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**CULTURE, POLICY, AND SUBSIDIARITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:**

**From symbolic identity to the governmentalisation of culture**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper critically assesses the discourse of cultural policy initiatives of the European Union (EU) during the 1990s. It focuses upon the formulation of so-called 'cultural action' following the recognition of culture in the Treaty on European Union in 1992. It explores the multiple instrumentalities ascribed to culture as a medium for the management of European integration, and suggests that the evolution of policies to promote cultural co-operation are indicative of a progressive 'governmentalisation' of culture at the EU-level. The paper argues that the focus of critical evaluation of EU cultural-policy should be upon practices of citizenship participation in emergent network polities.

Keywords: Culture    Policy    European Union    Subsidiarity    Governmentality  
Citizenship

## **CULTURE, POLICY, AND SUBSIDIARITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:**

### **From symbolic identity to the governmentalisation of culture**

#### **1. Introduction: culture, policy, and modes of citizenship-practice**

‘Culture’ has become an explicit focus of policy concern for the European Union (EU) over the last two decades. This is related to the introduction of new spheres of competence, including social policy, education, and health, along with the development of a more explicitly political dimension to the project of European integration. A critical normative issue for the development of EU cultural policies has been the extent to which they should follow European traditions of national cultural-policy, tied to ‘thick’ models of shared national identity, where the polity is defined in terms of membership of solidaristic community which defines citizenship, or whether European citizenship presupposes a more abstract, less exclusivist conception of the relationship between citizenship and identity (see Preuß 1995, 1998). In this paper, I want to track the evolution of an agenda for so-called ‘cultural action’ by the EU in the 1990s, in order to trace the ways in which the relationships between culture, identity, and citizenship have been negotiated in practical policy-making contexts. Cultural action is distinguished from the audio-visual sector as a field of policy in the EU: it refers to action in support of artistic creativity, literature, language policy, heritage, cultural tourism, and the performing arts. This separation between the two policy fields is confirmed with the development of the *Culture2000* programme since 1997, providing a single policy instrument to rationalise cultural co-operation in a variety of fields.

The development of an agenda for cultural action has coincided with the initiation of distinctive forms of citizenship-practice in the EU (Warleigh 1998). Citizenship-practice is understood here as “the action that contributes to the establishment of citizenship rights, access, and belonging” (Wiener 1996, 45). This paper analyses three dimensions of the forms of citizen-participation initiated in EU cultural policy debates over the last decade. The first of these is the ways in which the relationship between culture and citizenship is discursively constructed in policy-making. Secondly, the paper tracks the ways in which the development of policies to promote cultural co-operation has depended on the institutionalisation of novel forms of consultation, participation, and representation. In this respect, policy-making in the area of cultural co-operation is indicative of a broader trend for an ‘ethic of participation’ to be grafted onto the elite-driven and instrumentalist dynamic of EU decision-making (Bellamy and Warleigh 1998). The third dimension of the analysis concerns the different ways in which ‘culture’ is defined as an object of policy intervention by actors operating at different territorial scales, from the sub-national through the national level to the supra-national level. The focus of the paper in this respect is to trace how the establishment of responsibility for cultural action at particular territorial scales of jurisdiction works to define the agents of participatory policy-making in particular ways.

The paper starts with some comments on conceptualising the interface between culture and policy, before proceeding to review the emergence of ‘culture’ as an object of concern in EU policy-making. The contradictory implications of the formal recognition of culture in the Treaty on European Union (1992) are analysed, and the ways in which these contradictions have been worked-through in debates over culture and the principle of

subsidiarity, and over culture and employment, is discussed. The argument of the paper is that, in the process of putting flesh on general commitments to promote cultural unity and protect cultural diversity, there has been a shift in EU policy-making from conceptualising culture in primarily symbolic terms to conceptualising culture in 'governmental' terms.

## **2. Conceptualising the Culture/Policy Interface**

In tracing the evolution of EU policy since 1992, when culture was formally recognised in the Treaty of European Union (TEU), I want to suggest a reorientation in the conceptual basis for a critical analysis of EU cultural policies. Criticism of EU cultural policies tends to focus upon the essentialist conceptions of European identity that underwrite such endeavours (e.g. Morley and Robins 1995, Schlesinger 1993, Shore 1993). Often taking audio-visual policy as the paradigm, EU cultural policy is understood primarily at face value, as an attempt to re-shape the affective identifications of citizens around a set of coherent symbols of European unity. From this perspective, there are two problems with the objectives of EU cultural policies. First, the Community's own *Eurobarometer* surveys provide empirical evidence which suggests that the development of European identity is somewhat limited, and where it does exist, it tends to be based on strategic calculations rather than affective identification (Duchesne and Frogner 1995). Second, there is the normative limitation of defining European identity in relation to a shared tradition of values taken to encompass Hellenistic democracy, Roman law, Judeo-Christian religion, and Enlightenment humanism. Affirmations of the core values of

European identity are premised upon bounded, static conceptions of identity that have exclusionary undertones (Morley 1998, Stolcke 1995).

