

Chapter 10

Defending Communicative Spaces: The Remits and Limits of the European Parliament*

Katharine Sarikakis

Introduction

With the internationalization of communications policy, the role of international and supranational institutions in the process of decision-making has attracted the attention of academic research but also of actors in civil society. Surprisingly, perhaps, the European Parliament, given its special position as a unique institution of representational politics at an international level, has not been given the same degree of attention. There is a profound lack of studies of the role, potential and dynamics of European Parliamentary politics in issues of communications policy, whether these are related to media, telecommunications or more broad cultural policies.

This chapter examines the role of the European Parliament (EP) in the historical development of media policies in the European Union (EU). A historical overview of the institution in media policies provides information about aspects of internal EU policymaking processes, and therefore helps us understand the workings of the polity. Most importantly, however, it provides an insight into a unique case of supranational representation, which gains significance in its potential for dialogue with international social movements and social change. As a first-ever experiment in supranational representation, it provides the only source of historical data that can reveal the conditions under which emancipatory politics can

be pursued at a governance level in a globalized world. The importance of the institution is inherent in its representative role for European citizens, its position vis-à-vis unaccountable international elites, the de facto facilitation of a European, albeit elite, political public sphere and its definitional positive predisposition to 'public good' idea(l)s.

Based on the historical analysis of key media and communications policies in the EU, this discussion will seek to identify the role of the EP in determining the discourses surrounding the process of developing policy. In particular, this chapter discusses issues of cultural domination on the European cultural and communication policy agenda. Here, the notion of cultural imperialism is used as a broad concept that addresses cultural imbalances, not as a linear construction of top-down or one-way domination, but rather as a net of complex social and economic relations. The chapter first sets the background against which the EP is called to fulfil its mandate. It then analyzes the ways in which the institution has perceived and addressed key communications issues. This analysis takes into account that both the current 'singularity' of supranational political representation and the phenomenon of cultural imperialism are firmly located within the processes of globalization.

Unique or First of Its Kind? The Driving Context of a Supranational Parliament

In order to understand the nature of the EP, it is important to analyze and understand its positioning within the broader structure of the EU. It is widely accepted by the majority of integration theorists that the predominant objective in the creation of the EU polity was economic, even though the political grounds for pursuing integration were also strong, such as the aim of restoring and maintaining peace in Europe. Meanwhile, and especially with the expansion of EU jurisdiction, the integration process has been accompanied by criticism of the democratic deficit of the polity, improvements in the role of the EP notwithstanding. Increasingly, not only economic but also social issues are dealt with at an international level. However, political representation at this level involves only some representation of states and not of citizens. Furthermore, projects of regional economic integration are operational in the cases of NAFTA, MERCOSUR and the African Union. Questions of democracy and accountability at these levels of decision-making have become central in the continuation and legitimization of these regimes. In

March 2004 the inauguration of a Pan-African Parliament was followed by proposals for the creation of a MERCOSUR Parliament in September 2004. These developments further emphasize the pressing need for democratic representation within international economic regimes. They also seriously question a popular argument among students of the EU that the polity is a 'unique' political system, making the existence of the Parliament a 'uniquely' European phenomenon.

On the contrary, although the EP is currently the only supranational Parliament (with democratic representation), it is reasonable to argue that, as an institution, it is both an 'answer' to and a product of globalization (Sarikakis 2002, 2004). Political integration as a means of legitimation seems to follow efforts in market integration; this phenomenon leans closer to the analyses offered by scholars such as Peter Cocks and Jacques Mistral. Cocks (1980) argued that the process of European integration can be traced back as far as the Middle Ages, making the EU project neither unique nor 'contemporary'. Instead, as market integration has forced political and administrative cohabitations, so has the European polity come into existence through a history of gradual but consistent steps towards regionalized globalization. Moreover, Jacques Mistral (1982, 1986) of the Parisian Regulation School sees the world economy as being simultaneously an 'organic totality' of capitalist accumulation and a hierarchy of hegemonic nations, a tendency towards market integration coexisting with the fragmentation of systems of accumulation. This is because, in each nation, the process of accumulation is autonomous, deriving from the general laws of capitalism and from social relations and cultural conditions that are more particular. The state of the international regime of production, accumulation and circulation requires an appropriate regulatory milieu that provides trading actors with a degree of predictability in political and economic conditions, as well as with familiar and low-cost trade environments. It also requires new institutions.

Our discussion of the construction of the EU and the subsequent development of its governing bodies leans closer to Mistral's analysis, who argued that an international regime consists of three elements: 1. a regime of capitalist accumulation that serves as a model; 2. a configuration of economic spaces, and 3. complementary relations between these spaces (Mistral 1986, in Robles 1994). The third element is expressed in the role of non-state actors such as transnational companies in international regulation. Although not having the same function, such actors are granted

the same status as state institutions at an international level. The EU is a transnational regime within an international regime of accumulation and regulation that is largely facilitated and driven by communications technologies in the early twenty-first century. Here, the role of hegemony is to be found not only in the role of the American empire, most associated with the international regime and the question of cultural imperialism, but also in the immaterial realm, that of ideas and values. Therefore, the ideals of liberal democracy and freedom of expression or those of the 'European way of life' become some of the elements negotiated for their rhetorical and material value. Communications policies have come to the forefront of not only economic but also social and cultural struggle owing to the very nature of the role of communication as an inherent element of humanity.

