

‘The world favors the brave’:
Towards a long-term strategy for Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy

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Executive Summary

Despite Hungary's new turn in its approach to foreign cultural policy, Hungarian cultural diplomacy has not completely adapted its goals to the new political, economic and cultural environments of the country. Although different strategies have been published, the function and goals of cultural diplomacy - in both these strategies, publications and in practice - are complex and diffuse. Additionally, despite continuous efforts to change Hungarian cultural institutes abroad from the national model to a more European one, building on cultural networking, cooperation and cultural management, the transition seems to face several challenges.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the current context of Hungarian cultural diplomacy in order to find the factors impeding its desired development. What challenges should a reform of Hungarian cultural diplomacy overcome? And what should be the priorities of the reform transforming Hungarian cultural diplomacy practices to a more European model, adapted to the globalized and interdependent world of the 21st century?

In order to find answers to these questions my research consisted of examining cultural diplomacy in Hungary first by taking a historical perspective then turning to the actual form of its development by interviewing ten practitioners in the field. Documentary research, interviews and field visits all enabled me to identify the weaknesses of the system and helped me to articulate recommendations for the reform of Hungarian cultural diplomacy.

Introduction

Hungarian cultural diplomacy has a relatively long history. In the beginning of the 20th century, cultural policy addressing audiences abroad has become one of the major concerns of foreign politics. Due to the aftermaths of the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary embarked with a cultural policy strategy emphasizing the Hungarian “culture superiority”. Although almost hundred years have passed since, today’s approaches to cultural diplomacy are seemingly not able to break traditions with these roots. The world has significantly changed, but Hungarian cultural diplomacy has not yet been adapted to the new political, economic and cultural environments of the country. Several government steps have been made to modernize the field, but no political leadership was willing to make the radical changes required to fully update Hungarian cultural diplomacy. However, the current set-up is costly and at the same time, the resources are not used at best. Although upkeeping the status quo seems to be more comfortable and less risky, in order to maximize the potentials lying in cultural diplomacy - a field gaining unprecedented importance in international relations - , decision makers should be ‘brave’ enough to take the necessary steps to reorganize Hungarian cultural diplomacy.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to examine the current context of Hungarian cultural diplomacy in order to find the factors impeding its desired development. What challenges should a reform of Hungarian cultural diplomacy overcome? And what should be the priorities of the reform transforming Hungarian cultural diplomacy practices into a more European model, adapted to the globalized and interdependent world?

My thesis will attempt to find answers to these questions, identify the main weaknesses of Hungarian cultural diplomacy and make recommendations for its reform. To do so, the first chapter will review the existing literature and introduce the key elements of soft power. Moving further, the second chapter will examine the context of cultural diplomacy in Hungary. My methodology includes documentary research, observation and semi-structured interviews with practitioners of cultural diplomacy. The fourth chapter, after presenting the results of the interviews will include policy recommendations and suggestions for the reform of Hungarian cultural diplomacy.

Chapter One: Elements of Soft Power

Before examining the development of cultural diplomacy in Hungary, some key terms must be discussed. This chapter will look at the different forms of soft power a governments may use in order to advance the national interest. First, the concept of soft power will be presented, then following sections will introduce its different forms, such as public diplomacy, nation branding, and finally, cultural diplomacy.

1. Soft Power

‘Soft power’ is a concept developed by Joseph Nye in his book published in 1990. In *Bound to Lead*, the author pointed out, that the strong military and economic power of the United States is complemented with a third, so called soft power (Nye, 2004). Defined as the “ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion.” he laid down the basic theoretical framework for public diplomacy. According to this concept, public diplomacy - and hence cultural diplomacy - are elements of soft power (Simon, 2008). Soft power is the ability to persuade others to adopt your goals, without forcing them to do so (Nye, 2004). It combines a wide range of governmental and non governmental initiatives and interactions with other countries. It gathers foreign policy interactions, but also cultural exchanges of ideals, norms, and values of nations. Nye argues that soft power helps getting “a more favorable public opinion and credibility abroad” of a country (Myers & Nye, 2004) and that this third power is becoming a more and more important dimension of international politics (Myers & Nye, 2004). Soft power became today one of (if not) the most important element of foreign policy, because it enables states to shape their attractiveness, but also to set agendas and achieve different policy goals (MacDonald, 2011). The primary currencies of soft power in international affairs are therefore a country’s culture, art, literature, design, traditions, core values, political environment, and the extent to which these “primary currencies”, as Nye refers to them, are able to influence other country’s decision makers to “want what you want” (Nye, 2004). In Nye’s view, public diplomacy methods are the most important elements to develop a state’s soft power. In the short term, he argues, a country’s soft power should be disseminated through media and broadcasting. In the medium term, soft power should be developed by presenting some of the country’s “key strategic themes” which would explain the countries different policies and advance its nation-branding. Most importantly, Nye argues that in the long term, soft power should be carried out through cultural diplomacy (Nye, 2004), by implementing a long-term strategy built around cultural and educational exchanges (Simon, 2008).

Soft power however has not only become the basic term to refer to in cultural diplomacy literature. It is also widely used today in international affairs and public diplomacy in practice. In the 21st century, soft power became an acknowledged model for international conflict resolution. And even today, soft power today is gaining an unprecedented importance. In our information society, a big percentage of the world's population is having a quick and easy access to all kind of information on the internet. It is widely recognized now, that these information are also able to influence government positions and decision makers as well (MacDonald, 2011). Soft power has therefore become the primer instrument to keep doors open for political negotiations (Hoogwaerts, 2012).

2. Public Diplomacy

Previous section described, that public diplomacy is one of the key elements of soft power. This section will discuss what the term public diplomacy refers to. In general, public diplomacy can be defined as the different practices and strategies that are available to a government to influence and persuade the “hearts and minds” of foreign audiences (MacDonald, 2011). Although definitions of public diplomacy in the academic literature are abound, only a few will be presented in order to give a better understanding of the concept.

According to Schneider's definition, public diplomacy in a wider sense is comprised of everything a state does to explain itself to the world (Schneider, 2003). She argues public diplomacy is basically every action a state uses to attract foreign country audiences. Cowan and Cull's definition however is more precise, and explains public diplomacy as “an international actor's attempt to advance the ends of policy by engaging with foreign publics” (Cowan & Cull, 2008). Similarly, Hans Tuch (Hans N. Tuch, 1990) calls public diplomacy the communication of a government with foreign publics, in attempt to gain understanding and appreciation for its core values and ideas, its culture, national goals and policies.

These definitions all clearly demonstrate that public diplomacy is one of the tools of the state to influence public opinion of other countries, to create a positive impression of the state and therefore create a better position to acquire its different foreign policy goals (MacDonald, 2011). More in details, if a foreign country's population is attracted by a state and its people as a whole, this will indirectly influence this foreign country's government in favor of that state. In the short term the state attempts to shape public opinion abroad in order to create a positive reception for its policy, while in the long term these public diplomacy strategies also have the aim to familiarize foreign people with the state and its citizens (Ryniejska-Kieldanowicz, 2005). This second, long term goal of public diplomacy on people and not governments, is what brings us closer to the field of cultural diplomacy. Public opinion became even more important to governments in an environment of

increasingly conscious and active societies, created by the emergence of the information society (Szondi, 2008).

3. Nation Branding

A third term that has to be presented is nation branding. Despite the fact, that public diplomacy and nation branding are being used in the same context and more and more interchangeably in the academic literature and in practice, we need to first clarify that nation branding is an element and not a substitute of public diplomacy.