In significant respects, both of these lines of criticism echo the policy statements they take as their targets. They focus primarily upon issues of meaning and symbolism as the essence of cultural practices (Barnett 1998). However, if Schlesinger (1997) is correct to argue that it is participation in political institutions and practices that shapes patterns of affiliation and solidarity, then this implies that academic analysis of cultural policy in the EU should move beyond the mode of ideology-critique. Rather than focussing critical attention on general statements about the content of European identity, greater attention should be paid to what policies actually set out to do. In light of this concern with the relationships between cultural policy and modes of citizenship-practice, this paper adopts a broadly Foucauldian conceptualisation of culture which accords methodological priority to the investigation of 'the programmatic, institutional and governmental conditions' in which cultural practices are worked up and deployed (Bennett 1992). This approach focuses critical attention upon the modes of representation through which certain phenomenon are depicted in ways which open them up to deliberation, calculation, and policy-action (Rose and Miller 1992). This methodological concern with the discursive and institutional construction of policy is in turn consistent with recent arguments in European integration studies for the need to consider the contribution of normative discourses of integration to the development of a Euro-polity (Diez 1999, Bellamy and Castiglione 2000). In adopting this approach to cultural analysis, this paper is also meant to illustrate the potential of critical governmentality studies for the analysis of the geographies of contemporary cultural practices by focussing upon upon the ordering

practices through which culture is organised (Pratt 1997, Barnett 2001). One of the advantages of the Foucauldian approach to cultural analysis is that, in defining culture as inherently governmental, it does not presuppose an opposition between instrumental utility and pragmatic values on the one hand, and intrinsic, non-instrumental, and aesthetic values on the other. Nor does it reduce questions of the instrumental or pragmatic value of culture to a single dimension, that of economic value. Rather, it suggests treating the culture/economy split in EU policy discourse as a symptom of contested imperatives of governance.

There are a couple of caveats I want to make about the application of a 'governmentality' approach to the analysis of EU cultural policy. First, there is a tendency in governmentality studies to elide the constitutive role of conflict in policy formulation and outcomes. As a result, policy texts are read primarily as indices of the logic of *administrative* processes, rather than in terms of wider dimensions of the *politics* of the policy process (O'Regan 1992). As Flew (1997, 100) observes, the critical governmentality literature often tends to obscure "the extent to which policy failure arises from active mobilisation against particular policies, legitimised as a citizenship right. It also limits an understanding of one of the more important political trends of the last two decades: popular opposition to forms of public expertise seen as distant and unaccountable". In this respect, policy-making in the EU exemplifies the tendency for the monopolisation of knowledge by experts to generate broader crises of legitimacy and accountability in decision-making (Harcourt & Raedelli 1999, Raedelli 1999). And in the case of the EU, the legitimacy problems associated with technocratic decision-making



procedures have stimulated the emergence of new forms of consultation, participation, and representation over the last decade.

The second problem with directly applying the governmentality literature in this case is that existing work in cultural-policy studies adopting this perspective tends to assume a congruence between citizenship practices and an infrastructure of *national* social-democratic institutions (see Cunningham 1992). However, the evolution of a policy agenda in support of cultural initiatives at the EU level indicates that the government of culture is no longer (if it ever was) deployed as a means of governing a unified citizenry at a single territorial scale, that of the nation-state. And the emergence of a new configuration of territorial scales for the administration of culture re-defines the scope and intensity of different modes of rule, arguably reducing the effectiveness of cultural modes of ‘governing-at-a-distance’ (Barnett 1999).

Taken together, these two observations imply a less univocal conceptualisation of policy-programmes than is sometimes suggested in critical governmentality studies, directing attention instead to the complexity of relations between different actors involved in the development of cultural policies by the EU. This paper argues that the governmentalisation of culture in EU policy generates some unanticipated consequences, facilitating new pressures for broader participation in decision-making procedures. The development of cultural action in the 1990s has been shaped by the evolution of new political opportunity structures for participation and representation at the EU level.<sup>1</sup> An important element of the argument here is that, in a spatially complex polity such as the EU, citizenship-practice is likely to ascribe rights of participation and consultation to collective actors as much as to individual human subjects. Moves towards broadening

participation in EU policy-making as a means of encouraging active citizenship has therefore facilitated participation by various sorts of collective actors, such as interest groups, social movement organisations, and NGO's.

### **3. Culture and 'A People's Europe'**

At the foundation of the European Community in the 1950s, culture did not formally lie within its range of responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> The 1970s saw the first initiatives to put culture on the Community's agenda. In the absence of a formal competence to act in this area, cultural action had to be justified in relation to economic objectives. The bulk of funding for culture has therefore come through the Structural Funds. These are regional-policy instruments set-up to alleviate uneven development within the Community. In particular, Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which provides for infrastructural development, has been a source of extensive investment in cultural projects as part of broader urban regeneration programmes. The real impetus towards explicit policy consideration of culture came in the mid-1980s, with the rise of an agenda for a "People's Europe", stimulated by concerns over the Community's so-called 'democratic deficit'.<sup>3</sup> The rise of an agenda for cultural action in the 1980s therefore coincides with the re-invigoration of the project of European integration, overseen by a newly assertive European Commission (Ross 1995). In this context, policy-makers identified 'culture' as an instrument to be used in "explicit exercises of 'consciousness-raising'" (McDonald 1996, 54). The stated aim was to instil in the citizens of member-states a stronger sense that they were 'European' through the staging of various symbolic events. In 1987, the Commission's framework for cultural action for the 1988-1992

period clearly presented culture as a medium through which to shape a popular consensus in support of moves towards market and monetary integration: “The sense of being part of European culture is one of the prerequisites for that solidarity which is vital if the advent of the large market, and the considerable changes it will bring about in living conditions within the Community, is to secure the popular support it needs” (CEC 1987, 1). At this stage, then, cultural policy was conceptualised around a primarily symbolic notion of using various cultural practices to shape the identities of citizens.

Throughout the 1980s, the expansion *de facto* ‘cultural’ policies had to avoid giving the appearance of wanting to impose a singular model of cultural policy or establish a single model of European identity: “Culture is seen as a dynamic, evolutive enrichment of daily life. The European Community dimension has and can continue significantly to contribute to this [...] through the harmony upon which diversity thrives, through increased contact, comparison and mixing, and the identification both of different cultural traditions and of common uniting principles, of mutual understanding and the elimination of prejudices between people. The European ‘cultural model’ is not all exclusive, still less a ‘melting pot’, but rather a multi-various, multi-ethnic pluralism of culture, the sum total of which enriches each individual culture.” (EP 1990, 28-29). This dialectic of diversity and unity has characterised the dynamic of EU cultural initiatives into 1990s. Thus, since its establishment in 1992, the Committee of the Regions (COR) has lobbied for an enhanced role for local and regional actors in the design of cultural policies, reflecting a focus upon cultural diversity, understood as essentially territorially defined, as the essence of European action. For the European Commission, on the other hand, the main emphasis has been upon enhancing the commonality of European values

throughout the EU: “If people are to give their full support to and participate fully in European integration, greater emphasis must be placed on their common cultural values and roots as a key element of their identity and their membership of a society founded on freedom, democracy, tolerance and solidarity” (CEC 1998b, 5). As I will argue below, this is not merely a conflict over definitions, but indicates different models of the administration of cultural policies at the European level.