The Policies

The development of the European Parliament has been subject to the larger institutional questions surrounding the development of the EU. Consequently, its formal powers to influence and direct policy within the EU have changed with the degree and nature of European integration. Its role in media policies has also followed this path, being heavily dependent upon the position defined for it by the nation states in their agreements (Intergovernmental Conferences). As an institution, it has grown from a decorative consulting body to a legislator almost equal with the Council of Ministers, made up of the representatives of member states. Its own institutional and formal increase of power, the changing function of the EU more generally and the external international economic regime have played an important role in defining the key issues in communications, in both the media and the broader field of cultural industries. Therefore, the analysis of the European Parliament's activity takes as its basis these two factors and coincides, in terms of the Parliament's 'efficiency' in influencing policy with the milestones in media policy at an EU level. The centrality of the European Parliament's role in dealing with this philosophical aspect as well as the 'pragmatic' issues of change in the media industries is visible in the very policy itself. Three periods of European Parliamentary activity in the last twenty years of media and cultural policy can be distinguished, each signifying the transformation of the media and cultural climate in Europe, the character of public debate and the position of strong actors in particular industries.

Phase 1: Making Waves

The first period of Parliament's active role in media policies involves the introduction of the fundamentals of media and cultural policy discourses to the EU 'domain'. It covers the period from the first parliamentary resolution in 1982 (European Parliament [EP] 1980a, 1980b, 1982) for policy at a European level to the establishment of the most important single policy for the single pan-European market in 1989 – the Television Without Frontiers Directive (TWF) (Peterson and Bomberg 1999: 204–5). In this first period of EU involvement in media policy, Parliament gained some legislative powers but was still in a disadvantaged position compared to the Council of Ministers. Media and communications markets were expanding from largely national to regional and international territories with the application of particular technologies.

Soon, by the end of the 1980s, media deregulation had become the single most common action taken by nation states, an integral part of the wave of privatization of public spaces and services. As is well known, existing dominant media conglomerates benefited the most from the deregulated environment. This observation was addressed as a phenomenon of internationalization or commercialization of media by an alarmed Parliament in one of its 1985 reports. The European Parliament saw the exacerbation of informational flow imbalances within the EU space as a particularly unfavourable condition for European media and culture industries but also for European integration.¹

Earlier, the European Parliament had asserted the significance of the role of the media in their twofold capacity of creating a European identity and disseminating information about the European Community, tasks that would presume a degree of non-commercial organization of communicative spaces (EP 1980a, 1980b, 1982, 1984b). The predominant issues represented in the resolutions adopted by the institution were cross-border themes of such as the protection of freedom of speech, the protection of human rights, and the preservation of cultural diversity in Europe, echoing the rhetoric of the beginnings of the European project, namely – peace, democracy and respect for human rights. The decisive point of departure from the discourse was the inclusion of cultural diversity as a factor in, and object of, supranational policymaking. This has been a persistent and constant pursuit in policymaking for over two decades. The European Parliament's core argument was the development of a political union, through the development of a common consciousness (EP 1985a: para. M).

In the early days of EU media policy history, the European Parliament commenced the advocacy of a socially responsible media model, a model that still continues to inspire the Parliament's positions today. The institution's limited authority, however, meant that the tactic – and necessity – of 'being a nuisance' was necessarily adopted as the means to pursue this ideal. It succeeded in defining the way in which cultural and media matters were to be addressed in the following years. In this 'discourse-setting' period, the European Parliament introduced eleven media-related reports and resolutions. This remarkable body of work was channelled into the drafting of the TWF Green Paper and the subsequent, albeit compromised, directive. Across these eleven resolutions, (prepared by the the Committee of Culture), often regarded as one of the 'less significant' or, 'soft' committees in the European Parliament²) some common themes emerged:

1. The concept of pan-European spaces of culture and media information as the drivers of political and cultural European integration.
2. The supranationalization of policy relating to the media and cultural sector (not provided for in the founding treaties of the EU), and hence the advocacy of a form of public interest-centred intervention and proactively integrationist politics in the European polity.
3. An emphasis on the political significance of cultural expression of European peoples in relation to the polity and on the preservation of spaces dedicated to the creation of national/local 'stories' free from cultural imperialistic industries; according to the European Parliament, 'the cultural diversity in Europe threatened to be overrun by international media commercialisation ... the media question [was] "a power question"' (EP 1985b: 272).³
4. Advocacy for a culture of public service broadcasting not sidetracked by commercial activities and for the independence of journalists particularly in commercial media.

It is interesting to note that 'cultural cohesion' has never been explicitly referred to in the work of the European Parliament, whereas 'cultural diversity' has become one of its main concepts. Cultural cohesion is conventionally thought to constitute a vital element of societies, alongside common language or other common cultural values. Scholars and politicians have sometimes attempted to approach the EU in terms of a society in need of cultural cohesion, but this has not been a view that the European Parliament shared. Although its propositions for

action in fostering a 'European consciousness', and therefore a form of cultural cohesion, underlie much of its conceptual work, the European Parliament has been careful not to suggest connotations of cultural homogenization, and therefore of dominance. Rather, the European Parliament has based its cultural and media policy initiatives on the ideas of diversity as part of a newly assumed European identity. In its response to the Commission's Green Paper and during subsequent readings of the TWF, the democratization of the Community through democratic and attuned media became one of the important aims of future policy. However, the 'Cultural', as opposed to the 'Economic', was already gaining some ground (Sarikakis 2004). The protection of cultural diversity, the creation of a new cultural identity and the reception of products as cultural rights (EP 1985a: para. 7), as well as the economic potential of cultural production, appeared to go hand in hand with the political and economic dimensions of the polity.

Phase Two: Expanding, Defending and Stabilizing – Lessons in Compromise

With the completion of the TWF Directive, another cycle of deliberations began. Some scholars point to the fact that some of the most important European Parliament proposals, such as the content quota and advertising restrictions, failed to become part of a more social agenda in the largely market-oriented TWF Directive (e.g. Collins 1996). However, European Parliamentarians feel that the drafting of a directive was itself a successful achievement, given the difficulties of setting the whole process into motion (the decision-making process lasted almost a decade) (Sarikakis 2004).

