

The Renaissance of Soft Power. Rediscovering Cultural Diplomacy in Transatlantic Perspective  
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## Synopsis

This essay examines some of cultural diplomacy's theoretical foundations, its historical roots as well as the current state of transatlantic cultural diplomacy with a particular emphasis on the German-Canadian context. Considerations will not only be restricted to governmental programs, but will look at relevant activities conducted by semi-public or private organizations. Finally, the paper will look at the content of cultural diplomacy and discuss the similarities and differences in the self-representations of Canada and Germany today. It will provide examples from the work of the Goethe-Institut Toronto as the central German cultural institution in Canada and compare its methods with other examples of Soft Power elsewhere to conclude with the "three secrets of success" in cultural diplomacy today.

## The Renaissance of Soft Power. Rediscovering Cultural Diplomacy in Transatlantic Perspective

by Arpad A. Sölter, Goethe-Institut Toronto

"We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled (...). We could not understand, because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages (...)."<sup>1</sup>

You should have seen Ashlie.<sup>2</sup> Her smile, her radiating happiness, and her super-cool new haircut she got from Felix, her hairstylist in Berlin. It was obvious. She had changed. "I loved it. And I learned something", she said. Berlin was an eye opener, she made a huge jump abroad to find a new artistic horizon. Her time in Germany changed the way she thinks about the role of the arts and artists in society. And all of a sudden, the sky is the limit.

From Toronto to Berlin - and back. Ashlie Corcoran is the first Canadian theatre artist accepted into the Goethe-Institut's Theatre Guest Artist program. She stayed at the famous Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin for 2 months, plus weeks of Germany-wide travel. In Canada, Ashlie Corcoran is the co-artistic director of Toronto's Theatre Smash. She has collaborated creatively with the Goethe-Institut Toronto in co-producing a dramatic reading of Lukas Bärfuss' "The Bus" in 2006 and is currently preparing a production of Igor Bauersima's "Norway. Today" with a translation from the Goethe-Institut Theatre Library. Ashlie is homing her interdisciplinary skills at the Canadian Opera Company.

You can find her full report about her time in Berlin on the Goethe-Institut's web site:<sup>3</sup> "On 15 September 2007, I arrived in Berlin for the first time in my life. My only

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*. Penguin Books 1995. p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> I am very grateful to Jutta Brendemühl, Nandita Biswas Mellamphy, Jeffrey Kopstein, James King for their critical feedback on this article. Any shortcomings in the ideas expressed, however, are entirely my responsibility.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.goethe.de/ins/ca/tor/kue/the/en2826379.htm>

other time landing on German soil had been ten years earlier when in a frantic backpacking trip around Europe, I had spent two days in Freiburg. Since that time, a decade ago, I have begun my career as a theatre and opera director. And in the last few years I have learnt more and more about German theatre from studying it academically in Britain, seeing German touring groups in Canada and Europe, and by collaborating with German artists. When I learnt about the Goethe-Institut and the International Theatre Institute Guest Artist for Young Theatre Artists at a Toronto industry event two years ago, where the Goethe-Institut Toronto Theatre Programmer Jutta Brendemühl presented the program, I knew I had to participate. I wanted to be immersed in German theatre-making culture, to learn about it from its artists, to have a chance to see it within the community it was made for. I immediately started studying German at the Goethe-Institut Toronto to acquire the necessary language skills. My first two weeks in Berlin were spent acclimatizing to the city, building courage to speak German, and lastly translating the texts that I would be working on (namely "Der Schimmelreiter", "Der Biberpelz" and "Heaven") (...) under the direction of Gorki "Intendant" (director) Armin Petras – one of Germany's most exciting contemporary theatre creators.

While in the Gorki rehearsal halls, I filled up notebook after notebook with thoughts comparing Canadian and German theatre-making culture. There are two big differences I have noted so far. First of all, it seems that in German theatre the director's vision, or understanding of a piece, holds primacy over text itself. Secondly, there doesn't seem to be the same need in Germany for final products to be as cohesive as I have experienced in Canada. In Canada, text is often treated as the king. This is quite different in contemporary German work, where texts are often cut, altered and transformed. I am excited to see how my experience in Germany will affect my working methods at home. I am keen to examine a classic piece of theatre, perhaps a new translation, and break it apart, exploring the text from the inside out, using tools I've picked up while I was here in Germany. I am not yet sure whether this style of working is right for me, but I am keen to find out.

