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DEFENDING COMMUNICATIVE SPACES
The Remits and Limits of the European Parliament

Katharine Sarikakis

Abstract / The role of the European Parliament in the formation of media and cultural policies is a largely underresearched area, despite the implications of the institution's active involvement in supranational decision-making regimes for emancipatory politics in Europe. Through a historical overview, this article argues that the EP has successfully defended existing communicative spaces and promoted the creation of new ones. In its efforts to defend European communications and culture from processes of cultural domination, however, it has failed to acknowledge dominations within the EU. The article positions the institution within a supranational arrangement of economic and political power and identifies the structural constraints and resistance space for public interest centred politics.

Keywords / broadcasting / civil society / communications policy / communicative space / cultural imperialism / European Parliament / globalization / media pluralism

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 of the civil society. Surprisingly perhaps, the European Parliament (EP), 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 EP politics in issues of communications policy, whether these are related to media, telecommunications or broader cultural policies.

This article examines the role of the EP in the historical development of media policies in the European Union. The study of the institution provides information about aspects of the internal EU policy-making 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 that 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 of European citizens, its position vis-à-vis unaccountable international elites, the de facto facilitation of a European, albeit elite, political public sphere and its authentic predisposition/intention to 'public good' idea(l)s.

Based on the historical analysis of key media and communications policies in the EU, the discussion seeks to identify the role of the EP in determining the discourses surrounding the process of developing policy. In particular, the discussion revolves around the question of cultural domination, as a phenomenon, policy problem and key political issue behind the rationale of policies but also their direction. 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. This article first sets the background against which the EP is called to fulfil its mandate. It then proceeds to analyse 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 institution, it is important to analyse and understand its positioning within the broader structure of the EU. It is widely accepted by the majority of integration theorists that the creation of the EU polity had predominantly an economic objective, even where the political grounds for pursuing integration were strong, such as the aim of restoring and maintaining peace in Europe; the survival of nation-states through collaboration, or the power of the charismatic political figures in setting European integration in motion. Meanwhile, and in particular with the expansion of EU jurisdiction, criticisms of the democratic deficit of the polity have accompanied the integration process – the improvement of the role of the European Parliament 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 the Pan-African Parliament was followed by strong 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 'unique' European phenomenon.

On the contrary, although the EP is currently the only supranational

parliament, it is reasonable to argue that as an institution it is both a response 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 Jacque 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 integration. Moreover, Jacque Mistral (1982, 1986) of the Parisian Regulation School sees world economy as being simultaneously an 'organic totality' of capitalist accumulation and a hierarchy of hegemonic nations, a tendency towards market integration coexisting with 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 some predictability of political and economic conditions, as well as 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; cited in Robles, 1994). The fourth element is expressed in the role of non-state actors, such as transnational companies, in international regulation. Although not of 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 21st 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 in their rhetorical and material value. Communications policies have come to the forefront of economic but also social and cultural struggle due to the very nature of the role of communication as an inherent element of humanity.

The Policies

The development of the 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, much dependent upon the position defined for it by the

nation-states in their agreements (intergovernmental conferences). As an insti-
tution, it has grown from a decorative consulting body to a legislator almost
equal with the Council of Ministers, 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 the media
as well as the broader field of cultural industries. Therefore, the analysis of the
activity of the EP takes as its basis and criterion these two factors and
coincides in terms of its 'efficiency' to influence policy, with the milestones in
media policy at an EU level. The centrality of the EP's role in dealing with this
philosophical as well as the 'pragmatic' issues of change in the media indus-
tries is visible in the very policy itself. Three periods of EP activity in the last
20 years of media and cultural policy can be distinguished that signify 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 the Parliament's active role in media policies involves the
introduction of the fundaments of media and cultural policy discourses to the
EU 'domain'. It covers the period from the first parliamentary resolution in
1982 (EP, 1980a, 1980b, 1982) for policy at a European level to the estab-
lishment of the most important single policy for the single pan-European
market in 1989, the Television Without Frontiers Directive (TVWF) (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 disadvan-
taged position compared to the Council of Ministers. Media and communi-
cations markets were expanding from largely national to regional and
international territories with the application of particular technologies. Soon,
by the end of 1980s, media deregulation had become the one most common
action taken by nation-states, an integral part of the wave of privatization of
public spaces and services, an inherent problem in neoliberal politics. As is
known, existing dominant media conglomerates benefited the most from the
deregulated environment. This observation was addressed as a phenomenon of
internationalization of commercialization of media, by an alarmed Parliament
in one of its 1985 reports. The EP 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.
Drawing upon one of the major elements of the cultural imperialism thesis, it
introduced policy proposals for a common action in the EU.[1]