With the European Parliament now armed with a considerable policy document advocating economic integration in the field of the media, the second phase of activity began by focusing on a number of key issues. Media pluralism and ownership concentration, public service broadcasting and the strengthening of domestic production and talent were the main areas that the European Parliament now concentrated its efforts on. At the end of this period – from 1989 to 1997 – the institutional arrangement through the Amsterdam Treaty gave the European Parliament legislative powers almost equal to the Council of Ministers. Furthermore, two significant policy outcomes concluded this cycle: the Public Service Broadcasting Protocol to the Treaty of Amsterdam and the withdrawal of the draft Media Pluralism Directive.

By the end of the 1990s the media market had reached entropy, with major acquisitions taking place. The revision and amendment of the TWF Directive revived a number of issues as matters of public debate, such as the definition (and expansion) of European works, obligatory contribution of resources towards the production of independent works, and restrictions – albeit seriously compromised – to advertising space. Also important were renewed efforts to provide content quotas (though for a second time such attempts failed to produce definitive and binding policy) and the proactive protection of media content pluralism (rather than media ownership) without abandoning measures for the protection of national players as commercial or PSB providers. Further attempts to define content pluralism and control ownership patterns within the auspices of a new definitive policy provision (the Media Pluralism Directive) were unfruitful as private interests proved too strong to be overcome by a disunited front of anxious public service broadcasters (PSBs), and member states and diverse local/regional conditions (Sarikakis 2004). Parliament even decided to withdraw a proposal regarding the establishment of an independent broadcasting committee, under pressure from the advertising lobby, among others. Even more radical proposals (such as a policy to tackle pornography) were rejected by the Council.

Since the founding treaties did not allow for culture to be addressed by the policy mechanisms of the EU, any references to this issue were characterized as beyond the jurisdiction of the Community. The European Parliament's representations during the TWF debate addressed not simply the legalistic question of culture as part of Community jurisdiction, but also posed the 'institutional question' – the question of democratic representation. This brought the European Parliament into direct opposition with member states who would not happily embrace other forms of integration. European governments and EU jurisdiction were drawn into confronting the uneasy question regarding the direction of European integration. It continued pressing for reform of the constitutional law that would enable it to attain more legislative powers and expand its range of activities. The Treaty on the European Union, which came into force in 1993, signalled a breakthrough in European politics: Article 128 includes the audio-visual sector under the jurisdictions of the Community, whereby action between the member states 'shall be aimed at encouraging and supplementing their action [in such fields as] artistic and literary creation, including the audio-visual

sector' and that the community 'shall take cultural aspects into account in its action' (op. cit. in SCADPlus 2001).

Twelve years after the first call of the European Parliament for legislation in the cultural section, the founding Treaty of the European Community now included cultural products in its jurisdiction, thereby creating the necessary legal base while also expanding the jurisdiction of the Community as a whole. The area of culture, as directly related to that of consciousness and identity and furthermore as a significant component of democracy, became the point where even the redefinition of the essence of the Community could start taking place.

Alongside the battle to introduce cultural issues as part of the EU's agenda, the European Parliament had to address two of the most crucial media-related concerns facing Europe – pluralism and public service broadcasting. Within the space of just two years (1990–1992) the European Parliament introduced over ten reports specifically about the problem of ownership concentration and pluralism, leading to a highly controversial draft directive. This was soon withdrawn due to lack of agreement. Many MEPs clearly did not believe that a directive on pluralism would ever be developed some stating, the main reason for the failure in policy was the vulnerability of national governments, such as those in the U.K. and Germany, to transnational media moguls (see Sarikakis 2004). A similar observation about the power of industrialists was made by the European Federation of Journalists in their report on media ownership concentration in Eastern Europe (2003). Despite integral disagreements (as some MEPs were in favour of some degree of ownership concentration), consensus in the European Parliament acknowledged that uncontrolled and unlimited merger activities endangered the independence and freedom of journalists and the right to information (EP 1992: 6).

As the Maastricht Treaty introduced 'Culture', and therefore the means for cultural expression, into the sphere of the EU's jurisdiction, the European Parliament further argued for the protection of public media space, this time public service broadcasting systems. The inability and unwillingness of nation states and industry to allow a positive policy on the problems of ownership concentration and media pluralism to find fertile ground and, the profound insult against the legitimacy of Public Service Broadcasters role in the market were two of the most significant battles the European Parliament had to fight. Its arguments for the protection of PSBs were based upon the ideas of cultural diversity and the protection

of communicative, cultural spaces from commercialization. As earlier, at the beginning of its advocacy work, the European Parliament repeated its calls for the establishment of pan-European channels – also based on the ideals of public service.

As the European Parliament argued, the public service broadcasting system 'before being a technical, legal or economic one, addresses the needs and concerns of citizens and consumers, whose interests in, *inter alia*, civil rights, employment, cultural diversity or consumer protection, are not necessarily the same as those of merchants' (EP 1998b: para. 2). This came as a response to the guidelines drafted by the Commission at the request and pressure of commercial broadcasters. According to these, the PSBs would have to choose one of the funding models suggested by the Commission: to be solely funded by public funding; dual funding; or funded by public tenders. The consequences for the funding of public service broadcasting and control over content production would have been disastrous, as PSBs would have little control over their long-term development as institutions and as economic factors. The European Parliament not only successfully advocated for the protection of PSBs, it also played a central role in the drafting of the public service broadcasting protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty. The Commission was soon forced to withdraw its proposal. In 1997 the Amsterdam Treaty made a specific commitment to the role of public service broadcasting in Europe. The European Parliament's resolution called on broadcasters to enrich their multicultural content and encourage a feeling of solidarity among different cultures (EP 1998b: para. 37); to improve their accountability to the public (para. 29); to set up a list of guidelines and principles that govern the PSBs' activities (para. 34) and to promote equal opportunities policies for the inclusion of women and men in their workforce and content (para. 27). Furthermore, the Resolution introduced the principle of universal access in the Information Society (i.e., in para. AB).

