

EU Cultural Policy and Transnational Networks
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Introduction

European Identity and European values, in particular cultural values, have increasingly become topics of reflection and debate, even concern during the last few years.¹ The reunification of Europe in 2004 by the largest EU Enlargement round ever and- in the aftermath- the Constitutional contract, which was signed by the Heads of States and Governments but failed to win the overall support of the EU citizens led the EU into a state of uncertainty. The massive information and policy explanation campaign which the European Commission launched as an immediate reaction to the negative votes on the Constitutional Contract in France and the Netherlands 2005 just revealed that the issue went far beyond the lack of information and trust in EU policy and policy-makers. In the overall context of economic globalisation and perceived external threats to personal security it was the cultural dimension of European Integration that was put in the limelight and in this context questions such as: Who are we Europeans, what do we have in common and also – more importantly and pro-actively – how do we position ourselves in the globalising world with its cultural diversities and frictions.

EU Cultural Policy

From the EU institutional perspective the cultural dimension is being covered by the EU Cultural Policy, which is clearly defined in terms of legal basis, objectives and budget allocations.² Calls by the European Commission for implementation of the Programmes and projects are being addressed to creative people, artists and cultural managers in the EU member states, candidate, associated and even third countries. These so-called cultural operators, who are expected to use the EU cultural funds by cooperating across national borders towards the objectives set by the EU, usually cooperate through networking or assisted by institutionalised networks³, in search of new ideas, to share skills and knowledge, gain feed backs, and obtain funding. If a group of cultural operators– from at least three different countries – manages to win a contract in the context of the EU Cultural Policy it may be expected that this gives added value and sustainability to their transnational cooperation and networking to the end of shaping European culture and –finally- European identity. Experience resulting from the project such as new ideas, specifications and instruments for cultural cooperation might even be returned to the European Commission in the course of a consultation process. After all, “...developing a more systematic and proactive approach to working with key networks to enable them to contribute to decision-

shaping and policy-execution, and examining how the framework for transnational cooperation of regional or local actors could be better supported at EU level for the purpose of presenting proposals”, has been the Commission’s declared intention since 2002.⁴

The idea for taking a closer look at the EU Cultural Policy and its possible impact on the formation of transnational cultural networks in the East-West/East-East context occurred at the occasion of the constitutive meeting of an EU financed project- *Mobile Studios*- in February this year in Berlin. PublicArtLab – a Berlin-based NGO in the MediaArts sector- and associated partners from Bulgaria, Serbia, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary had won the grant award for the period of one year under the EU Programme “Culture 2000”, heading “Specific innovative and/or experimental actions”. *Mobile Studios* was conceived as a nomadic multimedia platform which should travel from Belgrade to Bratislava, Budapest and Sofia, temporarily possessing urban spaces in these cities, supported by a Mobile Webcast Studio in Gdansk. It had been designed to temporarily act as an “open-minded” space, which offered the opportunity of collaboration among artists, grass-roots groups and cultural institutions. The Studios were expected to stimulate a public dialogue about local, national and global identities in connection with cultural policy-making structures. Networking and the creation of new transnational networks was both objective and instrument from the outset: “for “MediaArts” networking is the usual way of interaction to the end of exchanging opinions, information and disseminating results, the European Commission’s call for proposals for innovative transnational actions to be carried out in partnerships or in the form of networks , just fitted our approach”, explained Susa Pop, Managing Director of PublicArtLab.⁵

The February meeting was thus planned as a first step towards establishing the “*Mobile Studios Network*” among the project cooperation partners, who were creative, innovative, young and mostly female, each coming from a different Central and South East European culture, ready for moving across the borders of their countries and initiating innovative European culture in practice, determined to shape “Europe” and perhaps even European Identity - “New Europe” at its best .

Being financed by the European Commission- even though just for a year- was of highest importance for the cooperation partners, regarding both funding and strategic perspective. Susa Pop: “Contributing to ‘shaping Europe’ was a major incentive, and of course there was the European grant money”. How far would this incentive lead? Would the cooperation partners eventually even become agents of European consciousness through creating a sustainable transnational network, even though the European funding granted to *Mobile Studios* just covered a period of one year ? Young artists are poor and networks , virtual ones included, need to be organised, which is – in particular if they are “transnational” - time consuming and costly.⁶ Would the implementation of this networking project confirm the assumption that cooperation programmes being initiated and co-financed by the EU cultural policy – precisely “Culture 2000” - were conducive to fostering transnational networking , thus helping to establish a new quality of European cooperation in this sector ?

