Zsolt Antal

The National Character of Hungarian Culture

Challenges in the New Media Space

*"The culture of small nations must be retained
by the state, because if it privatises it,
it will set it on the road to destruction."*
(György Spiró 2020)

Abstract

Globalisation and the explosion of communication technologies have created unprecedented challenges for states, with regard to their responsibility for the preservation and maintenance of cultural heritage. In the era of digital content production, state cultural institutions have become key players, as they undertake the tasks of value preservation, value creation and value transfer, and in so doing provide an important public service. Such organisations are responsible for preserving the national character of culture in the face of the negative effects of globalisation, while creating a twenty-first century version of culture that meets the demands of the new media space and social networks.

Key words: national culture, new media, social networks, cultural institutions, public service, globalisation

1. National culture in the age of globalisation and digitalisation

The competitiveness and success of a national community shows a close relation to both its cultural background and scientific performance. State institutions that safeguard and nurture national culture must face the negative effects and challenges of globalisation. In the twenty-first century, the character of culture is increasingly determined less by its conformity to traditional value criteria, but, as a result of global, market-driven processes, the presentation of a form of culture that is tailored to mass demand, and which is focused on entertainment and attracting attention, has come to the fore. This occurs concurrently with a worldwide deterioration of the credibility of high culture and the homogenisation, uniformisation and individualisation of different cultures (Antal 2011, 166; Kucsera 2021, 92). The current revolution in infocommunication, also referred to as the fourth industrial revolution, questions the social role and content of culture, blurring the hierarchy of values between popular and high culture, and creating an interconnectedness and interdependence of culture beyond the domain of the nation-state.

"[…] The infocommunication revolution has brought about the spread of the English language, a radical reduction of the spatial and temporal distances between individuals, groups, organisations and institutions, an intense migration of cultures, a transformation of lifestyles, networking, westernisation and homogenisation of popular culture" (Nemesi 2015, 99).

With this in mind, the study interprets the essence of culture through the threefold principle of value preservation, value creation and value transfer, applying the methodology of critical axiology (value theory), for the preservation of national cultural heritage. Value theory is an indispensable element of both ethics and aesthetics, and as such, it is of use for understanding the situation and challenges of institutions that cultivate and promote culture, and for identifying their potential. Péter Fekete, the Hungarian Secretary of State for Culture, may have also adopted this approach when, at the ceremony on the occasion of the Day of Hungarian Culture in 2020 at the Uránia National Film Theatre, he stated that:

"[…] Our notion of culture focuses on our national past, our roots clinging to existence, our national identity, our accumulated intellectual and material treasures and values. […] It would not be good if technical progress were to abandon

culture, just as I would not consider it fortunate the other way round. We need to turn the world of computers, the world wide web and the worldwide networks towards culture, and we need to adapt culture to the accelerated and different civilisation trends" (Fekete 2020).

There are both pessimistic and optimistic scenarios for the integration of culture into computer-mediated communication, new media and social communication dominated by social networks (Tóth 2022, 6). The aim of this study is to examine the new media space as an arena for cultural communication and as an opportunity for mediation, despite the clearly negative effects and consequences of the revolution in infocommunication.

This paper is not intended to provide a detailed investigation of the academic discourse in which the term 'national culture', which is most often used to define our community identity, is embedded. It should be noted, however, that conservative and liberal thinkers differ in essential aspects of their concepts of nation and culture. Depending on their orientation, the individual authors approach the essence of these concepts based on entirely different premises, as well as including different attributes in the set of meanings behind the word (Csepeli 1987; Egedy 1998; Poszler 2000).

According to ethnographer Gábor Barna, by national culture "[…] we always mean a representative culture that produces political, social ideas, meanings, values and ideologies, and thus includes all the beliefs, interpretations and worldviews that influence social and political action.

Every national culture strives for the individuals under its influence to have a clear historical consciousness, common cultural forms of behaviour, a clear sense of belonging and a specific personality structure" (Barna 2011, 63). Extending Barna's definition to cultural institutions makes their value-creating and value-carrying role and significance conspicuous.

The common characteristic of theatres, museums, and other cultural institutions, as well as the media that play a role in cultural transmission, is that in contrast to the global, market-oriented perspective, they "prioritize the public interest, that is, they keep in mind the pursuit of the common good" (Antal 2017, 325), and they lay great emphasis on nurturing national culture and respecting traditions. With regard to the definition, it is also worth discussing why the present paper finds a definition conceived in an ethnographic paradigm to be the most suitable link for the study of the relationship between culture based on the Judeo-Christian tradition and the national character, and the new media

space dominated by social networks. This is because, compared to other disciplines, ethnography, which focuses on the study of folk culture, is the closest to the subject of study, in that it creates a cultural space that connects the past with the present, thus transcending the often misleading, over-politicised attempts of other disciplines to provide a definition.

2. The possibilities of value preservation and value transmission in the media

Even today, the publicity of cultural institutions is difficult to imagine without state, public service media and quality journalism. Public service radio and television are the primary mediators for cultural institutions in presenting their works and values, and in moulding and orienting a culture-loving and understanding audience. The task of the public service media is precisely to maintain content services that ensure the presentation of national interests, values, and opinions (Antal 2011, 51), to nurture national culture, language, and identity (McQuail 2003, 42), and to satisfy the social and cultural needs of the public.

The ethos of public service information therefore also includes the need to adhere to and establish high-quality professional standards, while at the same time attempting to correct the shortcomings of the offerings of market-based media. For decades after the Second World War, there was a persistent difference between the perceptions of market and state actors in the dual media system, and a disparity in their influence potential.

Thanks to the entertainment-oriented content offered by market players, which also cover serious topics in a popular form (such as entertainment, infotainment, and edutainment), and to tabloid-style, sensationalist editing, they were, from the beginning, more successful in homogenising and transforming the public into consumers than the public service media in the social integration of the public and the forming of the citizens' sense of community journalism (Antal 2011, 33, 160–165).

The merger of the global media and the telecommunications industry in the last three decades has further increased the distance and disproportion between market and public service media actors. Internet-based media has created a universe of mass culture that transcends national culture (Bayer 2002, 749–750), which today goes far beyond the differences in values and interests

of the dual media system. "Not only has the logic of business prevailed over the preservation and creation of values, but at the same time the traditional notions of the historical state and national cultural heritage and tradition have been challenged, and the notion of the public interest and the common good has faded" (Kucsera 2021, 90). The audience is no longer a citizen, but a consumer, at best a consumer citizen (Bayer 2002, 751). Furthermore, the cultural content provided by transnational corporations is presented in a standardised, commercialised way in order to ensure the widest possible market distribution (Bayer 2002, 750).