In the period leading-up to the Maastricht Treaty on European Union (TEU), a variety of measures were therefore already established for providing support for cultural events such as the City of Culture programme, arts festivals, and support of orchestras, music and the performing arts. By the early 1990s, this *ad hoc* development of measures dealing with culture led the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) to claim that the EU’s competence to act in support of culture had already been effectively established through existing features of Community action, such as the free movement of cultural goods and services and of cultural workers, the development of audio-visual policies, and various taxation measures (ESC 1990). In 1991, in anticipation of the formal recognition of culture as an area within the Community’s purview in the TEU in 1992, the Commission introduced a proposal for a programme to encourage artistic creativity and cultural events with ‘a European dimension’. Revealing a continued commitment to a symbolic conception of culture and citizenship, the stated aim of the *Kaleidoscope* programme was “to contribute to the enhancement of European citizens’ sense of belonging to an emergent multicultural community” (CEC 1991, 19).

Article 128 of the new Treaty clearly established legal competence over cultural affairs: “The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member

States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore” (Article 128:1).<sup>4</sup> There are three strands to the cultural clause of the Treaty. First, the new provision authorised the EU to encourage co-operation between member-states and to act in support to their action through various ‘incentive measures’. As well as providing for specific cultural policy initiatives, the second strand of the new cultural provision of the TEU held that ‘cultural aspects’ should be taken into account in *all* other areas of EU policy (Article 128:4). The precise implications of this all-encompassing requirement have been a central concern for the Commission since 1992. The third strand of cultural action recognised the importance of co-operation between EU member-states and non-EU states in cultural action, given that ‘cultural frontiers’ did not neatly coincide with political boundaries. This element of the new competency contains an implicit recognition of the basic problem involved in predicating definitions of citizenship on shared identification with a common core of ‘European’ values: the diversification of identities is likely to increase as the EU expands by incorporating member-states from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as being complicated by the emergence of multi-cultural European polities (see Balibar 1996, Kofman 1995).

It is important to emphasise that the formal recognition of cultural action was not meant to establish the grounds for a European-wide cultural policy. Article 128 explicitly prohibited harmonisation of regulations for cultural affairs. The principle of subsidiarity was applied to cultural action, establishing primary responsibility for cultural policy at the level of individual member-states.<sup>5</sup> Any EU action was meant to supplement member-state policies, serving primarily as a means to encourage exchange and co-operation. The

emphasis on EU action being supplementary to member-states' cultural policies is reflected in the sorts of measures supported, which include support for the translation of books, the dissemination of scientific research, and the improvement of information services for cultural activities. EU cultural action aims to facilitate cultural co-operation to encourage cross-national cultural projects: "Actions should not supplant or compete with actions organised at national or regional level, but provide added value and promote interchange between them" (Council of Ministers 1992, 1-2). In turn, this 'horizontal' approach (CEC 1992, 9) tends to privilege certain actors as partners in cultural co-operation: professional organisations in the arts and culture sectors.

The inclusion of cultural competence in the TEU was the result of a compromise between two opposing positions on the extent of the EU's competence over cultural affairs. As Forrest (1994, 17) observes, Article 128 "contains a balance struck between member states which wanted culture in the Treaty in order to allow wider Community action and those who wanted it mentioned in order to set limits beyond which it should not go". Rather than solving the problem of how to integrate culture into the EU's affairs, Article 128 therefore established a new set of terms around which the politics of cultural policy would be organised after 1992. Furthermore, the inclusion of the cultural clause in the TEU coincided with significant changes in the decision-making procedures of the EU. On the one hand, any agreement to the introduction of any 'incentive measures' in support of culture required unanimity within the Council of Ministers, in contrast to action in other policy fields where qualified majority voting was sufficient. The principle of unanimity in Council has been consistently identified by the European Parliament (EP) as a main cause of the slow progress on implementing effective support for culture since

1992. This has meant the process of implementing Article 128 can be stymied by any member-state suspicious of the objectives of cultural action. On the other hand, in both the new powers provided to the EP and the establishment of the COR, the TEU of 1992 established the grounds for much stronger representation in EU policy-making of interests likely to be supportive of extending support for the cultural sector. The introduction of the co-decision rule gave the EP a much greater say in the shaping of EU legislation and monitoring of budgets. And the new Committee of the Regions (COR), established to advise the Commission on issues related to regional and local affairs in the EU, has to be consulted in all matters related to cultural action.

Despite formal recognition of culture in the TEU, culture continued to be figured as a disruptive element in relation to the overall logic of EU policy. This way of problematising culture as an object of policy reflects the areal, territorialised framing of culture as both local and diverse in Article 128 and in other policy areas. In putting flesh on the commitments of 1992, cultural action has become a multi-dimensional sector through which various EU actors presume that the process of integration can be effectively managed: something that can increase direct employment; enhance the image of regions to attract investment; protect cultural diversity in the form of arts, heritage, and language; as well as having a social development utility to enhance the attributes of populations in overcoming social exclusion. In turn, the role allotted to cultural action since 1992 has been less to do with engineering a single European identity than it has had to do with the ‘the multiplication of culture’s utility’<sup>6</sup> in relation to the objectives of the EU. Cultural action is increasingly presented as a means of engaging people more closely

with European institutions not merely at a symbolic level, but through participation in a precisely defined set of practices.

