not previously available to me. Saving and exploring these files was the beginning of my immersion into the internal workings of the organisation. A distinctive feature of organisational ethnography lies in its incorporation of not merely observational and participatory methods, but also in-depth analysis of important textual materials and supplementary data, yielding nuanced understandings of organisational practices which can then be pursued further ethnographically or in an interview setting (Kostera and Harding, 2021; Warren, 2012; Ybema *et al*, 2009). Prior to my arrival, my perspective of the organisation was shaped almost entirely by the activities displayed on its website and the various publications that I had analysed for my MA dissertation. By engrossing myself within these resources, I had a crucial starting point.

My initial feelings of isolation upon my arrival at the ECMI were significantly mitigated by the warm reception extended to me by a group of four interns, each of whom hailed from different parts of Eurasia and were at varying stages of their internships at the organisation. Their kind invitation to join them on a ferry trip to Glücksburg, a nearby town and the northernmost in Germany, was a welcome development. It was also my first experience of exploring the borderland region itself. Glücksburg is renowned for its eponymous *Wasserschloss* (water castle), which once served as the ancestral home of the House of Glücksburg, the reigning family of Denmark and Norway, and the trip proved to be an illuminating experience. During the ferry ride, I was fascinated by the diverse backgrounds and experiences of my companions and was eager to learn more about their motivations for coming to Flensburg to work at the ECMI.

Figure 6: A photograph of the Glücksburg Wasserschloss, taken during the trip with the ECMI interns.

As we chatted, I came to understand that the internship programme at the ECMI was a microcosm of the wider network of the organisation. Two of the interns had come from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, a partner institution listed on the ECMI website, while another had participated in an edition of the ECMI Summer School. The ECMI's collaboration with institutions such as the OSCE Academy and its recruitment of interns from these organisations enhances and broadens its social capital. Being part of a reputable network allows the ECMI to signal its legitimacy in the field of minority issues, given the OSCE is an important player in world politics as it holds observer status at the United Nations. The fourth intern had been introduced to the ECMI through a friend at her university. Undertaking an internship is a common practice in continental European universities for students conducting master's degree programmes, and at the ECMI, interns typically stayed for three months. It was fascinating to learn that several of the current employees at the ECMI had previously joined the organisation as interns.

As the conversation continued, I was struck by the diversity of research interests represented among the interns, each of whom was working on a unique project. This was something loudly advertised by the ECMI in the 'People' section of its website, highlighting the

inter-disciplinary nature of their respective projects (see 5.6). One intern was researching Italian-language media in Slovenia and Croatia, while another was exploring the challenges faced by the Roma community in Ukraine regarding access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic. These varied thematic interests spoke to the interdisciplinary nature of the ECMI's research interests, but also, particularly in the case of the Roma, the advocatory commitment of the ECMI in promoting diversity and pluralism.

One of the most significant moments in the early days of my visit was my first meeting with the person who would later become my closest contact and friend at the ECMI. We met at Tableau Kulturcafé, a left-wing bar near the harbour in Flensburg. The café was covered in political stickers that expressed disdain for Nazi and fascist ideologies, as well as support for FC St. Pauli, a Hamburg-based football club known for its connection to anarchist ideologies. This venue later became a regular meeting spot for us. He asked me about my project and what my perceptions of the ECMI were, to which I recited what was essentially a regurgitation of the information that I had gleaned from their website. Our dialogue, however, quickly turned to the ECMI's recent tumultuous period, exposing me rather unexpectedly to what was a very distressing and sensitive time. Nor had I anticipated that such issues would be a fixture in my work, as my focus was on observing how knowledge about minority issues was produced and transmitted by a small research institute in the Danish-German borderlands.

This turbulent period in ECMI's history contained many aspects of what could be considered a toxic workplace environment and resulted in a great deal of staff turnover. The impact of this period was still evident among the staff. During my first month, the team held a retreat to address these lingering issues, despite most employees having been with the organisation for five years or less at the time. Whilst not crucially relevant to knowledge production, staff relations and the organisation's turbulent history were continual factors behind decision-making at the ECMI and ultimately their knowledge production strategy. There were several instances where such insights proved relevant to institutional strategy decisions; however, it would have been ethically inappropriate for me to include these developments as part of my 'data'. For long periods in my office, I would struggle with deciphering how I could articulate certain insights whilst remaining respectful to those affected by that period. My new friend told me at Tableau (and did so on other occasions) that he was still shocked by the fact the ECMI managed to produce and publish anything during that time. I had only been with the ECMI for two weeks at this point, and I was surprised by how much I had already learned about the place. This experience emphasised the need to be receptive to unexpected subjects and the importance of remaining flexible in my ethnographic approach. Moreover, the Glücksburg trip and the bar meet-up, each planned

independently of official ECMI activities, were examples of occasions where even an organisational ethnography moved beyond the confines of the office itself, with additional field sites included. Ybema and Kamsteeg's (2009) reflections on the importance in limiting full immersion are important here, as encompassing all social activities (should they involve ECMI staff) as research opportunities means that effectively, the ethnography never stops. Yet, this level of immersion proved fruitful later in the fieldwork, as informal research sites were often the producers of the most interesting insights about organisational culture (Ouroussoff, 2020; Schwartzman, 1987). After our conversation at Tableau, I felt that only then had my ethnography truly begun. I became cognisant of the fact that as an ethnographic researcher, there would be much I would learn that could not make it into my thesis. Given that having a few alcoholic drinks with a friend had revealed itself to be generator of critical ethnographic data, I found myself deliberating over the ethics of this. I decided that anything I learned whilst on a social outing that I deemed useful to my project should only be used if I also encountered it in a professional setting. Later during my fieldwork, I opted to use my formal interviews to get stuff 'on the record' that I did not have previously.

The significance of meticulous fieldnote taking was particularly evident during these early stages. Upon reflecting on my notes after returning, I realised that I had completely forgotten some of the feelings and thoughts I had experienced. My fieldnotes contained detailed descriptions of dialogues and my reactions to various dramas and conflicts. This aligns with Emerson *et al.* (2001), who note that the success of ethnographic research often depends on the quality of notetaking during the process. In my early fieldnotes, I was grappling with questions such as "how can I justify an argument without being able to use the evidence that informed it?". This contemplation highlights a crucial aspect of ethnographic research where the omission of data due to ethical concerns impairs the completeness of a study. Although I acknowledged that relying on data from social occasions was not the best research practice, and attempted to address this by discussing these topics in interviews, I still collected knowledge that remained unusable. My goal was to analyse discourse and knowledge production outside the context of national governments or international organisations, and the complex interplay of personal relationships was a key element in this at the ECMI, making my ethnographic study particularly suited for understanding it. Including analyses of the complex personal factors of an organisation's function would have resulted in a far richer study – but also a desperately unethical one. This inherent limitation of organisational ethnographies emerged, especially ones like I was conducting where there were just fourteen permanent employees. Such was the necessity to preserve confidentiality, privacy, and the well-being of the participants involved, my data had to be sanitised of anything that could

compromise my participants. The presence of undisclosed or unanalysed elements introduces a layer of incompleteness to a study, and some entire analytical angles were abandoned at a very early stage. Whilst interviews may also reveal things which are unethical to include, ethnographic data is organically produced – people forget that they are being studied, more natural conversations are undertaken which become more revealing as trust grows and relationships build.

Signed consent forms are often the remedy for confidentiality concerns when conducting interviews. However, these issues are more complex in ethnography (O'Neill, 2020; O'Reilly, 2005). I had to balance the need to respect individuals at the ECMI with my intention of writing about my experiences, which were not always positive, in the form of a PhD thesis afterwards (Kostera and Średnicka, 2021). Consent in organisational ethnography is not a one-time event, and when research was undertaken outside of the ECMI office at academic conferences, for example, this only cemented the fact that consent is an evolving process requiring continual renegotiation (Fine and Shulman, 2009; Schwartzman, 1993b). I maintained open communication with participants and diligently clarified what was, and was not, appropriate for me to include in my research.

Amidst these initial social interactions that took place beyond the confines of my professional commitments at the ECMI was the realisation that even in instances when work was not the explicit focus, numerous occasions presented themselves when topics pertinent to my ethnographic investigation naturally surfaced. It was within the context of these informal dialogues that I gleaned a wealth of information about the organisation's past and evolution to the present day. These exchanges unveiled prevailing challenges for the ECMI that historically persisted or continue to endure. Reflecting upon the entirety of my fieldwork and subsequent interactions with colleagues following my departure in September 2022, I can assert that some of my most profound insights were born from these unstructured social engagements. For political geography and critical geopolitics, the importance of the everyday in shaping knowledge production and discourse formulation within organisations cannot be understated. The textual analysis of ECMI publications within this thesis was largely informed by me having got to know the authors of some of these works personally. In a field such as minority issues, understanding the jargon and institutional strategy behind knowledge production was essential to understanding transmitted knowledge – whether this be a report, journal article or blogpost. Being at the ECMI office every day afforded me many opportunities to clarify understanding – and outside of the office, conversations about official recognition of Roma, historical regional language discrimination in Spain, or the political representation of minorities in Schleswig-Holstein were genuinely organic in that I was not prompting these discussions for personal research purposes. Research staff hold

significant control over research agendas at academic think tanks, and through developing personal relationships with these people inside and outside of the office I was able to attain a richer understanding of the broader picture of knowledge production at the ECMI. It is therefore surprising that the fascination with discourse in critical geopolitics has rarely been explored ethnographically, given understanding the meanings behind discourses extend beyond a singular speech or document – they are crafted and performed in everyday environments. The everyday cannot be understood through interviews and textual analysis alone.