The alliance formed by national broadcasters, sympathetic governments and Directorates-General, and professional organizations supported the European Parliament's work, which resulted in the public service broadcasting protocol. The dominant position in the debate surrounding cultural and communications policy had been occupied by questions of media competition and the economic potential of emerging technologies. The well-known struggle over the introduction of content quotas in the TWF,⁴ but also the 'cultural exemption' achieved at the end of the WTO negotiation rounds, due to the insistence of the European Parliament

and the strong position by certain countries, were responses clearly addressing a belief in the role of culture and expression in sustaining human communities and in creating new ways of understanding one's own lifeworld. However, the European Parliament also perceived crude commercialization as the threat posed mainly by (U.S.) domination of cultural products.

Phase 3: Coming Full Circle – Reviving the Ghosts

The current third phase is characterized by the commercialization of cultural industries and constant pressures on PSBs' existence in most European countries. The commercialization of content in the public sector indicates the shift of cultural production towards easily consumable and marketable artefacts. As expected, the main beneficiaries are media and communications technology conglomerates, which dominate the market through vertical and horizontal integration of services and production. Responding to the Commission's monitoring report on the TWF's effects in European countries, the European Parliament (2001) and the recent review of the TWF Directive (December 2003) call for further amendment to the directive to include issues of technological development, despite the Commission's reluctance. A new amendment would be of particular interest, as it would demonstrate continuity or changes in the debates led by the European Parliament.

More importantly, the European Parliament, having fought some of the most significant battles in media policy at international level, returns to address the problems of media pluralism and ownership concentration with a number of its own initiatives. The most important of these initiatives are found in the resolution voted by the Parliament on the Commission's fourth report on the TWF (EP 2003) and its resolution on breaches of freedom of expression in the EU (EP 2004). Both documents call upon the Commission anew to draft policy that addresses the problem of media concentration. The European Parliament stated that a 'complete overhaul' of the TWF Directive is needed to address the effects of communications technologies. The proposed way is the synthesis of a legislative framework that brings together the directives of TWF, e-commerce and copyright.

The European Parliament also repeated its call for a transnational broadcasting council, this time in the form of a working group made up of representatives of public and private broadcasters as well as national regulators. In this resolution, the role of pluralism in cultural diversity,

freedom of information and democracy is once again emphasized. However, nowhere is it more strongly argued than in the resolution adopted on breaches of freedom of information (EP 2004). This controversial report and resolution originally referred to the Italian politician and media proprietor Silvio Berlusconi by name, although during the debate in the European Parliament references to named individuals had to be omitted. Regarding media ownership concentration, it stated: 'the Italian system presents an anomaly owing to a unique combination of economic, political and media power in the hands of one man – the current President of the Italian Council of Ministers.' Referring to a study by the European Institute of the Media, the European Parliament expressed concern about the state of media ownership in the EU and the lack of a policy framework to deal with the increasing concentration of ownership and even abuse of power. For the drafting of both reports, a number of European Parliamentary committees were involved alongside the Committee on Culture and Education; the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs was, for instance, especially involved in the report on breaches of freedom of expression. Such broad-based involvement shows the extent not only of the European Parliament's concern about such issues, but also the media's impact across the spheres of individual liberties, human rights and internal affairs.

Historically, the development of media and cultural policies in the EU has its roots in the political engagement of the European Parliament. The European Parliament has emphasized the significance of the role of the public service broadcasting system for European societies and the special role of media in constructing a European identity. Media and cultural industries are viewed not only as tools to preserve and expand existing cultural traditions and languages but also as active facilitators of new cultures and identities. The active rather than passive (consuming) function of media is also advocated in their role in political processes and in the project of cultural integration, through the potential of technologies to act as two-way vehicles for the exchange of information among European peoples. The protection of content, pluralism and the public service broadcasting system have constituted the central focus of an ongoing debate for over twenty years. During this third phase of activity, the work of the European Parliament – now in its sixth term and with a still larger number of people and countries to represent – has become even more relevant to the international character of the media and cultural issues. In the preparation and review phase leading to the

adoption of the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive (European Parliament and Council 2007; this is replacing the Television Without Frontiers Directive), brave positions were put forward by the European Parliament. For example, the underlying approach to media and culture as one based on basic principles irrespectively of their technological aspects of delivery or consumption has been one cultivated by EP's long term involvement in the protection of culture and citizens. Initial proposals related to the controlling of sexist, racist and other harmful content to be expanded to digital platforms and internet content derived also from long standing efforts by EP to introduce proactive regulation in the communications industry. Again this new directive manifests the signs of compromise between parliamentary based attempts for socially proactive policy and resistance for any but the minimum of regulation by industrial actors (see Sarikakis 2007).

The Relevance of the European Parliament's Work and Its Blind Spot

In its work, the European Parliament deals with an increasing volume of economic and social affairs that transcend the boundaries of select committees and jurisdictions. Despite internal disagreements and tensions about the degree of 'protection' of media and cultural industries, there is a consensus that media issues are too important to be left to competition policy. A significant number of interventions have been made by the institution that aim to shape the discourse and agenda of EU media policy. This requires that the European Parliament is on a constant 'alert mode', not least because private interests in media markets are immense – the industrial lobby is well organized and has strong allies among certain, technocratic, parts of the Commission as well as national governments. This does not mean that MEPs do not share free-market ideas; however, even the neo-liberal fraction signs up to the need for the protection of communicative spaces.

