

# CULTURE REPORT

EUNIC YEARBOOK 2013/2014



## Europe from the Outside

Expectations of Europe's  
External Cultural Relations

CULTURE REPORT  
EUNIC YEARBOOK  
2013/2014



Culture is more than a book or a play. Culture opens doors and builds bridges to the peoples of the world. Emerging economic powers such as India, Brazil and South Korea have grasped the potential of culture in foreign relations and are already working on their external cultural policies. Europe's history of democracy, tradition of human rights and practice of friendly co-existence means that it has a great deal to offer and it should be investing more heavily in cultural relations with the rest of the world. What initiatives are needed in the area of external cultural policy – and what does the world expect of them? 30 authors from 20 countries look for some answers.

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## Escaping the mid-life crisis

The gaze of the Other shapes my body... creates it as it is, sees it as I will never see it.“ For leading French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, the Self only becomes aware of its reality through the gaze of the Other. In this way, the Self gains awareness and discovers its place in the world. But we do not have to be existentialists to take a certain pleasure in holding up the mirror to ourselves and others. Indeed, for Sartre, the Other took on a negative role by robbing the Self of its freedom to determine its own future.

In international cultural relations, systematic listening takes on essential – not to say existential – importance. Without listening, it is impossible to conduct any kind of fruitful dialogue. So it is somewhat surprising that this sixth edition of the Culture Report is the first to investigate how Europe is perceived from beyond its borders. More specifically, this edition looks at expectations of Europe’s external policies and the still-developing role of culture in its external relations. Opinions have been sought from commentators in Africa, Asia and Latin America in an attempt to illustrate the challenges that Europe faces in our fast-changing, multipolar world. 20 of the 30 contributors live outside Europe.

Kenyan journalist Peter Kimani is amazed that Africa still has to “grapple” with the traumatic experiences of slavery and colonialism that still shape European perceptions of his continent. If we are to overcome Europe’s ignorance of Africa, he believes there is a need for cultural immersion that goes beyond that of European diarists and travel journalists. He rails against narrow-minded “Out of Af-

rica rhetoric” and warns that the EU will have to change its strategy towards Africa now that Africans are learning how to survive without Europe. Farai Mpfunya, director of a development fund in Zimbabwe, proposes a “New Deal” between Africa and Europe on the basis of a partnership of equals. It must take into account the new sense of self-confidence that has developed in Africa’s 54 countries with their 1.5 billion people, enormous resources and rates of economic growth that for others remain little more than a pipe dream.

Carlos Ornelas, a professor of education and communications in Mexico City, wonders why his compatriots still know more about Greek mythology than about the Aztecs and Maya. Ladislau Dowbor, a political scientist based in São Paulo, gently points out that the question of Brazil’s expectations of Europe is actually missing the point. “We are all big boys now.” The time has long gone when Latin America was still trying to find ways of joining the modern world. Now it is a case of addressing common global challenges that individual countries can no longer tackle alone: financial chaos, climate change and growing social inequality.

Yang Lian, a Chinese poet who lives in exile in Berlin, ponders the extent to which globalisation has shaken the old world order and how it can be that a bewildered Europe suddenly finds itself stricken by poverty. The old equation “Capitalism equals democracy equals prosperity” certainly no longer applies. The tsunami of Chinese economic success has to lead to new reflections on democracy.

And what are the consequences for Eu-

rope? With regard to the upheavals in the Arab world, political scientist Claus Leggewie claims that the EU has failed to find an appropriate reaction. It either responded to the Arabellion with great reserve or with the usual reflexes of former world powers attempting to retain their old colonial spheres of influence. The region has asked more of Europe than it has so far been prepared to give. It will only be possible to establish a project for peace and development that can spread beyond the core of Europe if the South is also brought into the conversation about the future. Such a project must include important issues such as energy supply, while also tackling the contradiction between repressive policies on refugees and rational policies on migration.