At first I found it strange to see a patchwork quilt being created on stage in Germany instead of a carefully thought-out tapestry. But now, towards the end of my three-months stay, I must admit, I am quite seduced by the idea that not everything needs to fit or work together, that one central idea can bring an artist to many different places. I am excited to see how this experience changes my work in Canada as well.

The next two weeks of my internship I will spend travelling around Germany: Munich, Dresden, Hamburg, and hopefully points in between, in order to experience yet more different types of theatre, as well as to continue improving my language skills. I am very grateful to the opportunity given to me by the Goethe-Institut and International Theatre Institute. This scholarship has taught me more about German theatre, the German language and culture in general - as well as myself - than I ever expected. I am excited to return to Canada, to put my new tools into practice, and to examine how my understanding of theatre and art has changed since arriving in Germany. And see you soon Berlin!"

## **Rediscovering Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy**

What is "Soft Power"? What are the benefits? What is "Cultural Diplomacy" and what are its core instruments? Is Cultural Diplomacy primarily a policy tool and if so, what are its effects? Basically, "Soft Power" is the power to attract, to inform, to

influence and thus, to transform. The term "cultural diplomacy" was defined by Joseph S. Nye (2004) as "a prime example of 'soft power', the ability to persuade through culture, value, and ideas as opposed to 'hard power', which conquers or coerces through military might." From this perspective, cultural diplomacy is part and parcel of foreign affairs and international relations and ultimately it is about nothing less than the "the means to success in world politics" (Nye 2004). Looking at cultural diplomacy's theoretical foundations in Germany, one will notice big changes over a short period of time. Initially, cultural diplomacy was expected to repair the country's ruined image after the Nazi dictatorship by regaining trust among nations. In Germany's post-war period, cultural diplomacy was assigned many noble tasks to justify and to explain its purpose: Aiming at dialogue, understanding and building mutual trust between people on an international level, thus securing peace among nations. Later, it was supposed to serve as an 'early warning system' for conflicts abroad (Hans Magnus Enzensberger), serving a cross-cultural engine in a global 'learning community' (Wolf Lepenies) and as a means to build civil societies in formerly authoritarian regimes and to introduce and disseminate a Western style "culture of liberty" (Joschka Fischer) worldwide (Sölter 2000 & 2001). This approach is based on the assumption that in an age of soft power, Western democracies will be more successful in propagating their beliefs and values via the exchange of ideas and people. They will fare better with cultural exchange than with hard power.

With the rise of the Internet and globalization, however, the legitimacy of cultural diplomacy gradually seemed to dissolve. Its traditional theoretical foundation was increasingly questioned in German public discourse. As if the different forms of its mandate were outdated and as if its agents were overburdened with expectations too high to fulfill, drastic budget cuts were implemented, reshaping the global network of the Goethe-Institut, for example, and other prominent players (Bahners 2007, Becker 2007, Jeismann 2007, Steinfeld 2007). In 2007, after years of downsizing, restructuring and cost-cutting, Germany's Foreign Minister Steinmeier announced a U-turn in this realm of foreign affairs. Simultaneously, Americans and Russians rediscovered the significance of soft power of cultural diplomacy, too. On a global scale, the renaissance of soft power has begun, re-assessing, re-defining and even re-inventing tools and targets of traditional cultural diplomacy.<sup>4</sup>

### **The new centre: Culture and lifestyle are the diplomacy of the 21st century**

In 2007, Putin closed the British Council offices in Russia. Blocking access to the movers and shakers of tomorrow's Russia effectively hurts British interests in Russia today more than sending some diplomats at the British embassy in Moscow home to Manchester or London. With this decision, young Russians lose another window to the West, thus weakening not only the British Council, but also Britain's influence in Russia in general.