These first encounters each encapsulated the impact of my positionality as my fieldwork begun. Several different aspects of my socio-demographic status proved highly beneficial to my research – being someone who drinks alcohol afforded the opportunity to use bars as sites of ethnography, and my relative youth made me approachable to the interns, which may explain the early invitation to join them on the ferry trip. Contrastingly, my status as an academic in some instances exacerbated my outsider-ness, in part due to some scepticism about my visit. This echoes the dynamism of positionality illustrated by Reyes (2020).

Whilst these initial, informal social interactions revealed the importance of sites beyond the office environment, elements of what I was interested in understanding about knowledge production at the ECMI could only be revealed within the walls of the Kompagnietor. Meetings – many of which were convened at the Kompagnietor Conference Room – were extremely important sites of ethnography during my fieldwork, as they provided insights into power and identity dynamics, decision-making processes at the ECMI, as well as some of the more hidden aspects of the organisation's 'everyday' (Sandler and Thedvall, 2017).

7.3 The Kompagnietor Conference Room

Meetings were valuable opportunities for observation as they represented some of the sole occasions where everyone was present, and institutional strategy and organisational activity were discussed openly. Whilst some aspects of knowledge production can be revealed through casual office interaction, the observation of meetings represented the most crucial opportunities in understanding the overall strategy at the organisation (Thedvall, 2013). Ultimately, "meetings are extraordinary data-intensive events" "where tacit and coercive norms are made explicit", they bring out the more hidden everyday practices of knowledge production in the form of concrete discussion between hierarchies (Sandler and Thedvall, 2017, p.17). Observing meetings and attending special events are not necessarily research sites that are out-of-reach for researchers not conducting an organisational ethnography, however much of what is discussed at these occasions requires the everyday context behind it to comprehend fully. Whilst the work of scholars such as

Alun Jones (2022) utilise ethnographic observation for meetings and discussed their research subject's work with them before and after – this does not represent an organic observation of the 'everyday', as is suggested. I attended dozens of meetings, seminars, workshop sessions and special events every month, and each of these offered their own insights into the institutional processes behind knowledge production. The Kompagnietor conference room was a typical location for these.

The monthly general staff meetings (GSMs) were particularly useful for me and notably, my involvement during GSMs was limited primarily to observation – they were occasions where I merely watched discussion unfold. I was privy to most ECMI meetings, although not all aspects of the organisation were available for me to observe. Kendall and Silver (2017) point out the issues of ethnographically 'studying up', that is, researching those in positions of authority. In my research, this concerned the representatives of the funding bodies who sit on the Executive Board. Gaining access to board-level meetings was unattainable for me, and this issue of access in ethnographic studies has typically resulted in researchers utilising discourse analysis and limited interview data to fill the gap. The consequent disconnect between the extensive ethnographic engagement with some subjects of study and limited organic contact with others "yields very different kinds of data and different understandings" of social organisation (Kendall and Silver, 2017, p.25). According to the authors, this leaves a methodological and analytic disconnect which cannot be ignored. The Kompagnietor conference room, nonetheless, did afford me some ethnographic engagement in this regard. Though the room was only quite small, and the meeting table capable of fitting only a dozen around it and the room in total having the capacity for thirty at one time, one of the very first events I attended was the celebration of the ECMI's 25th anniversary which took place there.

On the 3rd of December 2021, the ECMI turned twenty-five years old. On the very same day, a special reception event was held to celebrate this quarter-century and all the work the ECMI had done during this time. The first event of the celebration was an anniversary panel discussion at the Danish Library in Flensburg, which reflected on the existing dilemmas within the field of minority protection and what still needs to be solved. Following this, there was a reception at the Kompagnietor building. Representatives of local minority organisations, politicians, affiliated researchers, and former directors were all present. One notable guest speaker was Daniel Günther, the Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein. In his role, Günther significantly influences the ECMI's work, as he leads the state government of Schleswig-Holstein, one of ECMI's three principal funding bodies. Additionally, the appointment of the Minority Commissioner (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) is under his jurisdiction.

His arrival was highly anticipated, with my ECMI colleagues bustling around to ensure everything went smoothly, visibly nervous prior to him getting there. Günther delivered his speech in German, with a line-by-line interpretation into English by one of the ECMI's Executive Board members. He departed almost immediately after he was done. After the event concluded and all guests had left, the ECMI staff who remained opened up almost instantly, giving their thoughts on the proceedings they had witnessed. There was a recognition amongst them that the reception was more about pleasing funding bodies and organisational self-congratulation, as opposed to effectively advancing the ECMI's mission. Whilst there were few insights about knowledge production to be gathered from the event, it did propel my ethnographic study forward significantly for two very different reasons.

Figure 7: A photograph of the Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein, Daniel Günther, arriving at the Anniversary Reception. (Photo: ECMI)

Figure 8: A photograph taken at the reception, with me in discussion with an ECMI researcher in the background. At the front on the left is Vello Pettai, the director of the ECMI. (Photo: ECMI)

On one hand, the anniversary events were my first experience in observing the ECMI in an environment where it needed to promote itself to outsiders – critically revealing what aspects of knowledge production and results of their research they wished to emphasise. In terms of institutional strategy, the speeches given about the centre's history and achievements were often linked to the borderland region, which the ECMI itself has done very little research on since its foundation (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Even items such as an advent calendar (Figure 9) that was given to attendees provided some insights. Though mainly highlighting events such as the appointment of new directors or the visit of Danish royal family members, specific projects and publications underline what the ECMI considers itself to be their most impactful work. While not as informative about knowledge production as an institutional strategy document, materials like the advent calendar serve as examples of "unknown unknowns" that can be uncovered during ethnographic research.

Figure 9: A photograph of the official ECMI 25th anniversary advent calendar.

Secondly, after everyone had left and we had finished clearing up, we made use of the space for a bit of karaoke. Although no matters pertinent to my ethnographic study were discussed (or sung), it was the first time I spent time with many of the staff in a non-professional setting. This informal interaction allowed my colleagues to see me less as an outside observer and more as a fellow team member. The relaxed atmosphere and shared enjoyment of karaoke helped break down remaining barriers of formality and reservation – for the rest of my time at the ECMI people were more willing to share their personal insights and experiences with me. Additionally, this experience helped me feel more settled as part of the ECMI team and I gained a better understanding of the social dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the organisation, further underscoring the importance of informal interactions in ethnographic research. This experience showed that even when an ethnographic researcher is not overtly collecting data, any interaction, whether it be professional or explicitly social, contributes to the overall outcomes of the fieldwork. Even over a year after leaving the ECMI, I was still having regular discussions with

staff via social media or meeting up in person to watch Watford vs Leicester City at Vicarage Road – or Ireland vs Romania at the Rugby World Cup in Bordeaux. This illustrates the challenge of exiting the field, as highlighted by Vanessa Monties (2022), where social interactions with individuals who have become friends can continue to serve as venues for additional research. There must come a point when research must finally stop, yet this time often comes long after the actual fieldwork took place. Aside from events such as the anniversary reception, there were few occasions where external parties were present in the conference room. However, every fortnight, a research seminar was held, whereby an alternating schedule of in-house and external speakers would give a presentation, serving as a forum for the exchange of scholarly work and ideas. Interestingly, having attended a dozen or so of these seminars, they were rarely advertised as having taken place on any of the ECMI's communication channels, suggesting that even though some prestigious scholars gave talks, the purpose of these events was not a push for symbolic capital through association with such prestige. The seminars were places for ECMI researchers to network with visiting scholars and gather insights about aspects of autochthonous minority issues they may be unfamiliar with – they were sites of learning and networking. In the case of the two ECMI researchers I most closely worked with, the research seminars they organised were focused on minority language media and were used as an opportunity to strengthen their academic network by inviting scholars they wanted to collaborate with. In addition to this, they justified the research agendas set out by individual staff. In one particular research seminar about Basque-language television channels, the external speaker was heavily involved as a co-organiser of an ECMI conference, and the potential benefits this collaboration might bring in grant applications and future events was discussed widely. Network-building and strategic collaboration was a key part of the day-to-day activity at the ECMI. By organising research seminars that double as opportunities to expand their academic connections, ECMI researchers were not just passively consuming knowledge but actively shaping and directing it to serve both institutional and intellectual goals. Aligning research agendas with network expansion in this way enhanced the ECMI's symbolic and social capital within the academy – positioning it favourably for future collaborations, funding opportunities, and influence in the broader academic and minority issues fields.