The history of the European Parliament, therefore, has produced some of the most significant cornerstones of transnational policy not only at EU level but also international level. Examples are the special reference to PSBs in the Treaty of Amsterdam, which is in effect EU constitutional law, and the exemption of cultural products alongside basic services of water, health and education. Despite such victories, the European Parliament can never afford to rest on its laurels, as threats to

all these realms of human existence and activity are very real, and not simply rhetorical. The European Parliament's overarching aim has been to defend the media against commercialization and cultural domination, both through the preservation of existing communicative spaces and the active creation of new ones. It has therefore advocated for the protection of existing public-based communicative spaces such as the PSBs and the cultural industry, not only in its ability to produce goods that can compete but, most importantly, in preserving and nurturing nodes of diverse cultural expression. Minority languages, museums and cultural cities, audio-visual and electronic media production are some of the 'spaces' where the creation of a polity and European identity can emerge. Democratic ideals alone are not strong enough arguments for the development of policy in an environment that prioritizes production and accumulation. Therefore the economic potential of these communicative spaces has had to be proven not only to technocratic Commissioners and neo-liberal states but also to the European Parliamentarians themselves.

In its effort to protect communicative spaces, whether in the form of PSBs, domestic cultural production or even freedom of expression, the European Parliament has favoured certain spaces while failing to turn its attention to others. As part of its advocacy for space for cultural expression, the idea of cultural domination has played an important role, not simply as a normative justification for policy proposals but also as a perceived real threat to Europeanness. Content quotas, state aid to domestic independent audio-visual producers, media pluralism and diversity of languages have been approached as tools in the protection against cultural domination, and in particular American cultural imperialism. It is true that the single European market has benefited the United States more than any other single nation, which is not surprising as the hegemonic position of political and economic players is maintained through the integration of markets.⁵ However, cultural dominations within the EU remain the blind spot of the European Parliament. And history has shown that, unless issues of immediate economic profit are brought up by the European Parliament, they will remain invisible in elite politics.

Policies designed to boost European production such as the MEDIA (and MEDIA Plus) programmes have borne fruit. The increase in film production can be mostly observed in nations with strong cinematic traditions within their own territory. Thus, France and Germany are the strongest producers, followed by Denmark and the Netherlands.

Furthermore, Spain, Italy and France have strong links to Latin America with co-productions occupying fourteen of the twenty top places in the Latin American box office in 2001. Germany, Spain, Italy and Great Britain are certainly the main producers in the EU but also the main beneficiaries from admissions sales. Overall, France is the dominant EU 'exporter' with 12 per cent of total admissions for French films, followed by Great Britain (7.5 per cent) Germany (3.9 per cent) and Italy (2.1 per cent) (Focus 2002). All other EU countries together account for the remaining 5.9 per cent, while Hollywood still maintains its dominance.

Media ownership concentration is reaching extraordinary proportions, resulting in actual oligopoly in some cases. Out of the top-five most successful British publishers, three belong to German transnationals, one is U.S.-based and one is British (Hodder Headline). More specifically, both Transworld, the number-one U.K. publishing house which produced over six million copies in 1998, and Random House, the fourth largest in sales, belong to Bertelsmann AG, the German media company; HarperCollins, the second largest in sales, belongs to News Corporation, which is owned by the Murdoch media empire (Stokes 1999: 13). The situation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has recently been recorded by a study on behalf of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) (2003). The complex and murky patterns of media ownership reveal that the usual suspects are the dominant buyers in national media. These are mainly Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia and, in particular: the German Passauer Neue Presse, which owns newspapers in Germany, Austria and, now, in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia; Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ), which owns newspapers in Germany, Austria, most CEE countries and occupies a dominant position in Bulgaria (EFJ 2003: 8); and Axel Springer Verlag (Germany), which is the largest publishing company in Europe and owns a majority of magazines in Poland, Hungary and Romania. The Scandinavian group Orkla is also expanding into CEE countries, including Ukraine. Increasingly, the U.S. media is also gaining control of a large portion of media in CEE countries, through U.S. programming, satellite and cable broadcasting and the acquisition of media companies. Here, again we find the major U.S.-based/U.S.-owned media companies such as AOL Time Warner and Viacom dominating the media sphere.

The architecture of the EU facilitates the integration of 'fragmented' market spaces into a common space of integrated markets, in terms of capital, labour mobility and sustainability. But legitimacy of the

project is a prerequisite for internal stability and predictability, a feature that is also especially attractive to governments of states eager to be part of the EU, despite the opportunity costs their countries will face. Governments are subjected to pressures from stronger nations with stronger market forces and are more vulnerable to media commercial interests (Galperin 1999; Hoffmann-Riem 1996). Nentwich and Falkner (1997) argue that, where corporatist interests prevail, the European Parliament is much less powerful than national parliaments. 'Unity in diversity' has been addressed by the European Parliament as the concept that seeks to epitomize contemporary Europe and provide a vision for a future EU, while cultural imperialism has been perceived as one of the most powerful 'enemies' of this vision. However, the threat of cultural imperialism is recognized only when it is imposed by external actors. The internal pathologies are only addressed in terms of conventional understanding of media pluralism. Again, even within this context, the European Parliament has not been able to develop its own 'panopticon' across the often subtle, yet nonetheless significant practices of dominance, which is expressed at multiple levels and in complex ways. Besides media ownership, language and cultural practices also become objects of imbalanced relations. With the accession of CEE countries into the EU, 20 million people will be added to the 40 million people currently speaking minority languages. Although the (currently eleven) official languages of the EU are the official languages of the member states, this is not a synonym for 'preferred' languages. Initially French and increasingly English have become the preferred languages of the EU, particularly in communications with third parties. It is clear that even policies designed to revive and protect this aspect of cultural diversity are not particularly effective. Although regional development programmes and language-targeted initiatives have assisted the revival of languages, such as Gaelic, most of Europe's languages are spoken only within their national or regional territories. As some critics point out, the languages of incoming countries will be official on paper, but in reality will be treated as second class (Carlson 2003).

