EUROPEAN COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL POLICIES FRAMEWORK: CREATIVITY AS A NEW PARADIGM?

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Abstract

This article critically examines the framework of European communication and cultural policies with the intention to enable a better understanding of the role that is currently assigned to both fields within the EU agenda. It is argued that the official European discourse has found in the notion of creativity a way to further domesticate culture in order to instrumentally reduce it, as has already been done with communications, to just another sector that can generate further revenue. In consequence, the creative processes have also begun to be taken into account in the formulation of information society and media policies. This is not a surprise from a historical point of view: the paradigm of creativity has been introduced in policy formation processes through the Lisbon agenda and the innovation society logo as a way of deepening the existing trends.

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Introduction

Communication and culture have been progressively separated and reduced to mere assets within European Union (EU) policies, the Lisbon strategy having played a major role in this process from 2000 onwards. As the communication sphere has been subsumed in a more technical and industrial programme, this has also been the case with culture within the wider creative industries agenda. Such separation, perfectly illustrated in the existence of different Directorate-Generals (Information Society and Media on the one hand and Education and Culture on the other), has led in turn to the development of unrelated policies and criteria and, in the end, separate programmes of action during the last decade. In the case of cultural policy, the successive Work Plans for Culture (2002-04, 2005-07 and 2008-10) have accompanied Culture Programmes 2000-06 and 2007-13, whereas communication policy has obtained its framework through the i2010 Communication (EC 2005), that built on the eEurope initiative launched in 2000.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that since the re-launch of the Lisbon agenda in 2005 the divorce between communication and cultural policies has not only deepened, but has also led the latter to follow in the footsteps of the former. If the i2010 Strategy focused since its origins on the contribution that information and communication technologies (ICT) can make to the economy, the European Agenda for Culture proposed in 2007 defines for the cultural sector the same aim information society and media policies have in contributing to Europe's economy and competitiveness: culture must be promoted as a catalyst of creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs.

The more recent Europe 2020 Strategy (EC 2010a) and the umbrella policy it will provide for the next Culture Programme after 2013 as well as the Digital Agenda – the new policy framework for the information society and media – seem to favour the same orientation. A critical examination of the i2010 Strategy and the Agenda for Culture may help to better understand the role that is currently assigned to communication and cultural fields within the EU policies. Both dimensions are here understood as inevitable and inextricably linked. Nevertheless, historical fractures and academic gaps in their treatment have tended to forget that, even though both maintain paradoxical relations, they have a structural (inter)relationship (Bustamante 2006).

The central argument presented below will be that the official European discourse has found in the notion of creativity a way to further domesticate culture in order to instrumentally reduce it, as it has already been done with communications, to just another sector that can generate further revenue; and that as a consequence, interestingly, creative processes have also begun to be taken into account for the formulation of information society and media policies.

Previous analyses have already shown that European policies have been oriented towards economic and industrial objectives (e.g., Schlesinger 1997; Bustamante 2000), especially in the case of audiovisual policy and regulation – which have also been influenced by competition issues – (Collins 1994; Humphreys 1996; Levy 1999) and have progressively been co-opted by policy formation processes ruled by soft, auto- and co-regulation (Harcourt 2005; 2008). Such tendencies, together with a partial shift in their configuration from the national to the European level (Littoz-Monnet 2007), could be illustrated by recent compilations (Ward 2008).

The use of the term "creative" to identify activities traditionally understood to form part of the cultural industries originated in Australia and the United Kingdom in the 1990s. It is mostly agreed that the election of New Labour in Britain in 1997 was decisive for the shift from the term "cultural industries" to "creative industries." Since such change has been analysed elsewhere (Garnham 2005; Tremblay 2008; Bustamante 2009), historiography included (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005; Pratt 2005; O´Connor 2007), the aims here are:

Firstly, to outline the confusion and lack of theoretical clarity around the umbrella terminology of cultural and creative industries (Galloway and Dunlop 2007; Pratt 2009), as well as the intellectual and practical problems that it both inherited and created (Banks and O'Connor 2009).