Earlier, the EP 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,
1984). The predominant issues represented in the resolutions adopted by the
institution were cross-border themes of 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 policy-making. This has been a persistent and constant pursuit in policy-making for over two decades. The EP'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 EP commenced the advocacy of a socially responsible media model, a model that continues to inspire Parliament's positions until today. The institution's limited authority, however, meant that the tactic – and necessity – of 'being a nuisance' was 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 EP introduced 11 media-related reports and resolutions. This remarkable body of work was channelled to the drafting of the TVWF Green Paper and subsequent, albeit compromised, Directive. Across these 11 resolutions, prepared by the Committee of Culture, regarded as one of the 'less significant', 'soft' committees in Parliament,[2] some common themes emerge. Parliament:

- Introduced the concept of pan-European spaces of culture and media information as the drivers of political and cultural European integration;
- Insisted on the supranationalization of policy related to the media and cultural sector (not provided by the founding Treaties of the EU), advocating therefore a form of public interest centred intervention and proactively integrationist politics in the European polity;
- Emphasized the political significance of cultural expression of European peoples in relation to the polity and the preservation of spaces dedicated to the creation of national/local 'stories' free from cultural imperialistic industries; to the EP, 'the cultural diversity in Europe [was] threatened to be overrun by international media commercialisation . . . the media question [was] "a power question"' (EP, 1985b: 272);[3]
- Advocated for a culture of public service broadcasting (PSB) not sidetracked by commercial activities and 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 EP, 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 EP 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 EP has been careful not to cause associations of cultural homogenization, and therefore of dominance. Rather, the EP 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 TVWF, 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 2: Expanding, Defending and Stabilizing – Lessons in Compromise

With the completion of the TVWF Directive, another cycle of deliberations began. Some scholars point to the fact that some of the most important EP proposals, such as the content quota and advertising restrictions, failed to become part of a more social agenda in the largely market-oriented TVWF Directive (e.g. Collins, 1994). However, parliamentarians feel that the drafting of a directive was itself a successful achievement, given the difficulties to set the whole process into motion (the decision-making process lasted almost a decade) (Sarikakis, 2004). With a considerable document of economic integration making use of some of the most important proposals by the EP, the second phase of activity begins with a focus on a number of key media issues. Media pluralism and ownership concentration, PSB and the strengthening of domestic production and talent are the main areas on which Parliament concentrated its efforts. From 1989 until 1997, a second phase of renewed efforts but also more institutional powers was under way. At the end of this period, the institutional arrangement through the Amsterdam Treaty allowed the EP 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 TVWF Directive brought the revival of a number of issues to the public debate, such as the definition (and expansion thereof) of European works, obligatory contribution of resources towards the production of independent works and restrictions – albeit seriously compromised – to advertising space. Also of importance were the renewed efforts to provide content quota (for a second time both 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 non-united front of anxious PSBs, self-absorbed national representations and diverse local/regional conditions (Sarikakis, 2004). Parliament even decided to

withdraw a proposal regarding the establishment of an independent broad-casting committee, under the pressure of the advertising lobby among others. Even more radical proposals (proactive measures for realistic representations of women and men based on principles of citizenship equality and policy tackling 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 EP representations during the TVWF debate not simply addressed the legalistic question of culture as part of Community jurisdiction but also posed the 'institutional question', the question of democratic representation. This brought the institution in direct opposition with member states who would not happily embrace other forms of integration. European governments and EU jurisdiction were drawn into con-fronting 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 activity. The Treaty on the European Union, which came into force in 1993, signalled a break-through 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 the Community 'shall take cultural aspects into account in its action'. Twelve years after the first call of the EP for legislation in the cultural section, the founding Treaty of the European Community included cultural products in its jurisdic-tion thereby creating the necessary legal base and, second, expanding the juris-diction of the Community as a whole. The area of culture, as directly related to that of consciousness and identity and furthermore as a significant com-ponent of democracy, became the point where even the redefinition of the essence of the European Community starts taking place.