A number of internal independence claims and distinct minority communities within the member states of the EU (the cases of Northern Ireland, Basque Country, and Scotland, for example) pose questions about the degree of recognition of their respective cultures, including those of language, education and religion. Most of the linguistic and nationality minorities in Europe have currently no legal status or media or official

public presence (Minority 2000.net). Even so, some minorities are better represented than others, the different power positions of internal minorities also indicating the limitations of cultural policy attempts to encourage linguistic diversity.

As Europe becomes more diverse in its ethnic composition, the inclusion and organic integration of the protection of 'immigrant' cultures should also be pursued. Currently, over 30 million people living in the EU have no citizenship. The issues surrounding their cultural heritage are closely interrelated with current ideological and political predispositions about the nature of citizenship. The dimensions of the latter are addressed in particularly limited contexts, involving rights and responsibilities, attachment to nationhood and significant dependency on linguistic competency. The social and cultural dimensions of citizenship, however, are rarely addressed in the EU context, although generally cultural policy could be categorized as citizenship policy. Some of its unspoken effects in the lived experience of certain historically discriminated or minoritized groups go so far as to become matters of survival.

The political change in CEE states has been accompanied by an eagerness of their governments to 'fit into' the Western world. The conditions for accession to the EU prescribe that incoming countries should first satisfy the *acquis communautaire*, which includes meeting the economic criteria. Such conditions are actively promoting the 'adjustment' of educational, administrative and even linguistic practices to the order of a particular conception of the EU – a conception largely manufactured by particular social groups (elites). An example of this dimension of impacting on the internal organization of CEE societies is the effect of processes of adaptation on the economic, social and cultural lives of citizens. For instance, policies to 'streamline' administrative and economic systems are taking away earned women's rights. Already, research shows the ways in which the introduction of neo-liberal policies in Central and Eastern Europe is undermining women's socio-economic status. Masculinist cultures rise together with higher unemployment for women and the withdrawal of welfare systems especially important for women, such as childcare, and systems encouraging women's participation in formal politics and political representation (Watson 2000). Gender-imposed unemployment is one such example (Watson 2000). These are effects caused by the transition to a different socio-economic system (liberal capitalism) accompanied by and adhering to a patriarchal ideological system.

Remits and Limits of Supranational Representation

Culture and media in European policy occupy the two ends of an ostensibly defiant relationship between motives: for the European Parliament, they become the watchdog of integration – for others and, in particular, the technocratic Directorates-General of the Commission, an economic asset (Delgado-Moreira 2000; Sarikakis 2004). The transformative potential of cultural policy is left to the jurisdiction of regions in the same way that policy is designed to bring common initiatives into different spaces without bridging them. Even programmes aimed at fostering European co-productions, especially in the audio-visual field, may not necessarily provide the conditions for genuine cultural expression. Culture as a commodity is therefore heavily influenced by market pressure and industry deregulation. The policy adopted for the protection of ‘indigenous’ cultural production aims to counterbalance Hollywood’s predominance in Europe. For this reason, initially internally but later also internationally, co-productions in the audio-visual sector are supported through funds and training programmes. The European industry has benefited from these programmes, but at the same time the benefits cannot be enjoyed equally. Moreover, the increased need for cooperation, due to the difficulty in securing funding outside the Hollywood industry, has resulted in leading international co-productions having to ‘assume global characteristics ... that is, forms that are culturally indistinct and which eschew political content’ (Baltruschat 2003: 166). The outcome, a homogenized product tailor-made for international markets, bears little difference to the familiar Hollywood recipe.

The initiatives taken to promote ‘Europeanness’ aim to construct public consciousness about a particular space and form of society in the making. However, these policies are not confident in their definition of ‘European’. Sassatelli (2002), analysing the policy behind and organization of the ‘European Capital of Culture’, emphasizes that the ‘European’ focus remains blurred; it is a combination of references to distinct points in the cultural and geopolitical space of the EU rather than something clearly ‘of Europe’. What this tells us about is not the lack of or need for the construction of – or even the undiscovered existence of – pure Europeanness; rather, it indicates the ways in which conflicting images of Europe have been articulated in its policy trajectory.

The European Parliament as the embodiment of the institutionalized version of citizens' representation in elite suprastructures is a 'lonely' experiment in the current map of international relations, despite the fact that, increasingly, demands for an active input from European Parliamentarians in these processes have become more visible (freedominfo.org 2004). The reasonable expectation of the institution is that it should be closer to European citizens than to governments and to a great extent this is the case, seeking to ensure that citizens' views are put forward. Still, the power of national dynamics and in particular those of capital and government are strong, manifested in the effects of governmental or industrialist pressure on a range of policies. It is also demonstrated in the way in which European integration has been approached, not as a cosmopolitan or intercultural collaborative project but rather as a fiscal exercise in market integration that requires the expansion to other fields and the creation of new institutions (Mistral 1991).