So far in this chapter, I have discussed my ethnographic experience regarding certain events that took place – memorable snapshots of my earliest encounters, and specific meetings and events. One of the most powerful factors which shaped ECMI knowledge production during my time there was an external force – the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This tragic geopolitical development had a profound impact on the work and atmosphere at the ECMI, given the personal connections many had to the country. The minority issues of Ukraine also represented a topic of

expertise for the ECMI, in which its history goes back almost to the very inception of the organisation. The invasion became a central point of reference in shaping research priorities, influencing how knowledge was produced and disseminated. Whilst the humanitarian catastrophe of the war was never forgotten, the extent to which Russia's invasion shaped the ECMI's knowledge production strategy represented an important analytical element of my fieldwork for months. The next section explores the ECMI reaction to this development, and what it revealed about knowledge production and the institutional strategy at the organisation.

7.4 The Russian Invasion of Ukraine

On the 24th of February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, marking a major escalation in the ongoing conflict in the region. The invasion took the world by surprise and quickly became the dominant topic of news cycles. The timing of the invasion was noteworthy for me as it occurred during the middle of my visit to the ECMI, which provided me a unique perspective on the event, as well as the organisation's own reaction. As an academic organisation that focuses on the promotion and protection of the rights of national minorities, the ECMI had established deep ties to Ukraine, which has very complex minority-majority relations – the Russian minority in the context of the war, being the most significant. The organisation's immediate response to the conflict and their unique angle on the events that followed was ethnographically very interesting. The meetings that were held, the conversations in the corridors, and the subsequent knowledge produced, were important for my research. A comprehensive picture of how the ECMI functioned was revealed.

The invasion of Ukraine and the news coverage that accompanied it was dominated by grand geopolitical or humanitarian narratives, such as debates around NATO expansion, so-called 'poking the bear', financial and military support, and a refugee crisis. These discourses are undoubtedly important, but in turn, many other aspects of the conflict are obscured. Political geography and critical geopolitics as academic fields have long focused on the movements and actions of political elites, and this has only perpetuated this obscuring. However, through ethnographically observing the ECMI's reaction to the war, I became increasingly convinced of the need to re-scale critical geopolitical analyses of discourse to include narratives produced outside of these settings.

With their institutional focus on autochthonous minority issues and the specific issues they face, the ECMI responded to the situation by creating a special Ukraine section for its Minorities Blog series named "National Minorities and the War in Ukraine". Institutionally, the ECMI has long argued that "Minorities Matter" and their concerns are often dismissed or ignored, yet

"minority rights abuses are often at the heart of ethnic conflict" (Kempin Reuter, 2012, p.359). The special series on Ukraine is dedicated to the often-unheard stories relating to the conflict, and it utilised many existing contacts and expertise. For several years, the ECMI has actively engaged with Ukraine, creating numerous publications on minority participation and equality, organising dialogue events among minority groups and stakeholders, and conducting comparative research on regional governance models for minority communities (Biaspamiatnykh *et al.*, 2014; Henke, 2021; Malloy, 2017; Osipov, 2017; Smith and Semenyshyn, 2016; Solonenko, 2017; Willis, 2020). Working alongside its field office and local affiliate, ECMI Ukraine, the organisation has formed a significant partnership with the Ministry of Culture in Ukraine, while the ECMI Ukraine Programme team is located in Kyiv, facilitating personal relationships with many individuals in the country. ECMI has closely monitored the significant decentralisation reforms that Ukraine underwent between 2018 and 2019, and since 2020, they have formed a partnership with the University of Chernivtsi, focusing on enhancing three research domains, including decentralisation, societal resilience and security, and the participation of minorities in local development.

The war in Ukraine had a profound and deeply personal impact on the ECMI, especially considering nearly all members had visited the country in an official capacity at some point during their tenure at the organisation. The invasion of Ukraine was a harrowing experience for those within the ECMI, causing great distress and emotional upheaval. A young Ukrainian student, who had just begun their internship with the ECMI, left Germany to be with her family in the face of the conflict. The ECMI staff also anxiously awaited news of their colleagues in ECMI Ukraine – following the updates of their passages within the country to safer regions or escaping out of the country. Males between the ages of 18 and 60 were prohibited from leaving altogether. Moreover, the ECMI tragically learned that a young man, who had previously participated in one of their events in the country, had died in the fighting.

As I entered the conference room for the first General Staff Meeting following the invasion, there was a clear sense of unease around the table. The atmosphere was heavy and quiet as everyone took their seats. The director began by describing that the world has "turned upside down" and spoke of ECMI employees and associates who were already assisting with the efforts to help those fleeing Ukraine. Despite the chaos taking place in what was a country intimately linked with the ECMI, he spoke of the importance in maintaining focus on the tasks and responsibilities at hand even in the midst of turmoil. It was announced that the ECMI was launching a scheme to host academics and scholars displaced by the war. With support from foundations in Germany (the German Research Council and Volkswagen Stiftung), the ECMI was

ready to sponsor Ukrainian scholars who worked in the field of minority issues. It was during this meeting that it was announced that the Minorities Blog would be creating the special collection dedicated to the issues minorities face during the war. As of May 2024, this space is still active and repeatedly calls for further submissions.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine emerged as a powerful external force that changed the topical focus of knowledge production, but it also provided an opportunity for the ECMI to make timely contributions which centred minority issues as a key political debate in an evolving geopolitical event (see 5.5). The creation of this blog resulted in increased exposure for the organisation, impressive viewership numbers, and the ability to engage with current affairs in a more up-to-date manner than the previous publication strategy allowed for. The ECMI's primary objective is to promote awareness of autochthonous minority issues, and its special series on the Ukraine War aims to frame key minority issues within the context of the ongoing conflict. Considering the importance the Executive Board places upon the ECMI to maintain the focus on autochthonous minority issues (see 5.3), the demarcation of the field from minority issues more generally, consequently, makes it a significant form of symbolic capital for researchers and the organisation.

This is particularly important given that other issues, such as Russia's territorial aims, have dominated the attention surrounding the conflict. The ECMI emphasises that it is not competing with other issues, but rather seeks to highlight the challenges faced by minorities in Europe alongside other pressing matters. This speaks to a wider argument, in that critical geopolitics has too often focused on elite political movements and territorial disputes, leaving the experiences of minority communities affected by the conflict largely overlooked. The Russian invasion of Ukraine exemplified why the ECMI has persisted with its 'unfashionable niche' (5.3), they occupy a place in the academic field that draws attention to the disproportionate impact of the war on minorities by reframing understandings of conflict that centre upon grand geopolitical narratives. One example of an article published on the blog explores the systematic conscription of individuals from national minority communities in Russia, which has resulted in the "elimination" of these communities:

> The number of representatives of the poorest national minorities from remote regions of Russia who were injured or killed during the war disproportionately exceeds the respective share of ethnic Russians who have suffered the same fate (Lossovskyi, 2022).

In conversation with an ECMI researcher that took place at their apartment, I was told that the importance of highlighting stories such as Russia's conscription strategy reflected how national minorities generally suffer in a different way in times of conflict. If Putin called up conscripts from Russia's largest cities, for example Moscow or St. Petersburg, which have far smaller minority populations than in the country's east, they may be very large protests occurring on his doorstep. But in calling up conscripts from rural areas, the risk to him was mitigated significantly. This is just one example of the kind of topic where a re-scaling of geopolitical analysis is needed, and it exemplifies the powerful force of advocating for minority issues within the ECMI that guides its knowledge production. Writing about grand geopolitical narratives may have earned a larger viewership, but that ultimately was not the primary goal. The development of the Russia-Ukraine war exemplified the importance of sticking with the 'unfashionable niche' (see 5.3).