#### **4. Culture and Subsidiarity**

As already noted, the inclusion of an explicit legislative competence over culture in the TEU coincided with significant innovations in the context of decision-making within the European Union. This new institutional context has generated new political opportunity structures for alliances between EU and non-EU actors. The growing literature on the EU as a system of multi-level governance argues that neither EU institutions nor member-states are able to completely control policy agendas (see Marks 1993). Effective policy measures require the construction of alliances between EU agencies and with a broader range of policy experts and interest-groups operating at national, sub-national and trans-national levels (Bellamy 1999, 201). This implies that European citizenship is 'fragmented' (Wiener 1997), with different policy-fields defining actors' ascribed rights of participation and consultation in different ways. The emphasis found in the multi-level governance literature upon the complexity of decision-making procedures and modes of representation raises the question of just how to conceptualise the politics of scale in EU policy-making. While the multi-level governance literature does open up consideration of the geographical constitution of decision-making structures of the EU, it still privileges a particular understanding of geographical scale based upon territorial models of sovereignty and political representation. The politics of EU cultural action might therefore be conceptualised in relation to notions of networked spaces and scales (Axford and Huggins 1999, Diez 1997, Jachtenfuchs *et al* 1998, Schmitter 1996).<sup>7</sup> The network



approach is better suited than areal notions of geographical scale to understanding the disarticulation and re-combination of functional and territorial modes of representation characteristic of the EU. This process generates a plurality of polities distinguished by new forms of representation, accountability, and decision-making, in which the relationships between citizens and those who govern is necessarily and irreducibly mediated (see Schmitter 1999, 942-945).

The attraction of a network-based interpretation of the development of EU-level cultural policies follows from the central objective of this policy-field being to balance cultural diversity and cultural commonality. A Council resolution in 1991 established networks of cultural organisations as the privileged intermediaries between EU institutions and the 'grassroots' in fostering cross-border co-operation in the cultural field (Council of Ministers 1991). This emphasis upon networks of cultural organisations in facilitating co-operation reflects the emergence of the cultural agenda in 1970s and 1980s from 'below', from local, regional and national organisations, often through the medium of the EP. It also indicates the dependence of the Commission for information, expertise, and implementation on this same network of organisations. The ascription of legitimacy to networks of organisations as actors in cultural co-operation indicates that cultural diversity is framed as a territorially bounded phenomenon on the one hand, to be represented by locally and regionally-based organisations, but that access to EU support is dependent on the ability of these territorially embedded actors to link up with other organisations elsewhere in the EU to form networks. In this way, actors whose interests are embedded in particular 'spaces of dependence' are obliged to construct a spatially

extensive 'space of engagement' in endeavouring to pursue a more aggressive cultural agenda within the EU (Cox 1998).

The first substantive outcome of the newly established cultural competence after 1992 was the establishment of three concurrent funding projects for artistic creativity and cultural exchange (*Kaleidoscope*), the promotion of books and reading (*Ariane*), and the protection and promotion of cultural heritage (*Raphael*) (CEC 1994). These programmes serve as the reference point for subsequent development of policy debates about the scope and responsibility for cultural action. Building upon pre-existing initiatives dating back to the 1980s, they illustrate the efforts of *DGX*, the directorate-general of the Commission responsible for cultural affairs, to pin-down just what sorts of actions were covered by the broad brush strokes of the new cultural clause in the TEU. The development of cultural action in 1990s has involved a struggle to re-define the meaning of subsidiarity, a struggle to frame both the scales of jurisdiction and the actors involved in administering cultural co-operation (see Jones 1998).

Putting flesh on the abstract principles of Article 128 since 1992 has involved a negotiation between those actors seeking to extend the scope of EU cultural action and those actors seeking to limit such action. Cultural and arts organisations have been consistently critical of the slow pace in the development of support for cultural initiatives by the EU, with the bulk of funding still coming from indirect sources such as the Structural Funds. On the other hand, expansion of this policy field has to negotiate concerns over whether or not culture can be administered by the EU without threatening the diversity of cultures. In assessing the implementation of its three cultural programmes introduced in the mid-1990s, the Commission identified a lack of co-ordination as the the

main problem of existing EU cultural activities. While affirming the need to use culture to strengthen citizens' feeling of belonging to 'one and the same community', it was argued that the proposed focus of future action should be upon establishing permanent networks of cultural operators and organisations and a convergence of support measures (CEC 1996b). The *Culture2000* initiative is the latest step in this agenda. This programme aims to develop a common European cultural area by facilitating co-operation between creative artists, cultural operators, and the cultural institutions of member states. The outcome of extensive consultation procedures by the Commission, and based upon a critical evaluation of the *Kaleidoscope*, *Ariane*, and *Raphael* programmes, *Culture 2000* reflects a consensus that limited budgetary commitments and disjointed programmes in early and mid-1990s had failed to establish lasting networks or a coherent programme for integration culture in other dimensions of EU policy. The new programme, with a commitment of 167 million ECU over a five-year period from 2000-2004, has the twin objectives of rationalising and simplifying cultural measures and further encouraging explicit integration of culture into other fields. However, *Culture2000* has not resolved the institutional conflicts over the precise direction of cultural initiatives. In 1998, the EP proposed amendments to the Commission's proposals for the *Culture2000* funding instrument that substituted the phrase 'cultural policy' for the Commission's usage of 'cultural action' (see EP 1998). In the context of EU debates, this small change was meant to register the EP's support for a stronger role for the EU in this field, and an associated increase in the EP's own role in these affairs. The Commission rejected this proposed amendment, on the basis that there were no grounds in the TEU for the EU to take the role allocated properly to member states. This brief dispute over whether to refer

to *cultural policy* is just one moment in a continuing institutional contest concerning the appropriate scales and actors with responsibility for the regulation of cultural practices in the EU.