Isabelle Schwarz of the European Cultural Foundation calls for a strategic European foreign policy that would ideally react to the new power centres of our multipolar world by finally exploiting the true potential of culture. “If Europe wants to remain relevant in the world rather than turning the notion of a ‘dwarfing Europe’ into cruel reality, it needs to use its key assets much more strategically and effectively.” Most of our authors agree that it is not only Europe’s cultural heritage, but also the whole gamut of the creative industries, from architecture and fashion to film, fine arts and literature, that exerts a strong attraction around the world. At a time when emerging nations are experiencing rates of economic growth that can only be dreamt of in Europe, culture can be a real source of power for the old continent. Culture can make a major contribution to meeting huge social

challenges such as migration and integration and also play its part in mitigating conflicts. With over 2,000 branches in some 150 countries, EUNIC has certainly not yet made the most of its potential. EUNIC and the European Union as a whole are facing the challenge of how to develop a lasting future strategy for the community at large out of their successful work in cities and centres around the world. However, to quote French writer Frédéric Martel in his allegory on the new geopolitics of the internet and the multipolarisation that exists there and in real life: The internet is neither good nor bad, it is what we make of it. Instead of sticking its head in the sand, Europe needs to act, for example by setting new agendas. Or, in the words of Claus Leggewie: It is time for Europe to overcome the midlife crisis that has beset it since the euro crisis.

This is the sixth edition of the Culture Report, and the third time that it has been published as the EUNIC Yearbook. This volume brings together the outcomes of a conference held in Brussels that was jointly organised by EUNIC and the ifa Research Programme on Culture and Foreign Policy. I would like to thank everyone involved, and in particular the authors and translators, for their contributions to this project. Special thanks also go to the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam for making it possible to produce an English version and to the Steidl-Verlag in Göttingen for publishing this edition.



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## Chapter 1: A global conversation – The old continent in the age of the world wide web and new global players

The internet is changing the world's cultural communication. But is the spread of the internet causing the disappearance of old barriers to interpersonal communication such as geography, language or news censorship? Not really. Most of the content we consume, the culture we like, the conversations we hold, the videos we watch are in our own language and linked to our own territory. And yet we now have new possibilities for communication and dialogue. In an increasingly complex global landscape with new centres of power, the European Union and its Member States now have to reorient their cultural engagement with the rest of the world and accept that traditional hierarchies and preferences are now changing.

Emerging economic powers such as India, Brazil and South Korea have grasped the potential of culture for their external relations. They are already developing their policies in this area. What is Europe's response?



## The power of an idea – Opera Village Africa

“Nothing is so powerful as an idea whose time has come”. These are the words of the great French author, Victor Hugo. And what could be more powerful than the idea of an artist who – shortly before his death – dreamed of building an opera village in Africa? Before he died in 2010, Christoph Schlingensiefel had turned his vision into reality by building such a village in Burkina Faso, a country with a rich artistic tradition. Opera is both a true art form and a symbol of the diversity of artistic and cultural expression. The village is not only a place for cultural encounters but also a real place where people live, learn, play, look at art and create art. The artist’s vision has led to the creation of a cultural space that is illustrated by the photos in this edition of the Culture Report.

A new cultural conversation is on the horizon The new geopolitics of the internet will no longer be made up of one dominant stream, a 'mainstream' steered by America, but will comprise a multitude of small streams between all countries – beginning within the countries themselves. In reality, the emerging countries are currently experiencing a digital explosion. New possibilities for communication and dialogue have emerged. How can Europe make the most of these new opportunities? *By Frédéric Martel*



internet gurus intuitively assimilate the web in its American image: its freedom, boundless space, speed, the way it is always pushing the frontiers. If we listen to them, it seems they prefer the US Constitution's First Amendment relating to free speech over the Fourth Amendment on privacy. "Age-old obstacles to human interaction, like geography, language and limited information, are falling", predicts Google boss Eric Schmidt. He adds that the online future will no longer be "bound by terrestrial laws" and that we will increasingly be talking to people beyond our own borders.