The systemic conscription story is one that mainstream analysis would miss, and the ECMI's promotion of it reflects the importance within the organisation to demarcate the field of autochthonous minority issues as a distinctive academic discipline. From my encounters with scholars of minority issues, it was clear that demarcation of the field was a valued form of symbolic capital – a strong belief exists that there are unique issues facing autochthonous minorities and thus their concerns should be addressed with particular attention. In effect, the ECMI and the academic field of autochthonous minority issues in tandem struggle for Bourdieusian capital accumulation within the wider field of academia. This blog series on the Russia-Ukraine war was one of the clearest indications of the advocatory aspect of knowledge production, with ECMI staff continually informing me that a crucial component to their activity was highlighting matters specifically affecting autochthonous minority groups. While grand-scale geopolitical analyses of the conflict emerged almost immediately after the escalation, the ECMI contributed to the Ukraine war discussion in their own unique way. They highlighted the inequalities exhibited by Russia's conscription policy, the situation of Russian migrants to Central Asia (where substantial Russian minority communities already exist) (Berdiqulov, 2022b), the work of minority journalists in Ukraine (Haertel, 2022), the experiences of Roma refugees from Ukraine (Sribniak, 2022), and the digital nationalism of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine (Lajosi, 2022), all of which relate to the conflict. Having observed first-hand how the ECMI navigated its response to the conflict in Ukraine, these insights revealed how the changes in institutional strategy adopted following the 2018-19 evaluation were actioned. The revised publication strategy bore the creation of the Minorities Blog, underscoring their endeavour to provide more contemporaneous and current analyses (see 5.5). The "strong tension" that exists within academic think tanks like the ECMI concerning the policy relevance, slow turnaround, and inaccessibility of monographs to

policymakers and the general public is largely mitigated by the blogpost form (McGann, 2016, p.17; Abelson, 2014). The meticulous scrutiny of the editorial process necessary to publish journal articles and book chapters is not compatible with timely response to emerging events, but with the special series dedicated to the war on the Minorities Blog, this allowed the ECMI to assert scholarly authority over the autochthonous minority issues relating to the conflict, equating to a strong attempt at accumulating the social capital that comes with such authority. Employing a blog platform had the additional benefit of attracting a greater number of submissions from external contributors for their website. For example, writing a piece of around 2,000 words is a much more attractive prospect compared to a 10,000-word monograph, especially without any guarantee that the paper would be accepted and published by the ECMI. One editor of the Minorities Blog told me that the number of hits on the blog post series was very impressive, especially in comparison to the poor figures achieved by the monographs published previously. High viewing figures on the blog posts notably increased the organisation's visibility relative to others in the field of minority issues. Another editor of the blog illustrated to me in a meeting that they had encountered many individuals at conferences who had excitedly pitched potential submissions having read other posts – including some who the ECMI had never collaborated with previously. The networking opportunities brought by the establishment of the Minorities Blog clearly made the ECMI more relevant within their field – underscoring further the necessity of the changes to publication strategy.

Whilst an external perspective on the blog could have yielded insightful findings, my presence during the internal discussions amongst the ECMI staff concerning their crisis response enriched a deep understanding of the geopolitical nature of the knowledge produced by the organisation. Despite the ECMI's lack of political power to influence the course of the conflict, the special series served as a channel for the ECMI to amplify their discourse on the propensity of minority issues to be overshadowed or outright ignored within the context of these substantial geopolitical events. This discourse was disseminated as part of press releases and social media posts, with Twitter and LinkedIn being the most significant.

The discourse produced by an academic think tank such as the ECMI takes a different form to that formulated in, say, the Oval Office, yet my ethnographic observations of discourse production at the ECMI revealed significant insights that are useful for understanding think tanks more generally. Think tanks are significant players in public knowledge creation and policy development, and in attempting to gain policymaking influence, they must identify the factors that get them noticed by their target audience. In the literature on think tanks, the emphasis on 'outreach' is often considered to be the primary concern of funders, with knowledge production

centred around what can deliver the greatest 'impact' (McGann, 2019; Misztal, 2012; Rich, 2004). However, the very existence of the ECMI, and its institutional direction, performs a key role in Danish-German politics, as both countries (and the state government of Schleswig-Holstein) consider their financial contribution to their operations as a direct contribution to their respective national minorities. By simply advertising that they are funding an organisation like the ECMI, it serves as a tool of self-promotion for these governments. In all my interactions with representatives of the funders themselves, I was unconvinced that they had any real knowledge of what the research staff were doing. This is not surprising given that the Executive Board meets only every six months, and it is common practice for members to send substitutes to these meetings. I approached all members of the Board for interview, with one even admitting (despite serving in the role for more than a year) that they felt they did not have enough knowledge to be useful for my project. In addition to this, occasions such as the 25th anniversary celebration only exemplified the disconnect – where generic statements about the 'key work ECMI does for minorities' or 'the importance of ECMI being here, in the borderland region' were frequently made. The only clear statement of strategic intent I could gather from my interactions with the Executive Board was that the focus on autochthonous minority issues should be central to knowledge production. This is important because there are so few organisations dedicated to these issues. Additionally, for the governments themselves, promoting their contribution to hosted minorities can significantly enhance their social capital in international politics. Knowledge production at the ECMI has been demonstrated to be strongly influenced by the funding bodies' insistence on maintaining the focus on autochthonous minority issues, and how the Russia-Ukraine war exhibited the ways ECMI advocates for the demarcation and specific reflection on these issues. A unique dimension this thesis brings to discourse analysis and researching knowledge production in think tanks is that alongside my role as a PhD researcher, I was also a team member of the ECMI. This afforded me the distinctive perspective of analysing how knowledge was produced in the ECMI, by actively participating in these practices myself. The following section discusses my experiences in this regard.

7.5 Representing the ECMI: Becoming a Geopolitical Knowledge Producer

Throughout my organisational ethnography, I made a concerted effort to partake in a diverse array of events whether these comprised routine staff meetings, interactive workshops, research seminars, external presentations, online talks, or any instance affording me the opportunity to spend time with colleagues beyond formal work settings. These distinct activities were all opportunities to undertake ethnographic research and were moments when the ECMI's

core interests, objectives, and actions were often directly engaged. Moreover, they served as opportunities for me to connect with colleagues whose professional orbits I rarely intersected with – occasions that provided insights into their respective work trajectories. Foremost among these events were academic conferences. I partook in two such events, one as a participant and general aide, and the other as a presenter of two papers, co-authored with a couple of my colleagues. Conferences held a critical significance in my ethnographic journey, as they afforded me the chance to observe ECMI researchers disseminating knowledge to peers and the networking efforts that are endemic to such events. My identity as an academic, positioned as both and early-career researcher and an institutional representative of the ECMI, allowed me to integrate into these settings with relative ease. This positionality afforded me familiarity with academic settings, and the social capital useful in navigating some discussions that took place at the events. The insights gathered at the conferences themselves were highly valuable, yet it was the activity leading up to these events that defined my findings most significantly. This relates especially to the second conference where I presented work stemming from my collaboration with ECMI researchers to produce knowledge and two publications. This afforded me insights that were only possible due to the level of immersion made possible by my ethnographic approach and saw me actively involved in what I wanted to study: the production of geopolitical knowledge. By engaging so deeply with the everyday practices of knowledge production at the ECMI, I was able to develop a unique perspective of think tank discourse transmission and an intimate understanding of the Bourdieusian field of autochthonous minority issues and the capital valued within it.

The first in-person academic conference I attended as a representative of the ECMI was the minority language media (MLM) conference (31st March – 1st April 2022), which was hosted by the ECMI at the Danish Library in Flensburg. Two colleagues I was particularly close with organised the event, and I was able to observe the development of the conference from when I arrived at the ECMI in October 2021. Very early on in my ethnography I was told during a meeting that 'almost everything' the ECMI does revolves round the Framework Convention (see 2.6.1) – as it represents a legal instrument specifically relating to national minorities. Accompanying it is a monitoring process that reports on each of its signatories' progress on improving their hosted minorities' lives. The topic of the conference directly concerned Article 9 of the FCNM, as it asserts "that persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media" (9.1); parties "shall not prevent [members of minority communities] from requiring the licensing, without discrimination and based on objective criteria, of sound radio and television broadcasting, or cinema enterprises." (9.2); ratifiers "shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities […] and taking into account the

provisions of paragraph 1, that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media" (9.3); and "Parties shall adopt adequate measures in order to facilitate access to the media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and permit cultural pluralism" (9.4). All the minority issues analysed at the conference consistently had a legal element. However, during a conversation with an expert on Schleswig-Holstein's Friesian minority, I discovered that minority groups across Europe, along with the researchers advocating for them, tend to either overestimate or underestimate statistics based on their audience. Concerning minority language use in the media, the number of speakers of a minority language tends to be exaggerated to show that any investment in supporting a newspaper, for instance, will not be wasted because a sufficient audience exists. Contrastingly in other situations, underestimations can galvanise governments to support language education media urgently, especially if language extinction could occur. Minority languages are also promoted as being part of the overall nation state's history and culture. This was an interesting observation which I brought to the attention of my ECMI colleagues, and they concurred with this thought. This discourse by scholars in the field of autochthonous minority issues signified further that there is a strong advocatory element to the ECMI's activity, despite the perceived objectivity of academia and academic think tanks. Furthermore, this suggests the prevailing typology of think tanks is too rigid and organisations which traverse multiple categories cannot be effectively analysed in this way.

Figure 10: A photograph of a keynote speaker (Professor Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones) at the ECMI's Minority Language Media (MLM) Conference (31st March – 1st April 2022), which took place at the Danish Library in Flensburg.

Much of the conference's content explored the ways in which media has been utilised to promote the use of minority languages in public life. Given minority issues is only a small academic discipline, many key figures were present, and it served as a critical opportunity for the ECMI to promote its scholarly authority in the field. One strategy they employed was to actively link the content of the conference with the historical context of the borderland region – choosing the Danish Library in Flensburg as the venue after the Europa-Universität Flensburg pulled out of the event. Although the original choice of venue might not have been the Danish Library, its selection facilitated a tangible link between the conference's content and what the ECMI views as an illustration of effectively managing minority-majority relations—an example of 'best practice', being the Schleswig-Holstein model. The affective power of hosting the event in the borderland region, and in creating a platform for scholars in the field to exchange ideas, and to place the ECMI as an arbitrator of minority issues, heightening its place in the hierarchy of the field.