Secondly, to contextualise the creative industries debate into the wider framework of information society and knowledge economy policies. If liberalising trends emerging from documents such as the Bangemann Report (EC 1996) or the Green Paper on Convergence (EC 1997) built an European information society agenda where the concepts of information and knowledge were deliberately thrown into the centre of the arena, it can be suggested that, since the Lisbon agenda was born in 2000, this project seems to have been reinforced by the innovation-based society ideal, where creativity is the main protagonist. Hence, as it was also the case with the notion of "creative industries" (from the identification of activities based on individual creativity that have the potential to develop intellectual property to concentric circles or questionable social network markets models; O'Connor 2009), different stages might be identified: from an information to an innovation and creativity-based society; from a knowledge-driven to a digital economy.

Thirdly, to analyse specific implications of this change. Motivated by a historically specific political context (Garnham 2005; Schlesinger 2007), the shift in terms has allowed the inclusion of software and computing services in the mapping and quantification of the cultural sector, so as to strengthen and widen copyright boundaries, allege a crucial importance and dimension of creativity within the real economy, and, in turn, benefit from and ask for the same prestige, protection and benefits which the cultural sector has.

In other words, the notion of creativity, a central element to the information/innovation society theories that constitute the dominant framework that presumes to explain the world today, can be understood as an ideological construction that claims for new (digital) activities the same specificities and protection that artistic and cultural sectors already have (Tremblay 2008). Terms such as cultural value and the cultural industries have been co-opted for a new political purpose (Throsby 2008).

Creativity as an elaborate and hegemonic framework of policy ideas has become a body of thought increasingly international in scope (Schlesinger 2007). This is clearly reflected in a number of documents, such as Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy and Creating Culture: the New Growth Industries (DOCA 1994a; 1994b), the American Canvas Report (NEA 1997), the Creative Industries Mapping Document (DCMS 1998), the Creative Economy Report (UNCTAD 2008), and the Industrias de Contenido en Latinoamérica (Castro 2008), or even in the adoption of creative industry policies in diverse territories and by newly industrialised countries in the Global South (Ross 2007).

The EU has not been the exception to this rule and has also embraced the discourse according to which "creativity = innovation = growth." The framework of communication and cultural policies described below are proof of this fact.

The i2010 Strategic Framework

In line with the call of the 2005 Spring European Council to make knowledge and innovation the engines of growth in the EU, the Commission proposed a new strategic framework: the "i2010 – A European Information Society," which is based on an integrated approach to information society and audiovisual media policies, embracing all aspects of the information, communication and audiovisual sector (EC 2005). This policy framework was presented as a way of promoting the positive contribution that ICT can make to the economy, society and personal quality of life and was the continuation of the "eEurope" project launched in 2000.

The new i2010 initiative, conceived as part of the Lisbon strategy to make Europe a more competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy, provided the broad policy guidelines for the years up to 2010. These involved:

- Establishing a single European information space to promote an open and competitive internal market for the information society and media which offers affordable and secure high-bandwidth communications, rich and diverse content and digital services. Action in this area was focused on the creation of a new, market-oriented regulatory framework;
- Reinforcing innovation and investment in ICT research, in cooperation with the private sector, to promote technological leadership. Actions implemented under this priority aimed to strengthen European capabilities through instruments such as the Seventh Research Framework Programme or the European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives;
- Promoting an inclusive European information society which ensures that its benefits can be enjoyed by everyone. Priorities in this area would have to do, for example, with issues such as eAccessibility, the digital divide, inclusive eGovernment or digital literacy and culture.

Despite such intentions, at the point of the adoption of the initiative culture had already been left behind and the communication sector had been reduced to the audiovisual media and subsumed to the information society agenda. This can be verified with certainty when looking into the original formulation of the framework, the successive reviews of the strategy, summarised in the Digital Competitiveness Report, and, finally, the post-i2010 agenda work, which was set in motion with the European Digital Agenda launched in May 2010.

The i2010 objectives were presented as being fully integrated into the new convergent Lisbon umbrella policy. To begin with, the single European information space was reduced to the achievement of a new regulatory scenario to support competitive high bandwidth communications and enough content and digital services to fuel them. Accordingly, the Television without Frontiers Directive and the electronic communications regulatory framework, including the formulation of a new spectrum management policy definition, were to be reviewed. Security (e-commerce) and interoperability (digital rights management) were to be considered as well. As regards the crucial contribution of innovation and investment in research in ICT, this was going to be attached to the aim of closing the gap with Europe's

leading competitors (the US and Japan). And, finally, even though the strategy recognised that ICT should benefit citizens by making better public services and improving quality of life, it was suggested that the first of these aims needed to be more cost-effective. The proposal of a European Initiative on e-Inclusion would have to wait until the end of 2007.