The expectation that the declared objectives of “Culture 2000” or at least official evaluation reports could reveal evidence proved to be illusive . Likewise the blunt reaction of a senior European Commission official when asked about the Commission’s support to transnational cultural networks: “ It is not the objective of the Commission’s Cultural Programme to finance networks”. The only evaluation report currently available on the Commission’s website only covers the first 2 years of the program, therein no mention of networks can be detected at all.⁷ Systematic empirical research – for instance the questioning

of a representative sample of cultural operators who had received EU funding- was not feasible during such a short period. What will be discussed below therefore is EU cultural policy as such , its emergence, scope of activities, priorities, objectives, rules and implementation by the example of *Mobile Studios*. General Conclusions concerning the contribution to transnational networking will be drawn with the reservation that evaluations of a variety of different projects and programmes implemented in the context of Culture 2000 would be required to make them watertight.

What is European culture and why does it matter ?

There are different categories of culture ranging from the narrow sense of arts and cultural products and respective commercial industries including the acquisition of learning via culture in terms of civilisation and manners to “company or corporate culture” and finally to the anthropological view of Culture as “ a disputed space central to which are issues of language and power, and ideology and consciousness”.⁸

Understanding culture as “...an assemblage of imaginings and meanings that may be consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous...culture is always transitional open and unstable”, thus “...a culture can never be closed since it is made up of competing interests and many different individuals ...and groups”⁹ describes an inclusive approach that reflects both the process of cultural development and the impossibility of defining a “Culture” once and for all.

With regard to the cultural dimension of the European Integration process, all categories seem to be applicable somehow, including the “ corporate culture” of the European Commission as executive body of the EU Cultural Policy. However, the following seem especially applicable:

- Existing cultural products which are perceivable (visually and audibly), including the different cultural heritages ;
- Culture as a disputed, negotiated place with regard to the assessment of the existing variety as well as the imagined common sphere.

The dimension of power is inherent to both :

“Whose culture shall be the official one and whose shall be subordinated? What culture shall be regarded as worthy of display and which shall be hidden? Whose history shall be remembered and whose forgotten? What images of social life shall be projected and which shall be marginalized? What voices shall be heard and which silenced? Who is representing whom and on what basis ? This is the realm of cultural politics.”¹⁰

While the level of images, dispute and discourse remains invisible, the Commission’s “European Culture portal “ presents the complex picture of European culture in the sense of sectors and products relating to culture in Europe. Common Cultural activities include “.....arts, cultural heritage, music, books, lifelong learning, but also commercial cultural industries (cinema and audiovisual media), dance and sport. The Commission itself succinctly states that there are many EU policies for the promotion of culture, which is supposed to mean that cultural sectors , professions and concerns are being taken into consideration by policy areas such as Industrial Policy, Agriculture, Regional Funds, Telecommunication, International Relations and others. Culture in the context of established Community policies thus appears as a commodity, a productive force in economic and social

development and as a political tool, functional for achieving overriding European policy objectives.

In addition, by setting up a European “Culture” programme, a special instrument was created to promote the cooperation of European cultural operators with a view to developing common cross-border cultural activities. An official European definition of “Culture”, however, can neither be found in the cultural dimensions of the Community programmes nor in the “Culture” area itself.

In order to elucidate background, function and potential of the EU Cultural Policy a brief look at earlier periods of the European Integration process may be useful.

“Culture” in the European Integration Process

Culture was not mentioned in the Founding Treaties of the European Communities, which were signed in March 1957 by then six Member States, nonetheless already the signatories of the Treaty of Rome were determined to “lay the foundation of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe“ ((Treaty of Rome, Preamble).

It was only in the 70ies – after the first enlargement by UK, Denmark and Ireland- when the EC Member States recognised that an ever closer union among the peoples required more than pure economic integration, framed by a vision of building peace on the continent. The issues of culture and identity and in this context the idea of European citizenship were brought to the European agenda in search of means and ways to address the Europeans directly.¹¹ In 1973 - as a first step towards raising awareness about Europe and “Europeanness” among the citizens - the EC Heads of Government signed the Declaration on European Identity, highlighting the same attitudes to life, shared values, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.¹² The Tindemans Report on the European Union 1975 took up the idea of the Peoples’ Europe, the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 - thoroughly prepared by a European awareness campaign- gave a further boost to the debate.