Though the power of the funding bodies in defining the institutional thematic focus of the ECMI has been determined by the external evaluation and the Executive Board's interpretation of the founding statutes, the general determination of topics of regions of interest at the ECMI has largely been driven by its researchers' expertise (Haas, 2007). This highlights the role of a think tank's staff in shaping its research agenda (see 2.3.4), although the discourse remains rooted in minority rights as articulated by the FCNM and asserted by the founding statutes (Appendix A). During my time at the ECMI, I was eager to contribute to its body of publications. Initially, my intention was to write about the challenges that the ethnically Russian minority might face in a post-war Ukraine, given my research interest in peace geographies, though publications in the special series on Ukraine on the ECMI Minorities Blog were coming from experts on the region and thus my submission would not have been suitable. However, owing to my prior work on the collective memory of ultras in East Berlin's football scene (3.1), it was suggested that I contribute to a short series focused on football fan communities in a minority context, writing with two other colleagues.

Down and Hughes (2009) highlight the importance of collaboration between the researcher and the organisation in organisational ethnographies, as this allows for the gathering of richer data, immersing the ethnographer further into the research. Consequently, it was important that I maintained my 'uncomfortable' position as both an insider and an outsider, so repeated reflection on my activity was important to keep in mind especially at times where I was working particularly closely with some individuals. Importantly, my academic status helped to legitimise my presence in these collaborative contexts. I was not perceived merely as a visitor or observer, but as a contributor to the missions of the ECMI, which allowed me to be taken seriously both

internally and in external settings such as conferences. This co-production of knowledge proved to be an excellent generator of ethnographic data, as I experienced the inner workings of the editorial process as a contributor and led to me presenting our findings as a representative of the ECMI at a conference. I was able to gather valuable insights as to how the thematic priorities established at a board level by the funders, transferred into the processes through which knowledge is produced in the everyday office environment. This level of immersion required me to maintain a critical gaze, which is important in an organisational ethnography because the strong personal relationships which develop means ethnographers may be less likely to challenge narratives (Ybema and Kamsteeg, 2009).

As a co-author of two pieces[8] for the ECMI Minorities Blog, I represented the ECMI at the International Conference of Minority Languages (ICML), a prestigious bi-annual conference which took place in Carmarthen. The two blog posts focused on national and linguistic minority professional football clubs in Europe, with the first part examining non-kin state minorities and the second part exploring national minorities with a kin state. During the editing stage for the first part, the editor suggested that we needed to be more comparative in our perspective between the five examples provided and asked us to consider what our case selection revealed about how these clubs expressed their identity.

In this work, we were very attentive to picking language cases from across the continent, to give geographic balance. SC Bastia (Corsican in France); Athletic Club (Basque in Spain); Ruch Chorzów (Silesian in Poland); Girona FC (Catalan in Spain); SC Heerenveen (Friesian in the Netherlands) were our non-kinstate cases, whilst Derry City (Irish in the United Kingdom); FC DAC (Hungarian in Slovakia); IFK Mariehamn (Swedish in Finland); FC Südtirol (German in Italy); HŠK Zrinjski Mostar (Croatian in Bosnia-Herzegovina) were our kinstate cases. Our research examined the use of minority languages by each of these clubs, and whether this was more of a fan-led initiative or club-led. We investigated the use of the languages on the official

[8] Links to these articles can be found here:

Willis, C., Hughes, W.R.A., Bober, S., 2022. National and Linguistic Minorities in the Context of Professional Football across Europe: Five Examples from Non-kin State Situations. ECMI Minorities Blog. URL https://www.ecmi.de/infochannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blognational-and-linguistic-minorities-in-the-context-of-professional-football-across-europe-five-examples-from-non-kin-state-situations.

Willis, C., Hughes, W.R.A., Bober, S., 2023. National and Linguistic Minorities in the Context of Professional Football across Europe: Five Examples from Kin-State Situations. ECMI Minorities Blog. URL https://www.ecmi.de/infochannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blog-national-and-linguistic-minorities-in-the-context-of-professional-football-across-europe-five-examples-from-kin-state-situations.

club website, social media, official merchandise, and other notable club or fan action. Having promoted our talk to many attendees at the conference during the evenings prior to our session, we were confronted with a large audience who asked some insightful questions following our talk, and offered their own thoughts about other football clubs that could be of interest. This experience really underscored a key objective of the ECMI Minorities Blog, which is to generate a greater readership by discussing topics that would be of interest to a greater size audience than the "potentially three" (Interview 5, former employee) that were reading the huge monographs in the previous publication strategy.

The feedback provided during the editing stage of the two co-authored blog posts shed light on a growing recognition within the ECMI of the need to incorporate identities beyond the national and/or linguistic status of autochthonous minorities, including factors such as class, gender, and race. This realisation complicates the ECMI's remit, which is explicitly focused on issues related to autochthonous minorities (5.3) and may compete for funding with projects centred on other intersections of identity. In the case of the Minorities Blog, this was not necessary as it was an internal submission – however the recognition of the issues the field of autochthonous minority issues faces when competing with migration or refugee studies has long been recognised (see 5.3). At the ECMI, it appears that any project related to national minorities is deemed relevant, even if gender, class, or other factors are the primary focus. This highlighted the thoughts of a considerable number of researchers at the ECMI that there was an institutional need for a greater consideration of the interplay between various aspects of identity and the challenges associated with prioritising different dimensions of identity in research and funding decisions. My personal experience in getting published in academic journals previously was critical here, as in our response to the editors we explained that a consideration of these aspects would be better suited to a different piece. My ability to articulate this editorial choice in the language of academic rigour was only possible due to my own scholarly background, and it served to strengthen my legitimacy during internal editorial discussions.

While not explicitly stated, the issues explored in the blog posts are linked to the principles outlined in the FCNM. One example is the case of the Hungarian minority club FC DAC 1904 in Slovakia, which highlights the potential conflict between the prohibition of flying a flag of a nation other than Slovakia in a sports stadium and Article 7 of the FCNM, which guarantees freedom of assembly, association, and expression to members of national minorities. The conclusions we drew from both pieces also provided an insight into how knowledge production works at the ECMI, as these were dictated by my co-author. These concerned how the presence and level of influence a kin-state dynamic has to the broader socio-political context of the clubs. In the case of FC DAC

1904, they displayed a much stronger connection to an external homeland because of the funding they receive, as opposed to other clubs which had a more regional focus. Following their publication, the feedback from the editor indicated that these blog posts attracted above-average engagement compared to others.

Whilst outsiders are encouraged to publish in the Minorities Blog, authoring a work whilst *in situ* at the ECMI office afforded me a greater insight into the editorial process and what the intended benefits of the Minorities Blog were. The co-authors and I then presented our work at the XIX International Conference on Minority Languages (ICML), which was held between the 20th of June and the 24th of June 2023 in Carmarthen, Wales. The ICML was exactly the kind of event that the ECMI needed a presence at, and it represented an opportunity for me to observe how the researchers of the ECMI network at these events, and for what reasons networking is used. Importantly, it was also the kind of space in which my academic identity allowed me to pass easily, again I was not viewed as an external observer, but as an equal. At external events like the ICML, my outsider-ness as a visiting researcher at the ECMI was non-existent.