The European Parliament expresses concerns about the state of the media in a very similar way to national parliaments. A number of the issues addressed through parliamentary resolutions, such as proposals for an independent broadcasting committee, the threat to pluralism and the problem of media ownership concentration and foreign ownership and the perceived threat of cultural imperialism, are common concerns among industrialized nations. The report on Cultural Sovereignty commissioned by the House of Commons of Canada includes almost identical proposals to those made by the European Parliament (House of Commons 2003).

However, similarly, the position of the institution within a state-like formation that is constituted by processes of production and accumulation sets the limits of its 'radicalism'. As Mistral points out, 'regular capital formation cannot be ensured without the existence of solid institutional frameworks' (1986: 181) that make the transition from differentiations into stable principles of action for private agents and rules of cohesion for states. Putting aside the negotiations and network games that are inherent in any decision-making process, the European Parliament is an institution that largely fulfils the purpose of the EU as a supranational administration, which entails, like any other state in the industrialized world, the concurrent existence of structural constraints and 'paradoxes' of spaces of resistance. The success of these moments and spaces of resistance depends on the network of alliances, the make-up of the

political fractions and the positioning of national governments. Also, its own preoccupation with 'external' threats, which has dominated so much of its rhetoric for the development of policy, is based on largely ignoring internal processes of media and cultural domination, which indicates that the ideas and pragmatics driving the advocating work of the institution do not pose an irreversible threat to the interests of 'domestic' capital.

If the criterion that would quantify the degree of legitimization of or resistance to cultural domination were the degree to which it has supported national cultural industries compared to 'foreign' ones, then the European Parliament can be said to have exercised considerable resistance. The institution has certainly provided valuable advocacy for national PSBs and domestic productions; it has mobilized training programmes and has achieved a very moderate but nevertheless secure funding system for European works; it has intervened in matters of content provision and continues to defend the political significance of the cultural sphere in the context of international agreements (e.g. WTO negotiations and the World Summit on the Information Society). It enables further resistance in the space created for the debates over citizenship issues, the role of citizens and not just consumers, cultural entities in Europe, expression and diversity.

However, the European Parliament's angst over the domination of American culture in the European space reveals a blind spot in as far as internal processes of domination are concerned. Its rather unsystematic engagement with policies that resist practices of internal cultural domination at the expense of internal minorities and non-market-driven creative and other public spheres has served to legitimize a status quo that supports 'European' expression in order for it to compete in a market arena. Furthermore, 'culture' is addressed mostly as an object of commercial value or as an antiquated, static site for visitors, but rarely as the realm where social relations are formed and maintained. Attempts to deal with the cultural dimensions of the EU still are often blurred and at the bottom of the polity's list of priorities. Nevertheless, the possibility of debating an alternative to media and cultural consumerism, albeit restricted, provides an oppositional discourse to market sovereignty that can be used by civil-society organizations as an entry point for the representation of matters of social justice. Elite structures are hardly the place for radical politics, so resistance is extended mainly to the ways and degrees that citizens have an input in policymaking. Despite the problems, resistance takes place with the legitimization of certain

debates and in particular those that are in conflict with private interests. Resistance also takes place in processes of mediation between masses and unaccountable elites. The European Parliament is actively involved in global media policy and signals the possibility that supranational representational politics might be one of the ways forward in a globalized world. In that form, parliamentary representation could provide further links to the global networking grassroots that seek to address universally shared concerns. Dependency on their electorate and relative autonomy from nation states also means that successful lobbying on behalf of civil society makes the European Parliament more accessible than other EU structures and certainly more than international organizations.

Bibliography

- Baltruschat, D. 2003. 'International TV and Film Co-production: A Canadian Case Study', in S. Cottle (ed.), *Media Organisation and Production*. London: Sage.
- Bobrow, D.B., Eulau, H., Landau, M., Jones, C.O. and Axelrod, R. 1977. 'The Place of Policy Analysis in Political Science: Five Perspectives', *American Journal of Political Science* 21(2): 415–33.
- Carlson, C. 2003. 'Dying Words: EU Expansion to Affect Minority Languages'. Retrieved from <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/08/15082003160020.asp>.
- Cocks, P. 1980, 'Towards a Marxist Theory of European Integration' *International Organisation*, 34 (1) 4
- Delanty, G. 1998. 'Social Theory and Transformation: Is There a European Society?' *Sociological Research Online* 3(1). Retrieved from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/1/1.html>
<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/spcresonline/3/1/1.html>.
- Delgado Moreira, J.M. 2000. 'Cohesion and Citizenship in EU Cultural Policy', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38 (3): 449–70.
- European Audiovisual Observatory. 2002. *Focus 2002 World Film Market Trends*. Strasburg: European Audiovisual Observatory.
- European Federation of Journalists. 2003. *Eastern Empires. Foreign Ownership in Central and Eastern European Media: Ownership, Policy Issues and Strategies*. Brussels: European Federation of Journalists.
- European Parliament. 1980a. *Report on the Information Policy of the European Community, of the Commission of the European Communities and of the European Parliament (the Schall Report)*. PE Doc 1-596/80.
- . 1980b. 'The Threat to Diversity of Opinion Posed by the Commercialisation of New Media'. Doc 1-422/80. Cited in European Parliament 1984a. ———. 1982. 'Resolution on Radio and Television Broadcasting in the European Community, in European Communities', *Official Journal of the European Communities*, OJ No C87/109–112, 05.04.1982.