The cohesive development of various media technologies, that is, media convergence, promises significant economic benefits and economic convergence to the actors of the global media industry. Due to the interoperability of individual channels, the homogenisation of content that has already prevailed in the traditional media system also continues on digital platforms. In the process, essentially the same content has become available for sale on other platforms in exactly the same form. With a seemingly wide, but actually homogeneous offer, a specific platform also strengthens the position of another one (see the concept of content convergence, Andok 2016).

For actors in the global media industry, this situation is synonymous with what the Austrian economist and sociologist Joseph Alois Schumpeter (1980) defined in the 1940s as creative destruction: that is, whether it is a product, service or process, the result of innovation systematically replaces what has gone before, with a destructive effect. However, an important element of the optimistic Schumpeterian concept is that although innovation is inevitably accompanied by some degree of upheaval, that is, there will always be losers in the process, the emergence of the new can ensure (economic) growth in the medium and long term. The Schumpeterian dichotomy of creation and destruction (and the linking of this process to radical market competition) provides a useful description of the situation in which the revolution in infocommunication has overwhelmed state cultural institutions, which have assumed the trinity of value preservation, value creation and value transmission, and therefore play a public service role, the latter having been assigned the role of losers.

With regard to major technological transitions and innovations affecting (also) the media, there is a consensus in the literature that existing technologies were often replaced by new ones, for which, while often affecting the entire

LONG WAVES OF INNOVATION

The theory of innovation cycles was developed by economist **Joseph Schumpeter** who coined the term 'creative destruction' in 1942.

Schumpeter examined the role of innovation in relation to long-wave business cycles.
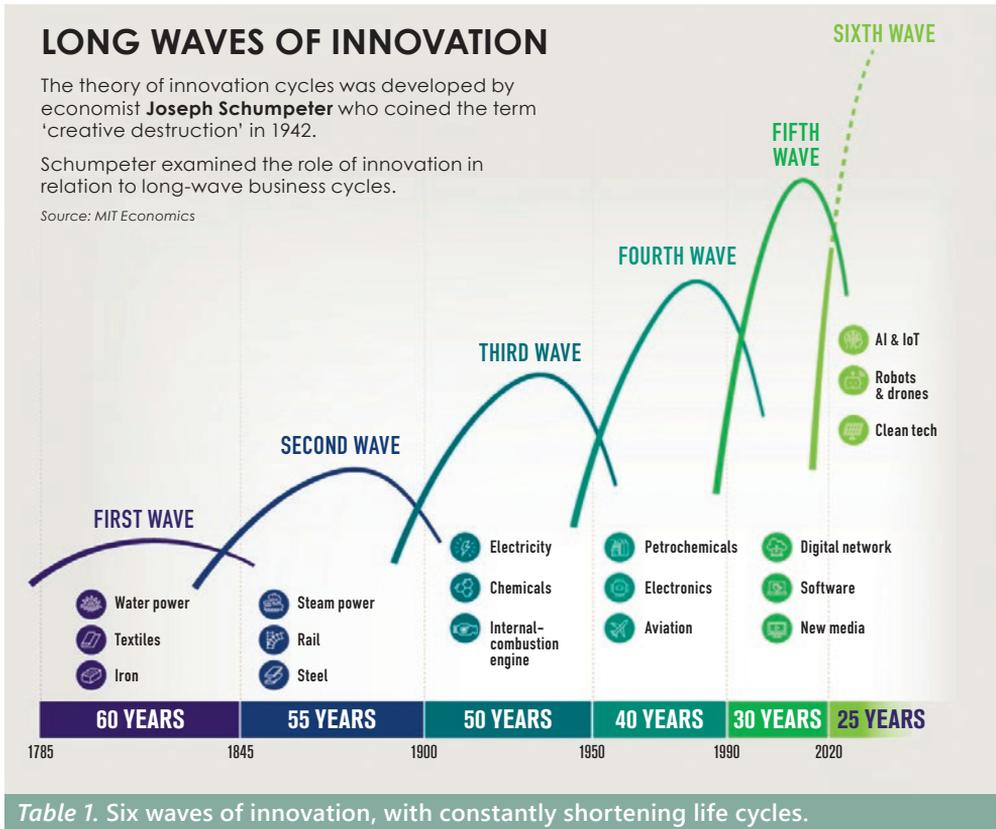
Source: MIT Economics

FIRST WAVE

SECOND WAVE

THIRD WAVE

FOURTH WAVE

FIFTH WAVE

SIXTH WAVE

Water power	Steam power	Electricity	Petrochemicals	Digital network
Textiles	Rail	Chemicals	Electronics	Software
Iron	Steel	Internal-combustion engine	Aviation	New media

AI & IoT
Robots & drones
Clean tech

| 60 YEARS | 55 YEARS | 50 YEARS | 40 YEARS | 30 YEARS | 25 YEARS |

1785   1845   1900   1950   1990   2020

Table 1. Six waves of innovation, with constantly shortening life cycles.

population, neither the state, the society nor individuals were sufficiently pre-pared. The main challenge of technological transitions from a perspective of public interest is that the new has always sought to eliminate old technologies before society could adapt to them at its own pace. The problem was modelled by Rogers (1962), who defined the diffusion of innovations as the spread of information about innovation through specific communication channels within a given society over a given period of time. In other words, diffusion is a deci-sion making process that can be described in time, in which different types of information and knowledge transfer mechanisms play a role at different stages, and the success of the process is largely dependent on the success of the trans-fer of crucial information during this process (Antal 2011, 22–23, 29).

It is essentially this process that is reflected in the speed theory of the French social philosopher Paul Virilio (1991/2003, 1998/2002, 1993), known as dromol-

ogy[1], through which the self-defined urban theorist was among the first to warn of the dangers of the accelerating world that pervades all aspects of life, including communication and the arts. Virilio called the technological explosion a *"total accident";* because, according to his pessimistic point of view: "[...] the new technical procedures have accelerated the flow of information to such an extent that the time of memorization will become shorter and shorter [...] parallel to the acceleration of the flow of information, as if in response, the process of forgetting also accelerates. This is what I call the industrialization of forgetting [...]. In some ways, cyberspace could be seen as the last colonial empire. Because what do we create with the Internet or cyberspace? A new area for expansion [...]and I ask myself if these new electronic technologies that are being offered today are not a deceptive device, whose real purpose is to take away our culture and roots, just as we took away the culture and roots of the peoples of the Third World before leaving them to die and be taken by disease [...]" (Virilio 2018, 22–33).

The fact is that the success of digital platforms has led to more concentrated, homogeneous content offer than ever before, and the gradual eclipse of public content providers, leaving little visible alternative to guide citizens in their choices. For example, thanks to digital television channels, streaming services such as Netflix and the Internet, the media consumer can apparently now plan the programme they want to watch from the content offered by the various platforms (Bayer 2002, 752), but compared to traditional media, it is striking that the viewer no longer receives any editorial assistance or guidance.