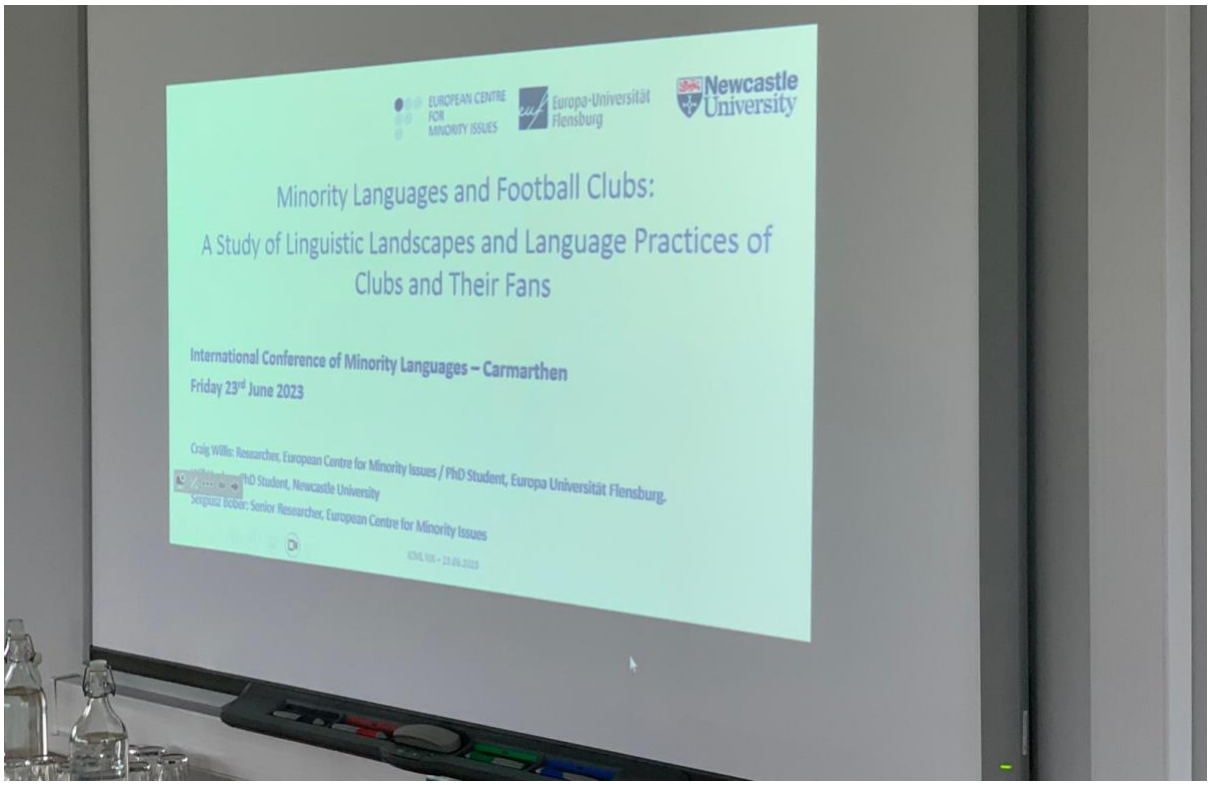

Figure 11: A photograph of our presentation: "Minority Languages and Football Clubs: A Study of Linguistic Landscapes and Language Practices of Clubs and Their Fans". Took place at the International Conference of Minority Languages (ICML), in Carmarthen, 2023.

Figure 12: A photograph of my fellow presenter, Craig Willis (right) and I (left), at the ICML Conference.

During the period of the mentioned conference, one of my colleagues at the ECMI was in the process of formulating an application for The European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) programme, an initiative which my ECMI colleagues were extremely excited about the prospect of being involved in. One of the researchers I was closest to was preparing an application centred on the digitalisation of minority language media. The products of such endeavours within COST, known as 'COST Actions', are intrinsically directed toward the cultivation of collaborative research. It is imperative to underscore that these Actions exhibit a distinct inclination for interdisciplinarity, exemplifying the ECMI's need to promote this aspect of theirs significantly (see 5.6). Unlike conventional research funding paradigms, which primarily allocate resources to research-orientated activities, COST Actions allocate resources with a specific emphasis on facilitating collaboration. This encompasses the provision of support for networking events, training initiatives, conferences, and related activities. The essence of COST Action applications necessitates a significant engagement in networking activities to achieve a successful application, this is because parties' names are attached to it. Conferences such as the ICML, therefore, are the ideal opportunity to attract people to participate in a potential project. The head of this potential project informed me that applications which conform to the ideas of diversity, equality and inclusion were much more likely to succeed, and this influenced the kind of people

he was approaching to become a part of this project. Somewhat in jest, I was explicitly told that project applications containing 'just white men' would be far less likely to succeed – and this was especially apparent in those related to minority issues.

What was most interesting to observe, however, was the way researchers networked with one another at the conference. In many Slavic countries and Central Asia, the perception of minority rights as "where you just sing and dance and you have concerts" (Interview 3, junior researcher), which was challenged strongly by the ECMI's work in Ukraine, very much existed at the ICML conference amongst the researchers (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). A key objective for the ECMI was to shift minority rights from the realm of cultural rights to more political rights, yet much of the networking I witnessed was scholars (many of whom themselves were not from a minority) singing traditional songs and performing related dances.

My experience at academic conferences with the ECMI illuminated two key factors in their organisational activity. Firstly, the editorial process of the ECMI Minorities Blog shed light on their thematic objectives and quality control procedures. Secondly, the conferences were opportunities for me to understand how ECMI researchers engage with the broader academic community and their professional networks. In contrast to the perception of Hauck (2017) that think tanks attempt to distinguish themselves from universities, these events contained very few individuals that were not part of a formal university structure, and thus illustrated to me, as did many other instances at the ECMI, that the organisation was pushing for closer ties. In the field of minority issues, knowledge production often begins with the singing and dancing aspect of minority rights. At the ICML, I began a fascinating conversation with an S4C[9] executive after participating in a rendition of *Calon Lân*. By becoming a vessel of ECMI knowledge production myself and presenting at this conference, as part of a highly immersive organisational ethnography, I learned things about the institution, and the wider field of minority issues, that simply would not have been possible using a different methodology.

The specificities of my positionality would suggest limited repeatability; however, it was precisely through my embeddedness in the field that ethnography proved invaluable in generating the insights presented in this chapter. My identity as a young, white, mono-lingual British PhD student and my institutional affiliation with a well-regarded UK university shaped my access and interactions, but it was the prolonged immersion within the everyday life of the ECMI that enabled a depth of understanding unattainable through other methods. Ethnography allowed me to move beyond surface-level observations and capture the subtle, often unspoken dynamics of knowledge

[9] S4C is a Welsh-language television channel.

production – whether in casual conversations at conferences, spontaneous discussions in office hallways, or informal moments shared outside the workplace. These rich and revealing encounters were made possible not simply by who I was, but by how long I was present and the trust that developed over time. The value of ethnography, therefore, lies in its capacity to access these layered realities, making it a powerful and necessary method for uncovering the complexities of institutional practice at organisations like the ECMI.

7.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to illustrate precisely what insights an ethnographic methodology can reveal about how knowledge is produced within an academic think tank, that would not be available to a researcher who opted to conduct interviews or textual analysis alone. My ethnographic fieldwork was conducted with a high-level of immersion, in that anywhere I was with colleagues became a research site, and it was on these occasions outside the professional working environment that I was able to uncover many of the implicit forces behind knowledge production at the ECMI. I was able to obtain some of my most valuable insights from, for instance, conversations in bars at two in the morning, weekend ferry trips, Christmas gingerbread biscuit-making sessions, or moments stood on the terraces at SC Weiche Flensburg football matches. The other critical element to my organisational ethnography was my direct participation in the everyday knowledge production I was there to study. Observation can generate a particular level of insight – it is only through highly immersive direct involvement that such a rich understanding of institutional knowledge production processes can be understood. Ybema and Kamsteeg (2009) argue that traditional engaged ethnography, where the researcher is fully immersed in the organisation, can limit the insights gained from the research. This idea is relevant in my case, as my continuous reflexivity may not have been enough to mitigate my tendency to accept the organisation's dominant discourses and practices. The relationships I built during my time there may have made me less critical.

The discourse formulation at the ECMI, particularly regarding the advocatory aspect of their institutional strategy in promoting minority rights and language usage, showed that discourse is something worth researching outside of Oval Office press releases and interviews with United Nations bureaucrats. Think tanks like the ECMI do have an influence on public policy and given their increased level of accessibility to academic researchers, they offer critical avenues through which to investigate knowledge production ethnographically. The lack of methodological diversity in political geography and critical geopolitics has long been recognised – as has its preoccupation with war and violence (Megoran, 2011). This ethnographic study argues that organisational

ethnography provides valuable insights into discourse by examining it at its source. It also contends that deeper engagement with peace initiatives can significantly improve the lives of individuals, particularly minorities.

8 Conclusion

The central purpose of this thesis was to explore how geopolitical knowledge is produced within the ECMI, examined through an organisational ethnography conducted at their office in Flensburg, a city in the Danish-German borderlands region. The ECMI was founded as a research institute in 1996, with the primary objective of disseminating and producing knowledge on autochthonous minority issues. Its establishment came at a time when minority-majority conflicts were re-emerging in Europe in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the breakup of Yugoslavia. Schleswig-Holstein, the historic region in which the ECMI is located, was the location of an infamous nineteenth-century ethnoterritorial conflict known as the Schleswig-Holstein question. Major foreign policy actors of the time, such as the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, were extremely pessimistic about how peace could possibly be achieved in the region. Yet, albeit one hundred years later, Schleswig-Holstein emerged as an example of how a place can go from being blighted by human rights abuses, irredentism, brutal discrimination and violence – to a region where minorities feel secure in their host country and practice their national identities freely. This extraordinary story of peacebuilding became known as the Schleswig-Holstein model.

The ECMI's conceptualisation of the model suggests two paradoxical conclusions about peace. In the Danish-German borderlands, there were many preconditions which allowed for the contemporary 'positive' peace to develop, and the resulting reconciliation, political developments, and social progress seen in the region implies that a universal notion of peace does exist. Moreover, it implies a semi-rigid ladder of progress where, if the situation of a majority-minority conflict is to improve, certain criteria must be met for this to occur. On the other hand, the unique political, historical, cultural, and economic situation of Schleswig-Holstein is not recognised as something which can be directly replicated anywhere in the world. Peace is simply too complex a concept to be universal in its appearance. This thesis contributes to this debate in peace geographies by highlighting the need for geographically contextualised understandings of peace, whilst at the same time suggesting that pre-conditions for positive peace to develop do exist.