In 2009 the main achievements of the i2010 Strategy were presented in the Communication on "Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report" (EC 2009) in a new financial context, where ICT, and in particular broadband Internet, were assigned a crucial role in the European economic recovery plan. But the tangible results the report claims, consequence of a pro-competition and pro-consumer policy, show in fact the technocratic and industrial outcome of the strategy. Without taking into consideration gap issues in access as well as skills, it states that the number of regular Internet users increased from 43 percent in 2005 to 56 percent in 2008, Europe has become the world leader in broadband Internet with 114 million subscribers, the market for mobile phones has exceeded 100 percent penetration, ICT research has played a key role in Europe's major industrial development, such as in micro- and nano-electronics, and Europe has made fast progress in the supply and use of online public services (one third of European citizens and almost 70 percent of businesses in the EU use eGovernment services).

In other words, as the document underlines, the promotion of a single market in telecoms and audiovisual media services is supposed to be one of the most important areas in which ICT policy has made a difference. From this auto-celebratory point of view, results can be seen on the supply side of the development of the information society, in particular in relation to broadband communications. Divides in take-up are not considered (what is for instance the situation in rural areas or in the EU's newcomer states?) and, most importantly, a simplistic conception of the relationship between ICT and the information society is hidden behind the figures (is it appropriate to consider progress as being just the automatic outcome of the introduction and adoption of ICTs?)

The Agenda for Culture

The innovation and competitiveness drivers which the Lisbon strategy succeeded in mainstreaming in most policy formation processes begun to be associated, after its 2005 re-launch, with investment in culture as a tool to stimulate creativity. Culture-based creativity is therefore currently presented as a key element for fostering innovation, which in turn will positively influence a competitiveness that will subsequently, and automatically, contribute to growth.

Nevertheless, as the study on the impact of culture on creativity prepared for DG Education and Culture reminds (KEA 2009), while the policy priority on technology innovation has been reflected in the EU's funding strategy (budgetary resources are linked to regional development, research and ICT programmes), non-technological innovation has received little consideration: the relevance of cultural and creative industries as a strategic area to drive the innovation agenda has remained marginal.

In order to overcome this gap, the Commission released in April 2007 the European Agenda for Culture in a globalising world (EC 2007), which can be summarised in the three interrelated objectives it presents:

- Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Since it is a preoccupation that EU's cultural diversity be understood, respected and promoted in a borderless Union that encourages mass cultural exchange within the continent, the specific objectives to be addressed are the mobility of artists and workers in the cultural sector, the cross-border dissemination of works of art and the promotion and strengthening of cultural competences, in particular by developing cultural awareness;
- Promotion of culture as a vital element in international relations, which implies an approach that consists of the systematic integration of the cultural dimension and different components of culture in all external and development policies, projects and programmes and the support for specific cultural actions and events;
- Promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy. The Agenda is absolutely clear about the way in which cultural industries must be understood: as an asset for Europe's economy and competitiveness, because creativity generates innovation and stimulates growth and jobs.

The document highlights the important contribution culture has already made to European internal and external relations and supports further development in the same direction, but its interest in the economic dimension of cultural activities is introduced as a crucial element. Assuming that creativity is the basis for innovation and taking for granted that cultural industries and the creative sector contribute substantially to European GDP, growth and employment, the Agenda suggests that the role of culture in supporting and fostering creativity and innovation should be promoted by addressing specific objectives, such as: encouraging creativity in education (culture as a concrete tool for lifelong formal and informal learning), promoting capacity building in the cultural sector (supporting the training of cultural workers in management, entrepreneurship and the European market), and developing partnerships between the cultural sector and other sectors (such as ICTs or tourism in order to reinforce the social and economic impact of investments in culture and creativity).

Based on a disproportionate conception of the size of the cultural sector, fuelled by enthusiastic advocates of the economic impact or economic importance of the arts since the 1980s (Towse 2000), the sector is presented as a crucial economic asset that needs to be exploited in favour of Europe's economy and competitiveness, since it contributes to growth (approximately 2.6 percent to the Union's GDP in 2003 according to KEA 2006) and creativity. And creativity generates both social and technological innovation.