Therefore, we argue that in order to offset the negative effects, there is still a need for state service channels and interfaces that seek to meet the needs of the audience and are diverse in terms of their programme structure, and which also provide a handhold in the digital age by defining value creation as a goal, offering guidance for their audience. The search for new alternatives in the media is therefore unavoidable for a community exposed to globalisation processes that wishes to ensure the survival of its culture and identity (Antal 2011, 170). Indeed, *creative destruction* in the Schumpeterian sense by no means precludes the fact that state cultural institutions that play a public service role may also regard innovation as a means of making a profit. Virilio's pessimistic admo-

---

1 The theory of dromology is a new dimension in social science research. Virilio defines dromology from the word dromos, meaning 'race'. Dromology is therefore the logic of the race (Virilio and Lotriger 1993, 40).

nitions are of course real dangers. One only has to think of the extent of the (image) destruction that may be caused by negative opinions on the World Wide Web, which are slowly becoming equivalent to the persuasive power of the traditional media. Nevertheless, the examples presented in the following chapters demonstrate that, putting aside the moral resistance of high culture in general, cultural institutions, by way of deliberate communication by skilled professionals, are also capable of applying technological changes in a forward-looking way that connect the creator with the audience. Today, this is the only way for cultural institutions to be part of the public sphere that is created by the new media.

# 3. Cultural institutions as producers of social media content

In an era that has seen the merging of telecommunication, media and entertainment industries, the dilemmas behind the position, role and future of the public service media represent a thought-provoking challenge for cultural institutions. With the decline of traditional media platforms in favour of new media, and their inability to meet the communication needs of institutions representing Hungarian culture, cultural institutions have also been forced to take steps forward. They are increasingly less able to avoid mobilising (financial and professional) resources to create their own interfaces, social media, and the production of their own content. In addition, they must also communicate to the domestic and international audiences at the same time, as this is a prerequisite for a specific cultural institution to be included in the interwoven network of international cultural institutions (Káel 2021, 99–100). Experience shows that only institutions with better-than-average digital communication can enter this "blood circulation". In this way, both new and old media surfaces may contribute to the presentation of the character of contemporary national culture, to the development of the framework, forms, arenas, and content of the self-esteem of individuals, communities, regions, and the nation.

It is not surprising that the dynamic multiplication of communication tools and the need to reach audiences in a broad and creative way is giving rise to an increasing number of innovative responses from the world of art institutions. A number of international studies, such as *Branding in the New Museum Era (2017)*, concern the branding trends of cultural institutions, in which the stra-

tegic image building of institutions and communication solutions play a key role. Taking advantage of their unique features, the buildings of an institution can even become cultural icons (for example, the Sydney Opera House or the Danube cultural district of the National Theatre and MÜPA in Budapest), but it is also a recurrent element that certain institutions make themselves instantly identifiable through modular design solutions that can be applied uniformly. Below we present international and domestic examples whose participants regard the relationship between digital communication and cultural institutions as an opportunity.

3.1. Culture as a national brand: Culture is digital – The United Kingdom

The success of digital platforms and the eclipse of traditional media indicate that the future of cultural institutions and the maintenance of their relations with their audiences is increasingly unimaginable without a deep involvement
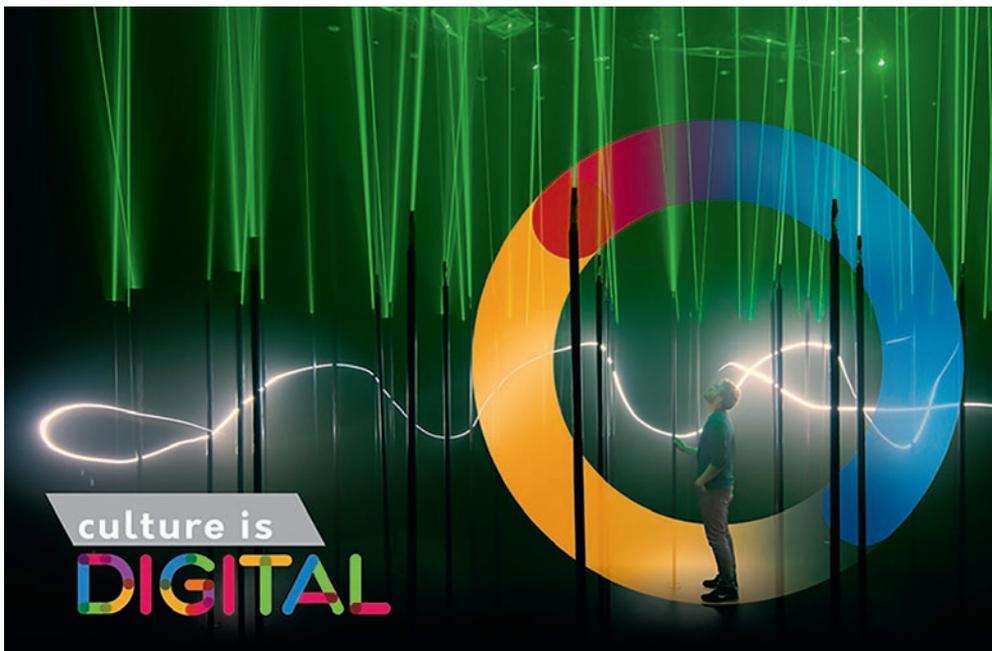
Source: Assets Publishing

Figure 1. According to the UK's National Culture Strategy, which was published in 2018, technology offers unprecedented opportunities for the country's cultural sector.

in the digital space and network society. *Culture is digital,* the motto of the UK's national cultural strategy, which was published in 2018, refers to this dependent relationship. Presenting the government's strategy, Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Digital Culture, Media and Sport, argued that technology offers unprecedented opportunities for the UK's cultural sector. The tools that are made available by digitalisation have an important role to play in attracting new audiences, both nationally and internationally. Digital platforms should therefore be regarded as an opportunity, not only to increase the accessibility of a world-class artistic and cultural heritage, but also to provide a certain level of networking space for the creation of artistic and cultural content and experiences in digital space. Hancock also emphasised that not everything is high-tech, nor does everything have to be: "[...] we still like to have a book in our hands, or see a painting or a play without a mobile phone. Even in a traditional format, great cultural experiences are created and the audience appreciates it. However, audience expectations change over time, as do the practices of artists, creators and curators, so we need to ensure that the right structures are in place to support this transformation so that the country can continue its long history of creative excellence – digital and analogue."[2]

Digitised television channels and the Internet allow members of the public to plan the programmes they want to watch from the various elements on offer. At the same time, with the forming of the audience's orientation, a new door opens for cultural institutions to arouse interest.