In response to the slow development of cultural programmes, various actors, most notably the EP and the COR, and various interest-groups have endeavoured to shape a network of decision-making that in large part circumvents the national level, arguing that subsidiarity implies that cultural action is best pursued at sub-national scales of regions and localities. The COR in particular has become a key player in the politics of culture at the EU level, not least through contesting the meaning of subsidiarity (see COR 1999). The contested politics of EU cultural policy is thus indicative of a broader challenge to the assumption that subsidiarity implies a centralisation of authority at the national level of member-state governments to counter-balance tendencies towards centralisation at the EU level. The counter-argument holds that subsidiarity also implies decentralisation to sub-national levels (see MacCormick 1995).

The definitional disputes visible in the proliferation of reports, opinions, and resolutions on cultural matters are indices of this broader politics of jurisdiction and funding being fought out between different actors. These debates have taken the form of challenges to the narrowness of definitions of culture adopted by the Commission's post-1992 proposals. In response to these initiatives, both the ESC (1992) and EP (1994) objected to the inadequate funding available for support for cultural activities, arguing that this lack of funding is connected to the Commission's narrow definition of culture in terms of 'high art'. Furthermore, the COR has explicitly challenged the identification of cultural action as the primary responsibility of member-states. It argues that this falsely

posits homogenous national cultures within member-states. The lack of precise definition of culture in Commission initiatives is seen as an implicit affirmation of the privileged role of member-states for cultural action, an attribution of responsibility that the COR, the EP, and various networks of interest-groups consider to be the main impediment to the development of more far-reaching and effective cultural action at EU level. The COR argues that the lack of a definition of culture is related to “the failure to recognise the key role of regions and localities play in originating, shaping and supporting our rich variety of cultures and artists based in those regions and localities. Their work stems from a cultural milieu conditioned and modified by local and regional aspects of life. The inclusion of a reference to the fact that culture has a regional/local base and of the importance of regional/local authorities in providing and supporting that base would have been an important step forward” (COR 1994). The COR’s stated position on the role of localities and regions in cultural action is one move in an institutionalised contest over the framing of subsidiarity, in which various actors seek to out-flank the obduracy of member-state governments by appealing to different scales of jurisdiction and mobilising extensive networks of interest-groups to engage with EU institutions, principally the Commission. And increasingly, this institutional contest over the meaning of subsidiarity has come to focus upon reconciling ‘cultural’ and ‘economic’ imperatives of EU policies.

## **5. Culture, Economy, and Employment**

Just as the Commission’s proposals for specific cultural funding initiatives has had to negotiate the potentially enormous range of activities that might qualify under an expansionary definition of culture, so the question of how to integrate a consideration for

culture into other areas of EU competence has proved difficult. In this respect, the problem of defining culture has been explicitly addressed in the Commission's 1996 report on the integration of 'cultural aspects' into other aspects of EU policy-making: "In point of fact, the concept of Culture is a nebulous one which can vary from one school to another, from one society to another and from one era to another. It may include the Fine Arts, literature, etc., but may also include all types of knowledge and features which characterise a society and make it possible to understand the world." (CEC 1996b, I,3). Faced with a potentially ever-expansive definition of culture which includes just about everything, the Commission raised the issue of precise definition only to lay it aside. It adopted instead the 'pragmatic' approach of considering only those areas where culture had already been made an explicit object of EU policy (which still included a broad range of fields: copyright, taxation, free movement of labour; aspects of regional policy, tourism, and the environment; cohesion policy; audio-visual policy; and relations with non-EU states).

In the Commission's 1996 report, culture was presented as a differential phenomenon with potentially disruptive consequences for other areas of EU policy, which emphasise harmonisation and standardisation.<sup>8</sup> The Commission is concerned with finding examples of best practice that, in principle at least, manage to reconcile the different imperatives of 'culture' and 'economy'. Copyright harmonisation and audio-visual policy are held up as examples of policy where the economic logic of market integration and harmonisation facilitates the promotion of cultural diversity by guaranteeing the effective expression of individualised consumer preferences (CEC 1997, Schlesinger and Doyle 1995). As an object of policy, culture is therefore represented as a

problematic element within a discourse that aims above all to find a suitable balance between competing logics of integration and diversification. In this discourse, the centrifugal dynamics of economic integration have to negotiate residuals of cultural diversity that the EU must promote and protect if it is not to undermine its own legitimacy.

Culture has in turn come to be defined as crucial to the mediation of the contradictions arising from the elite-driven integration of market structures and the persistence of geographically uneven development. In a context where culture is understood to be inherently related to place-based differences, and where political participation remains primarily defined in terms of territorial representation, culture-related policies have been identified as mediums for enhancing the legitimacy of European-level policies. The ‘culture’ and ‘economy’ division is therefore best thought of as a discursive distinction deployed in EU policy to figure different and competing imperatives of governance. What is at stake in the contested politics of defining culture and framing scale is not a simple opposition between narrow economic instrumental calculations and the intrinsic values of culture, but rather a conflict to define culture’s multiple instrumentalities.

The oppositional staging of culture and economy serves as a useful rhetorical strategy for key actors in the EU. The COR is the body that has consistently adopted what appears to be a resolutely non-instrumental conceptualisation of culture against the overly narrow, economic instrumentality of culture found in the Commission’s proposals: “The COR would point out that the traditions of the future are the diverse patterns of everyday life in today’s Europe. If the protection of these traditions in accordance with the

subsidiarity principle is impossible in the Community because of the preference given to industry and commerce, then some kind of common European identity is possible for the people Europe - but only at the expense of diversity and individuality” (COR 1997, 6). For the COR, the Commission’s self-limiting ‘pragmatic’ approach to assessing the integration of cultural considerations into other areas of EU action is a means of avoiding the question of how cultural considerations should be *extended* into those areas of EU competence that have not previously explicitly considered culture.

