The Educational Legacy of a European Research Project Based on History

Daniella Palmberg

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Abstract

InsSciDE’s pilot training programs in science diplomacy showed that history can be a powerful tool to demonstrate the nuances, complexity and skillsets involved in the practice of science diplomacy. From its experiences conducting training programs, organizing conferences and compiling training resources, the Horizon 2020 project amassed a unique blend of insights that may help advance how European science diplomacy is taught, discussed and, ultimately, practiced. This paper provides an overview of the lessons learned from InsSciDE’s experiences of teaching and discussing science diplomacy with a historical focus, and how we envision our contribution to future initiatives.

Keywords: Science Diplomacy History – Training Resources – Online Training – Education – Horizon 2020 Results.

In the past four and a half years, InsSciDE\(^1\) has developed more than twenty-eight case studies, a strategic recommendation, issue papers and a theoretical framework for European science diplomacy\(^2\). The project hosted workshops, conferences, and two editions of its pilot training program Warsaw Science Diplomacy School (WSDS). The training program was tested in a virtual format in 2020 and 2021, welcoming a total of fifty-two early career scholars and practitioners from all over the world. The school was structured to draw on all the other activities of the project, in particular its historical case studies, to create an interdisciplinary and dynamic learning environment during the live program,

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\(^1\) InsSciDE has received funding under the European Union’s Horizon2020 research and innovation program (Grant Agreement No 770523, 2018-2022).

\(^2\) Outputs of the project are found in the resources section of the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance website, alongside those of related European projects. Online: http://www.zenodo.org/communities/insscide [accessed December 2022].
as well as to yield a “Collection of Training Materials” (CTM) containing resources to help future educators replicate or build on InsSciDE’s tested methods.

InsSciDE’s CTM invites emerging training initiatives to learn from the project’s experience of teaching, discussing and researching science diplomacy, as well as provides ready-made resources to integrate into science diplomacy education. This paper aims to complement the CTM by providing a broader vista on the lessons gleaned from InsSciDE’s experience in training, including the conclusions drawn from testing the materials, and visions for how future initiatives could build on the work.

So, what do the results of InsSciDE reveal about the role of history in science diplomacy learning? I outline my view as a non-specialist participant in InsSciDE, having attained my own de facto science diplomacy training through the discussions, deliberations and actions that came with being a member of the project with a role that traversed the ten work packages. As the Community Manager of the project, I worked at a point of convergence for InsSciDE’s social sciences researchers, its coordinators and experts. The role entailed supporting the organizing of InsSciDE conferences, consolidating impact reports, drafting issue papers and sharing InsSciDE’s achievements with the world through our website and social media. In the Warsaw Science Diplomacy School (WSDS), I had the pleasure of being a part of the dynamic organizing team led by Symlog’s Claire Mays and the European Academy of Diplomacy, and of assembling the subsequent CTM.

From this standpoint, I share my observations of the lessons learned in the process of designing and implementing training and learning events, the potential benefits of InsSciDE’s educational outputs and how long-term impact in science diplomacy training could be attained. I first discuss the experience of integrating history in InsSciDE’s training programs and consider how InsSciDE’s flagship case study book can facilitate future science diplomacy study by “thinking with history”. Subsequent sections examine structural elements of the overall educational design, leveraging InsSciDE’s historical case studies to enable an understanding of the complex contexts and workings of science diplomacy. The final section reflects on the feasibility – and necessity – of virtual formats for training.

The outcomes discussed are based on observations from within the project and extensive feedback gained from WSDS participants. The InsSciDE Impact

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Assessments contain detailed internal and external accounts on the reception of WSDS and its other activities and outputs.

**Applying History to Science Diplomacy Training: Benefits, Challenges, InsSciDE’s Contribution**

Integrating history in science diplomacy training is a challenging yet potentially highly rewarding endeavor. In InsSciDE, we found that the historical case studies used in WSDS illuminated the vastness of science diplomacy as a practice and often stimulated impassioned debates on related contemporary issues.

At the same time, “using” history in this way provoked questions that had no apparent answers. How can we learn from historical cases without inadvertently extracting “lessons”, which tend to oversimplify the contexts of the history or the present or future to which it is compared? How can we prevent false narratives from forming when discussing historical case studies with complex political dynamics at play?

From a more practical standpoint, there was the challenge of conveying vital nuances and complexity to a non-historian audience within a constricted timeframe, and moreover in a virtual format. With diverse backgrounds in the cohort, making connections between history and the present was not an easy task for all the participants. Students had to make peace with a lack of definitive conclusions, instead using their historical case to, for instance, launch an ethical debate or as evidence for the need to question the interests of today’s actors of science diplomacy.