The emblematic institution of the UK's digital culture strategy, the British Museum in London, which opened its doors in 1753 and has one of the largest collections in the world, has digitised nearly 4.5 million exhibits to date, a significant proportion of these, around 300,000 items, after the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic in the spring of 2020 (Cascone 2020). By its own admission, the museum has always considered "the preservation and accessibility of knowledge" its primary goal, and by digitising its priceless collection, the institution has set itself the goal of bringing its cultural heritage to those who may not be able to see the exhibits in person. While the state cultural establishment is clearly investing considerable energy in value preservation, the creation and

---

2 The UK's Cultural Strategy, which was published in 2018, is available at the link below: *https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/687519/TT_v4.pdf* Viewed on 17 February 2022.

transmission of value, and more specifically the cultivation of the national character of British culture, is far from straightforward.

The left-wing Black Lives Matter movement, which started in the United States and gained fresh momentum worldwide after the death of an African-American man named George Floyd during a police check, became stronger than ever in the United Kingdom in the second half of 2020. The effects of this cultural war on society were felt most by cultural and historical institutions that aim to preserve traditions. Britain's cultural heritage, which indisputably includes a colonial past, has suddenly become the target of the cancel culture, and violent street protests involving the defacing and toppling of statues have also sought to hold accountable in the new media space any institution that keeps national history alive. However, neither the Conservative government in power nor the state cultural institutions yielded to the movement. In response to mounting pressure, the British Museum released a statement explaining that they did not intend to remove controversial objects from the exhibition, but rather to place them in context, helping the visiting public to understand the circumstances of the creation of the specific monuments.[3]

3.2. Citizen-focused image building on Twitter – Sweden

It is now an axiom that the nature of communication in the digital new media space has changed. This is not only due to the fact that the boundaries between written and spoken language have become blurred, and in the new means of communication "we are writing as if we were speaking" (Balázs 2003, 18), or because the new linguistic and thinking quality is now almost inseparable from visual support, but also because in digital communication the boundaries between the role of the communicator and that of the receiver have disappeared. The "one-to-many model has been replaced by the horizontally highly efficient option of many-to-many" (Aczél 2014, 21).

The Swedish Liberal government sought to exploit the potential of this to build the country's image and develop the national character in social media

---

3 British Museum 'won't remove controversial objects' from display. 2020. BBC. Viewed on 18 October 2022. *https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-54325905*

Source: https://www.slideshare.net/tyinternety/david-orlic-vist-sweden

Figure 2. The Curators of Sweden social media campaign endeavoured to present the country's cultural life from the subjective point of view of ordinary people.

when it published the first tweet from the @Sweden[4] Twitter account in 2011.[5] Stockholm made the country's official Twitter account available to the Swedish public, who are proud of their diversity, as part of a social media campaign called the Curators of Sweden, so that the world could gain a subjective taste of the country's culture through the posts of a different (ordinary) Swedish citizen every week. According to Patrick Kampmann, the creative director of Volontaire, the advertising agency commissioned by the Swedish government to carry out the campaign, "Sweden stands for certain values. It wants to be progressive, democratic and creative, […] and the best way to demonstrate these virtues has been to put control in the hands of ordinary Swedes, instead of cen-

---

4 Sweden's Twitter site. *https://twitter.com/sweden?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwte rm%5E833117884360560640%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.huffpost.com%2-Fentry%2Fsweden-twitter-experiment_n_5b9f3510e4b04d32ebf9b4fb* Viewed on 11 February 2022.

5 @Sweden's citizen driven nation branding is a global success. *https://mb.cision.com/Main/1623/9248950/5184.pdf* Viewed on 11 February 2022.

tralised communication, so that they can present Swedish culture themselves" (Christensen 2013, 40).

The Curators of Sweden project is the result of a partnership between the Swedish Institute (in Swedish: Svenska institutet, SI), which has an organisational structure and profile similar to that of the Balassi Institute, which is responsible for shaping the cultural diplomacy of Hungary and public diplomacy in other nation states,[6] and Visitsweden, a state-owned joint-stock company that specialises in tourism with functions almost identical to those of the Hungarian Tourist Agency. While the primary aim and mission of both governmental organisations is to promote Sweden and the Swedish culture abroad, the Curators of Sweden campaign was also openly aimed at providing feedback to their own citizens, showing what best characterises the everyday life of Swedes.[7]

The project has caused considerable inconvenience for the government. There have been several instances of speakers sharing their controversial political views on the microblog for the political leadership of the country, with one curator of the project promoting conflict with Denmark (Löfgren 2016) and another personally criticising former US President Donald Trump (Toor 2017). However, the vast body of literature analysing the campaign concludes that the project has gained merit by building bridges between the state and ordinary people through digital communication, while its success in national branding is also significant (see for example Christensen 2013, and Hoffmann 2015).

Among other things, Hoffmann's (2015) research revealed that although the curators were not given any instructions on what topics to thematise their posts

---

6 The term public diplomacy first appeared in 1856 in the pages of The Times magazine, as a social articulation of criticisms of the actions of Franklin Pierce, US President at that time, and as a manifestation of citizen activism in this direction (Szörényi 2010, 138). The first institutionalisation of the term is most widely credited to the founding of the Edward R. Murrow Public Diplomacy Center in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, a professor at Tufts University's Flatcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and a noted career diplomat in the United States. According to Gullion, "public diplomacy is [...] concerned with influencing public opinion in order to formulate and implement a country's foreign policy. It includes dimensions of international relations that go beyond traditional diplomacy: the efforts of governments to influence public opinion in other states; the interaction of civil society organisations and interests between states; means information on international relations and their impact on policies [...] and the process of intercultural communication" (Hansen 1984, 3).

7 While the government Twitter account given to ordinary people was also intended to underline the commitment of the Scandinavian country to democratic values, the selection of the lucky few was far from democratic and fair. Patrick Kampmann himself was a member of the three-man committee that selected the tweeters of @Sweden week by week. He says that throughout the project, which has been running for more than eight years, he has been looking for people who are interesting, skilled in microblogging and willing to write short text messages in English.

around, tweets capturing moments of everyday life and conveying broad political positions dominated the news feed, followed by posts mainly promoting local culture. The curators of Sweden also regularly reported on the microblog about their experiences at the cultural events and festivals they visited, so the project indirectly promoted, not only within the country but also internationally, several different segments of Swedish culture and public institutions, depending on the cultural interests of the particular Swedish citizen who happened to be managing the official account that week.