For his part, Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg has even suggested that social media could even resolve the problem of terrorism, which is caused by "a lack of communication" and "connectedness". The solution is to be more connected. We just need more opportunities to connect. The management of Facebook and Google, whose business models largely depend on collecting personal data, have both let it be known that protection of privacy will become an "anomaly".

I do not share this schematic vision of the future. A different geopolitics of the internet

When viewed from Silicon Valley, the terms digital and global seem to be synonymous. For the US web giants, borders are a concept that are outdated in the digital age. The world that they promise to open up to us is limitless. It is totally open, connected, boundless. The social networks are bursting with virtual friends, friends that we don't actually know, and what does it matter if this makes individuals more vulnerable and opens them up to previously unimagined threats to their privacy? The in-

is already emerging. On the contrary, I believe that the digital revolution that we are now living will not, or at least will not predominantly, translate into full-blown globalisation. It does not necessarily mean homogeneity and is far from being internationalism without borders. We should not fear cultural and linguistic uniformity. Instead, the digital revolution seems to have more to do with territorialisation: the internet is a territory.

When I use this idea of territory, I am not necessarily referring to a specific geographical area, although this could also be the case. A territory does not have to be a national territory. It can of course take the form of a physical space, but it can also be an abstract space belonging to a community or a language. So this 'territorialisation' does not necessarily mean that the web is becoming country-specific. Its field of activity may go beyond a country's borders or it may remain well within them.

### *The territories of the World Wide Web*

Today, the web is very local, very regional, sometimes national or pan-national and occasionally it transcends geography altogether. It is often linked to a community, a term that in US English may refer to an ethnic group, a sexual minority, a religion or to the neighbourhood or city in which they live. Sometimes this 'territory' takes a linguistic or cultural form and in this way reflects a community of people with similar interests or tastes. Exchanges may be based on contig-

uous borders, a common language or alphabet (such as Cyrillic), a sub-culture (such as the Otakus, Femen or Bears), or on a lingering colonial influence (such as the Commonwealth or the Ottoman Empire). And, at the end of the day, 'conversations' on the internet are generally limited by their 'territories' and are rarely global.

All these internets are different, and they are different in a variety of ways. We intuitively perceive digital technology as a global phenomenon that serves to accelerate globalisation. But I believe the opposite is in fact true. On the ground, I have discovered that the internet is in fact divided along the lines of cultures, languages and regions. But if the internet is no longer global, it is also no longer national, and not even necessarily local. It is part of a 'territory' that is individual to each of us; a universe that we can, to a certain degree, shape and model with our own preferences and the multiple identities that each of us possesses or chooses to highlight. The internet is localised. In many respects, rather than depriving people of their power, it can in fact return it to them; it can give them a chance to be masters of their own destiny. By adapting to their uniqueness and their particular territory, it belongs to everyone.

More than a billion people are on Facebook. So we may intuitively feel that we are all connected to each other, that we are becoming more and more homogenous and, of course, that we are quickly becoming more Americanised. Sometimes I have believed this myself. But every field survey contradicts this

"Age-old obstacles to human interaction, like geography, language and limited information, are falling."

Google boss Eric Schmidt

view and shows that it does not reflect reality. Every Facebook account is different. Users have their own friends, chat in their own languages and no one Facebook page is the same as the next. The ‘social graph’ – the network of friends – is always unique. It is rare for high school students in Southern Italy or Northern Poland to count someone from the USA among their ‘friends’. The impact of language, culture and geographical distance makes such conversations fairly rare. By clinging to the realities of human life, linguistic diversity and, first and foremost, to territories, the internet has grown exponentially all around the world.

So, despite our gut feeling, the digital world is in fact essentially a territorialised world. The times of a standardised internet and of digital globalisation without borders are long gone. It is now the era of a territorialised internet. Its future lies in the localisation, customisation and differentiation of conversations. Being smart means being both digital and territorialised.