For instance, the student group “Team Heritage” discussed ethical issues tied to research fieldwork, launching from their study of InsSciDE’s case about a 1963 strike by local workers on a German excavation site in Syria. The case study prompted the team to dive deep into the origins of Western knowledge production, emerging with evidence for links to extractive practices and widespread presumption of superiority of Western methods over non-Western forms of knowledge.

“Team ITER8” found themselves evaluating the international megaproject ITER as a potential “science diplomacy success”, from which perhaps the greatest takeaway was that such an evaluative judgement is incredibly difficult to make. The team’s designated case study induced an appreciation for how early-stage

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8 *International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor*.

9 Anna Åberg, “The Ways and Means of ITER: Reciprocity and Compromise in Fusion Science
negotiations may impact management procedures and scientific outcomes for decades to come and for the vast range of challenges associated with moving such an immense international project forward10.

Rather than searching for a clean-cut takeaway lesson from a historical case study of science diplomacy, perhaps we need to embrace greater flexibility in the learning process: allow each case study to reveal its own unique utility, depending not only on the specifics of the case, but also on the makeup of its audience.

Learning from historical case studies requires more than simply to have India and Latin America are particularly active in contributing to the science diplomacy scholarship. Access to them. The WSDS experience showed that students require guidance to learn effectively from such resources, especially in order to embrace the studies as context for analyzing present or future issues. The InSciDE book “Inventing a Shared Science Diplomacy for Europe: Interdisciplinary Case Studies to Think with History”, not only provides an unprecedented compilation of case studies that can demonstrate the myriad practices that befit the umbrella term of science diplomacy, but also contributes guidance that eases the challenges described above. The harmonized collection of twenty-eight case studies allows for comparisons of a wide selection of science diplomacy contexts that “range across 250 years, several continents, and five thematic areas: heritage, health, security, environment and space11”. It guides the reader in discerning the protagonists in the complex landscapes of actors, spells out the stakes and provides thought-provoking “study questions” for each case. It boldly grasps the challenge of analyzing cross-cutting themes among the diverse set of cases, illuminating roots that ground the sometimes-diffuse concept of science diplomacy. Nestled in with the case studies are essays and analyses that draw on lessons learned throughout the project. The design invites readers to learn directly from its cases, essays and analyses, as well as to draw on the frameworks employed by the editors to learn themselves how to view science diplomacy through the lenses of history, theory and strategy formulation.

The book and its individual cases are openly accessible in an online library on the website of the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance12. Along with more contemporary case studies conducted by fellow Horizon 2020 science diplomacy project S4D4C, the library of case studies covers a vast territory of topics and

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contexts that can support students and teachers of science diplomacy in various manners.

The CTM proposes a few specific ways in which case studies can be used for teaching, such as in a strategic simulation exercise, as tested during WDS, or simply as discussion material. The analyses provided in the book also align with processes embraced during WDS (for instance, study questions are provided) which can further inspire pedagogical methods for engaging with science diplomacy cases.

However, the cases have limitations due to being for the most part focused on Europe or representing European perspectives, a result of the research responding to a Horizon 2020 call on European science diplomacy capacities. Although the cases include actors and scenarios that stretch across the world, are certainly relevant beyond the EU, and offer critical analysis of the power dynamics present in the historical settings, the lack of diverse researchers naturally limits the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn from the collection of cases. Acknowledging the limitations and engaging with additional scholarship from beyond Europe can help ensure students are exposed to a broader set of perspectives. India and Latin America are particularly active in contributing to the science diplomacy scholarship.

Innovating Discussion and Engagement Formats

Knowing that the task of creating science diplomacy training was still a rather novel endeavor and that our historical focus was a unique angle for the task, InsSciDE strove to push the boundaries of how science diplomacy is discussed and taught. This aspiration stretched across how we designed speakers’ interventions, how we fostered bonding online, and who was targeted as speakers and audiences in events. The below list highlights a few of the setups tested at various points of the project, in WDS as well as in other learning settings such as conferences and workshops. Some activities were original, while others were modelled on existing methods. The list below aims to encourage

13 The challenges of drawing lessons from historical case studies are discussed frequently, see for instance: A. L. George, A. Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).
thinking outside the box when considering science diplomacy training\textsuperscript{17}. The impact of these alternative discussion formats is largely subjective but given the diversity of topics and contexts of science diplomacy it is important to foster creativity and flexibility when designing learning environments.

- **Fish bowls (in-person):** A workshop format in which a small circle of participants discussed one of InsSciDE’s case studies with its author, while a larger group seated in a ring around them listened. To enter the conversation, an outer circle member switched with an inner, creating an effect of rotating through a diversity of perspectives and focuses.

- **Mentoring (virtual):** Organized encounters in which novices and experts engaged on the subject of science diplomacy (one-on-one or in a small group). Ideas flowed in both directions during these exchanges, as students shared their WSDS experiences and takeaways with established practitioners in science diplomacy.