The project is controversial in many respects, because although the Swedish example is an excellent illustration of how a country can integrate social networks into its activities of public diplomacy, the national character of culture, in this case Swedish culture, has hardly been cultivated through decentralised digital communication. Nevertheless, taking into account the positive and negative lessons learned from the project and adapting some of its elements to the domestic context, we consider it worthy of attention. Although the number of Hungarian Twitter users did not start to increase until 2022, the time has come for Hungary to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Facebook and Instagram, which are also popular social networks in Hungary, and to exploit the wide range of opportunities created by new media and digital communication on a larger scale than previously. The Swedish example shows that the popularity of cultural institutions can be increased, not only in the capital, but also in rural areas, even in cooperation with the tourism sector, with little financial investment. Cooperation between institutions could also represent a way forward: a social media campaign such as the one conducted in Sweden could be implemented, for example, by highlighting a coordinated selection of artists from public cultural institutions nationwide. This would create the opportunity for a culture-sensitive public to gain brief glimpses into the world behind the scenes, the everyday life of artists, and the diversity of rehearsals, thanks to social networks. Not least, such a project may also draw attention to provincial theatres or other cultural institutions that occupy a peripheral position compared to the strategic institutions of Hungarian culture.[8]

---

8 The cultural institutions in Hungary include the National Theatre, the Hungarian State Opera, the Budapest Operetta Theatre, the National Centre for Artists, Performers and Circus Arts, Müpa, the Honvéd Ensemble, the Petőfi Museum of Literature, the Hungarian National Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, the National Széchényi Library, the Hungarian National Archives, the Institute of Hungarian Research, the Hungarian Heritage House, the Museum of Ethnography, the Open-air Museum of Ethnography, the NMI Institute for Culture and the NMI Institute for Culture.

3.3. Transnational success stories

The capacities of cultural institutions in different countries, in rural and metropolitan areas, are significantly different, not only in terms of financial resources and media professionals, but also in terms of their distance from network nodes (Barabási [2002] 2019). However, there are some transnational digital projects that can help bridge this gap, and at the same time provide an opportunity for the international representation of the national character of Hungarian culture. One example is the title of 'European Capital of Culture'[9], which focuses attention on a provincial town in each member state for twelve months in order to showcase its cultural life and history worldwide, as well as to highlight the cultural richness of its member states, thereby increasing the sense of belonging to the common cultural area of European citizens and thus nurturing a better understanding of each other. The original aim of the title was to raise awareness of the fact that the common space of European culture is the result of the combined contribution of different countries and cities. It uses the language of art to convey the notion that European culture is common and always the result of cultural activity in a given region. The city or region holding the title will be at the centre of European attention for the cultural fare it produces, thus enhancing the image of the city or the mother country, while at the same time increasing the efficiency of local creative industries and the attractiveness of the locality for tourism.

Until now, approximately sixty cities, including Pécs, have proudly held this title. The project involves a year-long series of cultural events, but also has a number of other effects, including acting as a catalyst for urban development. In 2023, once again a Hungarian city, this time Veszprém, will become the European Capital of Culture (Morvay 2019, 321). During the season, which starts on the 21st of January, 2023, the county seat and the Bakony–Balaton region are preparing numerous cultural and artistic events and projects, community-building programmes, and infrastructure development.[10]

Among the transnational success stories, it is worth mentioning, without claiming to be exhaustive, the Opera Vision project, which was launched on

---

9 European Capitals of Youth and Culture. Viewed on 15 September 2022. *https://europa.eu/youth/get-involved/intercultural-understanding/being-european-capital-of-youth-or-of-culture_hu*

10 For more information see: *https://veszprembalaton2023.hu/* Viewed on 9 September 2022.
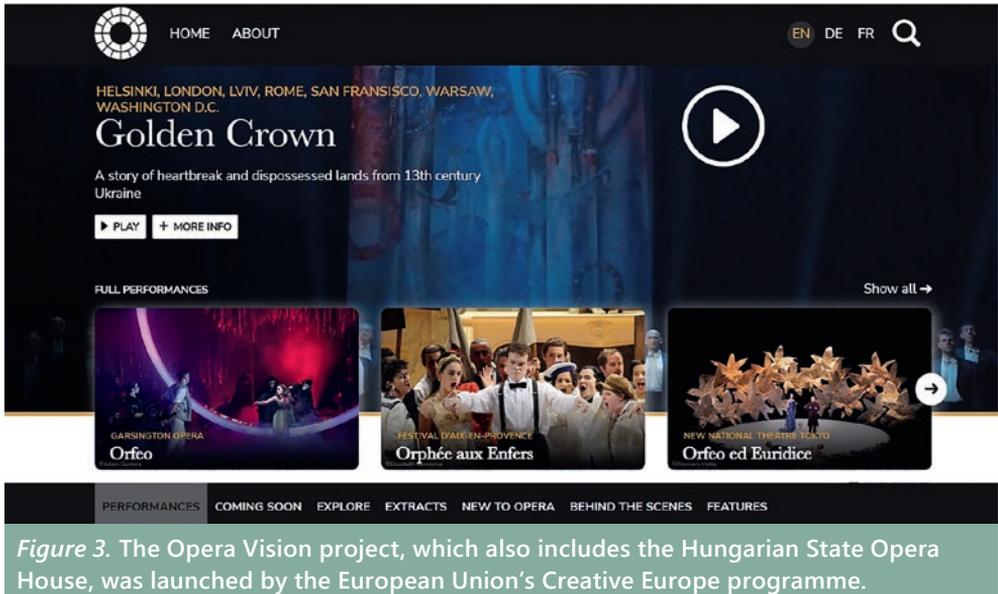
Source: operavision.eu

Figure 3. The Opera Vision project, which also includes the Hungarian State Opera House, was launched by the European Union's Creative Europe programme.

the 12th of October, 2017, and which provides the platform of Opera Europe, an association of European opera companies and festivals. Inspired by the success of the Opera Platform, Opera Europe, in partnership with thirty opera companies from eighteen countries, has created Opera Vision, a portal that allows you to watch Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande* from the Komische Oper in Berlin or Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* from the Teatro Real in Madrid live from anywhere in the world. The project, with the Hungarian State Opera among its members, was supported by the European Union's Creative Europe programme, which had supported more than 13,000 programmes by 2020, co-funding 647 cultural cooperation projects across Europe involving 3,760 organisations.[11]

3.4. Hungarian Success Stories

The exploitation of the opportunities inherent in the digitised new media space and social media networks is increasingly becoming a natural medium for the

---

11   Creative Europe: over €2 billion to support the recovery, resilience and diversity of the cultural and creative sectors. Viewed on 28 February 2022. *https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/hu/IP_21_2587*

communication of domestic cultural institutions. All cultural institutions have official accounts on Facebook and Instagram, which, in Hungary, are considered to be the most popular, to maintain the audience's attention and multiply access to individual productions. Some theatres use these channels to not only promote their performances, but to also create their own brand parallel to that, and to this end they prefer to employ their own artists. The following is a list of Hungarian cultural strategic institutions that, by deliberately exploiting the potential of analogue and increasingly digital communication, may serve as a good example to counterbalance global, market-driven processes and, in accordance with the trinity of value preservation, value creation and value transmission, to cultivate national culture in the new media space.