After the British Council, the European Institute in St. Petersburg also was closed down, supposedly because of insufficient fire safety: "The social scientists of the country are warned: The critical study of power and its mysteries is unwanted and dangerous."<sup>5</sup> In an amazing synchronicity, however, Russia opens Institutes for

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<sup>4</sup> The literature on public and cultural diplomacy is large. See Batora 2005, Belanger 1999, Feigenbaum 1999, Fiske/Plumridge 2005, Gienow-Hecht/Donfried 2009, Henrikson 1996, Roberts 2007, Schneider 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Florian Stark: *Russische Behörden schließen Europa-Institut in St. Petersburg*. In: Die Welt, 29.02.2008.

Democracy and Co-operation in Paris and New York. Putin's officials clearly know where power lies and aimed very well in targeting the British Council and other soft spots of Russia's international relations. The end of the Council's work in Moscow indicates a major change far beyond the closure. Power has moved from the Foreign Office as the former centre of power to the periphery, which has become the new centre, replacing its predecessor. "Culture and lifestyle are the diplomacy of the 21st century"<sup>6</sup>, argues Simon Jenkins, adding an even more holistic diagnosis: Conventional diplomacy is bankrupt. This is a trend observers and insiders have noticed for a long time. The increasing irrelevance and disconnectedness of traditional diplomacy from its current environment has changed the whole setting for the arts. Cultural diplomacy has moved from the embassies, the diplomatic corps and its bureaucratic outposts. The role of conventional diplomacy has been overrated for too long and its demise is now clearer than ever before. At the same time, alternative forms of diplomacy, public diplomacy and the "true" diplomacy of human and cultural exchange, have taken over, because it matters more (Dorment 2007). By the same token, businessmen have their own international network and no longer require the use of the commercial attaché abroad. Artistic festivals only need to call embassies and consulates for fine receptions, but no longer for artistic support or any cultural, content-related input. And governments call each other directly anyway these days should they wish to talk to each other.

Today's new diplomats are foreign filmmakers, musicians and conductors, artists and writers in residence, curators, visiting professors, foreign correspondents, exchange students, interns, and celebrities like Oscar and Grammy nominees. They are comers and goers. But they indeed shape the way countries and nations are perceived. They need student visas and travel grants instead of political telegrams and apparatchik memos. They need insiders who know the scene well enough to quickly connect them locally upon arrival so that they can hit the ground running. Nations not only benefit from sending writers, artists, scholars and academics abroad. A foreign correspondent has more influence over Germany's, Canada's or Britain's image abroad than any official diplomat. In short, a country's branding, its image, standing and influence is today less dependent on direct state activities than it used to be. Semi-detached agencies like the Council or the Goethe-Institut are moving closer to the centre stage, acting as facilitators and translators, operating as NGOs independent of government and, as a consequence, enjoy a higher degree of autonomy and thus more credibility than apparatchiks and bureaucrats representing some anonymous foreign state machinery.

## **An American in Pyongyang**

While Russia's closure of international agencies promoting cultural and academic exchange is a step backwards in time and a step towards isolation, the USA has intensified its biggest attempts to reach out by reintroducing cultural diplomacy into foreign affairs. This move in Asia with one of China's allies comes at a time when colossal losses in the military field during various wars on terror and massive human as well as financial costs have undermined former domestic support for pre-emptive strikes. In the aftermath of the Bush administration's decision to introduce 'regime change' by invasion and occupation, military might, and a good-bye to the Geneva Convention (justifying even rendition flights and torture), even the most pro-American

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<sup>6</sup> Simon Jenkins: *Russia's assault of the British Council reveals the true nature of diplomacy*. In: Guardian Weekly, 25.01.2008, p. 24.

scholars like Habermas claim the US has lost its former moral and political authority. Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay are only symbols of this dramatic decline.

Instead of running the risk of another conflict with a country newly armed with nuclear weapons like North Korea, a reassessment of soft power seems to be a more appropriate way to open up new avenues. Especially since the display of soft power comes amid the ongoing diplomatic pressure on North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal. Despite or because of a deadlock in the negotiations about North Korea's nuclear programme, the State Department authorized the New York Philharmonic orchestra's visit to the secluded country in 2008.