Only a few scholars have so far attempted to give a definition of nation branding however (Szondi, 2008). Fan defined it as “concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation’s image” (Fan, 2006). Another definition relates nation branding directly or indirectly to governmental influence: Nation branding occurs when a government or a private company uses its power to persuade whoever has the ability to change a nation’s image. Nation branding uses the tools of branding to alter or change the behavior, attitudes, identity of a nation in a (most probably) positive, but manufactured way. We can see, that nation branding deals with image promotion as the ultimate goal.

Szondi explains and summarizes well the essence of nation branding. According to him, nation branding is “the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political and social interest promotion at home and abroad” (Szondi, 2008). So nation branding is all about how a nation as a unique entity presents itself to the rest of the world, to the other nations. This is done by carefully selecting the values and characteristics of a country which will constitute the desired image, presented abroad. This is basically what we call marketing today. Simon Anholt, was the first to refer to the term nation branding as to the application of marketing strategies to individual countries. He argues, that the function of nation branding is marketing the country, by harmonizing policy and people, culture, sport, tourism, national products, trade and investment, education and talent recruitment (Anholt, 2006).

As to conclude, we have seen that nation branding is a tool and necessary element of public diplomacy. It should be emphasized that nation branding is not concerned with diplomacy but is more about marketing the country and gaining economic benefits for all its businesses (Szondi, 2008).

4. Culture

Before finding a working definition for cultural diplomacy, we need to first clarify what we call culture. Because of its complexity, it is impossible to frame it into a single definition. In general, the

notion of culture that is used in the field of cultural diplomacy and cultural policy, is an overarching term, referring not only to the different arts, but also to typical lifestyles, personal interactions, history, traditions, habits, values and ideas characterizing a community or group of people. The ensemble of a country's culture is what constitutes the country's "currency" of soft power¹. This is one of the reasons why cultural policy is gaining stronger significance in both the local and the international politics.

In the relation of culture and politics however, there is an important controversy: the logics of culture and politics greatly differ from each other (Bozóki et al., 2013). While politics cannot avoid focusing on quantity (number of supporters, vote maximization), culture always refers to some sort of quality (Bozóki et al., 2013). The general view of politicians and decision makers is that culture is only taking away money, but does not bring votes (Bozóki et al., 2013). While representants of cultural life argue that culture and education are worth investing, because - as outlined in a recent cultural strategy document edited by András Bozóki (Bozóki et al., 2013):

- Culture creates self-esteem
- Cultural experiences constitute the identity of individuals and communities
- Culture enables social integration. It reserves and renews communities, and shapes values.
- Culture and cultural pluralism are the sources for innovation
- Cultural competition inspires creativity

In the Hungarian political scene however, different approaches to the notion of culture seem to exist. The ethnonationalist concept views national culture as belonging to the people thought to have a common ancestry, distinct from other cultures by their traditions, history, communities and language. This approach, making a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them' will more probably develop an introvert and closed society. While the anthropological concept promotes an "open" culture, which is able to account for all the different cultures, subcultures a modern, constantly changing society, where lifestyle, behaviors, habits, traditions, artistic expressions, etc. all constitute to the notion of culture (Bozóki, 2006). In Hungary, current politics, cultural policy and cultural diplomacy as well, tend to depart from the ethnic nationalist concept of culture. This political trend of promoting a "cultural superiority" is inherited and kept from Kuno Klebersberg²'s cultural policy. It has to be noticed now however, that the political, cultural and economical environment of Hungary has significantly changed since the beginning of the 20th century. This paper argues therefore, that only a tolerant, receptive and open approach to the notion of culture is

¹ According to Nye's definition, the primary currencies of soft power in international affairs are a country's art, literature, design, traditions, core values, political environment, etc. (Nye, 2004).

² See Chapter 2: Historical overview

able to represent the changed structures of modern societies, characterized by many different cultures.

It is clear by now, that cultural diplomacy should build on an open concept of culture, without overemphasizing the differences between “our own” and the “alien” cultures. Cultural diplomacy should be able to represent all the different cultures and interpretations of cultures that constitute Hungarian society.

5. Cultural Diplomacy

Finally, the last section of this chapter will review the different definitions of cultural diplomacy in the literature, in order to find a working definition to use in next chapters.

An element of soft power

It is clear by now, that cultural diplomacy, as a major sub-area of public diplomacy, is also an element of soft power (Nye, 2004). Milton C. Cummings’ definition (Cummings, 2003) calls cultural diplomacy “the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding”. This definition emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding, through the means of culture. Other authors (ACCD, 2005) refer to cultural diplomacy as not only to the means to foster understanding with foreign audiences, but also as a tool that helps creating a foundation of trust which cannot be reached by any political, economic or military intervention. According to the report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy of the U.S. Department of State (ACCD, 2005), “it is in cultural activities that a nation’s idea of itself is best represented”, and the role of cultural diplomacy therefore, is to demonstrate this idea.

In another study carried out by the Center for Arts and Culture³, Dr. Harvey Feigenbaim researches the issues of globalization and cultural diplomacy (Feigenbaum, 2001). He notes that cultural diplomacy no longer must only foster understanding among people, but it needs to provide opportunities and platforms for a country’s cultural sector for co-operation and trade. He emphasizes that cultural diplomacy has an ever increasing role in the international relations of a globalized world, since culture undergirds markets, laws and regulations and all foreign mutual communications and relations (Feigenbaum, 2001). He points out, that consequently, the configuration and production of culture, its representation and transmission abroad is a legitimate concern of public policy. Along with these lines, the Arts Industries Policy Forum defines cultural diplomacy as “the domain of foreign policy and diplomacy concerned with creating, developing and

³ The Center for Art and Culture is an independent non-profit organization for cultural policy issues.

sustaining relations with foreign states by the way of culture, art and education” (Ivey & Glegett, 2005).

Masses as cultural diplomats

In both the literature and practice, cultural diplomacy is most often related to governmental action or involvement in the diffusion of the nation’s image abroad. The narrowest understanding of cultural diplomacy (Simon, 2008) refers to - and only to - government actions undertaking cultural aspects, which have the clear goal to contribute to the country’s foreign policy, or diplomacy goals. In this sense, cultural diplomacy is managed only by diplomats working for a government’s foreign ministry, representing the culture of the state through the lenses of the government. However, we see that even this approach to cultural diplomacy is changing, with a trend of targeting wider population with cultural activity, and not just elites, or protocolar audiences. This shows, that even the strictest views of cultural diplomacy recognize a need to address broader audiences of the hosting country, and come out from behind the closed doors of a cultural diplomacy practice. Many also argue (Bound, Briggs, Holden, & Jones, 2007) that using culture to only advance the interests of the state is an old idea, and cultural diplomacy today is carried out by different actors than government agents only. Culture today is created by the masses for the masses, and became easily accessible without the help of governments (Bound et al., 2007).

Mutual recognition

It is commonly acknowledged however, that countries can more easily work together if they have some understanding of one another’s culture. To this end, cultural diplomacy refers not only to the promotion of a nation’s own culture, but also to the understanding and recognition of the cultural norms and traditions of the target country as well. Accordingly, the goal of cultural diplomacy is to develop mutual understanding, and at the same time, combat ethnocentrism and stereotyping (Mulcahy, 1999). For instance, if a country is unpopular, or has a bad reputation internationally⁴, cultural diplomacy may be the instrument to show that the views of the government are not held by the whole nation (Bound et al., 2007). Cultural diplomacy therefore also aims at familiarizing foreign audiences with the country and its culture, in the hope of creating a positive image of the country and fostering mutual understanding between people, and not primarily governments (Ryniejska-Kieldanowicz, 2005).