3.4.1. The institution as a global brand: Müpa

Inaugurated in March, 2005, the Palace of Arts (Müpa) is a multifunctional institution, providing a permanent home for three different artistic disciplines, namely, music, visual arts, and theatre. The institution describes itself as "the best-known cultural brand in the country" and one of the most modern cultural institutions. In the autumn of 2005, Müpa launched a call for tenders in a restricted procedure, which was won by the Mátai and Végh Creative Workshop, for whom, according to their own words, it was clear that they had to develop a well-functioning "trademark" from the institution's brand, which would communicate not only to the Hungarian audience, but also would serve to present the productions it created abroad.[12] Due to its unique operation, Müpa had to develop a marketing communication strategy that differs significantly from that of other cultural institutions in Hungary, as it hosts hundreds of performances per year, which differ in genre, performers and target group. The large number and diverse nature of the performances therefore require a constant presence in a wide variety of media and social networks, both online and offline, but also make it difficult to convey something of the Hungarian cultural character to international audiences.

At the same time, Müpa's mission is not to serve public taste, but to shape it. It has performers, and hosts musical events performances and works that

---

12 MÜPA branding case study (2005–2014). *https://kreativmuhely.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/mupa_esettanulmany.pdf* Viewed on 16 February 2022.
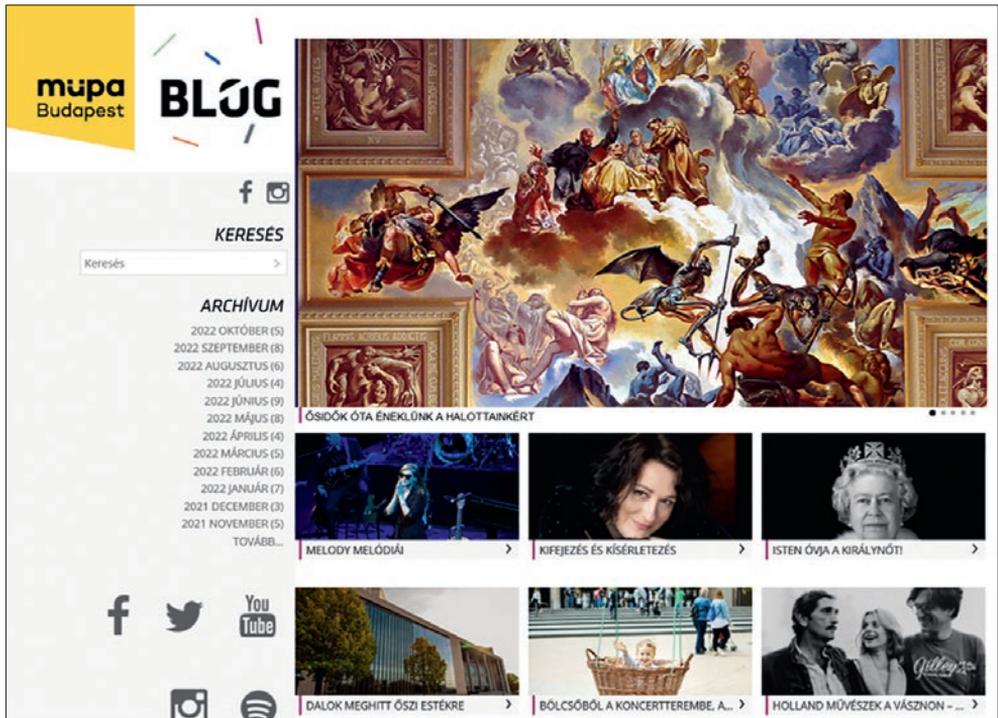
Figure 4. Extract from the MÜPA blogosphere. MÜPA has a number of notable activities in both the old and new media space. The connection of Podcasts, Digital Literary Compilation, Playlist-Spotify with the audience, as well as print-based publications all serve to promote culture.

contribute to major cultural processes around the world, representing specific artistic values.[13] Since its opening, the institution has become a global brand, an inescapable factor in the international cultural bloodstream, thus supporting the cultural diplomacy activities of Hungary and Budapest. As film director Csaba Káel, the General Director of Müpa Budapest, states in his study, "...one of the most important achievements of the first period of Müpa was undoubtedly that it put Hungary back on the classical music tour map, broadened the horizon of the international market, as world stars started to 'travel further' for

---

13 MÜPA branding case study (2005–2014). *https://kreativmuhely.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/mupa_esettanulmany.pdf* Viewed on 16 February 2022.

the sake of Müpa Budapest, they did not stop at Vienna, but started to include Budapest in their schedules, booked several years in advance" (Káel 2021, 95).

Another peculiarity of Müpa is that although in the beginning it only allowed high culture within its walls, nowadays the brand image of the institution represents considerably greater diversity of genre and quality culture, and this broadening of the spectrum is reflected by the fact that since 2015 the name of the institution has officially been Müpa, a nickname that was previously used by the audience and the artists (Káel 2021, 96).

3.3.2. The institution as a national brand: the Hungarian State Opera House and the Liszt Academy

The Hungarian State Opera House has an impressive track record in building national cultural character, and represents one of the strongest brands among Hungarian cultural institutions. The Opera House attracts the attention of the public with its innovative, sometimes provocative posters, appealing to young people and refuting the idea that the era of outdoor, public posters is long gone. They have also managed to attract attention with their actions to bring their performances to life outside the iconic building on Andrássy út. In the case of *Anyegin (Eugene Onegin),* for example, a green lawn was created in front of the steps of the Opera House, and the building was decorated with black roses, the central symbol of Kovalik's production. In addition, great efforts have been made to focus attention on the leading artists of the Opera House. The image of the Erkel Theatre was also built in the same spirit, where, for example, those who were the quickest to like the site could win tickets in the "Facebook gallery". They aim to attract the audience of the future with their project called *Opera-kaland,* which has already reached more than 200,000 students. They often organise performances to promote shows, staging free season-opening open-air performances in front of the Opera House, and their press conferences could be small shows in themselves, while they are also in constant communication on social networks.