Technically, North Korea and the US are still at war, have no diplomatic ties and have armed troops staring at each other across the heavily fortified border between North and South Korea. In this context, after a long history of mutual distrust, "cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings",<sup>7</sup> located on the "axis of evil" by former US presidents, the concert of the New York Philharmonic orchestra, one of the most eminent US cultural institutions, in North Korea was a bold, sensational step. It was the first time an American cultural organisation appeared in North Korea, with the largest contingent of Americans to enter since the Korean War. As a landmark event it is a remarkable display of cultural diplomacy and a symbolic, cultural gesture of harmony.

Critics in the US were quick, however, to denounce the musical diplomacy tour conducted by director Lorin Maazel as "a propaganda coup", a national "disgrace" and a PR event for a brutal Stalinist regime. Giving credibility to a barbarous dictatorship willing to keep its own population starving and keeping hundreds of thousands of its citizens in labour camps means pretending it is civilized.<sup>8</sup> Confronted with this critique, Maazel simply replied: "But what is the alternative?" If the only options are military conflict, non-communication, isolation and a Cuban-style blockade, or inclusion and slow, gradual change through cultural diplomacy, one rather turns to soft power as the better way after the first alternative has failed elsewhere.

The orchestra played an opera prelude from Wagner's Lohengrin, Dvorak's "New World" Symphony No 9, Gershwin's "An American in Paris", Leonard Bernstein's "Candide", and the musicians finished by playing Korea's beloved folk anthem "Arirang", receiving long standing ovations. Still, a concert is just a concert, one might say, not a diplomatic or even a political breakthrough. Playing down events like this ignores, however, the power of signature events in symbolic politics. This concert was broadcast live on TV and radio in many nations, including North Korea, opening with the national anthems of both countries. Opening the hearts and minds in the audience with the universal language of music some listeners might attach extra-musical values to this event. As the most prominent cultural exchange between the US and North Korea in the isolated country's history, the concert was a deeply moving emotional experience for many and as such, a step into a better, warmer future for American-Korean relations certainly.

### **Evaluation as a new trend: quantifying results and effects in cultural diplomacy**

With the dismal failure of hard power both in Iraq and Afghanistan, alternatives to tough military approaches have gained new significance and appreciation.

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*. Penguin Books 1995. p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> Melanie Kirkpatrick: *The Sound of dictatorship*. In: The Wall Street Journal, 26.02.08, p. D6.

Accordingly, soft power has re-emerged.<sup>9</sup> The power of a country to have real impact in a globalized world is again also measured by its "cultural capital" (Pierre Bourdieu) and by the impact of its cultural representation abroad. Simultaneously, however, one can note a very different trend in shaping cultural diplomacy, which is increasingly being squeezed by a different force. The trend is clear. It indicates the economisation of politics, in a field formerly directed by other criteria. The economic approach increasingly dominates cultural diplomacy turning its agents into service providers and delivery stations. In the future, agencies in soft power's political arena will be judged by measurable results. Quantitative indicators already increasingly define whether their performance is considered excellent or inadequate or even worse, meaningless. With the neo-liberal economic approach taking over politics, the new buzzwords are 'Quality Control', 'Strategy and Evaluation' and Controlling. In Germany's Foreign Office, for example, key players want to see more return on investment from semi-public organizations, and demand more bang for the taxpayer's bucks. "What's in it for the fatherland? How do you generate public value? What are the measurable results of your actions in cultural diplomacy? What are your target groups?" This new prevailing mode of thinking has surprised partners as well as outside observers, to put it mildly. Confusion is widespread, especially among those who consider "German cultural foreign policy the best in the world for so many years."<sup>10</sup> Certainly a lot can be measured in cultural diplomacy. Number crunchers can collect and count indicators and numbers in statistic charts: events, audience numbers, students in language classes and exams, participants in exchange programs, readers and books in a library, cost-benefit-ratios and financial contributions by partners. For cultural institutions like the Goethe-Institut guiding questions are:

- How many European projects have you organized?
- How many joint European cultural institutions do you have with other EU countries?
- How much money do you generate with your language classes and exams? Are they cost effective at all?
- How much media coverage do you generate with your events?
- How many web hits did you produce with your web presence?
- How many events outside of your own venue did you organize?
- How many writers or artist-in-residence programs lasting longer than two weeks have you organized?
- How much money are your partners willing to invest into joint programs?