The cultural and creative sectors are viewed as fostering innovation in other sectors of the economy. They are presented as essential for the further development of ICTs because they provide content to fuel digital devices and networks (the forecast is that revenues from online content will reach €8.3 billion in 2010; see Screen Digest, CMS, Goldmedia and Rightscom 2006). In addition, they are portrayed as having a multiple role to play in local development (in terms of tourism, employment and social cohesion). Last but not least, it is reminded that this promotion of culture and creativity is supported by EU copyright and related rights legislation.

Not only did the Council endorse the Agenda for Culture, but the European Parliament also agreed to consider 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. Culture as a catalyst for creativity and innovation fed the Work Plan for

Culture 2008-10 and, if the content of the consultation behind the Green Paper on unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries launched by DG Education and Culture in May 2010 is any indication, it seems it will also inform the Culture Programme after 2013.

Creativity in the European Discourse

Before analysing why communication and cultural policies have developed in the direction described above, it is essential to understand what the notion of creativity implies in the context of the European discourse, how it has been introduced in the policy formation processes, and in which direction it might evolve.

The Emergence of a New Paradigm?

The panacea of creativity was incorporated into the EU supra-national level of governance with the re-launch of the Lisbon agenda, which presented creativity as a key element to its further development. The notion was introduced in the informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government that took place during the Finland's EU Presidency in Lahti in October 2006. The Communication on an innovation-friendly, modern Europe stated, in its first paragraph, that

> to be successful in a global economy and achieve the rates of growth necessary to sustain our living standards, Europe must do more to harness its creative power and ability to convert knowledge into high quality products, services and new business models for which there is strong global demand. Progress on innovation will be central to the success of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs (EC 2006).

This reasoning, later introduced in the Agenda for Culture (EC 2007) and more recently in the post-i2010 Strategy (2009), was endorsed by a series of successive Presidency conclusions of the European Council from December 2007 on and was supported by the European Parliament when the Decision concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 was approved in 2008 (EP 2008). The Policy Guidelines presented to the European Parliament by president Barroso in September 2009 calling for a European Digital Agenda, as well as the final version of that document (launched in May 2010) also imply it.

Outgoing Commissioner Viviane Reding (replaced by Neelie Kroes) set out the Digital Agenda for the first time in a speech on July 2009, entitled "Digital Europe – Europe's Fast Track to Economic Recovery" (Reding 2009). Eight months later, its spirit was included as one of the pillars of the Commission's Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EC 2010a): the 2005 re-launched Lisbon goals for 2010 had to be reconsidered in light of the economic and financial crisis with the aim of delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion for the following decade.

Therefore, current priorities involve achieving a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This in turn requires developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation, promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy, and fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. These are intended to be transformed into targets, such as "75 percent of the population aged 20-64 should be employed" or "3 percent of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D." A wide range of policies will need to underpin them.

The Commission is putting forward seven flagship initiatives to catalyse these results, including the Digital Agenda for Europe (EC 2010c).

Rhetoric aside, what the notion of creativity represents in the European discourse is a new paradigm: vague enough to be cross-sectoral and to influence horizontally many policy areas while, at the same time, defined narrowly and strictly enough in terms of its potential financial contribution to guide policy decisions in a particular direction, i.e. to orient them mainly towards economic and industrial objectives. Communication and cultural policies have not, evidently, escaped a tendency that in fact has much older roots.

The intertwined imperatives and promises the discourse of creativity unveils are configuring into a new paradigm that, in Schlesinger's words, could be thought of as a doctrine (2007; 2009). Since creativity boosts innovation, it is understood to contribute to personal, social and economic development. At the same time, tautologically, as every human being is capable of being creative, it is important that education, business and, generally speaking, free movement of knowledge and ideas can inspire creativity.

Creativity is certainly a positive word. Associated with ideas such as "new," "original," "innovative" or even "modern" and "fashionable," it is presented as a process that has to be continuously shaped and stimulated, but also measured, because it is linked to the belief in a never-ending progress. Emphasis is put on individuals, sometimes with romantic connotations, too. And, as it is in fact a concept difficult to grasp, it has become the perfect linguistic node that allows the agglutination of existing tendencies presented in new terms. Challenges such as those of economic growth, job-creation, greater competitiveness and sustainable development (environmental aspects included) are as a result magically addressed through the encouragement of the multiple facets of creativity. A quick look at the outcome of the debates held on the occasion of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and the presentations displayed at the workshop "Towards a Pan-European Initiative in Support of Innovative Creative Industries in Europe," held in February 2010, can provide very good examples of this trend.