Alongside the battle to introduce cultural issues as part of the EU's agenda, Parliament had to face two of the most crucial media-related concerns in Europe. The issues of pluralism and PSB constituted two key areas for the world of communications, nation-states and publics and for the Parliament. Within two years (1990–2), the EP introduced over 10 reports specifically about the problem of ownership concentration and pluralism leading to a highly contro-versial draft directive. This was soon withdrawn due to lack of agreement among powerful actors. MEPs clearly stated to the author that they did not believe that a pluralism directive would ever be developed (MEP interviews 1998 and 2000). As one (right-wing) MEP said at the time, the main reason for the failure in policy was the vulnerability of national governments, such as in the UK and Germany, to transnational media moguls (MEP interview 1998). A similar observation about the power of industrialists is made by the European Federation of Journalists (2003). Despite integral disagreements, as some MEPs were in favour of some degree of ownership concentration, consensus in the EP acknowledged that uncontrolled and unlimited merger activities endanger 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 EP further argued for the protection of public media space, this time PSB systems. On the one hand, 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, on the other, the profound insult against the legitimacy of PSBs were two of the most significant battles 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 EP repeated its calls for the establishment of pan-European channels – also based on the ideals of public service.

As the EP argued, the PSB 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, 1998: 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; based on dual funding; or funded by public tenders. The consequences to PSB funding 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 entities. Parliament not only successfully advocated for the protection of PSBs, it also played a central role in the drafting of the PSB 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 the PSB system in Europe. Parliament's resolution called on broadcasters to enrich their multicultural content and encourage a feeling of solidarity among different cultures (EP, 1998: 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. para. AB).

The alliance formed by national broadcasters, sympathetic governments and DGs and professional organizations supported Parliament's work, which resulted in the PSB protocol. The dominant position in the debate surrounding cultural and communications policy has 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 TVWF[4] but also the 'cultural exemption' achieved at the end of the WTO negotiations rounds, due to the insistence of the EP 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 life world. However, Parliament also perceived crude commercialization as a threat posed mainly by (US) 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 PSB's 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 that dominate the market through vertical and horizontal integration of services and production. Responding to the Commission's monitoring report on the TVWF effects in European countries, the EP (2001) and the recent review of the TVWF Directive (December 2003) calls 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 EP.

More importantly, 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 own initiatives. The most important of these initiatives are found in the resolution voted by Parliament on the Commission's fourth report on TVWF (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. Parliament stated that a 'complete overhaul' of the TVWF 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 TVWF, e-commerce and copyright. Parliament also repeated its call for a transnational broadcasting council, this time in the form of a working group of representatives of public and private broadcasters and national regulators. The role of pluralism in cultural diversity, freedom of information and democracy is emphasized in this resolution again. However, nowhere is it more strongly argued than in the resolution adopted on breaches of freedom of information (EP, 2004). The controversial report and resolution originally referred to Berlusconi by name – the debate in Parliament had to omit references to named individuals. As regards 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, Parliament expressed concern about the state of media ownership in the EU and the lack of a policy framework to deal with increasing concentration of ownership and even abuse of power. For the drafting of both reports a number of parliamentary committees were involved alongside the Committee of Culture and Education. Particularly, the Committee of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs was responsible for the report on breaches of freedom of expression, which shows the extent of concern of Parliament but also the extent of 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 EP. Parliament has emphasized the significance of the role of the PSB system for European societies and the special role of media in constructing a European identity. Media and cultural industries are seen as tools of both preservation and expansion of 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 a two-way vehicle for the exchange of information among European peoples. The protection of content, pluralism and the PSB system constitute the central focus of an ongoing debate for over 20 years. This third phase of activity finds the institution in its sixth term and with a larger number of people and countries to represent, which makes its work even more relevant to the international character of the media and cultural issues it has turned its attention to.

The Relevance of the EP's Work and its Blind Spot

In its work, 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 and are continuously made by the institution aiming to shape the discourse and agenda of EU media policy. That requires that Parliament is in a constant 'alert mode', not least because private interests in media markets are immense but also because 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 ideas of free market, but even the neoliberal fraction signs up to the need for some protection of communicative spaces.