The early 1980s saw the re-launching of the European idea in the overall context of preparations of both the Single European Market and the Economic and Monetary Union, while the Mediterranean Enlargement was ongoing. These ambitious goals could not be achieved without giving due consideration to awareness if not consent of the European citizen. In 1983 the EC Heads of Government signed the “Solemn Declaration on European Union” by which they committed themselves to promoting European awareness and undertaking joint action in areas such as education, audio-visual policy and the arts. First actions were designed, for which – due to the absence of a legislative framework and culture specific budget allocations- funds had to be secured in established policy areas, primarily in information and telecommunication. Also, a series of symbols were developed – such as the blue flag with 12 stars, the European passport, and the official European anthem, which were expected to stimulate peoples’ interest in European Affairs and to make them more aware of their European identity.¹³ The European Council of Fontainebleau (June 1984) decided to set up a committee for a “ Peoples’ Europe” which -under the chairmanship of Pietro Adonnino- prepared a report covering the promotion of the image and identity of Europe, information and education, matters of interest for the youth and European culture . The Committee came to the realization that it was “through action in the areas of culture and communication, which are essential to European identity and the Community’s image in the minds of its people that support for the advancement of Europe can and should be sought.”¹⁴

This finding had to be translated into concrete action, even though Culture and Education at that time were still considered to be the exclusive responsibility of the Member States. Looking back at the period of the 1980s, Jacques Delors, at that time the Commission's President and spiritus rector of the Single Market programme, reports that launching some concrete gestures in enhancing the mobility of students across the borders was his personal matter of concern and initiative.¹⁵ Against initial resistance and only at the second attempt he succeeded in obtaining the Member States' agreement on the Erasmus programme for students' exchange in 1986 and -in 1988- on a directive concerning the mutual recognition of diplomas in Higher Education – two landmarks in the development of European educational and cultural policies.¹⁶ As a result of the special commitment of France and Delors in person in the field of audiovisual industries, the programme MEDIA was set up in 1990.¹⁷ Furthermore, within the context of *Information* and *Social Fund* policies, a number of culture initiatives including “European years”, European prizes and “Jean Monnet awards” were put on track. By the beginning of the 1990s, when the European Communities were completing the Single Market programme and, at the same time facing the challenge of integrating Central and Eastern Europe, the Cultural dimension of European Integration together with the concept of European citizenship was recognized as indispensable for promoting a sense of belonging to the European Community among its citizens.¹⁸ In consequence, 35 years after the Treaty of Rome, a European cultural competency was formally established in the Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht 1992). The legal basis for specific budget allocations and respective cultural programmes at the European level was provided by Art. 128 (Art 151, Treaty of Amsterdam), setting out that

- 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.
- Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action...
- The Community shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of this Treaty, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.
- In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council: ...shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States...

Taking culture into account and respecting cultural diversity in all Community policies, in compliance with EU law, thus became a legal obligation for the Community institutions. Also, the EU was entitled to launch specific activities with a view to enhance “Cultural cooperation” which led to a first series of pilot and sectoral programmes between 1993-1999.¹⁹

Needless to mention, since emphasized in any Commission documents on culture, that due to the principle of subsidiarity, Community action in this field had to be in compliance with the tasks assigned to the Community by the Treaty, since Community cultural policy could not be confused with cultural policies conducted by the Member States or the regions.

In its first interim report on the new EU cultural competency the Commission identified three important lines of action, thereby highlighting the pivotal role of support to – long-term- cultural networking²⁰

- Enhancement of the cultural roots and currents common to Europeans
- Promotion of Community cultural action encouraging permanent networking between those involved in culture in the different countries, offering them the means of setting up long-term, high-profile cooperation
- Definition of priorities to guarantee and increase the convergence and complementarity of Community action

This gave rise to the expectation that developing means to encourage sustainable transnational networking would become a priority when the initial culture programmes were - in 1999/2000 – replaced by “Culture 2000”, a single financing and programming instrument for cultural cooperation with one set of objectives, one budget and respective implementation rules.

The decision of the Council and the European Parliament that established the Culture 2000 programme for the period 1 January 2000 – 31 December 2004²¹ reflects in its Preamble that the high importance attached to the cultural dimension of the European Integration process. What had increasingly been in evidence since the signature of the founding Treaties, was fully realized at the end of the 1990s:

“Culture ...is an essential element of European integration..., both an economic factor and a factor in social integration and citizenship,... it has an important role to play in meeting the new challenges facing the Community, such as globalisation, the information society, social cohesion and the creation of employment.” That is why “ if citizens give their full support to, and participate fully in European integration, greater emphasis should 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; a better balance should be achieved between the economic and cultural aspects of the Community, so that these aspects can complement and sustain each other “. Furthermore it says, that “... The Community is consequently committed to working towards the development of a cultural area common to the European people (and)... cooperation to all those involved in the cultural sector....”.

In this context, the need is recognized “...to promote greater cooperation with those engaged in cultural activities by encouraging them to enter into cooperation agreements for the implementation of joint projects” and “... to provide support for specific and innovative measures...” .