- . 1984a. *Resolution on Broadcast Communication in the European Community (the Threat to Diversity of Opinion Posed by the Commercialisation of New Media)*, OJ No C117/198–201 30.4.84.
- . 1984b. *Resolution on a Policy Commensurate with New Trends in European Television*, OJ No C17/201–205 30.4.84.
- . 1984c. *Resolution on Broadcast Communication in the European Community (the Threat to Diversity of Opinion Posed by the Commercialization of New Media)*, OJ No C 117/198–201, 30.04.1984/1985b.
- . 1985a. *Bericht im Namen des Ausschusses für Jugend, Kultur, Bildung, Information und Sport über eine Rahmenordnung für eine europäische Medienpolitik auf der Grundlage des Grünbuchs der Kommission über die Errichtung des gemeinsamen Marktes für den Rundfunk, insbesondere über Satellit und Kabel*, (KOM(84)300 endg.), PE 92 783/endg.
- . 1985b. *Europäische Medienpolitik in Verhandlungen des Europäischen Parlaments*, Nr.2-329/272 12.09.1985.
- . 2001. *Report on the Third Report of the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the Application of Directive 89/552/EEC 'Television without Frontiers'*, A5-0286/2001 Final.
- . 2003. *Report on the Fourth Report of the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the Application of Directive 89/552/EEC* A5-0251/2003.
- . 2004. *Resolution on the Risk of Breaches of Freedom of Expression and Information in the Union, particularly in Italy*, T5-0373/2004.
- freedominfo.org. 2004. 'IFTI Watch Update', February 24. Retrieved from <http://freedominfo.org/ifti.htm>.
- European Parliament and Council 2007 Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities
- Galperin, H. 1999. 'Cultural Industries Policy in Regional Trade Agreements: The Cases of NAFTA, the European Union and MERCOSUR', in *Media Culture and Society* 21: 627–48.
- Hamelink, C. 1994. *The Politics of World Communication*. London: Sage.
- Hoffmann-Riem, W. 1996. *Regulating Media: The Licensing and Supervision of Broadcasting in Six Countries*. New York: Guilford Press.
- House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. 2003. *Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting*. Retrieved from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/37/2/HERI/Studies/Reports/herirp02/herirp02-e.pdf>.
- Landau, M. 1977. 'The Proper Domain of Policy Analysis', in D.B. Bobrow et al., 'The Place of Policy Analysis in Political Science: Five Perspectives', *American Journal of Political Science* 21(2): 415–33.
- Lees, T., Ralph, S., and Langham Brown, J. (eds). 2000. *Is Regulation Still an Option in a Digital Universe?* Luton: University of Luton Press.

- McChesney, B. 2001. 'Policing the Unthinkable', *openDemocracy*. Retrieved from <http://www.opendemocracy.net>.
- Mistral, J. 1986. 'Régime international et trajectoires nationales', in R. Boyer (ed.), *Capitalismes, fin de siècle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 167–202.
- O'Rourke, B. 2002. 'Eastern Europe: Language Group Turns Its Attention to Minority Languages'. Retrieved from <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/11/27112002170014.asp>.
- Peterson, J. and Bomberg, E. 1999. *Decision-making in the European Union*. London: Macmillan.
- Robins, K. 1991. 'Tradition and Translation: National Culture in its Global Context', in J. Corner and S. Harvey (eds), *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Robles, A.C. 1994. *French Theories of Regulation and Conceptions of the International Division of Labour*. London: Macmillan.
- Sarikakis, K. 2002 'Supranational Governance and Paradigm Shift in Communications Policy-making: The Case of the European Parliament', in M. Raboy (ed.), *Global Media Policy in the New Millennium*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- . 2004. *Powers in Media Policy: The Challenge of the European Parliament*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- . 2007. (guest editor) 'Media and Cultural Policy in the European Union' Special Issue of *European Studies: An Interdisciplinary Series in European Culture, History and Politics* 24
- Sassatelli, M. 2002. 'Imagined Europe: The Shaping of a European Cultural Identity through EU Cultural Policy', *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(4): 435–51.
- Schiller, H. 1969. *Mass Communications and the American Empire*. New York: Augustus M. Kelly.
- . 1996. *Information Inequality: The Deepening Social Crisis in America*. New York: Routledge.
- Screen Digest. 1998. 'Mergers and Acquisitions. Focus on Distribution Channels'. Retrieved from [http://www.screendigest.com/yp_98-04\(2\).htm](http://www.screendigest.com/yp_98-04(2).htm).
- Stevenson, N. 1999. *The Transformation of the Media: Globalization, Morality and Ethics*. London and New York: Pearson.
- TVinsite. 2002. 'Top 25 Media Companies'. Retrieved 17 October 2002 from <http://www.tvinsite.com/broadcastingcable>
- Veronis Suhler Merchant Bank. 2002. 'Communications Industry Report'. Retrieved from http://www.veronissuhler.com/articles/article_202.html.
- Vincent, R.C., Nordenstreng, K. and Traber, M. 1999. *Towards Equity in Global Communication*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Wallerstein, I. 1974. *The Modern World System*. New York: Academic Press.
- Watson, P. 2000. 'Politics, Policy and Identity', *Journal of European Public Policy* 5(1).

Notes

- * This is an updated and revised version of the article published in the *International Communication Gazette*, 2005, 67(2)
- 1. The European Parliament responded to the Green Paper as follows: '[We are] facing the danger that the Community might miss the opportunity to realize a common media policy and, instead, through the use of technical development allow the formation of irreversible international media structures of a commercial character, and monopolies or information systems of non-European origin' (translated from German by the author). See also Sarikakis 2004.
- 2. For a discussion on the inner dynamics of the European Parliament, see Sarikakis 2004.
- 3. 'Medienfragen sind ... Machtfragen'.
- 4. See Collins 1994; Sarikakis 2004.
- 5. The United States has a 65.4-per-cent share of cinema admissions in the EU, and the deficit in the audio-visual sector trade between the EU and States is growing (Focus 2002).