⁴ As it is currently the case in Hungary, due to the different policies of the current Fidesz government.

A working definition

The following chapters will refer to a concept of cultural diplomacy embracing all forms of cultural exchanges between countries. However it has to be clarified, that although there exists cultural diplomacy activities in the business and a civil sector as well, this paper focuses on the forms of cultural diplomacy carried out in the public sector. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that there is no tight border between these different cultural diplomacy practices, and in most of the cases, more than one of the above mentioned sectors take part in an initiative. For instance, the organization an independent civil theatre' performance abroad can also receive public support in forms of financial or logistical resources. The translation of distinguished native language books or films can also receive public subsidy. We will call cultural diplomacy every initiative that is carried out with the aim of presenting Hungarian culture (in its broadest sense) abroad, fostering cultural exchange and cooperation between parallel participants of local cultural life.

Chapter Two: Cultural Diplomacy in Hungary

In this chapter, we will take a closer look to the case of Hungary. First, Hungarian cultural diplomacy will be presented from a historical perspective. Then a second part we examine the current shape of cultural diplomacy, the network of Balassi Institutes, and the complexity of existing strategies.

1. Hungarian cultural diplomacy from a historical perspective

First half of the 20th century

Institutional cultural diplomacy as such can be identified in Hungary already from the first years following the First World War (Ujváry, 2004). Hungary, subjected to the conditions of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, lost two-third of its territory, and about one-third of the 10 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves relocated outside of the borders of the country. This consequently resulted in a strong Hungarian minority presence in all of Hungary's neighboring countries. From that point in history, the role of cultural diplomacy has significantly increased. Since Hungary lost territorial and economic power, the country made steps to engage in the enforcement of cultural power to regain its regional position (Mondik, 2007). The responsible public body - the Ministry of Religion and Education - initially led by Kunó Klebersberg, developed a cultural strategy which set the following goals (Ujváry, 2004):

- Establishment and expansion of the network of Hungarian cultural institutes, university departments and the network of Collegium Hungaricum⁵ abroad
- Establishment of state funded scholarships in order to strengthen the formation of a new elite
- Safeguarding the cultural identity of the Hungarians living abroad
- Promotion of Hungary's cultural and scientific values abroad
- The support of educational exchange programs for Hungarian students

From after the 1920s until current times, much of the emphasis of Hungarian cultural diplomacy is geared towards the Hungarian minorities living in surrounding countries, brutally separated from Hungary (ICD, 2009). However, besides focusing on Hungarians living abroad, Klebelsberg's

⁵ Collegium Hungaricum is a cultural center initially established to foster the presence of Hungarian scholars and students in Western Europe. The center served as an educational workshop, and also provided accommodation for state grantee scholars and student. Three Collegium Hungaricum were established in Paris, Berlin and Vienna. Today, the Collegium Hugaricum of the Balassi Institute became an interdisciplinary cultural center for art, science and technology.

strategy made it possible that by 1942, already 64 cultural and educational institutes were established abroad (Ujváry, 2004).

World War II and the Nazi occupation brought a setback in the field of cultural diplomacy, and after the war Hungary found itself again facing the challenge of improving the image of a beaten country, “on the wrong side of history”⁶. The main goal of diplomacy was to reconnect and reintegrate Hungary to the European cultural life. Hungary had to resettle a good relationship with neighboring countries, as well as improve relationships with UK, France, the US and the Soviet Union (Mondik, 2007) . The creation of new diplomacy ties with the West however, could also be explained by the massive emigration of Hungarians towards these countries in the first years following the end of the war. The strategies of cultural diplomacy of this period followed the same goals and tactics identified between the two World Wars (Mondik, 2007) .

Socialism

Foreign relations have significantly changed however from after the communist takeover of power in 1947-49 (Ujváry, 2004). In the first period of state socialism, Hungarian cultural diplomacy was mostly determined by the structure relations of a bipolar world, arranged by the Cold War. Hungarian institutes in non-socialist countries were closed, as well as the doors of all NATO countries’ institutes in Budapest (Mondik, 2007). Cultural foreign relations were steered by the newly founded Institute of Cultural Relations (1949-1962) under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture in accordance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ujváry, 2004).

The events of 1956 brought a change in Hungarian cultural diplomacy. In the 1960s and 1970s, Hungary set different cultural, scientific and educational bilateral agreements with several western European countries⁷. Moreover, the 80’s are characterized by an even greater openness towards new partnerships and by this decade, bilateral agreements have multiplied (Mondik, 2007). Although socialist ideology was still putting restraints on greater developments and held in suspicion all relationships with western and private institutions, more and more scholarships were granted, more and more Hungarian departments opened in universities across Europe and the number of Hungarian days, weeks and festivals taking place on the continent have also multiplied (Ujváry, 2004).

⁶ Imre Kertész, Hungarian Nobel laureate author denotes Hungary as a country on the wrong side of history in an interview in Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2012/feb/12/imre-kertesz-hungary-wrong-side-history>)

⁷ Hungary signs bilateral agreements with Belgium and Italy in 1965, with France in 1966, Great Britain in 1967, with Austria, Holland and Norway in 1969, Dania in 1970, and in 1977 with Germany and the United states (Ujváry, 2004).

After the regime change

From after the fall of the communist regime, culture has become one of the most important element for the renewal of national identity. The role of foreign cultural relations was to enhance positive interactions between local and foreign cultures, education and academia, and therefore serve the social and economic modernization of the country (Ujváry, 2004). Cultural diplomacy, in the intersection of cultural policy and foreign policy was subservient of Hungary's foreign affairs strategy, which at the time was focused on three main goals:

1. Euro-Atlantic integration
2. Good relationship with neighboring countries
3. Enforcement of the rights of Hungarian minorities abroad

The general view of the field of cultural diplomacy of the last few decades is that foreign policy should play a major role in setting out the guidelines for foreign cultural policy strategy (Pröhle, 2007), with the cooperation and participation of other bodies, most importantly the cultural ministry (Mondik, 2007). Therefore the task of Hungarian cultural diplomacy is to serve Hungary's foreign policy goals with the means of culture. In doing so, one of the most preferred and most frequently cited instrument is the Magyar Évad (Hungarian Cultural Festival) - a series of events related to Hungarian culture - organized in different countries (Marton, 2003).

Another milestone in the field of cultural diplomacy is the recent reform of the network of Hungarian Cultural Institutes. Hungarian cultural institutes are perceived to be the most important platforms for practicing cultural diplomacy. In recent years the reform consisted of the adoption of a uniformed image of all cultural institutes abroad under the collective name of Balassi Institutes and the establishment of a head quarter institute that is also responsible for the coordination and supervision, within the borders of Hungary⁸.

2. Hungarian cultural diplomacy today

In recent years' discourses and publications there is a noticeable divide between two different approaches to cultural diplomacy in Hungary. One perception, sees cultural diplomacy as a means to advance the national interest in foreign relations, as a strategy for national lobby in international decision making. This approach rather uses cultural diplomacy as a tool to support foreign policy goals. Another perception thinks of cultural diplomacy as an element of cultural politics, a strategy

⁸ See more in Chapter Two: Balassi Institutes section.

for the development of international cultural exchange, the dissemination of Hungarian culture abroad and of foreign cultures in Hungary. As we see, the first approach's focus is on national interest, in which culture is the instrument, while the second approach's focus is on culture, cultural exchange itself.