Therefore, the history of the EP has produced some of the most significant cornerstones of transnational policy not only at an EU level but also an international level. Examples are the special reference to public service broadcasters in the Treaty of Amsterdam, which is in effect the constitutional law of the EU, and the exemption of cultural products alongside basic services of water, health and education. Despite these victories, the celebration might only be brief, as the threat to all these realms of human existence and activity is not only rhetorical or imminent but also immediate. Parliament's overarching aim has been to defend communicative spaces against commercialization and cultural domination. Its strategy to achieve that revolved around the positive creation of such spaces and the protection of existing 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 in the market but most importantly in preserving and nurturing nodes of diverse cultural expression. Minority languages, museums and cultural cities and AV and electronic media production are some of the 'spaces' where the creation of a polity and European identity can emerge. Alone,

democratic ideals 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 had to be proven not only for technocratic commissioners and neoliberal states but also for parliamentarians themselves.

In its effort to protect communicative spaces, whether in the form of PSBs, domestic cultural production or even freedom of expression, Parliament has favoured certain spaces and has failed 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, as a normative justification for policy proposal but also as a perceived real threat to Europeanness. Content quota, state aid to domestic independent AV 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 market has benefited the USA more than any other single nation, which is not surprising, as the hegemonic position of political and economic players is maintained through integration of markets.[5] However, inner EU cultural dominations remain the blind spot of the Parliament. And history has shown that unless issues of immediate economic profit are brought up by 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, as the constant increase in Europe film production (625 in 2001 compared to 566 films in 1996) and film admission figures show (31 percent in 2001 compared to 22 percent in 2000) (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2002). 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 14 out of the top 20 films at the Latin American box office in 2001. Germany, Spain, Italy and Great Britain are certainly the great producers in the EU but also the main beneficiaries from box office sales. Overall, France is the dominant EU 'exporter' with 12 percent of total admissions for French films, followed by Great Britain (7.5 percent), Germany (3.9 percent) and Italy (2.1 percent) (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2002). All other countries together account for the remaining 5.9 percent.

Media ownership concentration is taking extraordinary proportions, resulting in cases of oligopoly in some cases. Out of the top five most successful British publishers, three belong to German transnationals, one is USA based and one is British (Hodder Headline). More specifically, Transworld, the number one publishing house with over 6 million copies in 1998, as well as Random House, the fourth in sales, belongs to Bertelsmann AG, the German media company; Harper Collins, the second in sales, belongs to News Corporation owned by the Murdoch media empire (Stokes, 1999: 13). The situation in Central and Eastern Europe has recently been recorded by a study on behalf of the European Federation of Journalists (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 and most CEE countries and occupies a dominant position in Bulgaria (European Federation of Journalists, 2003: 8); and Axel Springer Verlag (Germany), the largest publishing company in Europe and owning a majority of magazines in Poland, Hungary and Romania. The Scandinavian group Orkla is also expanding to Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries including Ukraine. Increasingly, the US media are also gaining control of a large portion of media in CEE countries, through US programming, satellite and cable broadcasting and acquisition of media companies. Here, again we find the major US-based/US-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 also looks very 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 the media commercial interests (Galperin, 1999; Hoffmann-Riem, 1996). Nentwich and Falkner (1997) argue that where corporatist interests prevail, the EP is much less powerful than national parliaments. 'Unity in diversity' has been addressed by the EP as the concept that seeks to epitomize contemporary Europe and provide a vision for a future EU. Cultural imperialism has been perceived as one of the most powerful 'enemies' of this vision. However, this is true as far as it is a condition imposed by external actors. The internal pathologies are only addressed in terms of conventional understanding of media pluralism. Again, even within this context, the EP has not been able to develop its own 'panopticon' across the complex, often subtle but significant practices of dominance, which are expressed at multiple levels and in complex ways. Besides media ownership, language and cultural practices also become objects of unbalanced relations. With the accession of CEE countries into the EU, 20 million people will be added to 40 million people currently speaking minority languages. Although the official languages of the EU (currently 11) are the official languages of the member states, this is not a synonym for 'preferred' languages. Initially French, but increasingly English is replacing the preferred language 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, they will be treated as second-class languages (Carlson, 2003).

A number of internal independence claims and distinct minority

communities within the member states of the EU (the cases of Northern Ireland, the 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 (www.minority2000.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, when, for example, it is mostly official languages, and therefore parts of 'official' cultures, that become policy objects.