Nevertheless, as Throsby (2008) and Bustamante (2009) argue, the true impact of the cultural industries on the economy still lacks rigorous empirical proofs. The discourse of creative industries is intellectually unformed, politically misinformed and economically deformed (Miller 2007). The dangerous outcome is that excessive importance is given to the economic contribution of cultural activities, which risks shifting the focus away from the achievement of social, cultural and educational objectives and towards industrial and economic goals.

It can be argued that, through the Lisbon agenda and the innovation society logo, creativity has been introduced in the policy formation processes analysed above as a way of deepening the existing trends. Even though explicit cultural policy can be thought as becoming implicit economic policy (and cultural and creative industries policy is presented as a singular candidate for such categorisation), it is suggested here that at the EU level as well, "the economic imperative driving cultural industries policy is so strong that the adjective 'implicit' dwindles in relevance and this area of cultural policy becomes just another arm of government economic policy," as Throsby (2009, 182) observed is the case of the UK.

From the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010 to the Green Paper

Five priority areas articulated around the three objectives of the Agenda for Culture were set by the Council as the basis for the Work Plan for Culture 2008-10 (CE 2008). Through two of them the Agenda becomes operational to develop culture as a catalyst for creativity: to develop data, statistics and methodologies in the cultural sector and to maximise the potential of cultural and creative industries, in particular that of SMEs. To contribute to these, work on cultural statistics was re-launched by EUROSTAT, an experts' working group on the potential of cultural and creative industries was set up and, building on the first European Culture Forum that took place in September 2007, the emergence of a new thematic civil society platform on creative and cultural industries was encouraged.

More specifically, the Council invited the Commission to order a study on the contribution of culture to creativity, the entrepreneurial dimension of cultural and creative industries and the contribution of culture to local and regional economic development, with the intention of kicking off a debate on the best ways to unlock the potential of cultural and creative industries in Europe through producing a Green Paper on cultural and creative industries by December 2009.

The Culture Programme 2007-13 that was launched with a budget of €400 million for projects and initiatives, aims to achieve three main objectives: (1) to promote cross-border mobility of those working in the cultural sector, (2) encourage the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic output, and (3) to foster intercultural dialogue. To do so, three types of activities are supported: cultural actions (multi-annual co-operation projects, co-operation measures and special measures), European-level cultural bodies, and analysis and dissemination of activities (national cultural contact points).

The Green Paper "Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries" (EC 2010b) was finally published at the end of April 2010 to gather views on issues impacting European cultural and creative industries. Predictably, the document underlines the idea that these have an untapped potential to create growth and jobs and that their spill-over effects can offer a path towards a more imaginative, cohesive, prosperous and green future. It is expected that by 2012 measures following the results of this consultation will be proposed.

Towards the Post-i2010 Scenario: The Digital Agenda

As regards the future of ICT and media policies, Europe was supposed to need a new digital agenda to avoid the risk of losing its competitive edge in high-speed fibre Internet, wireless mobile communications and Internet services and applications. That is why the Commission launched a public online consultation on nine key areas headed by the aim of unleashing ICT as a driver of economic recovery and as a lead contributor to the Lisbon growth and jobs agenda.[1] What is interesting is that among them creativity has been added as a new element to existing justifications.

In the new scenario the Internet becomes the driver of growth and the basis for open innovation, participation and – notably – creativity. It is stated that since the Internet offers an unprecedented chance to unleash the creativity of Europe's

citizens, it is essential to encourage its take up so as to promote a future wherein users are active players, producers or "prosumers" (active producers). That is why the consultation that helped to prepare the Digital Agenda as the next framework for the information society had a section dedicated to supporting access to creativity at all levels.