The imperative attached to these questions is always the same. Bigger, better, more! Increase the number! Visible effects and reliable results like the ones mentioned above are driven by a maximize- or *supersize me*-approach. Finally, they are specified by contract between the Foreign Office and non-governmental agencies. For example, 10% increase in partner contributions, 2% increase in income from language classes are expected each and every year since 2008 from the Goethe-Institut, Germany's official Cultural Centre abroad. Collecting and evaluating this massive flow of data will keep whole bureaucracies busy. At the end of the day an

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<sup>9</sup> In the most recent academic assessment of Canadian Foreign Policy "culture" or Cultural diplomacy" is not even mentioned (Kirton 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Kopstein (Director and Coordinator of the Joint Initiative in German and European Studies, the Director Institute of European Studies, and the European Studies Program, at the Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto) in an unpublished interview.

old German farmer's saying prevails, however, "Die Sau wird nicht dadurch schwerer, dass man sie wiegt." (You can't make a pig grow by weighing it).

The Goethe-Institut Toronto's media section is accessible online for quantitative and qualitative study.<sup>11</sup> The result is clear, one can see the bang Germany's taxpayer get for their buck over the years in Canada. To buy this kind of wide-ranging media space with ads or any other way would have been extremely expensive.

The crucial question is: Can the essence of cultural diplomacy be measured? In how far can the very core that lies on a deeper level of soft power be quantified? But what lies at the very heart of soft power and its cultural diplomatic activities? Here are a few personal pointers

1. The power to change individual biographies. To achieve that - plain and simple - people need to meet in meaningful ways. Thus, they can grow and open up to new horizons. From this perspective, good cultural foreign policy can change biographies for the better, ideally for life and even for the benefit of whole nations.

2. Symbolic politics create big impact beyond the individual. The American and the Russian examples show how good or bad cultural foreign policy can easily make big waves. You can strengthen or weaken your ties with other countries, using soft power you can open doors abroad or close them for decades to come.

3. Cultural foreign policy as a soft power is effective (and is, in particular compared to hard power, very cost-effective). Some argue not only there is a trade off when you promote writers, painters, filmmakers and curators in the international arena, but even a cash-back profit at the end of the day if you invest in the arts.<sup>12</sup>

4. And finally the very best thing about soft power: no one gets hurt. You can have impact and change somebody's life without choppers, tanks, bloodshed and casualties. With hard power civilians usually suffer the most. With soft power civilians benefit the most. Building cultural bridges across continents and nations can in the long run help to reduce mutual clichés and preconceptions in order to replace ignorance with friendship and mutual understanding.

## **The West and the rest: Soft Power in a Transatlantic Perspective**

Finally, we turn to the transatlantic connection between Germany, Europe and North America. Hot or cold conflicts between cultures, religions, lifestyles and value systems are a signature of the twenty-first century. In this context, good cultural programming aims at bringing together thinkers, politicians, activists from Europe and America to discuss these common concerns and to link our traditions of political thought as well as look towards the future together. But there is a shift of Germany's cultural diplomacy to re-allocate funds and activities towards booming regions like China, India and, in a post-9/11 world, also towards Islamic countries. Even though it may be easier and cheaper to start up new Goethe-Institutes and DAAD/German Academic Exchange Service programs in India and China and embrace young Muslims in Morocco, Pakistan and Indonesia, some question this trend and feel not sure it is as important to do so as sustaining the unprecedented transatlantic cultural space between Europe and North America. Many important players in the field of

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<sup>11</sup> [www.goethe.de/toronto/media](http://www.goethe.de/toronto/media). Canadian Author and journalist Russell Smith explains how foreign policy can succeed through intercultural exchanges and soft power: "When music speaks louder than words", [www.goethe.de/ins/ca/tor/prs/mep/en2278645.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/ca/tor/prs/mep/en2278645.htm) and: "I was the willing victim of a propaganda coup" - Russell Smith: *Pictures tell a tale of two cities*. In: The Globe and Mail, 06.07.02.