- **Coached breakout groups (virtual):** Students took the lead on discussions around an assignment while an expert in each group gently challenged their ideas and guided their framing from their specialist perspective.

- **Working lunch (virtual):** Reflecting an element of work life as a (science) diplomat, the lunch break is included in the allotted independent work-period with the assignment to complete a collective deliverable.

- **Juried presentations (virtual):** Subject-matter experts were invited to provide commentary on the deliverable presentations by WSDS students. Presentations drew on lectures and study of one of InsSciDE’s historical case studies and the invited experts was selected based on their work on a related contemporary issue.

- **Duos (hybrid):** A debate format pairing speakers (for instance, one historian and one practitioner) so that two distinctly different perspectives on an issue were placed side by side.

- **Flash presentation (in-person or virtual):** A presentation format in which several speakers are given only a few minutes to introduce their subject or argue their point, while follow-up questions from the audience help to deepen the discussion. When conducted in person, the audience saved their comments and questions for breakout sessions, in which they discussed directly with the presenter.

- **Case study workshops (in-person):** A co-learning environment in which participants read a case study or its summary prior to the workshop. Together with the case study author, the group debates pre-determined prompts around the case study, discussing its significance and considering present-day comparisons.

\textsuperscript{17} The CTM explain these activities (and more) in further detail.
History in Support of Non-Mainstream Science Diplomacy Aspects: Risk, Safety and Security

Risk and the safety of individuals conducting science diplomacy, and the place of science diplomacy in national security, are fundamental yet often overlooked aspects of science diplomacy. Attending to risk, safety and security (RSS) in the history of science diplomacy helps to distinguish such non-mainstream perspectives on the practice.

In WSDS, students were in general surprised at the literal and visceral presence of RSS issues in science diplomacy practice, yet they quickly grasped the significance of studying these. The RSS module was one of the highest-rated parts of the training, with students expressing great appreciation for discussion of the “dark side” of science diplomacy, to which many said they had previously been “naïve”. The RSS module focused on testimonies from science diplomacy practitioners. However, once RSS was introduced as a common aspect of science diplomacy practice, the idea provided an additional lens to studying the case studies, which were central in the program18.

The relationship between history and this module was mutually reinforcing. While the module had a contemporary focus, it highlighted underlying or contextual factors of science diplomacy that then became more apparent in many, if not all, of the historical case studies. Once this lens was applied, the historical study could support in turn a deeper understanding of the RSS aspects of present-day science diplomacy.

Importance of By-Design Cohorts

In science diplomacy courses or training, the learning environment can itself be an exercise in science diplomacy. Diversity in teams and groups is generally considered to breed more creativity and dynamic engagements. This is of particularly significant value in science diplomacy training due to the practice itself being characterized by frequent cross-professional and international interactions.

International, interdisciplinary and otherwise diverse student makeup helps build rich networks and teaches communication across different “cultures”. Indeed, cultures differ not only by national or ethnic association, but also disciplines, professions and age are marked by their own norms, values and rituals.

A training cohort designed to emulate the interculturality that exists in science diplomacy allows students to practice exchanging across these cultures, as well

as identifying distinctions and similarities between them. In WSDS, we put great effort into selecting candidates from the pool of applicants (over 100 in each edition) that together would form a highly diverse cohort\(^{19}\).

**Feasibility (and Necessity) of Virtual Science Diplomacy Training**

The Covid-19 pandemic in many ways stopped the world in its tracks. In the spring of 2020, InsSciDE was in the midst of preparing the first edition of WSDS when the program had to be transformed to a virtual event due to imposed health measures. One relatively positive consequence was that WSDS no longer served merely as a pilot for testing the use of history in science diplomacy training, but also constituted an experiment for *virtual* science diplomacy training. Could a science diplomacy training really be successful without any in-person interactions? It is a particularly interesting question to ask given the complexities entailed in InsSciDE's history-based approach.

While there is no substitute for the benefits brought by exchanging, discussing and connecting in person, virtual programs entail their own unique benefits that arguably could make up for some of their shortcomings. One primary benefit is that a virtual format enables a much greater diversity of students to participate, especially if the program does not include funds for transport as was the case with WSDS. The broad geographic distribution that became possible with the online format was an invaluable feature of WSDS. It also opened doors for people who cannot travel for family, job, disability or other personal reasons. Although different time-zones pose an obstacle, the impact can be minimized by programming short days during times that are feasible for as many as possible\(^ {20}\).