A closer examination of its justifications reveals the real interests behind this initiative: beyond affirming users' rights in the participative web, supporting the digitisation of cultural resources to preserve cultural heritage, and wondering about equal access to content for persons with disabilities, the protagonist was the emergence of a true digital single market for digital content, based on new viable business models. If digital content is to circulate freely in competitive markets overcoming borders across the EU, a reasonable equilibrium between sustainability of copyright, the possibility of access and the protection of cultural diversity are needed, while the development and mutual reinforcement of the ICT sector and the European content industry is implied. It still remains to be seen how a true balance is going to be achieved in a high-tension field where the demonisation of downloads and peer to peer relations tends to ignore the dominant position digital gatekeepers have and the power they exercise.

It should not be surprising then if in the future post-i2010 scenario, portrayed by the Digital Agenda for Europe (EC 2010c), an increasingly narrow – and even *naïve* – conception of creativity is developed as a key element in promoting new Internet-based services that will contribute to European competitiveness in the so-called digital economy.

This Communication by the European Commission, presented on 20 May 2010, aims to deliver sustainable economic and social benefits from a digital single market based on fast and ultra fast Internet and interoperable applications. In fact, as one of the flagships of the Europe 2020 Strategy, it offers an action plan for making the best use of ICTs to stimulate the EU economy. It is in this context that its seven key initiatives must be understood: creating a digital single market, improving interoperability between ICT products and services, boosting Internet trust and security, guaranteeing the provision of much faster Internet access, encouraging investment in R&D, enhancing digital literacy, skills and inclusion, and, finally, enabling ICT benefits for society.

In brief, the consideration given to creativity in the Digital Agenda is absolutely coherent with the analysis developed above. Creativity is considered to be underused and insufficient in terms of investment efforts, thus resulting in a failure to convert research and creations into competitive products and services. The existence of creative contents that can freely circulate inside the EU and be accessed online effectively is one of the necessary conditions for achieving a digital single market and, in the end, the virtuous cycle of the digital economy. That is why, apart from the objective of promoting cultural diversity, the following can be found among the planned actions: support for measures that unlock the potential of cultural and creative industries and promotion of the creation, production and wider distribution of digital content on all platforms, mainly by achieving open access to legal online content by simplifying licensing and copyright clearance.

To sum up, it can be said that in 2010 the re-launched Lisbon strategy has managed to continue guiding information society and media policies and began

to succeed in influencing the cultural field in the same technocratic and economy-oriented direction, thanks to a discourse in which the notion of creativity as the basis for innovation plays a central role. As a consequence, the distance between communication and culture has been deepened, even though the consideration of creative processes has recently also begun to be taken rhetorically into consideration for the configuration of forthcoming information society and media policies. In view of the orientation of the Digital Agenda and the Green Paper on cultural and creative industries, it would be difficult to say that the European Commission is likely to change course in the immediate future.

Creativity and Policy Configuration

To explain why the European framework for communication and cultural policies has developed in the direction described above, I would argue that economic and industrial rationales have prevailed because it has always been easier for the EU to achieve negative rather than positive integration. The term "negative integration" in the context of this article follows Scharpf's definition (1997, 1999) as the imposition of limitations on the member states that rule out national measures that could restrain trade or distort competition (e.g. removal of tariffs, quantitative restrictions), implying therefore a technical and economic nature of the rationale for intervention. "Positive integration," in contrast, refers to the harmonisation of national policies.

Whereas there are powerful mechanisms that allow the Commission and the Court of Justice continuously to expand the legal reach of negative integration, in the case of measures of positive integration the need for consensus remains very high because they generally require the explicit approval of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament and, consequently, imply alignment of a wide range of different national interests. This has certainly been the case with culture and communication, which are inextricably linked, but have been separately and negatively – in the above sense – treated. Clarifying analyses about the audiovisual sector that present evidence about this can be found for example in Levy (1999) and Harcourt (2005).

Furthermore, a Communitarisation[2] of domestic policies in the cultural sector has taken place, although no formal competence on cultural policy appeared in the original Treaty (Littoz-Monnet 2007). The Community's judicial and legislative organs were, of course, involved from the start in questions of cultural policy, but it was not until the 1992 Maastricht Treaty reform that culture was given a (problematic due the open-ended or vague terms used; Craufurd 2004) place of its own in the EU legal framework. In the Treaty, the role of the EU in the cultural field was explicitly defined and the main objectives of EU policies in the area were set out: to contribute to the flowering and preservation of the cultures of the member states, encourage contemporary cultural creation, take the cultural dimension into account in all policies, and promote cooperation between member states and third countries and organisations (Article 151).