<sup>12</sup> Susan Swan, Tips for Stephen Harper, the emerging writer. Did you know that for every dollar you invest in the arts, you get eight back? Globe and Mail, 14.4.2007, p. A21.

scientific and artistic exchange believe it is a mistake and even a shame to take anything for granted in inter-Western relations. In the post-cold war world, the construction of a transatlantic cultural space of shared values can no longer be assured through former achievements and alliances (Kopstein/Steinmo 2008). In cultural diplomacy, a level of common ground will not mutate into a given once and for all. To keep the wheel turning will require even MORE, not less investment. (Many Canadian observers wish the Canadian government would get this message, too).<sup>13</sup> At stake is nothing less than the survival of the "West" as a coherent entity (which in my understanding IS the transatlantic relationship). There is no more Russian bogeyman to hold us together as transatlantic peoples and nations, only our common cultures, norms and democratic values which we should share, preserve, develop, experiment with, and celebrate.

German cultural foreign policy -"the best in the world for so many years" (Jeffrey Kopstein) - is now unfortunately living on its reputation compiled in the past. The web of friendships and good will built up over all those years is priceless and created lots of Ashlie Corcorans, Russell Smiths and Jeff Kopsteins throughout the world, friends for life of the new Germany (and that was something that you could or would not have predicted from Jeff's childhood and Jewish upbringing). But, in absence of sustained efforts, you cannot assume that future generations will ever share the sentiments of their predecessors.

What are the biggest challenges for transatlantic cultural diplomacy in North America?

1. The culture industry is part of the dominant entertainment complex.
2. The event machinery, people-oriented entertainment and a growing festival landscape shape a context no one can ignore.
3. It's the economy, stupid! No one can understand the arts and entertainment sector in North America without the centrality of money. Cash matters. All programming is sales-driven these days. The drive for money is relentless. Artistic entrepreneurs must scour everywhere for money. From a German perspective with still well-funded public sectors in the cultural realm, it comes as a surprise that in Canada even directors of public galleries spend 40% of their time or more on fundraising activities, even if they have a full time-position fundraiser in their team.
4. Content- and topic-driven programming is a very different ballgame and increasingly harder to push through. Cutting-edge stuff is hard to sell. The conclusion is to go for the "big bang". You need signature events: big whoppers and avant-garde cutting edge events whether in New Music or experimental films or visual art).
5. The media follow. Media coverage focuses mainly on mainstream topics, celebrities, box office hits and the economy of creativity. The competition for visibility, attention, audiences and sponsors is brutal.

In this specific context, the Goethe-Institut operates not as a sponsor or a funding agency. Rather we are partners, co-presenters and programmers, trendspotters and -setters. Our working method is one that necessitates a co-curation from our side, a critical view to our thematic commitments to what the relevant contemporary transatlantic discourses are, and a solid partnership with local Canadian organizations.

At the Goethe-Institut Toronto, we program around current themes, key issues and discourses shaping an ongoing dialogue between Canada-Germany/North America-Europe. Three clearly defined thematic commitments are relevant for the next couple of years:

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<sup>13</sup> See John Kirton: Canadian Foreign Policy in a Changing World. Nelson 2007.

1. Cultures in motion: perspectives of migration, integration, inclusion and exclusion, in short, perspectives of multiculturalism.
2. The digital transformation of the public sphere: E-Democracy, Online-Journalism, Cyber-Citizenship etc.
3. The environment: the arts and climate change, green architecture and new sustainable energies.

With all these themes the cultural surplus value of the questions for us as cultural institution plays a special role. Not only the discursive treatment of these themes but also the aesthetic-visual component in the conception and realization.

### **The three secrets of success in cultural diplomacy**

What is our 1st secret of success? The Art of being local worldwide. As a cultural diplomat, simply showcasing how great, creative and wonderful your country of origin is won't get you very far anywhere. In cultural diplomacy, this is how we dance: First of all, you really need to know the cultural trends and burning questions in your host country to understand the shared concerns, worries and problems of your target groups if you want to reach them. You have to listen and learn what matters to them and why. In addition, and this is even more difficult for a professional stranger, one needs to connect all of the above on a deeper level with what you have to offer as an envoy and a player in the international cultural arena. Finally, your success will depend on whether bringing together the homegrown and some stimulating input from outside will create something new, meaningful and relevant for everyone involved. If you do not meet these criteria you run the risk of programming the irrelevant. Toronto for example as the world's most multicultural city invites thousands of newcomers every year, thus creating huge challenges for the city. This was the reason why the Goethe-Institut Toronto focused on urban developments as a key issue for some seasons. Adding input from Germany with what artists, photographers, urban planners, and even mayors have to say about this in a comparative perspective brings Canadians and Germans closer together. Being local also means you need an excellent local team with lively, dynamic professionals who act as scouts and who can pull the strings with you in the local scene. Without this it is difficult to act as a real player and serious networker. Without it, it is hard to be more than a participant observer.