In concrete terms “Culture 2000“ will support cooperation “... between creative artists, cultural operators, private and public promoters, the activities of the cultural networks and other partners...” to the end of promoting “... the movement of artists, creators and other cultural operators and professionals and their works ...”. This – only –reference to networks as one operator amongst others in the legal text body of the Council and European Parliament decision is complemented by the commitment to support “...cultural networks and in particular networks of operators...in different participating States with a view to realising structured cultural projects...” in the Annex setting out the implementation details. This notion, however , only relates to multiannual transnational cultural cooperation among networks that already exist.

Therefore, encouraging transnational networking as an end in itself may be considered as an option under “Culture 2000”, it is not explicitly foreseen, though not excluded either.

The overall budget for the period of 2000- 2006 of about 236,5 Mio€, has been broken down to 45 % for specific innovative and/or experimental actions, 35 % for multiannual cultural cooperation agreements, 10 % for special cultural events and 10% for remaining expenditure including costs related to contact points, which were set up in the Member States to assist with information on “Culture 2000” and providing a link with national cultural institutions.²²

The focus on innovative and experimental actions in combination with an all-Europe approach and the notion of cross border movement suggests a new understanding of “Culture” in the context of EU Cultural Policy: Culture as an active and innovative sector with the capacity of mobilizing resources²³, the potential of which was to be enhanced by supporting cross border cultural production.

Among the assessment criteria for the selection of eligible applications, the particular European added value comes first before “Quality” and “Innovation and Creativity”. Each project has to address at least one of the themes “Addressing the Citizen”, “New technology/media addressing creativity” and “Tradition and innovation; linking the past and the future”.

The preference that will be given to “...projects which involve the largest number of co-organisers and /or partners from different participating countries” reflects the indispensable “perspective which looks beyond local, regional or even national interests and aims to develop synergies at a European level”, a condition applied to EU funding in view of the Principle of subsidiarity. High importance is being attached to both “the level at which the actions address, reach, and benefit primarily citizens in Europe and that aim for broad visibility and accessibility”, and to “the possibility of continued cooperation and sustainability, further activity or ongoing benefits arising at a European level from the activities proposed constituting long-term contribution to the development of cooperation, integration and cultures in Europe”.²⁴

In view of the fact that award criteria are largely identical with criteria for ex-post evaluation it is striking that network creation and network sustainability do not explicitly figure as a priority, although networking is widely acknowledged as the predominant form of collaboration in innovative cultural activities linked to New Technology/Media such as Media Arts.

Culture 2000 in practice: the case of *Mobile Studios*

Mobile Studios was designed by PublicArtLab – a Berlin-based NGO specialising on MediaArts- as a transnationally networked pilot project of a mobile, autonomous production laboratory for young artists, musicians, performers and cultural programmers, conceived as an open process. Application for funding under “Culture 2000” was made for the annual budget allocation 2005. During April and May 2006 the production units consisting of Talk- and Editorial Studios travelled from Belgrade to Bratislava, Budapest and Sofia, assisted by a Mobile Webcast Studio in Gdansk.

When comparing the *Mobile Studios* project design with the specifications of activities eligible for finance under “Culture 2000/Inovative actions” the project appears as a prototype: a new multimedia product, open and accessible to the public, encouraging initiatives, discussions and cooperation between cultural operators , promoting the dissemination of live cultural events by making use of new technologies, with a focus on new and potential EU Member States in Central and South East Europe - and after all with the” transnational networking perspective “ as a constituting factor. From the outset, specific facilities were foreseen that would be conducive to setting up a transnational network among those becoming involved during the course of the project, such as a specific website, an initial workshop, newsletter and blogs.

Initiator and project coordinator Susa Pop (Managing Director of PublicArtLab) reports ²⁵ that the project application in the context of Culture 2000 had been submitted for two reasons: first because of the opportunity to create a new European cultural product through networking with artists and operators from different and largely unknown (media) cultures in Central and South Eastern Europe, second the need for refinancing, which is of vital significance for a NGO that largely depends on project finance.

Already in the non EU-financed project preparatory phase, though, the project coordinator’s time (and financial) budget for pure art design decreased to the extent to which the implementation conditions set by the European Commission proved to be a major challenge:

- Project partners (at least 2) had to be identified;
- due to the fact that Community support would not exceed 150.000 €, representing up to 60% of the total budget, further funding (matching funds) had to be secured and “ideal” as well as material commitment to the project idea be sought from cultural organisations at the national levels of each participating country;
- also, all partners (including the project coordinator) had to guarantee their own financial participation equal to at least 5% of the total budget for each;
- costs incurred before and during the selection period of 7 months – from application to contract signature - could not be charged to the project budget, therefore a financial pre- investment had to be made on the basis of own resources;
- finally, the application had to be prepared in accordance with Community requirements .