An additional rationale for continued investment in virtual programs is that the looming climate crisis demands that we radically reassess our perspective on any travel that requires flying, foregoing it when not essential. Rather than to eagerly return to normal as the threat of Covid-19 fades, it is crucial to critically evaluate and continue to build on the progress made in virtual training capacities. A very real consideration is also the growing tension between various countries in the world and the implications that this may have for travel, academic collaboration and science diplomacy more generally.

The WSDS organizing team aimed to compensate for the lack of real-life interaction with supplementary activities and tailored exercises. A few key features and signature activities of WSDS are summarized below\(^ {21}\).

\(^{19}\) Other innovative ways of ensuring balanced cohorts are emerging: for instance, the AAAS-TWAS science diplomacy training program requires candidates to apply in pairs including one person from the field of science and the other from the sphere of policy making.

\(^{20}\) WSDS 2021 included students from a geographic range as wide as from Brazil to India. While some students still had to wake up very early, the program was compacted into the hours between 10 and 16:30 CEST.

• **Small Group Discussions**: A powerful learning tool that becomes even more important when spaces like coffee breaks and lunch do not allow students to mingle and discuss face-to-face. Discussions and exercises in small groups allow students to digest and apply lessons gained in plenary, to advance ideas further in open discussion and also to build bonds with peers.

• **Disciplinary support groups**: Another compensation for a lack of in-person mingling can be created by designating space in the program for informal discussion. The diverse cohort of WSDS 2021 was divided into “disciplinary groups”, according to the disciplinary backgrounds of the trainees, which met on the first and last day of the program to discuss a series of prompts. Examples include: What attracted you to a science diplomacy summer school? What was particularly useful in the program from the perspective of your field/discipline? How will you stay in touch with your fellow students?

• **Collaborative article series**: Opportunities to collaborate beyond the program can help reinforce bonds between alumni. After the completion of WSDS, students were invited to submit co-authored blogposts for publication on InsSciDE’s website. The posts elaborated on topics examined during the training, building on both the discussions and connections established in the course of the program week.

• **Social media**: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn can each serve a role in building a community feeling in the training cohort and afford participants a platform to easily interact. In WSDS, students were given ample opportunities to connect and engage on social media, including by sharing their social media accounts ahead of the program for inclusion in the “Participants Booklet”, joining the WSDS Facebook group and tweeting during the program with shared hashtags.

• **Fun and movement breaks**: WSDS incorporated fun and movement exercises in each day of the online program as a means to lighten the mood in the midst of otherwise serious topics, as well as to help trainees regain focus and ease tension during the long days in front of the computer.

• **Science Diplomacy Ally Talks**: We paired students or young professionals new to science diplomacy with a more experienced or differently focused member of the science diplomacy community. In a closed meeting online or in person, the invited “Ally” engages with a small group to exchange experiences, thoughts and questions about science diplomacy and beyond.

• **SciDip Trivia Night**: Hosted as an open online event that aimed for WSDS alumni (2020) to reconnect with WSDS peers and topics, this was also open to the public. Participants competed in teams to answer correctly the most


questions about science diplomacy including some centered on InsSciDE case study topics.

- **Pre-study resources:** The “European Science Diplomacy Online Course”, created by the S4D4C project, is a fully online and self-paced course with modules covering a sequence of science diplomacy topics. The course is a full training program in itself, but its clear-cut modules can also constitute select pre-study content for students to establish a baseline knowledge ahead of the WSDS program. The course is now kept up to date by the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance24.

**Conclusion**

InsSciDE’s four-year experience of discussing and teaching science diplomacy has, for me, culminated in a strong belief in the utility (or even necessity) of history and historical case studies in science diplomacy teaching. While fostering connections between historical cases and the present, or even the future, poses some complex challenges, there are benefits to be gained. Creativity in the design of the learning environment is key for helping diverse students grasp the multifaceted complexities of science diplomacy and its history. Mixing and matching the structure of teaching modules and activities in WSDS kept students engaged and allowed them to expand and test their understanding from various angles. Small group discussions, breaks that foster cohort closeness, and opportunities to interact and cooperate outside the formal learning environment may be especially fruitful for highly diverse cohorts, in which students may be used to viewing and interacting with science, diplomacy, and/or history in very different ways, if at all. In addition, a flexibility in the objectives of modules can lead to unanticipated benefits, as seen in the diverse conclusions drawn from InsSciDE case study discussions during WSDS. Future science diplomacy programs should dare to continue experimenting with methods for fostering in-depth understanding of science diplomacy history and its significance to the present. The insights shared here, in the other articles of this special issue, and the compiled resources on the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance website, can hopefully each contribute a sustainable legacy within the growing body of knowledge and resources for science diplomacy teaching and training.

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24 European Science Diplomacy Online Course [https://www.s4d4c.eu/european-science-diplomacy-online-course/](https://www.s4d4c.eu/european-science-diplomacy-online-course/) [accessed December 2022].