Ever since, European intervention in the field has had to comply with a strictly defined principle of subsidiarity. The EU can only take action if the objectives under consideration cannot be achieved by the member states, which besides have traditionally considered culture to be the domain of national sovereignty and to

hold particular importance. Yet beyond the complex development of communication and cultural policies as arenas of integration, through negative as well as sometimes positive processes, there might be evidence to support the idea that a shift has increasingly – though not completely or without tensions – taken place from the national to the European level (both through Europeanisation and Communitarisation phases; Littoz-Monnet 2007)[3] in this area, while the approach of EU institutions to culture has been to abandon the traditional Community method in favour of "soft governance" (Harcourt 2008).[4]

It is here suggested that current trends, guided by a creativity-dominated discourse in the case of communication and cultural policies, should be understood (and further studied) in light of these tensions. And that additional thinking should be devoted to what Gray (2007) describes as the establishment and acceptance of a commodified conception of public policy that has led to the instrumentalisation of cultural policies (namely, placing an increasing emphasis upon the use of culture as an instrumental tool to attain non-cultural objectives).

It can be finally argued that the fact that economic and industrial logics have overlooked the development of communication and cultural policies was an expectable outcome absolutely coherent with the origins of the market-oriented EU project. Going beyond the critique presented above, a question pointing to the roots of such characterisation can therefore be posed: why (and how) would communication and cultural policies be considered differently by a project which was economic in its founding nature and conception? From the Steel and Coal Community to the Single Market and, more specifically, from the Maastricht to the Lisbon Treaties, the result has been a subsidiary and functionalist though initially vague consideration of the cultural dimension, based on an economic rationale, which has been increasingly technocratic from the nineties on.[5]

Ménage a trois: Culture, Communication and Creativity

As a way of concluding, following from the above analyses it can be said that the role assigned to communication and culture within European policies is not a surprise from a historical point of view. It can be portrayed as conflictive, to begin with, because of the type of competence the EU has in these fields (principle of subsidiarity). Consequently, the EU has always approached communication and culture in a sideways manner, indirectly affecting them through interventions developed in other sectors. For this reason the two fields have been predominantly considered from economic and industrial perspectives and have been mainly dealt with through negative integration processes.

It has been argued earlier that this treatment, explained within the wider context of the Lisbon strategy and the information/innovation society promises, has relied increasingly on a discourse based on a reductive concept of creativity that, in fact, re-oriented cultural policy and contributed to the reinforcement of existing tendencies in the field of information society and media. The new paradigm of creativity might further domesticate culture and certainly add a new element in strengthening control over communications, as a market-oriented rationale is emphasised. A co-opting movement could be placed behind apparently innocent objectives, such as might take into consideration culture-based creativity and encourage diversity (since cultural diversity is one of the sources of creativity), or

promote ICTs and traditional media (because these allow creative self-expression and lifelong formal/ non-formal education).

Yet if culture is further domesticated through the promises of creativity and considered merely another "asset," as it has been already the case with communications, sustainable development is likely to fail. If culture remains to be separated from communications, new digital products and services will keep on being managed according to industrial and technological rationales. Finally, if both communication and culture are completely subsumed to the imperatives of the Digital Agenda through a reasoning along the lines of "creativity = innovation = growth," a democratic orientation in communication and cultural policy-making will be harder to achieve.

Acknowledgments:

Notes:

1. See public consultation on post-i2010 "Priorities for new strategy for European information society (2010-2015)" <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/pc_post-i2010/index_en.htm>

2. For Littoz-Monnet (2007), Europeanisation refers to the penetration of the European dimension in national arenas of politics and policy, whereas Communitarisation refers to the emergence and development of distinct structures of governance at the European level.

3. This shift is obviously not linear but rather the outcome of complex Europeanisation/ domestication processes.

4. "The traditional Community method refers to legislation initiated by the European Commission, for example, directives, regulations, recommendations and decisions, and ratified by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. … By contrast, 'soft governance' refers to non-binding agreements made between participating actors established outside the Community method. Policy is agreed upon in 'soft' policy fora" (Harcourt 2008, 7).

5. Whether the existing market community should have given (or give) place to a cultural community and a shared communicative space is a question for a separate analysis (see Fossum and Schlesinger 2007). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that ideas of how European communication and cultural policies should evolve can be radically different depending on the position adopted.

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