My study of emerging countries has revealed the importance of their internets. The ‘booming’ nations are not simply emerging with their globalised economies and demographics, but are also emerging with their cultures, values and internet. We can even take this a step further. In the medium term, we should no longer think of the web as a Western network that is saturated with information in English, packed with Americanised services and generally used to connect the rich countries. In the beginning, the internet may

have been universally perceived as a head-on relationship between ‘us’ and the ‘US’, with each country contractualising its relations through direct links to Silicon Valley, but the internet of the future will be multipolar, decentralised and fragmented. This bilateral and unequal dialogue with the United States will become less pronounced, even if the internet still retains a certain American flavour. The new geopolitics of the internet will no longer be made up of one dominant stream, a ‘mainstream’ steered by America, but will comprise a multitude of small streams between all countries - beginning within the countries themselves. In reality, the emerging countries are currently experiencing a digital explosion. For me, this dimension has been a real revelation.

### *Emerging digital nations*

The discovery of emerging digital nations is not an ideological interpretation, nor is it an idealised vision of the web. Instead, it is the result of observations made on the ground. Proof can be found by taking a closer look at sites such as Yandex (a kind of Russian Google), Mxit (a kind of WhatsApp for mobiles in South Africa), VKontakte in Russia and Cloob in Iran (similar to Facebook), Maktoob (the Arab world’s Yahoo) and even Orkut in Brazil (again, similar to Facebook). Without

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mentioning the Chinese, whose clones of American sites have now gained their own vocation: Baidu (a kind of Chinese Google which is set to be the world’s second-largest search engine), Alibaba (a kind of eBay), Tmall (Amazon), Weibo (Twitter), Renren (Facebook), Hudong or Baidu Baike (Wikipedia), Youku (YouTube), Alipay (PayPal) and QQ (MSN). All these ‘emerging’ internets are not only different from each other but also very diverse in themselves.

This interpretation of the internet as a phenomenon that is not essentially globalised, this grid analysis which makes digital conversations out of particular territorialised spaces – is it really tangible? Does the internet’s global dimension really not exist? Of course it does.

First of all, it is true that the internet was technically conceived as being without borders. Now there is global content on the internet. Almost two billion people viewed Psy’s video Gangnam Style on YouTube. Then there are the Iranians, Palestinians and Cubans who are fascinated by Lady Gaga’s videos; the masses who download or share peer-to-peer the last Madonna or latest Beyoncé – of course these are symbols of a mainstream, globalised internet. Activists or hackers such as Julian Assange, the creative force behind Wikileaks; US soldier Bradley Manning (now known as Chelsea Manning after a sex-change operation), who leaked classified information; IT specialist Edward Snowden, who revealed the existence of massive secret global surveillance programmes run by the National Security Agency; or US journalists

Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras, who published Snowden’s documents – all these are part of a global internet.

These facts and figures all speak for themselves, so it certainly seems a little presumptuous to say that the internet is not global. But every thesis has an antithesis and exceptions that prove the rule. We could also cite video games or scientific research and elements of university exchange programmes.

A final counterexample is that of entertainment in general and cinema in particular. The film industry is extremely concentrated and Americanised. There may be a certain segmentation of genres in the music industry, publishing and television and a certain hybridisation of the internet, but when it comes to video games and cinema this is certainly not the case. Paradoxically, the internet has served to strengthen rather than weaken mainstream cinema; and although niche products may be multiplying on the web, blockbusters continue to thrive, including in emerging countries (something which is a new development). The web is fuelling this phenomenon. As far as cinema is concerned, the digital world is much more hit-driven than the analogue world: success breeds success. These changes are still ongoing and it is difficult to predict what will happen in the medium term. But I believe that in the mass entertainment sector – and particularly in the film industry – the internet and the mainstream complement each other. They are both part of the same movement, that of obliterating borders and producing globalised content that speaks



to everyone, where-ver they are in the world. Above all, they confirm the dominance of the United States. California is home to Hollywood and Silicon Valley, the machines that churn out the mainstream entertainment and start-ups of the globalised internet. This is a fundamental exception to my theory of the territorialisation of the internet.