The COR adopts a self-consciously broad notion of culture: “culture should essentially be regarded as a way of life peculiar to a specific community in that each and every local culture helps to enhance culture in the wider, more general sense” (*ibid.*). There is a tendency in this sort of understanding of ‘culture as a way of life’ to posit the authenticity of culture and identity upon belonging to territorially circumscribed communities of shared values (see Hall 1993). The COR’s deployment of this conceptualisation of the intrinsic value of cultural diversity is thus related to a particular claim to representative authority: an expressive notion of culture defined in this broad, apparently non-instrumental fashion is presented as part of an argument that sub-national authorities and organisations are the legitimate bearers of rights of participation in the formulation and implementation of EU cultural action. If “all culture is essentially a local phenomenon” (COR 1997, 5), then this understanding in turn allows the COR to argue that “local and regional and regional authorities have a central role to play in promoting understanding, tolerance and respect between different subcultures. They must continually seek contacts with social and cultural groups in their respective areas. This is also in the interests of local and regional authorities because different cultures can have



an enriching effect on each other and help to create an innovative atmosphere in which entrepreneurship can also flourish” (COR 1998, 9). In arguing for increases in funding and the extension of the cultural dimension to Community policy, the COR articulates an implicit claim that the rights to political participation implied by the more consultative mode of policy-formation emerging in the area of cultural action rightfully belong to territorially defined, sub-national collectivities and their political representatives. A set of claims regarding culture, authenticity, and representativeness are thus embedded in the COR’s non-instrumental account of the intrinsic values of European cultural diversity, claims which are directly related to the political interests of particular actors in enhancing their influence over policy-formulation and implementation in this field of EU competence.

The COR’s use of an apparently non-instrumental model of culture is thus best seen part of a struggle to define the jurisdictional scale at which subsidiarity should be applied in relation to EU cultural action. The instrumental deployment of the intrinsic value of culture is also evident in the increasing importance ascribed to culture in relation to employment issues since 1996. The imperative to define and re-define cultural action in ways that reconciles with what remain the overwhelmingly economic imperatives of the EU system has led to an emphasis upon the existing and potential employment impact of the cultural sector. It is estimated that some 3 million people are employed in the cultural sectors in the EU, amounting to about 2% of total employment (CEC 1998a). And in 1999, Article 10 of the ERDF regulation was revised to enable explicit support of culture-related projects through the Structural Funds, recognising the job creation potential of the culture industries.

Employment initiatives have become the site for attempts at reconciling the multiplicity of instrumentalities ascribed to that most ‘nebulous’ phenomenon, culture. This happy balance has been found in the claim that cultural action can serve a set of intrinsically ‘cultural’ objectives, including the flowering of diversity and the free expression of identity, at the same that it is argued that culture can “contribute to a reduction of disparities between levels of development of the various regions, greater economic and social cohesion, improvement of employment opportunities in the internal market, elimination of exclusion and enrichment of the quality of life of its citizens” (*ibid.*, 4-5). The multiple utility of culture in relation to the process of European integration is well illustrated by *DGXVI*’s 1996 analysis of the role of cultural action in EU cohesion policy (CEC 1996a). There are three dimensions along which culture is ascribed a role in boosting employment in disadvantaged regions: a direct role in the growth of employment in cultural industries; an indirect role in improving the image of regions, capitalising on cultural assets as part of place-marketing strategies to attract investment; and an indirect role in promoting social integration and social cohesion. This latter dimension is the most novel feature of arguments legitimising expenditure on cultural activities in the EU. Cultural action is increasingly legitimised in terms of an argument that proposes that participation in a variety of cultural and artistic activities enhances the ‘employability’ of citizens in under-performing regions of the Community. Culture’s utility extends beyond its role in a culture-industries employment strategy which stresses labour intensive small-and-medium-sized enterprises as the special characteristic of this sector, to encompass the fostering of creativity and flexibility, thereby contributing to the endogenous growth potential of regions. Culture is now

considered a medium for cultivating those skills of creativity and adaptability that, in EU parlance, are set to become crucial to the ‘jobs of the future’ in ‘knowledge-driven’ economies. The governmentalisation of culture is, then, as much a matter of trying to shape the attributes of ‘ordinary’ workers as it is about governing new forms of ‘fast’ managerial subject (cf. Thrift 2000).

The most innovative element of recent EU policies concerning the employment potential of cultural initiatives is the Commission’s belated adoption of an agenda that stresses the ‘social developmental’ aspects of cultural policy long championed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. This approach emphasises the role of culture in combating social exclusion and enhancing social cohesion in the context of economic integration (Beale 1999a). Thus, the agenda shaping the development of a coherent, single policy instrument for financing cultural action in the second-half the 1990s has been posited on the understanding that “access for citizens to culture in an operational or user capacity is an essential condition for full participation in society”, and the associated argument that “geographical, physical, educational, social or economic obstacles may make it more difficult for many citizens to gain access to culture and may increase the incidence of exclusion, particularly amongst the less-favoured groups of the population” (Council of Ministers 1996, 1). In short, culture has increasingly come to be defined as contributing to EU social-policy objectives as it has been integrated into education and training objectives.

The adoption of the social-development paradigm of cultural policy is indicative of the trend towards the ‘governmentalisation’ of culture in policy agendas at the EU level, in which culture is understood as simultaneously a target and instrument of projects

of social transformation: “its object or target insofar as the term refers to the morals, manners, and ways of life of subordinate social strata; its instrument insofar as it is culture in its more restricted sense - the domain of artistic and intellectual activities - that is to supply the means of governmental intervention in and regulation of culture as the domain of morals, manners, codes of conduct, etc” (Bennett 1992, 26). Accordingly, one can trace in the development in EU policies towards culture and employment of a tendency to understand culture not so much as a means of moulding identities, but rather as a diverse set of practices to be deployed in precisely calibrated efforts to shape discrete repertoires of conduct.