The communication of the Liszt Academy is also worth mentioning. The advertising post entitled *Lisztérium,* which captures the ars poetica of the institution's concert-oriented activities in forty seconds, won the Red Dot Design Award in 2015, representing an important recognition of the international com-
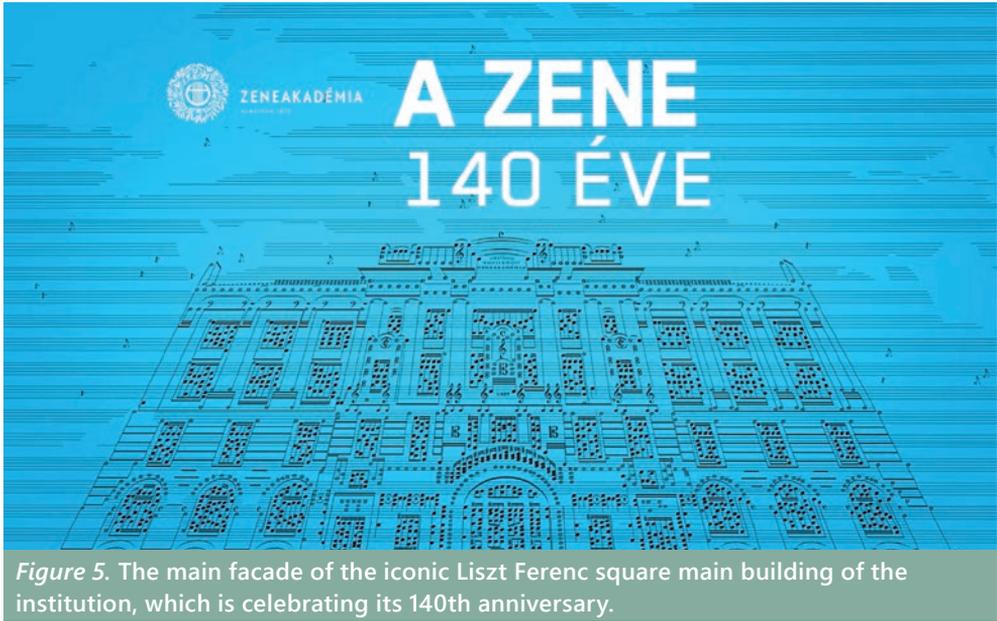
Figure 5. The main facade of the iconic Liszt Ferenc square main building of the institution, which is celebrating its 140th anniversary.

munication profession.[14] Similarly successful was the *'Liszt Academy – 140 years of music'* campaign, which organised a series of programmes to mark the 140th anniversary of the institution's foundation, and helped promote high culture to a wider audience through online media and distribution. However, the greatest achievement of the Liszt Academy's communication lies in the representation of its values beyond the borders of the country. For example, the cultural institution enjoys an extremely high reputation in the Far East (including Japan and South Korea), and thus indirectly influences the tourism sector through its high quality offer and value-creating community building, while also actively participating in the country's activities of public diplomacy through various transnational activities.

---

14 Kouble communication success for the 140th anniversary of the Liszt Academy. 2015. Viewed on 16 February 2022. *https://zeneakademia.hu/hirek/kettos-kommunikacios-siker-a-zeneakademia-140-szuletesnapja-ra-111985*

3.3.3. The institution as an instrument of cultural diplomacy: the Hungarian National Theatre

At the heart of the National Theatre's more conservative communication policy is the threefold unity of tradition, modernity, and internationalism (Vidnyánszky 2018). These values and principles define the thinking of the institution, carefully testing the question of whether the cultural institution can be considered such a commodity that is subject to traditional marketing concepts, or how to ensure that high art is not just the preserve of the few. A good example of the latter is the *#anemzetimindenkie* charity programme, which was organised for the first time in 2019, in which the theatre advertised free performances for those who would otherwise not have access to the theatre, for example, in cooperation with the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, the South Pest Central Hospital and the Bethesda Children's Hospital (Lukácsy 2019).

A noteworthy project initiated by the institution is the Madách International Theatre Meeting (MITEM), which was launched in 2014.[15] Established with the intention of creating a tradition, the annual meeting offers a platform and an opportunity for other cultures and nations to have a refreshing influence on the Hungarian theatre, and for foreign professionals to become acquainted with Hungarian performances and artists. In reference to the programme, Attila Vidnyánszky, the General Director of the National Theatre, said at the opening of the 2022 festival, "when the idea of MITEM was born, we already wanted to build bridges between different cultures, arts, countries, because we need to have a dialogue" (Petrovics 2022). Referring to the cultural diplomatic purpose of the festival, State Secretary Péter Fekete stated that it was important to emphasise that "the event series proclaims to the world through its actions that we are a truly inclusive nation, as MITEM is a great melting pot of different cultures, arts, trends and creative creeds."[16]

---

15 MITEM official site. Viewed on 10 October 2022. *https://mitem.hu/aktualis*

16 Welcome speech of State Secretary Péter Fekete on the official MITEM website. Viewed on 10 October 2022. *https://mitem.hu/aktualis/2022/04/mitem-2022-koszonto*

Source: debrecen.hu

Figure 6. The float of the National Theatre representing the 10th Theatre Olympics at the 2022 Flower Carnival in Debrecen.

MITEM's international reputation, acceptance and stable position have contributed to Hungary hosting the 10th Theatre Olympics in 2023 under the coordination of the National Theatre.[17] The event will be held on the 200th anniversary of the birth of Hungarian playwright Imre Madách, in collaboration with MITEM. Hosting the Theatre Olympics in Hungary presents a unique opportunity for Hungarian culture to demonstrate its values within and beyond its borders, as well as to strengthen its diplomatic position. As Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki, a member of the Organising Committee of the Olympics, explained, "The importance of cultural projects in the age of modern technology lies precisely in the fact that they help to share experiences of similarities

---

[17] In January 2020, Theodoros Terzopoulos, the Greek theatre director, creator and initiator of the Theatre Olympics, announced in Budapest that Hungary had won the right to host the tenth Theatre Olympics in 2023. The Theatre Olympics have been hosted as follows: 1995, Delphi, Greece; 1999, Sizuka, Japan; 2001, Moscow, Russia; 2006, Istanbul, Turkey; 2010, Seoul, South Korea; 2014, Beijing, China; 2016, Wrocław, Poland; 2018, New Delhi, India; 2019, St Petersburg, Russia and Tojama, Japan; 2023, Budapest, Hungary.

and differences between nations. The International Theatre Olympics Committee believes that the strong presence of the performing arts in the 21st century is a sign that there is still hope for genuine global communication" (Suzuki 2022).

Summary

The presented international, transnational and domestic examples prove, without claiming to be exhaustive, that despite the explosive development of globalisation and communication technologies and the resulting cultural homogenisation, there is a future for institutions that assume the trinity of value preservation, value creation and value transmission, and that therefore fulfil a public service function. Although the content that nourishes cultural identities, national culture, the freedom of art and the meeting of cultures must be positioned in a media noise that is considerably greater than before, which requires more effort than previously, the aim, in the Schumpeterian (1980) sense, must be to enable state cultural institutions, as market actors, to use the opportunities offered by the new media space for their own purposes. This is the only way for national cultural institutions to receive the same degree of attention in the age of the new media that the traditional media had granted them as a matter of course.