### *Everyone in their own bubble*

And yet, contrary to what we used to believe, the television, media, music and book sectors are not as Americanised as the film industry. Most of the time the internet as a whole manages to escape this kind of homogeneity. And this is precisely my argument. It is not a question of denying the existence of a mainstream global internet consisting of a 'layer' of standardised content and globalised streams. Of course it is uniform at this level. But this content is often superficial and limited in quantity. There are also many other streams above and beyond the Americanised mainstream. The bulk of the content that we consume, the culture that we love, the conversations that we hold, the videos that we watch on the internet are in our own language – and are territorialised. We are certainly entering a connected world, but its contents are disconnected. With our friends on Facebook, our followers on Twitter, our old schoolfriends on a dedicated site, through the text messages that we send, the conversations that we initiate, the information or contact sites that

we regularly visit in our own language, we remain in our own bubble, our own world, our own territory.

In other words, we can argue that even if the internet has no borders, it certainly has frontiers, to use the classic American distinction between political divisions and abstract, symbolic limits. The first is a concrete, physical border with customs, taxes, passports and a border patrol; the second has a more figurative sense based on the myth of the Frontier, the line between the civilised and uncivilised world, and on John F. Kennedy's New Frontier as he turned his gaze outwards towards space. The French organisation *Médecins sans Frontières* is known in English as *Doctors without Borders*, as *Doctors without Frontiers* would make no sense at all. So the internet does not have borders but frontiers, those symbolic limits that are both strong and mobile, such as languages, regions and cultures. In conclusion, I believe we can say that the infrastructure of the internet is global and deterritorialised, while its content and conversations are mainly disconnected and territorialised. To put it another way: the internet is territorialised with global interactions.

The internet is neither truly globalised nor truly homogenised, so it is strongly dependent on national cultures, languages and contexts. Every conversation on the web is different. But if the decentralised nature of the internet is to flourish, then those who run its technical side need to ensure they do not abuse their positions of power. This is why regulation is necessary, not so much for the internet itself

– which should remain 'open' – but for its protagonists. It is not a question of imposing a new national sovereignty on the web. Economic digital patriotism is an idea that has had its day. But it still needs rules and, if possible, some kind of digital justice system.

Today, there is a widespread feeling that the current situation, i.e. that of an internet that is principally regulated solely by America, is no longer viable. But international regulations dreamed up by the United Nations, such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), now seem to be barely functional. What is to be done? Many people I have spoken to on the ground think that we should consider regulations in terms of concentric circles. This would, for example, leave the management of national domain names to the countries themselves (such as .ca for Canada and .br for Brazil). Some of them also think that Google, Facebook and Twitter should be obliged to leave their national versions more room for manoeuvre, that they should be more subject to local laws (Google.com.br would thus be more strongly managed by Google's Brazil office and would have to respect national laws). Similarly, terms of use – the notorious 'Notice and consent' that the giants expect us to sign with a click – would have to be more national. Another requirement is tax harmonisation for the digital world and the possibility of taxing e-commerce sites and social media in the countries

where they earn their revenues. On US soil, the United States Supreme Court decreed in 2013 that such taxation should take place at state level. There is no reason why the rest of the world should not follow suit. It is a priority and a question of digital justice. And in a digital age with two conflicting realities – states with laws and internet companies with conditions of use – there must be some way of making these laws and rules more consistent. In one form or another, a certain virtual sovereignty needs to begin to see the light of day at national level, as long as it does not detract from innovation and creativity and does not translate into a bureaucratic, national or global set of regulations for the internet under the auspices of the United Nations.

If the International Telecommunications Union is not the right vehicle for coordinating the architecture of the internet, then we need to come up with something new that is capable of doing the job. ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) could still remain, for example for generic domain names, as long as it is no longer supervised by the United Nations and it moves its headquarters away from US territory, perhaps to Switzerland. The World Business Organisation could be another possibility.