In Susa Pop’s opinion it was a combination of an original innovative project idea, due respect of Community regulations and eligibility criteria – even “overdoing” by presenting 2 more cooperation partners than required plus further project participants²⁶-, the enthusiasm of her team, the cooperativeness of co-financing national institutions such as Goethe Institut and Allianz Kulturstiftung²⁷ as well as the fact that the local partners in South East Europe felt strongly attracted by the prospects of participating in an “EU-financed project “, which finally led to the “Culture 2000” grant award for *Mobile Studios*.

Still during the initial project implementation phase, PublicArtLab experienced that signing a contract with the European Commission did not necessarily mean access to funding without delay. When the respective Commission service demanded a bank guarantee concerning the financial soundness of the NGO prior to the transfer of EU funds, the proof that there was no legal basis for obtaining such a guarantee in Germany had to be supplied by PublicArtLab itself, after lengthy consultations of Banks and public institutions- a loss of time, not to mention the temporary financial gap and insecurity.

As early as during the constitutive workshop of the “networking” project partners and participants, PublicArtLab in its capacity as the project leader was confronted with the fact that the South East European partners primarily acted from and towards a local perspective: “our project partners had prepared project structures which allocated their budget shares entirely to local artists’ productions”. In the absence of a respective requirement by the EU tender specifications, allocations for networking formats on the spot for networking formats on the spot had not been not earmarked in the local budgets, and if there was any interest in networking at all, it was directed towards “stronger” partners, never to perceived “weaker” ones.

In the course of the project it became obvious that the struggle for funding would become the determining factor of the production process: while the availability of EU funds caused high expectations regarding payment according to Western standards among the Central and South East European project partners, the difficulties of securing local matching funds emerged as a major challenge to the project implementation. With the exception of Hungary where an official system for providing matching funds for EU financed projects had been put in place during the country’s preparation for EU accession, local artists were struggling with inadequate or missing cultural support structures. The non-existence of a market for art products – especially for innovative MediaArts – in the transition economies was another reason why the EU funding of *Mobile Studios* became the only source of income for the majority of the project partners. As a result, those who had direct access to funds and potential access to Western markets - in this case the project coordinator and German financial partners – became the people mostly in demand with the consequence of rather limited interest in East-East dialogue and cooperation throughout the project production phase.

In her project report Susa Pop concludes that while initially the local co-producers had been selected on the basis of similar interests and values with the perspective of transnational networking, unexpectedly the financial framework of the project became the predominant issue of concern and disputes. As a consequence, it also determined the debates on the direction the production process should take.²⁸

As it evolved, the production of *Mobile Studios* turned out to be an ongoing process of mutual learning and awareness raising about the different national conditions of production, the inadequacy of professional networks in the transition economies, the shortcomings in national regulations, the importance of support structures including the existence of culture-centred corporate foundations, potential of art markets, obstacles to mobility such as lack of finance and language skills, the requirements of proper art marketing as well as the potential of and the current limits to networking on an equal footing.

Thus, the institutional power of the EU cultural policy took effect by providing the major budget share and attaching the standard setting EU label to the creation of an innovative transnational multimedia product in line with the objectives of “Culture 2000”, and at the same time by forcing all project partners to adhere to the rules of financial regulations, which turned out to seriously hamper the realisation of these objectives. The complete disregard of the local art production conditions in the Central and South East European countries which proved to be inadequate for a smooth implementation of the project was particularly crucial.

In spite of these unexpectedly challenging circumstances, project coordinator Public ArtLab maintained the transnational networking perspective throughout the *Mobile Studios*

production process by creating new dialogue and activity formats and insisting on consensus oriented communication on the basis of a common agenda. The networking tools that had been part of the project design from the beginning – shared workspace, a digital common office, archives, discussions on networking formats as a constitutive element, web-conferences, continuous exchange with the virtual Mobile Webcast Studio in Gdansk during the *Mobile Studios* tour – proved to be conditional for the successful completion of the project.

In this way, *Mobile Studios* managed to come close to creating a solid basis for transnational networking among project partners, with national institutes, foundations and artists involved: common objectives and scheme for efficient interaction had been developed, supported by common consciousness of deficiencies and potentials regarding both local and European art market conditions. The next step would have been the setting up of a transnational network to the end of creating a sustainable “European space” for MediaArts producers by the means of which ideas and expertise could be disseminated and continuous communication about production and distribution structures be ensured- if there had been respective funds.