For the majority of the organisation's history, the ECMI has conducted little research on the majority-minority situation of its home region. Yet despite this, the model has nonetheless served an important role in their knowledge production strategy. The discursive practice of geopolitical scripting has been ubiquitously derided by scholars of critical geopolitics as an anti-geographical, reductive, and performative exercise (Agnew, 2009; Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). However, this thesis challenges the prevailing critique by revealing that geopolitical scripting can indeed serve as a legitimate tool for knowledge production, especially in the context of peacebuilding interventions.

In peace studies, the effects of focusing on geopolitical scripting and related top-down approaches in peacebuilding are thought to overlook local viewpoints and oversimplify complex realities (Goetze, 2016a, 2016b, 2019; Bliesemann de Guevara and Goetze, 2019). Yet, for the ECMI, the Schleswig-Holstein model has been utilised as an authority signifier and discursive tool, demonstrating that geopolitical scripting can effectively link policy interventions to established models, thereby granting them legitimacy. The action project "Minorities in the Western Balkans" illustrates that the 'Schleswig-Holstein script' can serve as a powerful instrument for legitimising minority-related policy interventions. However, in analysing the output of this project, it was found that the adaptations made to certain aspects of the Schleswig-Holstein model that were implemented in Bijeljina and Tetovo were so significant that they barely resembled their Danish-German counterparts. This suggests that the particular context in which the peacebuilding efforts took place was adequately considered. The Schleswig-Holstein model, in this case, served principally as a geopolitical script. Scripts are narrative devices that evoke carefully designed images, and for ECMI policy interventions, this meant illustrating a connection to a successful peacebuilding model that provided crucial legitimacy to these initiatives. This constitutes what Bourdieu (2013) calls 'symbolic' capital. Therefore, this instance suggests that geopolitical scripting is not merely a reductive exercise reserved for war-mongering American think tanks; it can be effectively and positively employed in peacebuilding efforts, providing the necessary legitimacy for interventions.

I argue for the reclaiming of geopolitical scripting as a tool for peace-making rather than simply a war-making or reductionist move. This thesis provides a somewhat antithetical analysis to traditional interpretations of the practice in political geography literature, arguing for the reclamation of geopolitical scripting as a valuable strategy for peace-making, highlighting its potential to enhance legitimacy and efficacy in policy interventions while also challenging existing critiques that portray it as solely reductive or harmful. Whilst this thesis does not deny that geopolitical scripting can be used to generate anti-geographical, reductionist discourse about places, the prevalent argument that exists in the literature of critical geopolitics which designates the practice as an exclusively negative one is reductive itself. Scripts are effective messaging devices which can be employed by anyone, not just the intellectuals of statecraft, for purposes beyond war-making. Having spent almost a year with the ECMI, immersing myself within the everyday practice of knowledge production, I developed a deeply rich insight into how institutional strategy was shaped by their interactions within minority issues networks and the field of academia; the pressures of their funding bodies; and internal debates. Utilising Bourdieu's framework to understand their knowledge production strategy through the analysis of capital accumulation

reveals why, unlike other think tanks, the ECMI does not place a high value on direct policymaking influence. Instead, it prioritises establishing itself as an authority within its 'unfashionable niche' in the academic field of autochthonous minority issues. This focus is largely driven by the academic background of much of its staff and the preferences of the Executive Board, which includes representatives of the three founding bodies that contribute a very large portion of the ECMI's annual budget. The ECMI's perseverance in maintaining its founding focus on European autochthonous minority issues raised some challenging questions amongst staff and representatives of the funding bodies. There existed a significant movement amongst ECMI researchers which pushed for a wider interpretation of 'Europe' and of 'minority', in the case of the latter, around introducing further dimensions of identity to their analysis. The funding bodies regard the ECMI's mission of researching only 'autochthonous' minorities to be almost sacramental, and considering the organisation is highly financially dependent on the three founders, steps have been taken to ensure this perseverance continues. Nevertheless, the contemporary situation in the ECMI's own home region has questioned and brought into contention their definition of an 'autochthonous' minority – with the leader of the German minority in Denmark being an immigrant from Bavaria. This 'blurring' was recognised by the Executive Board, but this has not stopped the push for the ECMI to play a greater role in researching the contemporary situation in Schleswig-Holstein. I witnessed first-hand and actively participated in the ECMI's new publication strategy, which had the objective of being accessible, academic, and influential. Though the change in approach was partly down to poor viewership figures, the unique funding situation of the ECMI means the usual indicators of 'impact' for think tanks – i.e. strong infometrics and direct policymaking influence, do not translate into being the primary forms of symbolic capital sought in its publication strategy. The ECMI's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 epitomised its institutional strategy – I observed how its new publication series, the ECMI Minorities Blog, was utilised to provide timely insights on various aspects of the war and draw attention specifically to the issues affecting autochthonous minorities – issues that are often overshadowed by commentary on grand geopolitical narratives. According to staff, the blog series (not exclusively the section on the war) was delivering impressive viewership numbers and was being effectively used to expand their academic networks. From my experience in co-authoring two publications and delivering an academic conference presentation with the ECMI, I concur that being in the ear of the President of the United States does not have to be the objective of an effective publication strategy.

This thesis expanded the notion of who can be considered a geopolitical actor by emphasising that even small research institutes can produce discourse that is worth political

geographers studying. Conventional analyses of discourse in the literature have fixated on the movements of the 'intellectuals of statecraft', and whilst they represent a legitimate and valuable focus of analysis, these studies have, methodologically, rarely moved beyond textual analysis. The works of Ó Tuathail, Agnew and Dalby were crucial in bringing the study of geopolitics away from the Kissingers of this world and transforming the discipline into one that critiques discursive practices, rather than perpetuating them. However, the study of discourse in critical geopolitics has been methodologically narrow, with knowledge production analysed from the outside using mostly texts and speeches, though sometimes interviews. My research underscores the importance of incorporating ethnographic methods to enrich our understanding of knowledge production from within. This opens up the debate within critical geopolitics about methodological diversity, as studies of discourse have for too long been conducted outside of the structures and institutions within which knowledge is created. A crucial aspect of this thesis was to analyse discourse having participated within those processes myself, and only through a high level of immersion into the everyday practices of knowledge production can data and insights as revealing as those demonstrated in this study be revealed. By actively becoming a knowledge producer in the ECMI, I was able to garner a rich understanding of how institutional strategy at the Executive Board level was able to influence the everyday practices of knowledge production. The close personal relationships I developed over eleven months also opened up field sites I had not initially anticipated, such as football stadiums and bars. It was in these places that some of the most interesting data was collected – data which would have been completely inaccessible and unknown to me had I utilised only interviews and textual analysis.

Whilst researching and writing this thesis in the field of critical geopolitics, I never imagined finding myself acknowledging that Donald Rumsfeld's point about 'unknown unknowns' may have been right along. For scholars in this field, a powerful way to deconstruct the geopolitical narratives of figures like him is to follow his lead and get closer to knowledge production. The ECMI's institutional objectives completely contrast those of Rumsfeld, but my central argument remains. One can uncover much richer data about geopolitical knowledge production by immersing themselves in the environments they are studying.

8.1 Further Research

Building on the insights of this study, several promising directions for future research emerge. One natural extension would be to undertake comparative organisational ethnographies of other institutions in the field of minority issues across Europe – obvious candidates would be organisations like EURAC and FUEN could test whether the dynamics observed at the ECMI

hold in different contexts. Whilst this thesis examined some direct policymaking involvement of the ECMI in the form of the "Minorities in the Western Balkans" project, an ethnography of such a project would bring a researcher much closer to geopolitical scripting in action than the interviews and policy analysis I relied upon. Involvement in the networks of the European Union, OSCE, Council of Europe for similar projects would also be a realistic opportunity.

The Schleswig-Holstein model is far from the only peacebuilding framework that has served as a script for managing ethno-political conflict. The Northern Ireland model, rooted in the Good Friday Agreement, and the South African transition from apartheid, offer equally important templates that have been mobilised in other contexts to legitimise reconciliation processes and power-sharing arrangements. These models function not only as historical precedents but as transferable narratives that geopolitical actors can draw upon to frame their own minority rights agendas or conflict resolution efforts. Whilst an ethnographic study of policymaking directly inspired by these models is not likely to be possible, many organisations have theorised each framework and interesting research would arise from analyses of these studies. If there were to be one genre of further research that I hope my study would inspire, it would be that political geographers and scholars of peace studies would take seriously the benefits that ethnography can bring to the table.

9 Bibliographies

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10 Appendices

Appendix A

Statutes
of the Foundation "European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)"

Article 1
Name, Seat and Legal Form

The Foundation shall be called the "European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)". It shall be a civil-law foundation with legal capacity (rechtsfähige Stiftung des bürgerlichen Rechts). The seat of the Foundation shall be in Flensburg.

Article 2
Objectives

1) The Foundation shall exclusively and directly pursue objectives of a non-profit- making character within the meaning of the section of the Tax Code on "Objections entitled to tax relief". The activities of the Foundation shall be altruistic, profitability shall not be its prime objective.
2) The objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous ethnic groups.