As Europe is becoming 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 inter-related 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 the 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 involves among others meeting the economic criteria. Such conditions are actively promoting the 'adjustment' of educational, administrative and even linguistic practices to the order of a *particular* European Union, a conception largely manufactured by *particular* social groups (elites). An example of the dimension of influence on the internal organization of Eastern European societies is the effect of processes of adaptation on the economic, social and cultural lives of citizens. 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 Eastern Europe is undermining women's socioeconomic 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 participation in formal politics and political representation (Watson, 2000). Gender-imposed unemployment is such an example (Watson, 2000). These are effects caused by the transition to a different socioeconomic system (liberal capitalism), and are bearers of cultures inherent in the assumed ideological supporting structures.

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 EP, they become the watchdog of

integration, for others and in particular the technocratic DGs of the Com-
mission, an economic asset (Delgado-Moreira, 2000; Sarikakis, 2004). The
transforming potential of cultural policy is left at the jurisdiction of regions the
same way policy is designed to bring common initiatives into different spaces
without bridging them. Even programmes aimed at fostering European co-
productions, especially in the field of AV production, 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 empire in Europe. For this reason, internal
initially but also international later, cooperations in the AV 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 inter-
national co-productions 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 from the familiar Hollywood recipe. The
initiatives taken to promote 'Europeanness' aim to construct public conscious-
ness 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 city 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 is not the lack of or
need for the construction of or even the possible undiscovered existence of pure
Europeanness. Rather it indicates the ways in which conflicting images of
Europe have been articulated in its policy trajectory.

The EP as the embodiment of the institutionalized version of citizens'
representation in elite supra-structures is a 'lonely' experiment in the current
map of international relations, despite the fact that increasingly demands for
an active input of parliamentarians in these processes become more visible
(freedominfo.org, 2004). The reasonable expectation from the institution would
be to be closer to European citizens rather than to governments and to a great
extent this is the case, as it is through the objectives it seeks to achieve 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 demon-
strated in the way in which European integration has been approached, not as
a cosmopolitan or intercultural collaborative project but rather a fiscal exercise
in market integration that requires the expansion to other fields and the creation
of new institutions.

The EP expresses concerns about the state of the media in a very similar
way to national parliaments. A number of the issues addressed through parlia-
mentary resolutions, such as proposals for an independent broadcasting com-
mittee, 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 EP (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 (1986: 181) points out, 'regular capital formation cannot be ensured without the existence of solid institutional frameworks' that make the transition from differentiations into stable principles of action for private agents and rules of cohesion for states. Negotiations and network games aside, which are inherent in any decision-making process, the EP 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 that dominated 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 legitimation of or resistance to cultural domination were the degree that it has supported national cultural industries vis-à-vis 'foreign' ones, then the EP has exercised considerable resistance. The institution has certainly provided valuable advocacy for national PSBs and domestic productions; it has mobilized training programmes, achieved a very moderate but nevertheless secure funding system for European works, has intervened in matters of content provision and continues to defend the political significance of the cultural sphere in the prospect of international agreements (e.g. WTO negotiations, the position in the light of the World Summit on 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, Parliament's angst over the domination of American culture in the European space reveals a 'blind spot' 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 site for visitors, but rarely as the realm where social relations are formed and maintained. The attempts to deal with the cultural dimensions of the EU still remain clumsy and blurred and at the bottom of the priorities list of the polity. Still, the possibility to debate 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 policy-making. 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 EP 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 mean that successful lobbying on behalf of the civil society makes the EP more accessible than other EU structures and certainly than international organizations.

Notes

1.   *. . . angesichts der Gefahr, daß die Gemeinschaft die Chance, eine gemeinsame Medien-politik zu verwirklichen, verpaßt und sich statt dessen irreversible internationale Medien-strukturen kommerzieller Art, Monopolstellung oder Informationssysteme nichteuropäischer Herkunft herausbilden, indem sie die durch die technische Entwicklung gegebenen Möglichkeiten nutzen. [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 [the EP responds to the green book as follows]. (My translation; see also Sarikakis, 2004)*

2. For a discussion on the inner dynamics of Parliament see Sarikakis (2004).
3. 'Medienfragen sind . . . Machtfragen'.
4. See Collins (1994) and Sarikakis (2004).
5. The USA enjoys 65.4 percent of admissions in the EU and the deficit in the audiovisual sector trade between EU and USA is growing (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2002).

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