Sustainable networks including the necessary “interface” with the real world, i.e. meetings “in real life” need to be managed and thus financed.²⁹ Whereas, within its multiannual facility, “Culture 2000” indeed supports existing cultural networks if they provide evidence of financial soundness³⁰, for annual projects under “Culture 2000/ Innovative actions”, a sustainability budget reserve reaching reach beyond the one year production phase in order to “bridge the gap” until a new project would become effective, is not foreseen.

Mobile Studios initiator and coordinator Susa Pop therefore notes a contradiction between the explicit commitment of the EU cultural Policy to ensuring sustainability and the rules determining the financial framework: “Cultural projects depending on a limited financial budget within a given time frame and being implemented by a project-financed NGO are not in the position to mobilize the necessary financial means for proceeding to the maintenance of a transnational network. Under such conditions, the production process follows a “stop and go” movement: During the financing period, networks are being set up and interplayed. However, once the financing period is over, the structures are fading due to the lack of financial means for the required manpower.”³¹

Consequently, while the EU cultural policy implicitly contributed to fostering transnational networking by initiating and supporting *Mobile Studios*, the emerging structure could not be sustained as a result of the EU financial tender specifications.

The tangible results of *Mobile Studios* in terms of transnational networking therefore remain far below the potential: documents of the production process (website, catalogue) will be archived by PublicArtLab, information about the project will be placed on already existing network platforms which continue to inform about the project.³²

The accumulated experience of Susa Pop and her project partners with implementing a “Culture 2000” innovative MediaArts project having East/West as well as East/East dimensions may be considered another, though invisible and, until now, unused result concerning

- the discrepancy between the acknowledged importance of fostering transnational networking in innovative in Europe and the restrictive financial framework (Susa Pop:” If the EU really wants to support transnational networking it should facilitate

- the application procedure and adapt the financial regulations to the fundraising conditions in Eastern European partner countries”);
- the necessity of a sustainability budget, which should be part of the project from the outset in order to maintain emerging structures;
 - the production conditions for MediaArts in the transition economies, and respective requirements of institution building in the cultural sectors of new and potential EU Member States;
 - the potential of cross-border communication and interaction among MediaArtists for creating a new “European space”, thus increasing mobilisation and opening up a market;
 - the importance of language training programmes for artists;
 - ways by which the EU cultural policy could become more efficient in pursuing its objectives;
 - the obstructive impact of the EU financial regulation on the working conditions of the cultural operators implementing the EU Cultural Policy (Susa Pop: “ a transfer of 80% upfront of the project grant to the NGO would immensely facilitate the production conditions”);
 - future actions to ensure an equal level of mobility within the European Community of cultural producers;
 - the promotion of Eastern European artists outside their countries of origin.

Against what was discussed above, each point seems worth being communicated to the responsible EU institutions, primarily to the Commission, in a structured, organised way.

Influencing “Brussels”: What impact may cultural NGOs have on the Commission ?

It is widely known that the Commission is compared to its task a rather small institution. In the “Culture” sector the number of staff amounts to 7 persons (plus assisting staff) on the conceptual and 4 persons on the programme implementation sides. Transparency and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society have been acknowledged as indispensable for fulfilling the Commission’s tasks, which was even stated in the Treaties.³³ Since the mid 1980s the early ad hoc consultation system of the Commission has given way to a more institutionalised and structured pattern of interest intermediation, a development which has been driven by the Commission.³⁴ However, there still seems to be room for new interests to develop an organised presence at European level, the incremental extension of Community competence and the recent enlargement both increased the need for group consultations, particularly in the field of NGOs and civil society.³⁵ Since the end of the 1990s and alongside with the preparation of internal institutional and financial management reforms there has been increasing reflection on governance with emphasis on the role of civil society in the EU policy process.³⁶

The degree of organised consultations differs among the Commission services, partly due to their respective areas of responsibility partly because of the prevailing “corporate culture” and administrative style. In “Culture”, which is charged with apparently “soft” issues such as values and identity formation, but in fact with the bond required to make the integration process function smoothly, a structured consultation on a permanent basis has not been set up yet, certainly not with “cultural” NGOs. Ad hoc consultations initiated by the Commission, such as the *Call for ideas* in preparation of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (cf. Commission “Culture” website) is one way of ensuring compatibility of programme

objective and activities, though temporary by nature. Innovative NGOs in the field of “MediaArts”, such as PublicArtLab, that dispose of accumulated experience from participating in Community programmes and immense resources regarding their expertise on transnational networking, still lack an institutionalised organised consultation with the Commission. In order to get prepared, such NGOs together with their multimedia networks would need to enhance their lobbying capacity by forming effective transnational coalitions and entering a process of organisational learning about how to communicate with the Commission. What should be kept in mind is that the Commission intends to “...ensure that it consults all of those affected by a policy and those involved in implementation”.³⁷

The future: Culture 2007

In contrary to expectations derived from both needs and lessons of the past, the Commission’s proposal for Culture 2007³⁸, which will cover the period 2007-2013, does not provide evidence of greater importance being attached to EU cultural policy in the future. It does not come as a surprise, that its general programme objective will be “the achievement of a common cultural area through the development of cultural cooperation in Europe”. To this end three specific programme objectives are set out:

- to promote the trans-national mobility of people working in the cultural sector;
- to encourage the trans-national circulation of works and cultural and artistic products;
- to encourage intercultural dialogue.