Article 3
Activities

1) The Foundation will carry out activities on a European basis within the following areas:
   a) Collection, promotion and communication of research work on issues of minorities (documentation centre);

b) Construction of a European bank of data and models on minority issues and possible solutions;
c) Compilation of research on minority issues and the creation of overall analyses and presentations;
d) Participation in network research on minority issues;
e) Promotion and communication of practical experience regarding protection of minorities through symposia, seminars and publications;
f) Creation of fora for mitigating conflicts;
g) Advisory activities regarding minority policies. 2) The working language of ECMI shall be English.

Article 4

Finances (Vermögen)

1) The assets of the Foundation shall consist of:
   a) The contributions of the founders as evidenced by the document establishing the Foundation;
   b) Contributions to the assets of the Foundation (Zustiftungen).
2) The Foundation shall fulfil its functions through:
   a) Revenue generated by assets of the Foundation and grants from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Denmark and the Land Schleswig-Holstein;
   b) Grants from the European Union;
   c) Grants from public and private institutions; d) Participant fees;
   e) Income from revenue-generating activities; f) Other income, donations or contributions.
3) The funds of the Foundation shall be used solely for the purpose permitted under its Statutes. The founders shall not benefit financially from the funds of the Foundation.
4) Free reserves shall only be formed as far as this is permissible under the provisions of the national budget law of the founders providing grants or, respectively, under the tax provisions of the law on non-profit making organi- zations. The Executive Board may add any free reserves and contributions from third parties to the assets of the Foundation if the contributor specifies that these are to increase the assets of the Foundation.
5) No person shall benefit from expenditure unconnected with the Foundation or from disproportionately high remuneration.

Article 5

Organs

The organs responsible for the Foundation shall be:

a) The Executive Board (Vorstand);
b) The Director.

Article 6
Number, Appointment, Term of Office and Recall of the Members of the Executive Board

1) The Executive Board shall be made up of:
   a) Three members nominated by the Kingdom of Denmark represented by the Ministry of Research and Technology, including at least one representative of the scientific community;
   b) One member nominated by the Federal Republic of Germany represented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior;
   c) One member nominated by the Land Schleswig-Holstein;
   d) One representative of the scientific community nominated jointly by the Federal Republic of Germany represented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Land Schleswig-Holstein;
   e) Three further members nominated by the founders at the suggestion of European institutions.

   The founders appointing these members may nominate a substitute for each. It shall be noted that the substitutes for the representative of the scientific community nominated under sentence 1 items a) and d) must likewise be of the scientific community.

2) Until the representatives of the European Institutions have been appointed, the Executive Board will consist of the members mentioned under point 1 items a) - d).
3) The chairman of the Executive Board shall be designated by the Kingdom of Denmark. He shall be one of the members appointed by the states. Compensation for the chairman may be fixed by the founders.
4) The Executive Board shall elect a vice-chairman from among its members by majority vote.

5) The term of office of the Executive Board shall be three years. Appointment shall be renewable. A successor for a member retiring prematurely may be appointed only for the remainder of the term of office.
6) The members of the Executive Board may be recalled at any time by the body that appointed them.
7) The members of the Executive Board shall work for the Foundation on an unpaid basis. Any necessary expenses incurred by them in the course of their activities for the Foundation may be reimbursed. Details shall be regulated by the rules of procedure of the Executive Board.

Article 7
Duties of the Executive Board

1) The Executive Board is the supreme authority of the Foundation.
2) The Executive Board shall represent the Foundation for judicial and extra- judicial purposes through at least two of its members. One of these members shall be the chairman of the Executive Board or, alternatively, the vice- chairman should the former be unable to perform this duty.
3) The following duties shall be reserved for the Executive Board:
   a) Approval of the budget;
   b) Approval of the annual plan of activities;
   c) Approval of the annual financial statement;
   d) Appointment, remuneration and dismissal of the Director;
   e) Appointment, remuneration and dismissal of the scientific staff;
   f) Appointment of committees and commissions;
   g) Issuing of instructions on business for the Director;
   h) Issuing of rules of procedure for the Executive Board.

   Any further rights of the Executive Board pursuant to other provisions of these Statutes shall remain unaffected.
4) The Executive Board shall have, in particular, the following tasks vis-à-vis the founders:
   a) Drawing up economic plans in accordance with the rules of procedure for the promotion of ECMI agreed between the founders as the basic for approving grants to the foundation;
   b) Presentation of an annual report on the activities of the Foundation;

c) Proof that funds allocated to the Foundation have used properly and in accordance with the rules of procedure for the promotion of ECMI agreed between the founders, and assistance to the appointed auditors.

Article 8

Convocation, quorum and decision-making procedure of the Executive Board

1) The Executive Board shall be convoked at least half-yearly by its chairman or, should he be unable to do so, by its vice-chairman. This shall be done in writing, stating the individual items of the agenda. The period of notice shall be at least three weeks; it may be shortened with the consent of all the members of the Executive Board. The Executive Board shall also be convened if one-third of its members request it, stating the point to be discussed.
2) The Executive Board shall constitute a quorum if more than half of its members are present.
3) With the exception of decisions falling under Articles 11 and 12, the Executive Board shall pass its resolutions by majority vote of the members present. In the event of an equality of votes the chairman shall have the casting vote. The Executive board may also pass a resolution if all its members give their approval in writing (circular method).
4) A record shall be made of the resolutions passed at the meetings of the Executive Board. It shall be signed by the chairman and one further member. All resolutions of the Executive Board shall be compiled and kept for as long as the Foundation exists.

Article 9

Director

1) The Director shall conduct the business of the Foundation.
2) As far as the day-to-day administration of the Foundation is concerned the Director shall be its special representative in the meaning of Section 30 of the German Civil Code (BGB) and authorized to represent the Foundation for judicial and extra-judicial purposes.
3) The following, in particular, shall be incumbent on the Director:
   a) Manager of ECMI responsible to the Executive Board;
   b) Preparation of the annual plan of activities and supervision of its implementation;
   c) Preparation of the budget
   d) Supervision of implementation of the budget as adopted by the Executive Board;
   e) Day-to-day administration of finances on behalf of the Executive Board within the limits defined by approved budget;
   f) Preparation of the annual financial statement and the annual report;

g) Appointment, remuneration or dismissal of the administrative personnel;
h) Furnishing the Executive Board with the information necessary for evaluating ECMI's work.

4) The Director shall take part in the meetings of the Executive Board in an advisory capacity only. He shall not attend if personnel matters concerning him are under discussion.

Article 10
Advisory Council (Kuratorium)

1) The Executive Board shall appoint an Advisory Council after consultation with the founders.
2) The Advisory Council shall support the ECMI mission by establishing contacts with persons, institutions and organizations, assume duties of representation and promote the ECMI activities vis-à-vis European institutions and in specialist circles.
3) The Advisory council shall elect a chairman.
4) The term of office of the Advisory Council shall be three years. Appointment shall be renewable. A successor for a member retiring prematurely may be appointed only for the remainder of the term of office.
5) Details, including the maximum number of members, shall be regulated by the rules of procedure of the Executive Board.

Article 11
Amendments to the Statutes

1) The Statutes may be amended if:
   a) The objectives and organization of the Foundation are not changed, or any changes are insignificant;
   b) This is appropriate because of major changes in the circumstances that existed at the time when the Foundation came into being.
2) Resolutions concerning amendments to the Statutes can be passed only by a major- ity of at least three quarters of the members of the Executive Board. They shall also require the consent of the founders and the approval of the public authority responsible for supervision of the Foundation. For amendments to the Statutes that affect the objectives of the Foundation, the approval of the tax office concerned shall be obtained.

Article 12
Merger or Dissolution of the Foundation

1) The Foundation may merge with another to form a new foundation if the objectives can be substantially better fulfilled by the merge.
2) The Foundation may be dissolved if its objectives cannot be fulfilled in the long term.
3) Decisions under the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 can only be made by at least three quarters of the members of the Executive Board. They shall also require the consent of the founders and the approval of the public authority responsible for supervision of the Foundation.

Article 13
Accession to Assets

Should the Foundation be dissolved or abolished, the shares in its capital paid in by the founders and the fair market value of the contributions made by them in kind shall be returned. The remaining assets of the Foundation shall be used for the purposes stated in Article 2. The resolution on the use of these assets shall not be implemented until the tax office responsible has given its approval.

Article 14
Supervision of the Foundation

The Foundation shall be subject to supervision in accordance with the provisions of the Act Relating To Civil-Law Foundations with Legal Capacity (Foundations Act) of 13 July 1972 (GVOBl. Schl.-H.P. 123) of the Land Schleswig-Holstein.
Flensburg, 29 January 1998

Jytte Hilden Manfred Carstens Gisela Böhrk

For the Ministry of Research and Information Technology of the Kingdom of Denmark	For the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany	For the Land Schleswig-Holstein For the Minister-President The Minister of Education, Science, Research and Culture of the Land Schleswig-Holstein