This unrelenting ambiguity of the primer function and task of cultural diplomacy is also well represented by the current organizational characteristics of cultural diplomacy in Hungary. First, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs among its offices of the Minister of State disposes of a Deputy State Secretariat for EU Bilateral Relations, Press and Cultural Diplomacy. According to the government's website the deputy state secretariat is the responsible agent for foreign cultural policy⁹. At the same time the Ministry of Human Resources among its offices of the State secretariat for Culture disposes of an office for International cultural relations, another office for EU cultural relations, and a separate office for Cultural Diplomacy Relations. The State Secretariat for culture according to its website¹⁰, defines and organizes the guiding principles and programs for the development of international cultural relations, and of activities aimed at popularizing Hungarian culture in the international arena as well foreign cultures in Hungary. Adversely to what has been stated on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website, according to the cultural department's webpage, it seems that these above mentioned offices are the responsible agents for carrying out foreign cultural policy. Until this point, we may recognize that cultural diplomacy in Hungary - as in many other countries - is situated in the intersection of the duties of the cultural and foreign affairs ministries. However the different scope of duties of this cooperation between the ministry of culture and ministry of foreign affairs are not clear, and seem to be undecided.

Moreover an interesting feature in Hungary's foreign cultural policy scene is the recent reallocation of the Balassi Institute from under the supervision of the Cultural Ministry to under the hospices of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice (Hungarian Government, 2012). It worth mentioning, that in its current status, the article of incorporation does not even mention the Ministry of Culture's function in carrying out cultural diplomacy in any aspect.

3. The network of Balassi Institutes

In 2006, Bozóki and colleagues published a cultural policy strategy in which the part dealing with foreign cultural policy states that a reform of the network of Hungarian Cultural Institutes abroad is

⁹ <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/kulugyminiszterium/eu-ketoldali-kapcsolatokert-es-kulturalis-diplomaciaert-felelos-helyettes-allamtitkarsag/felelossegi-teruletek/kulturalis-diplomacia>

¹⁰ <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources/offices-of-the-ministers-of-state>

needed. As outlined in the document, the reform would consist of an adoption of a uniformed image of the cultural institutes, the establishment of a head quarter institute within the borders of Hungary.

The headquarter institution in Budapest

This modernized institutional background for the international network of Hungarian cultural centers has been created in response to the changing needs of the actual cultural, political and economic environment of Hungary. The central Balassi Institute integrates the network of cultural institutes abroad and the network of Collegium Hungaricum as well. According to the article of incorporation of the Balassi Institute (Hungarian Government, 2012) the headquarter organization is responsible for coordination. It is supposed to collect the initiatives of Hungarian institutions, organizations, artists and civil organizations, and transfer them to particular institutes and diplomats abroad. The document declares that the Balassi Institute is a partner institution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its agents and background institutions, the tourism sector, and the cultural institutes of the European Union (Hungarian Government, 2012). The document explains that the network of cultural institutes and the headquarter institute are serving nation policy, cultural diplomacy, scientific and educational goals. According to the document the task of these public institutions are to be carried out in accordance with the goals set by Hungary's foreign policy objectives. Cultural institutions abroad - the main platforms of cultural diplomacy - should coordinate their programs and everyday operation with the goals set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to its website the Balassi institute has been established to support Hungarian Education worldwide, as well as to direct and coordinate foreign cultural affairs. "Similar to Germany's Goethe Institut, the United Kingdom's British Council, or Spain's Instituto Cervantes, the Balassi Institute's main objective is to project a quality-oriented image of our nation, thereby increasing Hungary's prestige in the international sphere, while strengthening and preserving all facets of Hungarian culture both within and outside of Hungary's borders. The Institute not only spreads and promotes Hungarian culture abroad, it also introduces the traditions and cultures preserved by Hungarians from outside our borders to those living in Hungary today. "¹¹

Balassi Institutes abroad

There are currently nineteen Hungarian cultural institutes in seventeen countries around the world. These institutes play a key role in developing and attaining Hungary's objectives in the area of cultural diplomacy, reports the website. The institutions are expected to become cultural and

¹¹ <http://www.bbi.hu/en/balassi-institute-hq>

organizational hubs in hosting countries. According to the website¹² the goal of Hungarian institutes abroad is “to promote and support Hungary’s cultural heritage through the development of cultural diplomatic relations between our nation and partner nations, the encouragement of international cooperation in culture and science, the furthering of Hungarian language education and the introduction of Hungary’s vibrant culture and society to foreign audiences by means of various programs.”

The complexity of the goals of Hungarian cultural institutes around the world - according the Balassi Institute website - can be listed as follows:

Balassi Institutes should:

- be the main platform for attaining cultural diplomacy goals
- become cultural and organizational hubs for the coordination of the activities of cultural diplomacy
- present Hungary’s cultural policies abroad
- support Hungary’s presence in international research and science
- offer housing support for state research grant recipients
- promote Hungary’s cultural heritage through diplomatic relations
- encourage international cooperations in culture and science
- further Hungarian language education
- organize programs in order to introduce Hungary’s culture and society to foreign audiences

We have seen therefore that the tasks of these cultural institutes and cultural diplomacy itself are manifold. In section 5., we will take a closer look to how existing cultural and foreign policy strategies approach the goals and function of Balassi Institutes and Hungarian cultural diplomacy.

4. Export offices

Another important development in the field of Hungarian cultural diplomacy happened in 2005, when the ministry of culture established the system of cultural export offices. Decision makers recognized that the representation of Hungarian culture abroad is not at best carried out by big (more or less successful) Hungarian Cultural Festivals. Huge national festivals are a common tool of cultural diplomacy. These festivals present an opportunity for nations to circulate their cultural treasures, advance their foreign policy goals and prepare the field for future business. This way of showcasing the national culture however, is often a political construct only and do not serve mutual understanding and cooperation (Wallis, 1994).

¹² <http://www.bbi.hu/en/balassi-institute-hq>

In the 2005, the cultural ministry recognized that the task of cultural diplomacy is better organized through a continuous and systematic presence in the hosting country (Bozóki et al., 2013). This task was to be fulfilled by small, low cost, effective and operational rather than administrative cultural management offices, with great expertise in the field of the cultural sector in question. In 2005, in the framework of the Program for National Contemporary Pop Music Culture (PANKKK), the first “export office”, the Music Export Hungary (MXH) was put in place. Later another office was created in the field of fine arts, called Agency for Contemporary Art Exchange (ACAX). There were also ideas and initiatives to create other export offices in all the different fields of Hungarian arts and culture, however this new system required a strong political will and a change of mindset from the part of politicians and decision makers regarding cultural promotion abroad, and cultural diplomacy (Bozóki et al., 2013). It seems that in Hungary these necessary circumstances have not been present so far: after a short period of cost-effective operation, these offices have not been embedded enough in the institutional infrastructure of cultural diplomacy to survive, and after a five-year long battle over financing, budget and infrastructural organization, in 2010 the program was finally shut down.