Sources

- Aczél Petra. 2014. „Az Új." In *Se vele, se nélküle? Tanulmányok a médiáról,* ed. Lányi András and László Miklós, 15–29. Budapest: Complex Kiadó.
- Andok Mónika. 2016. *Digitális média és mindennapi élet.* Budapest: L'Harmattan Könyvkiadó.
- Antal Zsolt. 2011. *Közszolgálati média Európában – Az állami részvétel koncepciói a tájékoztatásban.* Szeged: Gerhardus Kiadó.
- Antal Zsolt. 2017. „Közszolgálati kommunikáció, közbizalom és médiaszabályozás." In *In Medias Res* 2: 319–338.
- Balázs Géza. 2003. „Az új média retorikája." *Vigilia* 1: 12–18.
- Barabási Albert-László. 2022. *Behálózva.* Budapest: Libri Könyvkiadó Kft.
- Barna Gábor. 2011. *Kultúra és identitás.* Budapest: Nemzetközi Magyarságtudományi Társaság. Viewed on 15 February 2022. *https://mek.oszk.hu/10900/10902/10902.pdf*

■ Bayer József. 2002. Globális média, globális kultúra. *Magyar Tudomány* 6: 748–761.

■ Belenioti, Zoe-Charis and Vassiliadis, Chris A. 2017. "Branding in the New Museum Era." In *Strategic innovative marketing*, ed. Kavoura, Androniki-Sakas, P. Damianos and Tomaras, Petros, 115–121. Athens: Springer. **https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33865-1_14**

■ Cascone, Sarah. 2020. "The British Museum Has Put 300,000 Images of Its Most Famous Artworks Online So You Can Play Around With Them." Viewed on 18 October 2022. *https://news.artnet.com/art-world/british-museum-makes-collection-available-online-1850229*

■ Castells, Manuel (2005–2007 [1996–1998]). *Az információ kora. Gazdaság, társadalom és kultúra I–III.* Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó – Infonia Alapítvány.

■ Christensen, Christian. 2013. "@Sweden: Curating a Nation on Twitter." In *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture 11(1): Geopolitics and the Popular,* 33–46. London: Intellect Ltd. **https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2013.751855**

■ Csepeli György. 1987. *A szociálpszichológia vázlata.* Budapest: Múzsák Közművelődési Kiadó.

■ Egedy Gergely. 1998. „Konzervativizmus és nemzettudat." *Magyar Szemle 7,* 7–8: 135–162.

■ Fekete Péter. 2020. „Büszkék lehetünk az életünk minden mozgásterét befedő és meghatározó magyar kultúrára." *Magyar Hírlap.* Viewed on 18 October 2022. *https://www.magyarhirlap.hu/kultura/20200122-buszkek-lehetunk-az-eletunk-minden-mozgasteret-befedo-es-meghatarozo-magyar-kulturara*

■ Hansen, Allen C. 1984. USIA, Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age. New York: Praeger Publishers Division.

■ Hoffmann, Helen. 2015. "Digital public diplomacy on Twitter? The case of @sweden." *International Journal of Diplomacy and Economy 2,* 4: 278–298. **https://doi.org/10.1504/IJDIPE.2015.073931**

■ Káel Csaba. 2021. „Élmény! Minden tekintetben. Kulturális FMCG, avagy fast moving cultural goods." *Valóság: Társadalomtudományi Közlöny* LXIV: 96–101.

■ Kucsera Tamás Gergely. 2021. „Globalizált média, mediatizált kultúra." *Valóság: Társadalomtudományi Közlöny* LXIV: 90–94.

■ Löfgren, Emma. 2016. "That epic time Denmark and Sweden got into a Twitter war." Viewed on 11 February 2022. *https://www.thelocal.se/20160707/that-time-sweden-and-denmark-got-into-a-twitter-war/*

■ Lukácsy György. 2019. „A Nemzeti mindenkié program is bemutatkozott a Magyar Művészeti Akadémia nagy sikerű konferenciáján." Viewed on 10 October 2022. *https://nemzetiszinhaz.hu/hirek/2019/04/a-nemzeti-mindenkie-program-is-bemutatkozott-a-magyar-muveszeti-akademia-nagy-sikeru-konferenciajan*

■ McQuail, Denis. 2003. *A tömegkommunikáció elmélete.* Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

■ Morvay Szabolcs. 2019. „Európa Kulturális Fővárosa projekt: A veszprémi, győri és debreceni pályázatok összehasonlító elemzése." *Polgári Szemle 15,* 4–6: 321–339.
https://doi.org/10.24307/psz.2019.1221

■ Nemesi Attila László. 2015. „A nyelv a nyilvánosságban: versengő és társdiskurzusok." *Replika 6*: 97–111.
https://doi.org/10.18349/MagyarNyelv.2015.3.300

■ Petrovics Gabriella. 2022. „Az összetartozás esszenciája Hamlettől Bartókig." *Magyar Nemzet. https://magyarnemzet.hu/kultura/2022/04/az-osszetartozas-esszenciaja-hamlettol-bartokig* Viewed on 10 October 2022.

■ Poszler György. 2000. Európai egység és szociális gondolat. *Vigilia* 10: 722–730.

■ Rogers, Everett M. 1962. *Diffusion of Innovations.* Glencoe: Free Press.

■ Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1980. *A gazdasági fejlődés elmélete.* Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó.

■ *Simon-Nagy Lilla. 2012. Nyilvános diplomácia. Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem.* Viewed on 29 May 2022.
http://phd.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/705/1/Simon_Nagy_Lilla.pdf

■ Suzuki, Tadashi. 2022. „Van még remény a valódi globális kommunikációra." Viewed on 10 October 2022. *https://nemzetiszinhaz.hu/magazin/2022/10/van-meg-remeny-a-valodi-globalis-kommunikaciora*

■ Szörényi András. 2010. „A társadalmi diplomácia (public diplomacy) újraértelmezése a 21. században." *Külügyi Szemle* 4: 137–157.

■ Toor, Amar. 2017. "It's a weird time to be in charge of Sweden's Twitter account." Viewed on 11 February 2022. *https://www.theverge.com/2017/2/20/14670612/sweden-twitter-fake-terrorist-attack-president-trump-tweets*

■ Tóth Loretta. 2022. *Az udvariatlanság pragmatikája – Diplomácia 280 karakterben: a nemzetközi kapcsolatok alakulása a twiplomácia aranykorában.* PhD dolgozat. Budapest: Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem.

■ Vidnyánszky Attila. 2018. „Nemzeti – a nemzet színháza. Nemzeti Színház vezérigazgatói pályázat." Viewed on 10 October 2022. *https://nemzetiszinhaz.hu/uploads/files/pdf/Vidnyanszky_Attila_vezerigazgatoi_palyazat.pdf*

■ Virilio, Paul. 1991/2003. *Háború és televízió.* Budapest: Magus Design Stúdió Kft.

■ Virilio, Paul. 1998/2002. *Az információs bomba.* Budapest: Magus Design Stúdió Kft.

■ Virilio, Paul and Lotriger, Sylvére. 1993. *Tiszta háború.* Budapest: Balassi Kiadó.

■ Virilio, Paul. 2018. „Ellenállókká kell válni." Interview with J.A. Tillmann. *Szcenárium 6,* 8: 22–33.