What looks like a market oriented approach based on the principles of the Single Market – free movement of people and goods- is backed up by allocations and rules of a kind that offers less room for innovation and experimental activities than Culture 2000.

The Cultural Contact Point Germany takes the view that the budgetary framework remains far below requirements and expectations.³⁹ The share of innovative activities – financed on an annual basis- will be decreased to 24 % as compared to an increase for multiannual cooperations by 1 (one) and of special “visible” projects by 7 (seven) percentage points. While the application procedures (including forms) are expected to be simplified, the project preparation costs will – as before- have to be financed by the implementing cultural operators. Also, the financial regulations will continue to impose a self-financing share of 5% of the total budget on the project partners. In future annual projects will need 4 partners, multiannual ones at least six, with multiannual cooperations being supplied with a total budget of 5 % Mio € for up to 5 years. There is no specific notion of transnational networking that needs to be supported, except for the promotion of cooperation between - established- cultural players to form multi-annual cooperation networks, “enabling them to develop common activities, provide support for more targeted measures with a real European added value, support symbolic cultural events, support European cultural cooperation organisations and encourage ...promotional activities in the field of cultural cooperation”.⁴⁰ Transnational networks are – in this context- understood as cooperation schemes with a given objective, that ensure financial sustainability (individually by partner, or as a group) from the outset.

From the administrative perspective “Culture 2007” looks fine: the objectives are clearly defined, the increase of huge projects to be implemented by established cultural institutions at the expense of small innovative ones promises efficient and secure financial management. Visible actions shall show off administrative performance, the orientation towards mobility

and export of cultural products corresponds to the Single Market and Lisbon process priorities. But what about culture as creative, diverse, dynamic, open, unforeseeable, transnational networking, inclusive process in MediaArts, that cannot be defined once and for all and may bring about new forms of communication and interaction – and European consciousness in emerging cultural industries if it has spaces to develop its potential? Presumably this may not become a priority.

Considering the rationale of EU cultural policy, the reason why it became part of the Treaty and the need to raise questions of European values and identity it may be assumed that the increasing emphasis on the economic and “visibility” dimension of EU cultural policy will miss the objective if it is not sufficiently balanced by the dimension of European culture as strategic asset for creating a sense of belonging among the peoples of Europe. “Whether the cultural policy is a broadly directed one, aimed at enhancing cultural identity, diversity, creativity or other aspects of the cultural life of the community, or whether it is made up of specific measures directed at particular areas such as the arts, regional development, heritage, tourism etc, the importance of balancing economic and cultural value considerations in the formation and implementation of policy is essential.”⁴¹

Conclusions

Presumably the “founding fathers” of the European Union did not think of transnational networking when they envisaged “a peoples’ Europe” in the Treaty of Rome 1957, and it was not foreseeable either that it would take 35 years of reflection and debate about the significance of Culture for European Integration until European cultural competence was formally established in the Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht 1992).

Since the early 1990s the European Union has been producing legal texts, programmes and instruments with a view to promoting cross-border cultural cooperation, raising awareness of Europe’s cultural diversity, promoting cultural exchange and introducing a specific cultural dimension in other community programmes.

When the experiences of the first few years of European cultural cooperation proved the pivotal significance of transnational networking, “Culture 2000”- the first integrated EU cultural programme- made “innovative and experimental activities” a priority, thus opening up a space for creative, cross-sector, integrative (media)arts projects coordinated by project financed NGOs to which transnational networking is both objective and essential working tool. At the same time the European Commission undertook measures for involving NGOs and civil society in a structured process of consultation and policy shaping.

Mobile Studios may be considered as a prototype of an EU financed innovative “networked” cultural project. The example shows that while a learning process was initiated, the project’s full potential with regard to transnational networking remained unused, mainly due to financial terms and conditions resulting from the EU financial regulations which proved to be particularly cumbersome for East/West and East/East cultural cooperation at that level. Also, cultural NGOs at that level- small, creative, project-financed- are not yet organised in such a way that “lessons learned” could be communicated in the context of a structured consultation with the Commission.