5. Existing strategies

Hungary’s accession to the European Union in 2004 brought awareness of the potentials of cultural diplomacy. Since 2004, several cultural strategies have dealt with foreign cultural policy and cultural diplomacy and many have also addressed the network of Balassi Institutes. This section will present these strategies in order to make the picture of Hungarian cultural diplomacy complete.

‘Hiller strategy’, 2004

In 2004 István Hiller, Minister of Education and Culture has published a cultural strategy. On a press conference, the minister set out “the presentation of Hungarian culture abroad, and foreign culture in Hungary” as the most important task of cultural policy¹³. The document points out that the euro-atlantic integration merged all the cultural scenes and industries of different countries. This resulted in an enlarged market for the export of Hungarian culture, but caused oversupply of cultural products. It is said that Hungarian cultural diplomacy has to find and take advantage of the opportunities given by an environment of intensified competition. The strategy states that the primary task of cultural diplomacy is the promotion of national culture, which should be carried out in cooperation with other sectors of diplomacy and foreign policy.

¹³ <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/2004/elkeszult-magyar>

Additionally, the document emphasizes the importance of the support of publication, translation and promotion of Hungarian literature abroad. Another accent of the strategy is the virtual space. It highlights that cultural diplomacy activity is now more and more taking place on the internet. The document emphasizes that “Hungarian culture should be made available on the internet in English language in an authentic and attractive manner” (Harsányi, 2004).

Moreover, the strategy stresses the increased responsibility the country has towards the Hungarian minorities living in those neighboring countries which have not yet entered the European Union. Foreign cultural policy should also support, strengthen and renew the cultural organizations of the diaspora.

‘Bozóki strategy’, 2006

Succeeding Minister of Culture of Hungary, András Bozóki and colleagues published a cultural strategy called *A szabadság kultúrája. Magyar kulturális stratégia 2006-2020* (The culture of freedom. Hungarian Cultural Strategy 2006-2020). The document developed by the ministry of Culture in 2006 shortly outlines and lays down the priorities and strategies for cultural diplomacy.

First of all, it presents the European Union as a means to the expansion of national cultures by its promotion of a culturally heterogeneous Europe. It also emphasize the importance of the expanded market for Hungarian cultural products. According to this strategy, the role of government is to safeguard and showcase the culture of Hungary and Hungarians. Therefore, the authors clearly state that the role of cultural diplomacy is the branding of Hungarian cultural values by supporting its international presence and relevant initiatives from both the public, private and civil sector (Bozóki, 2006).

The strategy also give recommendations on how this task should be carried out. It claims that previous foreign cultural policy practices, both the ‘Hungarian seasons’ and the everyday operation of cultural institutes showed that the time of great one-way ‘national representations’ is over. The strategy emphasizes that only those cultural actions have long lasting results which build on co-creation, partner relations and co-operative projects. The measure of success, of these Hungarian seasons, it says, “is not the number of cultural products exported and media articles written about them, but the duration and intensity of partner relations and projects evolving from these events”. It points out that besides the traditional tools for cultural diplomacy, bigger emphasis should be given to relationship management, networking, and project initiation. The former however is indubitably the task of civil society actors. Therefore, the strategy lays down that the role and primary responsibility of public entities in cultural diplomacy, is to give the necessary physical or virtual

platform for these activities. The traditional way of cultural exchange is to be more and more replaced by project-based, program-oriented collaborations and network management practices involving multiple countries (Bozóki, 2006).

Finally, the strategy highlights that cultural diplomacy should be able to build on and work with a broader concept of national culture, accounting for the different subcultures constituting it. The authors emphasize however, that there is often no direct trespassing between these subcultures even within the country borders(Bozóki, 2006). “Instead of artificially creating a unity just for the sake of a better representation abroad, cultural diplomacy should build a bridge between the actors of analogue local and foreign subcultures”. The strategy points out that this - and only this - is the task of the state and public bodies in cultural diplomacy (Bozóki, 2006).

Foreign Affairs strategy, 2009

As discussed earlier, cultural diplomacy is situated in the intersection of cultural policy and foreign policy. Consequently, not only the cultural ministries tackle the question of cultural diplomacy. In 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a strategy for Hungary’s foreign relations(Government of Hungary, 2007). This paper also touches upon the subject of foreign cultural policy. The document affirms that culture has an ever increasing role in international relations, and Hungary should take advantage of this trend. Although all citizens are responsible for the image of Hungary, with their comportment and actions, it is the role of foreign cultural policy to present a modern and authentic image of Hungary. This strategy puts the main accent on the importance of the exploitation of Hungarian scientific and educational scene. According to the document, the country has to further increase its contribution to European innovation. According to this document, cultural diplomacy should (Government of Hungary, 2007):

- represents the integrity of the national culture embedded in a Central-European frame,
- represents the culture of national and ethnical minorities of the country,
- builds on historical and sociological facts
- presents the achievements of Hungarian science
- presents the success and achievements of Hungarian sport.

‘Directors strategy’, 2009

In 2009 a group of institute directors have put together an 8 pages long document, a Guideline for cultural diplomacy and the cultural representation abroad. This document was building on the

private experiences of the authors, but also includes - as they mention - compromises and cross-checking in regards to the public administration realm (Ecsedi-Derdák et al., 2009).

The document states that Hungary's cultural presence in the world is far more superior than its economic strength which also confirms that cultural diplomacy is a particularly effective tool to advance Hungary's interest in the international arena. This document outlines a comprehensive guideline, a framework for the organization and harmonization of short and long-term plans and activities of cultural diplomacy. According to the paper, the general goals of cultural diplomacy are (Ecsedi-Derdák et al., 2009):

1. Strengthening Hungary's position in the world's cultural, scientific and educational areas. Help the free flow of artistic creation and scientific innovation.
2. Increasing foreign interest towards Hungary
3. Strengthening cultural export
4. Support economic diplomacy aims with the means of culture
5. Strengthening Hungarian identity and the sense of belonging to the country in Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries.
6. Building an image of an open, reliable and innovative country, with great traditions
building and image of an equal partner, through cultural relations
7. Serving national interests with the means of culture
8. Conflict-management through cultural dialogue

The strategy pays special attention to the question of neighboring countries. It outlines specific goals for these institutes (Ecsedi-Derdák et al., 2009):

1. Managing misunderstandings and conflicts brought from the past and still present in society.
Building on common values and strengthening common identity.
2. Connecting and integrating the Hungarian minority of neighboring countries into the Hungarian cultural life.
3. Fostering communication between Hungarian minority and the majority of the hosting countries
4. Promoting European values

The authors also give a detailed outline of the different instruments, tools and services, cultural diplomacy should use to achieve its goals. The document should be a useful guideline for new directors, who by the time of their appointment did not have significant experience in cultural diplomacy. The paper however may be found a bit too roundabout and diffuse (too many general goals, too many specific goals and no ranking or priority given to them). Nonetheless, it is certainly

a crucial document, first written by practitioners, addressing practitioners and policy makers. However, the strategy was not approved and used by any previous, or current government.

Conclusions

We have seen so far that there has been several attempts to give a strategical framework for public cultural diplomacy. However we also see, that the goals and primer tasks outlined in these documents are manifold, and depict the complexity of the field of cultural diplomacy. The presented strategies portray the actual diversity of approaches to the role of cultural diplomacy of different stakeholders. They also show that there is no decision yet regarding which perception of cultural diplomacy has to be pursued. Should it be a tactic of cultural politics, or a tactic for foreign politics? Is its primer task to serve national interests and foreign policy goals, or is its primer task to promote Hungarian culture and foster cultural cooperation as widely as possible? We will see in next chapters that these two goals are not irreconcilable.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The aim of this paper is to explore the current context of public cultural diplomacy in Hungary, to bring to light the main questions and issues that surround its development in order to identify possible directions and present alternative scenarios for its future development.