This tendency towards the governmentalisation of culture is most clearly illustrated in *DGX's* most recent analysis of the culture-employment nexus. Culture is defined in a narrow sense, as a set of specific aesthetic practices, but these in turn have the potential to be deployed generally as a means of transforming the attributes and competencies of individuals and groups: “The nature of work has altered radically: to participate more fully in society and the world of work, people are required to develop professional qualities based on more specific individual skills, such as creativity, initiative, flexibility and human relations skills. Increasingly employees are seeking the potential for personal development and growth which cultural practices (exhibitions, performing arts, fine arts, etc.) may help to shape” (CEC 1998a, 2.1.2). Cultural practices are framed here as technologies which can encourage entrepreneurship, enhance creativity, and strengthen equal opportunities by encouraging mutual respect: “Training and participation in a variety of cultural activities are increasingly emerging as a significant tool of social integration whereby people can acquire new or improved skills

and qualifications” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, culture not only encourages personal skills such as flexibility and self-confidence, but it also plays a role in cultivating skills of participation: “the cultural sectors are increasingly test beds for new practices linking versatility, occupational and geographical mobility and promoting a project approach which will help the development of new initiatives which can create new jobs” (*ibid.*, 3). What such arguments suggest is that, conceptually at least, the Commission has found a means by which to reconcile the discursive tensions between culture and economy in the field of cultural action in a way that respects the intrinsic qualities of ‘the cultural’ while enabling their instrumental deployment in the service of economic and political imperatives of integration. Theatre, music, literature, and the performing arts are constructed here as embodied mediums for changing the conduct of individuals and social groups, and thereby as means of addressing problems of discrimination and social exclusion in everyday life and the workplace. But this governmentalisation of culture in relation to instrumental objectives of employment and social cohesion is, in turn, likely to generate a new set of problems regarding how to monitor and evaluate the impact of such policies. This process is already evident in the on-going concern within EU policy-making to establish reliable statistical evidence of cultural activities and their economic significance, indicating the importance that the availability of statistical data plays as a factor enabling or constraining the realisation of culture’s multiple utility (O’Regan 1998, 9).

## **7. Conclusion: an emerging ethics of participation in EU cultural action?**

Drawing upon a methodological perspective informed by critical governmentality studies, this paper has examined how culture is problematised as an object of policy by the EU. I have emphasised two issues: firstly, culture is not an object of a univocal policy apparatus, but is rather the theme of a complex politics of policy-formation and implementation. In the case of the EU, culture became an object of policy by stealth, and was then subjected to *a posteriori* rationalisation. Second, the politics of representation in this field is not just a matter of knowledge and expertise, but also involves an institutional politics involving the problematisation of claims of authority, accountability, and legitimacy by competing actors. In concluding, I want to consider in a little more detail the relationships between culture, subsidiarity and the emergence of an ethics of participation in EU policy-making (Bellamy and Warleigh 1998). This final section argues that the contested definition of the scales and actors through which cultural attributes are governed might be connected to a dynamic of unintended democratisation of decision-making in this sphere of EU policy.

I have argued that the territorial scales at which actors are constituted and over which they are able to act is a crucial feature of EU policy making in the field of culture. The emergence of an institutional agenda for enhancing cultural citizenship has seen cultural rights embedded as group rights, since cultural diversity is defined in areal, territorial terms with reference to localities, regions, and nation-states. In the case of EU cultural action, the role of collective actors is facilitated by the institutionalisation of a formal role for sub-national interests through COR, itself a product of the Commission's intention to extend consultation processes, and in turn by the development of networks of

professional organisations and interest-groups (see McCarthy 1997, Warleigh 1997). The politics of EU cultural-policy formulation is therefore characterised by a dual process whereby cultural diversity is framed as a territorially bounded phenomenon on the one hand, but simultaneously access to EU support is made dependent on the ability to territorially embedded actors to link up with other organisations elsewhere in the EU to form networks. This pattern is sustained both by the procedures for the allocation of funding, as well as by the form of decision-making through which the role of sub-national actors is formally recognised in the shape of the COR and the formal role ascribed to cultural networks in Council resolutions. The COR, the EP, a variety of sub-national actors including interest groups, local and regional authorities, and NGO's, have formed more or less resilient alliances in an effort to circumvent the blockages on the development of cultural action built into Article 128 in the application of the subsidiarity principle at the level of the member-states. Sub-national actors draw on centres of power at other scales to secure and augment their place-specific interests, while at the same time institutions at a trans-national level draw upon networks of sub-national organisations for expertise and legitimacy as part of their negotiations with EU decision-making procedures. The development of EU cultural action confirms the argument that the governance of the EU "partakes of some elements of state-centred co-ordination, a whiff of supranationalism and a growing amount of non-hierarchical, cross-border networking" (Axford and Huggins 1999, 186). Cultural action might therefore be considered as one policy field in which the features of a Europe wide network-polity is emerging, characterised by a form of trans-national politics which exists in the absence of formally representative political institutions and which spills over the formal boundaries of the EU.

In the case under discussion here, this emergent network-polity has been instrumental in the development of an agenda for cultural funding in the EU, an agenda that has been predicated on a conceptualisation of ‘culture’ as a set of resources to be deployed for the more effective management of populations in a context of economic and political integration. Putting general Treaty commitments to support culture into practice has involved a shift from a ‘symbolic’ notion of culture towards a more specific and variegated ‘governmental’ approach, in which culture is understood as precisely calibrated to the transformation of the dispositions of citizens in line with multiple objectives. EU policies in support of cultural diversity thus conform to a general tendency for cultural policies to be framed according to “a liberal progressive ideology in which citizenship rights can gradually and peaceably expand with an expanding economy” (Beale 1999a, 444).<sup>9</sup> EU support for the arts, heritage, and literature has been constructed around a quite conventional model of cultural democracy narrowly conceived as extending access to culture. EU action is conceptualised as facilitating improved ‘supply’ in response to a natural, linear growth in the demand for ‘culture’. The growing importance of culture is ascribed to the evolution from traditional industrial activities to service economies, to changes in lifestyle involving the growth of leisure time, and improved education (CEC 1996a). Conceptualising cultural democracy and rights of cultural citizenship primarily in terms of *consumption* reproduces an image of participation as essentially a passive process (see Bennett 1990). It fails to address explicitly issues of access to structures of participation in decision-making processes.