What's the 2nd secret of success? Connect the known with the unknown, foreign and alien. If you bring an excellent, but still relatively unknown artist or writer from Germany to Canada to read in any European Cultural Centre, you might end up with only a few people in the audience. Even if the writer's name is Ingo Schulze or Marcel Beyer. If Jenny Erpenbeck, however, appears during the same reading-night on stage with Jonathan Safran Foer at an international writers festival, you will have a full house. People who came that night bought her books and got it signed because they liked her writing so much. If you want to present a filmmaker like Heinz Emigholz you better match him with a Canadian icon like Michael Snow. Then people will start talking and writing about your show.

There is a 3rd secret of success - "Embedded programming" and the ongoing dialogue with successful partners. But every dialogue needs a direction. You will need a distinct profile, key issues and joint signature events. Only if you keep this wheel turning, all the time for quite some time, you will succeed in building bridges for a mutual understanding between cultures of different frames of reference. Only if there is a long-term perspective for exchange of ideas and people, we will be successful in bringing about change or busting stereotype. We only pick well

established major professional partners for our German-Canadian-projects. For example: Luminato, or the International Festival of Authors, The Contact Festival for photography, the Images Festival for avant-garde film and so on. Why? Big festivals draw their own audiences and are run in a highly professional way, including PR and media relations. Together we manage to build momentum, get the crowd out there and expose them to something new.

### **Art matters, culture counts**

You really should have seen Ashlie. What happened to her will never appear on a government chart. "The inner truth is hidden- luckily, luckily."<sup>14</sup> Knowing about her inner change and the big steps to follow, anyone would understand why art matters, why culture counts and moreover, why cultural diplomacy's soft power is so significant. Promoting the arts abroad as cultural diplomacy is useful to strengthen ties with other countries, and to showcase emerging artists on an international level which is often their first opportunity to gain attention and influence abroad. As a result, the freshness and vitality of the arts help to change minds and perceptions about countries.

At the very core of soft power lie the felicity conditions for intercultural communication, for translations between cultures, for knowledge transfer via dialogue, creative exchange and inner educational growth during poetry readings, composition workshops and theatre performances. In this framework cultural diplomacy as soft power has a clear purpose: to initiate innovative cultural developments and as a result to create public value. Its substance is sublime, magic moments which only art and culture convey. In this respect, we are aiming at nothing less than the nobility of the individual. In the words of Theodor W. Adorno it's about nothing less than the glimpse of what was once called education: "der Vorschein dessen, was einmal Bildung hiess".

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness.* Penguin Books 1995. p. 60.

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Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in building relations among states in contemporary international relations, as it might serve as an effective instrument in supporting national foreign policy objectives or a constructive channel at times of political difficulty. According to the American scholar Milton Cummings, it can be defined as "the exchange of ideas, information" Recognising the importance of cultural diplomacy, many countries aim to advance and extend their cultural institutions abroad as part of their diplomatic strategies. India, for example, is setting up its Council for Cultural Relations in Washington and Paris alongside the 18 existing offices as a strategic project of the country's growing power on the global stage. — "Soft Power vs. Hard Power: Opposing poles?" Rediscovering Cultural Diplomacy in Transatlantic Perspective. by Arpad A. Slter, Goethe-Institut Toronto. "We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled (...)." On a global scale, the renaissance of soft power has begun, re-assessing, re-defining and even re-inventing tools and targets of traditional cultural diplomacy.4. The new centre: Culture and lifestyle are the diplomacy of the 21st century. In 2007, Putin closed the British Council offices in Russia.