The research contributing to the case study consisted of three different elements:

- Documentary research
- Interviews
- Field visits

Documentary research

In order to explore the current situation of institutional cultural diplomacy in Hungary, I have used all available government publications, newspapers, contracts, agreements, certificates, and strategies carried out by different actors in the field. These documents and their assessment were presented in Chapter 2. Government strategies however were not easy to find, as even within the field of cultural policy, cultural diplomacy seems to be one of the less visible sphere. How Hungarian culture is represented and spread in the world by the government is not a ‘hot topic’ in the country. Only a few newspaper articles deals with the topic, and only if there is some kind of potential political scandal involved around an appointment or event. Nevertheless, in the few years following the Hungarian EU accession there is a peak in the number of government publication about the issues of cultural diplomacy. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture publishes several strategies and directives regarding the changing role and function of cultural diplomacy. Recently however, I could not find any document, strategy or study on cultural policy and cultural diplomacy showing the standing point of the Fidesz government. Therefore, I have written several emails to different offices dealing with cultural diplomacy of the State Secretariat for culture, asking for any relevant document published in the field. Unfortunately, I have not received any response until this day.

Interviews

The core element of my research consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews with practitioners in the field of Hungarian cultural diplomacy. The idea was to collect as many opinions and experiences about cultural diplomacy practice and theory as possible in order to be able to develop a long term strategy to solve the current problems of cultural diplomacy and build a bridge between

agents of different positions. In this respect, I have conducted ten 60 –120 minutes long interviews with the following people:

Péter Krasztev, director of Balassi Institute in Bratislava (2005-2010)

Balázs Ablonczy, director of Balassi Institute in Paris (2011 –)

Zoltán Bretter, director of Balassi Institute in Bucarest, (2008-2011)

Tibor Keresztury, director of Balassi Institute in Stuttgart (2006-2011)

Can Togay, director of Collegium Hungaricum Berlin (2008 -)

Kornél Zipernovszky, deputy director for cultural affairs in the Collegium Hungaricum Wien (2004- 2010)

András Derdák, director of Balassi Institute in Paris, (2005-2010)

László Jakab Orsós, director of Balassi Institute in New York (2005-2010)

Balázs Bencsik, ACAX

Fruzsina Szép, MXH

During the interviews, the following questions have been discussed:

1. What is the role of Hungarian (public) cultural diplomacy?
2. What is the function of Balassi Institutes in this role?
3. What do you think about the current situation of Hungarian cultural diplomacy? (With regards to the issues of long-term strategy, training, recruitment and career of professionals, continuity, institutional organization)
4. What are the most important strengths of Hungarian cultural diplomacy?
5. What are the most important weaknesses of Hungarian cultural diplomacy? What do you see to be the main problem?
6. What is the profile of cultural institutes abroad today? (Can we talk about one profile, or country specific profiles only?)
7. What do you think about the developments of the last fifteen years? Organizational and structural changes, unified look and online appearance of cultural institutes, task division between department of foreign affairs and department of culture)
8. On a scale of 1-5 in what degree you think Hungarian cultural diplomacy is politicized? What are your experiences?
9. Have you received any kind of strategic direction during your appointment procedure? Please describe the process of transfer of your post to your successor.

10. What kind of compromises you think are required to develop a long term strategy for cultural diplomacy?
11. What are your recommendations for future scenarios?

Observation

In order to gather more information and first-hand personal experience about the operation of cultural institutes, I have arranged visits in several cultural institutes. To the extent possible, I have chosen to visit institutes which differ in their historical development, their current status and functioning. For a better insight of the field, I had the opportunity to visit an old cultural center and Collegium Hungaricum (the Balassi Institute Paris), a relatively new institute (the Balassi Institute Helsinki), opened in 2002, which, compared to the BI Paris, is a smaller center, but still disposing of a small reception and exhibition space. The third institute I had the chance to visit was the Balassi Institute in New York, which differs from the other two centers by the fact that it operates out of one small office. From 2005, the office was moved out from the Hungarian Consulate's building, into a 500 square meters loft in Soho (see appendix). However recently, the office was relocated to the 26. floor of an office building located in the center of Manhattan. The new office was not easy to find between all the other business offices located on the same floor. It has no reception center, or event hall, but organizes its programs, and festivals in cooperation with partner organizations and venues.

Visiting these institutes have greatly contributed to an overall impression on how different institutional set-ups shape the form of Hungarian cultural diplomacy.

Chapter Four: Towards a long term strategy

1. Result of the interviews

The aim of this section is to overview the result of the interviews conducted with cultural diplomacy practitioners. After processing the answers, eight topics appeared to be the in the focus of concerns. In what follows, these topics will be presented and summarized in order to give a comprehensive image of the views of the interviewees.

1.Complex and diverse goals

The answers given to the first two questions represent very well the already mentioned disagreement on the main role and aim of Hungarian cultural diplomacy. While most of the answers referred to the aim of representing Hungarian culture in the given country, some of them highlighted the primary task of keeping contact with local Hungarians, some others emphasized the primer task to advance the international interest of the Hungarian state with the means of culture and in cooperation with other foreign policy strategies. Many of the answerers however pointed out the importance of presenting quality-oriented Hungarian culture and striving for complete freedom from politics. As one answerer expressed, “cultural institutes should showcase Hungary’s culture, and not a culture manufactured by any government.”

Some of the interviewees also expressed an approach to cultural diplomacy in which the essential role is not only representing the country’s culture, but act as a cultural manager office, with the primer task of embedding the institute’s programs into the local cultural scene, creating partner relationships and therefore building bridges between local and foreign actors of cultural life in order to stimulate cooperations.

2.Budget

All of the interviewees mentioned in their answers a very narrow budget they have to / had to work with. Compared to other cultural centers, the annual budget of many of these institutes is rather “ridiculous”, one of the expert said. “When you have to deal with problems like, from what to buy toilet-paper, it is hard to really talk about program-financing.” It is clear that many of the directors nevertheless manage to work with such a tight budget, but it has been said several times, that this requires skills which you often acquire once you are on the field. One view is that in many cases, the goal of these institutes and the reason for up-keeping them is simply a question of prestige and comfort. Even though they cannot accomplish big achievements in cultural diplomacy (due among others to their narrow budget), it is better to keep the system as it is. Survival is the ultimate goal.

But then a question arises: why keeping a system that does not work at it best? Why spending public money on something that we know does not bring the desired result?

3. Buildings

Many directors mentioned a ratio of the whole budget of cultural institutes, located in bigger state-owned or rented buildings to be around 80% for building maintenance and 20% for program financing. And even in this set-up, many of the buildings are in bad condition and need to be renovated as soon as possible. “You would not want to invite distinguished guests to your house, when the plaster comes off and the carpet is crazing...” noted one of the interviewee.

Although most of the institutes have a very good location in the host city, many directors reported a lack of interest from the local public to enter the buildings. Because those who are interested in arts and cultures will rather go to art cinemas, theatre, galleries. Many of the institutes fail to attract local audiences to cross the threshold of the building. Different suggestions were made to open cafés within the buildings, “in order to seduce people in, and make these institutes more of a meeting place, a place for cultural encounters”, but besides a few exception, this was considered not to be realizable by the central management of the Balassi Institute.