Meanwhile the EU is moving forward with preparing “Culture 2007”, which is expected to shift the focus towards promoting the “free movement of goods and artists”, “visible European cultural events” and – to this end - the transnational cooperation of established cultural institutions.

It remains to be seen whether this approach is conducive to the formation of European identity and developing the creative potential of innovative young artists in Europe which depends on transnational networking.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Cf. Joas/Wiegand 2005, Grimm/Haltern et.al 2005, Devuyt 2006, pp180ff
- ² Cf http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/culture2000/historique/historic_en.html
- ³ Networks are generally understood as system of cooperation among at least 3 partners , based on trust, interdependence, disposal of resources and reciprocity, cf. Wellmann 2001, p4ff
- ⁴ Commission 2002,p.12
- ⁵ During the meeting on 18 February; MediaArts is characterized by “connectivity, collaboration, inter-action, open work, networking, computability, social progress and change”, Wellmann 2001, p.18
- ⁶ Cf. Lovink 2005, p 23ff
- ⁷ Commission 2003
- ⁸ Shore 2000, p. 23
- ⁹ Lewis 2002, p.13
- ¹⁰ Jordan and Weedon 1995, cited in Shore 2000, p.24
- ¹¹ Cf. Wiener 2003, p 398ff
- ¹² Cf Shore 2000,p. 44
- ¹³ cf Shore 2000: 47ff
- ¹⁴ Adonnino 1985, cited in Shore 2000, p.46
- ¹⁵ “ Pour ma part, je souhaitais quelques gestes concrets dans ce domaine ». Delors 2004, p.396
- ¹⁶ cf Delors 2004: 395ff
- ¹⁷ Cf.. Delors´ speech in the European Parliament, cited in Shore 2000, p. 45
- ¹⁸ Cf Wiener 2003, p 409
- ¹⁹ - Kaléidoscope (1996-1999), which aimed to encourage artistic and cultural creation and cooperation with a European dimension;
- Ariane (1997-1999), which supported the field of books and reading, including translation;
- Raphaël (1997-1999), the aim of which was to complement Member States' policies in the area of cultural heritage of European significance.
- ²⁰ Commission 1996
- ²¹ Decision No 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2000 establishing the Culture 2000 programme, cf. for the following quotes ; the programme was extended until the end of 2006 by Decision 626/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 31 March 2004
- ²² Annex I of Council and Parliament Decision 508/2000 provides for the organisation of Cultural Contact Points by the Commission and the Member States “on a voluntary basis”
- ²³ Cf Lovink 2005, p. 4
- ²⁴ Cf. Culture 2000, Tender specifications, http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index_en.html
- ²⁵ Following quotes from interviews with Susa Pop in February and August 2006
- ²⁶ *Mobile Studios* partners: 4 EU countries(Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland) , 1 EU candidate countries (Bulgaria, with participants from Macedonia), 1 third country (Serbia)
- ²⁷ *Mobile Studios* received matching funding and support from Allianz Kulturstiftung , European Cultural Foundation (ECF), Goethe-Institut, International Visegrad Fund, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen and national bodies in the participating countries, cf. PublicArtLab2006, p.2
- ²⁸ Cf. PublicArtLab 2006, p. 22
- ²⁹ cf Lovink 2005, p. 17
- ³⁰ examples: a grant awarded to the Amsterdam-based European Cultural Foundation (ECF, funded by corporate and private foundations) for the pilot phase of its special platform labforculture.org, a multiannual support to the website organiser of www.on-the-move.org , which informs about international mobility opportunities in theatre, dance, music and other contemporary performing arts disciplines
- ³¹ Interview in August 2006
- ³² cf. PublicArtLab 2006, p.25
- ³³ Amsterdam Treaty, draft Constitutional Treaty, cf Mazey/Richardson2006, p.279

³⁴ Cf on the development of EU lobbying Mazey/Richardson 2006, p. 282ff, cf also Rifkind 2004, p 214ff

³⁵ ibid p.279

³⁶ cf Mazey/Richardson 2006, p289

³⁷ Cited in Mazey/Richardson 2006, p. 291; on the role of civil society in EU governance cf also Rifkin 2004, p. 239ff

³⁸ Cf. Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Culture 2007 programme (2007-2013), COM (2004)469 fin

³⁹ Cf. Cultural Contact Point Germany:Fachliche Stellungnahme zu Kultur 2007.(11.10.2004), http://www.ccp-deutschland.de/down/down-ccp/kommentar-kultur2007ccp_de.doc

⁴⁰ Commission 2004

⁴¹ Throsby 2001, p.148

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