However, while EU cultural policy has been developed around a narrow conception of cultural democracy, there is an inherent ambivalence in the process of



governmentalisation, as efforts aimed at establishing more effective modes of rule generate unintended pressures for further participation and greater accountability. Thus, the governmentalisation of culture in EU policy has turned upon a constitutive ambiguity in understandings of ‘the cultural’. On the one hand, culture is conceptualised as an instrument for the transformation of attributes and competencies, as a medium through which it is possible to cultivate identification between institutions and citizens. At the same time, this policy objective has had to negotiate a set of imperatives to protect, maintain, and foster cultural diversity, defined as territorially bounded. As articulated by the COR, this imperative depends upon an essentially expressive relationship between culture and identity. These two different notions of culture, one *transformative*, one *expressive*, have been deployed by different actors in different contexts in the development of cultural policy. The ability to exploit this ambiguity between a transformative and an expressive conceptualisation of culture is crucial to the strategies of actors in establishing legitimate claims over cultural policy functions. Success depends upon finessing a complex set of questions regarding authority and accountability: questions of who represents diversity, when this has been primarily defined in terms of bounded communities brought together in forms of dialogue and exchange; and questions of who defines the core values around which diversity should be encouraged to flourish.

This paper has argued that for both empirical and normative reasons, an assessment of EU cultural policies needs to move beyond an exclusive focus on symbols, meaning, and identity. Rather than the question of whether a single European identity is possible or desirable, the analysis pursued here supports Reif’s contention that “a more important question at this point is whether there is enough political, economic, and

cultural self-confidence in Europe to remain open to the influence and impact of those other cultures which may not belong to what are generally regarded as core European traditions but which are nevertheless present in our societies” (1993, 151). The evolution of policies in support of cultural co-operation at the EU level during the 1990s indicates an emerging commitment amongst EU institutions to a heterogeneous model of European identity, consistent with the complexity and fragmentary nature of European identities (García 1997). This is illustrated, for example, by the Commission’s strong preference for a vocabulary of cultural dialogue over cultural identity in framing the *Culture2000* programme. The emerging institutionalisation of an ethics of participation in cultural policy might, in principle at least, facilitate diverse modes of decision-making processes based upon principles of parity of participation for all members of the polity irrespective of cultural identity (see Fraser 2000). On these grounds, a series of issues will deserve scrutiny in the next phase of EU cultural action. These include the performance of the new *DG* for Education and Culture, established after the resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999. In particular, the success of the *Culture2000* programme in facilitating the establishment of networks of cultural organisations able to act at EU-level to effect changes in decision-making procedures deserves further critical scrutiny. Given the necessarily mediated nature of participation in EU policy-making, how far experts, interest-groups, and NGO’s are able to mediate both with political agencies *and* with citizens remains a crucial issue (Warleigh 2000). The question which the evolution of cultural action in the 1990s raises for the future is the extent to which the further development of this policy field will be characterised by an openness of decision-making procedures to cultural actors representing both ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ traditions,

and thereby help realise the potential for EU cultural co-operation to foster inclusive cultural practices.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See Hooghe (1995), Marks and McAdam (1996), and Tarrow (1995) for discussions of the new patterns of political mobilisation shaping and shaped by the process of European integration.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the Council of Europe has promoted ‘the development of European culture’ through a variety of measures, including the European Cultural Convention first signed in 1954, and a regular series of national cultural-policy reviews begun in the 1980s. The Council of Europe’s consistent emphasis has been upon using cultural activities as a means of fostering social cohesion and enhancing civic ties (see Council of Europe 1997).

<sup>3</sup> There are three related rent dimensions of the democratic deficit: that of *accountability* (the lack of influence of citizens on EU decision-making); of *sovereignty* (the lack of a clear federal apportionment of responsibility between different scales of political jurisdiction); and of *legitimacy* (the absence of popular legitimation for and debate about the EU) (see Bellamy and Castiglione 1999). Cultural action addresses elements of each of these forms of democratic deficit.

<sup>4</sup> In the revision of the TEU in 1997, this clause became Article 151.

<sup>5</sup> Subsidiarity refers to the principle whereby the EU takes action only when the proposed action cannot be taken by member-states by reason of scale or effects of action, and is therefore better achieved by EU. The dominant sense of the principle of subsidiarity in EU debates therefore assumes the existence of effective representative democratic decision-making at a variety of territorial scales (MacCormick 1997).

<sup>6</sup> This phrase is drawn from Bennett (1995).

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<sup>7</sup> This work resonates with recent literature that questions the hegemony of territorialised models of space in the social sciences (see Agnew 1994, Anderson 1996, Low 1997).

<sup>8</sup> The tendency to counter-pose culture and integration, by presenting cultural diversity as an ‘obstacle’ to the apparently homogenising impulses of integration, is also a feature of much critical academic analysis, in which cultural difference is also routinely elided with the persistence of national identities (e.g. Hedetoft 1998, Zetterholm 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Beale’s argument is that this sort of narrative embeds a set of gendered assumptions at the heart of cultural policy agendas. This is evident in the EU case in a series of ways. For example, a broad distinction is drawn between ‘collective’ and ‘individual’ forms of culture, which turns out to be a distinction between forms of cultural consumption in public spaces (heritage, cinema, etc.) and those that take place in the home (reading, television, etc.) (CEC 1998a). This distinction works to erase from consideration the gendering of domestic social relations and of ‘private sphere’.