4. Institutional Organization

All the interviewees found the new allocation of Balassi Institutes under the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice completely “unusual”. Most answerers reported that cultural diplomacy should be carried out with the cooperation of the cultural and foreign affairs departments. But the majority of answerers advocates that cultural policy should be responsible of setting the guidelines and developing the strategy of cultural diplomacy. Moreover, none of the experts think that the current situation is appropriate, even though some voices mentioned that due to the current controversial situation of the cultural apparat of the Fidesz government, the Balassi Institute is in a safer place under the administration of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice. It has been said on several occasions however, that the current institutional organization is only temporary, and that the Balassi Institute - as the platform of Hungarian cultural diplomacy - should be reallocated under the State secretariat for culture, or its future equivalent.

5. Team of professionals

Another important issue that arose during the conversations was the question of professionals. Several cultural diplomats after coming back from their mission leave definitely the whole area of cultural diplomacy, to get back to their initial career. This is, as many of the experts informed, a waste of human resource and capacity. Since the knowledge and expertise that a cultural diplomat accumulates during her five-year term in a foreign institute, would worth being reused in another

country. Many interviewees have articulated the need to create a system for cultural diplomacy, in which the practitioners would have the possibility to make a career out of their work in the field. At the same time, there is need to train professional cultural diplomats. Many directors have reported that they had no previous experience in cultural management or cultural administration. It took them at least one or two years to adapt to the environment and acquire the necessary skills.

One expert pointed out that one of the most important element of cultural diplomacy is the character of the director. The whole image and profile of an institute is defined by the leadership, managerial skill, talent and creativity of the person who manages it.

6. Continuity

When asked about the transmission process, many directors reported that they have not even met their successor and predecessor. If they have, it was in most of the cases a voluntarily arranged meeting. Others revealed that they are in continuous contact with the previous director, and often consult them about different issues. One ex-director reported that at the beginning of his term, he had an official one month period when both him and the former director was still present in the institute, which he found to very helpful and pointed out that this transition period is simply indispensable. This one month allowed the previous director not only to introduce him to the everyday management of the institute, to familiarize him with the colleagues, but also to present him to all of his partners and important connections. Many interviewees reported the need of a better organized flow of work, the collection of data in a transferable fashion, that would be easy to understand and use for future colleagues. “Important partner relations should not be just given up because a director leaves his post” emphasized a director.

7. External communication

A few years ago, the network of Balassi Institutes received a new, uniformed image and design, mostly focusing on its online presence. More specifically this consisted of the uniformization of all the websites of different institutes. This strategic step allows us to see, that the central management has already recognized the need of an updated online presence and improved communication. However, many of the directors complained about the lack of PR, communication and marketing professionals in their team. All the interviewees emphasized the importance of external communication strategies in making the institute’s program visible. The basic element of this strategy is that all the programs addressing foreign audiences should appear in the cultural program magazine of the hosting city. But more than that, a professional PR expert would be able to get the institute’s news into the local media and find channels to the circles of more specific target audiences. One example however also shows, how not only experts, but the building of the institute

itself can improve communication with the local population. The building of the Collegium Hungaricum Berlin is the best example of a perfect real estate choice (see appendix). The building itself addresses passers-by. Its huge windows allow anyone to see what is going on inside the building, and in case of actual programs, the windows transform to a huge multimedia canvas, where the event's videography is projected and people can watch it from the street.

8. Bureaucracy

One of the biggest concerns of many of the answerers was the extent and quality of bureaucracy. Although all newly appointed directors should participate in a two months long orientation in which they are introduced to the public administration processes, many interviewee reported to be overloaded with "completely superfluous" administrative work. Supposedly, more than 50% of the work is administration, which takes away considerable amount of valuable time from operational work. Detailed reports should be written about every event and activity of the institute. Directors claimed, that many of these records are completely needless, and it is quite unknown what is their real purpose, since no annual report or publications is made by the central Balassi Institute. "They serve purely bureaucratic purposes. If we want it to work at it best, cultural diplomacy should not be affected by the nightmares of the public administration realm" - said one of the directors.

2. The Reform of Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy

The aim of this chapter was to come up with the main strategical points for the future of Hungarian cultural diplomacy. The previous section resumed the viewpoint of ten practitioners in the field. Processing their answers helped finding out the main concerns, issues and weaknesses of the current system. All interviewees concluded that in its current set up, Hungarian cultural diplomacy is not efficacious, the system is not cost-effective and there is need for serious improvements. Therefore, the common ground, the point all experts agreed upon, is that the current system has to be reformed. The extent of the reform however is subject of disaccord. Nevertheless the goal of this thesis is to provide recommendations for the betterment of Hungarian cultural diplomacy. In this regard, a detailed framework for a reform will be outlined in this section.

We have seen that both in published strategies and in practice, the goals of cultural diplomacy are complex and diffuse. The first and most important task is to define what is the real aim and main goal of Hungarian (public) cultural diplomacy. Once we manage to give a clear and simple definition of what we expect from cultural diplomacy as a whole, it will be easier to identify the role of cultural institutes in the process. This definition should take a clear position but also try to reconcile the different approaches to the task of cultural diplomacy.

Definition: Cultural diplomacy is the ensemble of initiatives aiming at presenting Hungarian culture (in its broadest sense¹⁴) abroad, fostering cultural exchange and stimulating cultural cooperation between relevant actors.

Therefore, the goal of the state should be to build up the necessary environment, infrastructure, network, and serve as a manager, channel and platform for these initiatives. The state should nowise act as a filter for what is representable as national culture. ‘Hungarianness’ should not be a politically manufactured image, but should be the entirety of our ever changing culture, embracing our past and traditions as much as our present and incoming cultures. We should think of cultural diplomacy as the tool to advance Hungarian culture in the international scene, a tool to enhance its presence on the cultural map of the world. And decision makers should trust our artists, intelligentsia and cultural managers, and be confident enough, that the cultural scene and values of Hungary - if presented to the world - are worthy and capable of advancing the national interest in any international affair. Therefore, cultural diplomacy should certainly not be submitted to foreign

¹⁴ representing the different cultures, subcultures of the constantly changing Hungarian society, where lifestyle, behaviors, habits, traditions, artistic expressions, etc. all constitute to the notion of culture.

affair strategies. But as noted before, a well organized cultural diplomacy - embedded in a broader cultural policy strategy - is able by itself to advance foreign policy goals.

Now that we have defined what cultural diplomacy should be, what its goals are, and how it should be situated in the public policy realm, we will examine the leading milestones for its long term strategy.

The network of 'Cultural Exchange Offices'

First of all, we need to clearly differentiate two types of cultural diplomacy. One type of diplomacy is, in which cultural diplomats and institutes serve as partners of embassies, organizing protocolar events and celebrations. Let's call this type the protocolar cultural diplomacy. The other type of cultural diplomacy focuses on the mission of fostering cultural exchange, stimulating cultural cooperation. Let's call this second type, operational cultural diplomacy. It is clear, that Hungary should gear towards this second type of cultural diplomacy.

What needs to be done?

Along the lines of the idea behind the 'cultural export offices'¹⁵, the establishment (reestablishment) of a network of small cultural manager offices has to take place. Decision makers should realize that operational cultural diplomacy is at best organized through a continuous and systematic presence in the host country. This presence needs to be carried out by small, low cost, and effective cultural manager offices. These offices should however be made attractive for guests and visitors. The interior design (even if low budget) should show that the office deals with arts and culture. The best example for such an office is the former location of the Balassi Institute New York (see appendix).

Moreover, in order to gain independence from the public administration realm, the exchange offices' general operating costs should be covered by the state (Cultural Department's budget), but they should be organized under and coordinated by a foundation or non-profit organization. This would possibly allow more independence and less bureaucracy.

The network of Balassi Institutes

The network of Cultural Exchange Offices should use the infrastructure of Balassi Institute. More precisely, where possible, the offices should be located in the Institutes, and the Institutes' operational work should be carried out by the exchange offices. However, as many of the practitioners reported, a huge amount of the annual budget allocated to Balassi Institutes is spent on utilities and building maintenance. And even this expenditure is not enough to renovate all the old

¹⁵ See Section 4. of Chapter Two.

buildings that give home to some of the institutes. Additionally, it has been reported that some buildings are completely unsuited to operate as a cultural institute. It is clear, that paying the rents and utilities of huge villas and spending less on programs is not the most effective way of spending public money. Moreover, as outlined earlier, small exchange offices would be able to better fulfill the task of operational cultural diplomacy. Nonetheless in other examples¹⁶ we have seen that the building itself can help the work of operational cultural diplomacy.

What needs to be done?

Decision makers (possibly a group of experts) should examine one-by-one all the real estates the state owns or rents abroad, and see if there is real need to maintain them. After the review, there are several options:

1. The building and its conditions are well. Besides hosting the export offices, the building is also able to serve as an exhibition space, a gallery and all in all, it is capable of attracting people to come in. These buildings should be kept and continuous renovation works should be financed in order to maintain their good condition.
2. The building - due to its infrastructural characteristics or its bad condition - is not able to host quality cultural events. In this case there are two options:

2/A. The building should be rented out. The entire rent should be returned to the budget of operational cultural diplomacy.

2/B. If the embassy indicates the need to keep the building to use it for protocolar cultural diplomacy purposes, then the costs of maintaining the building should be financed from the embassy's budget.

Cultural Diplomats

The role of cultural diplomats is crucial in operational cultural diplomacy. To put it simply, according to our definition, their task is to present Hungarian culture (in its broadest sense) in the host country, foster cultural exchange and stimulate cultural cooperation between relevant actors. In order to achieve that, they should be able to build an environment that enables these exchanges, help with the infrastructure, develop a network of professionals and interested people, and make these offices serve as the manager, channel and platform for the ensemble of these initiatives.

To be able to pursue these goals, cultural diplomats should have the necessary skills and know-how. Their task is double sided. On the one hand, they must know, understand and appreciate Hungarian cultural heritage and the actual cultural scene they are representing. On the other hand, they must have managerial skills, and be able to run the business side of the cultural exchange offices.

¹⁶ Collegium Hungaricum Berlin

Cultural diplomats therefore should primarily practice cultural management¹⁷. The small team of cultural diplomats working in an exchange office should deal with marketing, PR, fundraising, programming, and the support of cultural production. Ideally, a team of three to five person, including experienced senior managers, a PR professional, emerging cultural managers and interns would make the team of an office. Only this set-up would be adapted to the needs of the management of a 21st century cultural institute.

What needs to be done?

Decision makers should recognize that a cultural institute abroad can only operate successfully and at its best, if lead by a competent and skilled expert. Therefore, it is clear, that only experienced cultural managers should be appointed as Head of Exchange offices and Balassi Institutes. Naturally, language knowledge is also an essential condition to become a cultural diplomat. In this scenario, a public sector position would therefore be able to seduce talented professionals from other sectors and make the work of cultural diplomats attractive to young, emerging colleagues. Working as a cultural diplomat, a cultural manager representing Hungarian culture could become a career aspiration for many, and career possibility for those who once entered the system. To illustrate this: a young graduate (i.e. in cultural management, art history or similar field) could become an intern in Brussels, later step further to become an assistant to the Head manager in Paris, and finally after she completed two terms, and learned about the field, she would perfectly fit the requirements to apply for a Head manager position in Prague.

This is how in the long term, cultural diplomacy would benefit of Hungary's skilled and experienced group of professionals. Because Hungary does have talents. Why not profiting of them?

Funding

It goes without saying that an effective cultural diplomacy system needs proper funding. Although the form of cultural diplomacy outlined above is far more cost-effective than the status quo, it cannot be emphasized enough that the money saved - by the conversion to the network of small offices, by the renting out of state owned buildings, by the fundraising work of cultural managers - should be by all means returned to cultural diplomacy. It can surely be spent on building renovation, modernization, technology, events, etc.

More over, in order to start this comprehensive reform of cultural diplomacy, an increase of funding has to be considered by decision makers. It has to be recognized, that cultural diplomacy is not only

¹⁷ By cultural management we refer to "art" of planning, organizing, leading, supervising and monitoring activities within the not-for-profit and for-profit arts, heritage and cultural industries sector. These activities include management and administration.

“something going on outside of our borders”, but something that has a real importance for the population within Hungary as well. Because it is crucial for any society to preserve and present its cultural heritage, showcase its actual cultural values and form an encouraging environment for its artists. And this is exactly what operational cultural diplomacy along with suited cultural policy is able to do. Finally, because national identity is constructed through cultural representations, an effective cultural diplomacy system - representing the entirety of Hungarian culture - would help shaping a more open and tolerant national identity.

Conclusion

Hungarian cultural diplomacy, in its transformation to a more European model, faces several challenges. My research paper have shown that both in strategies and in practice, the goals of cultural diplomacy are complex and diffuse. The current organization of cultural diplomacy is not cost-effective and is significantly politicized.

After reviewing the literature and the key elements of soft power, revisiting the historical discourses and current institutional models of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, my research took a more personal approach, building on real-life experiences of cultural diplomacy practitioners. These interviews allowed me to identify the main weaknesses of Hungarian cultural diplomacy and helped me to formulate policy recommendations. All interviewees confirmed my initial hypothesis that in its current set up, Hungarian cultural diplomacy is not efficacious, the system is not cost-effective and there is need for serious improvements. However, since the work and achievements of operational cultural diplomacy are not visible and do not bring votes in elections, Hungarian politics prefer to keep the status quo and use cultural diplomacy for political clientelism and protocolar purposes. Therefore, the potentials of the cultural scene in Hungary are untapped. Although several steps have been made to change and modernize the system, no comprehensive reform has been implemented yet.

This paper argued that the emphasis of the reform should be on culture (cultural exchange) rather than (protocolar) diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is a tool to enhance Hungarian presence on the cultural map of the world. The goal of the state is to build up the necessary environment, infrastructure, network, and serve as a manager, channel and platform for these initiatives. There is further need of administrative de-concentration and an increased emphasis on networking, management and long-term cultural cooperations.

The paper has also shown that as a “side-effect” and second function, operational cultural diplomacy is capable of advancing the national interest in any international affairs. Therefore the divide between the two different approaches to cultural diplomacy in Hungary has also been solved. Finally, because national identity is constructed through cultural representations, operational cultural diplomacy, building on a broad concept of culture, - representing the entirety of Hungarian culture - would help shaping a more open and tolerant national identity in Hungary.

Appendix

Building of the Collegium Hungaricum Berlin.



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