### *New regulations for the internet*

Finally, and this may be the most pragmatic solution for the time being, it is possible that dialogue between the USA and the

“The bulk of the content that we consume, the culture that we love, the conversations that we hold, the videos that we watch on the internet are in our own language – and are territorialised.”

European Union could be established on this issue – on fair competition, data protection, encouraging innovation and creativity, the end of monopolies and abusive uses of power – and that this balance could gradually lead to new regulations for the internet. The principles of Safe Harbour, the transfer of data, already offer space for dialogue between the USA and Europe. It is time for this common legal framework to be drastically renegotiated and for it to impose data traceability and stipulate where it is stored. For many reasons, I am convinced that internet regulations will not be drawn up in the face of the United States, but in conjunction with them. For the time being, I believe in an American regulation that is linked to a European regulation and then opened up to emerging nations and the rest of the world.

In any event, we should not forget that these regulations also constitute a soft power. Today, the United States shapes the global internet through a plethora of highly-complex federal and state regulations, whether they are initiated by the White House or the Departments of Commerce or Justice; framed by Congress; defined by the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission; or are a result of legal decisions made by the courts or the US Supreme Court. This means that they focus primarily on regulating the competition and encourage a strongly protectionist stance towards US industries.

Should we not be feeling nostalgic for the time when these federal agencies followed in the spirit of Roosevelt by fighting an effec-

tive battle against competition and abuses of power over the market? Today, the web giants are left to follow their monopolistic tendencies with few concerns about the US regulators. Content may have become increasingly territorialised, but internet tools, platforms and data still remain extremely concentrated in the United States. There is no longer any justification for allowing such exorbitant and anachronistic levels of power to continue.

#### *A Balkanisation of the internet?*

Are we moving towards a Balkanisation of the internet? This threat is being taken very seriously by the White House and the main US agencies for internet governance. Even Hillary Clinton has spoken of the risk of an “information curtain”. As for the web giants, they have perused with a sense of disquiet the forecasts about the decline of the USA’s cloud economy: an estimated net loss of revenues amounting to 35 billion dollars for 2014-2016 as a result of Edward Snowden’s revelations about the National Security Agency’s internet surveillance practices. These self-assured, brazen and, when required, arrogant billionaires are worrying about their economic models, their golden parachutes and their 401(k) retirement schemes. Of course we shouldn’t exaggerate. The end of the US internet? Let’s not get carried away. The USA will remain

“It is possible that dialogue between the USA and the European Union could be established on this issue – on fair competition, data protection, encouraging innovation and creativity, the end of monopolies and abusive uses of power.”

the uncontested leader of the digital world, and many critics of American spying activities are in fact more fearful of this data being intercepted by the Chinese or Iranians. But these revelations well and truly mark a turning point and a key moment in the still-young history of the internet. There is no doubt that there will be a pre-Snowden and a post-Snowden era and that the future of the web will be permanently affected. For the USA, it marks the end of innocence. It has also opened our eyes to the risks involved in the mass gathering of data. Finally, for the Europeans, this whole affair may turn out to have a positive side if they start to realise the importance of creating European digital technologies and establishing new forms of regulation and governance.

So are we seeing a Balkanisation of the internet? This has been the hope of countries such as China and Iran for some years now. Shortly before he died, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez said: “The internet cannot be something open where anything is said and done. No! Every country has to apply its own rules and norms.”

There is no denying the emotional power of this growing movement, which combines politics with economic patriotism. The establishment of digital sovereignty is a strong aspiration in all quarters, and the Snowden affair has simply made it even more urgent. In Brazil and Indonesia, governments are now keen to oblige the US web giants and national websites to store data on ‘their’ users on their own national soil and take radical steps

to protect their privacy. There is also a great deal of ongoing debate on internet laws such as the Marco Civil da Internet in Brazil. This movement has even raised its head in some US states, for example in California. Here pressure is being put on the US federal government with talk of ‘data relocation’. Finally, some believe that the widespread encryption of internet content would be the solution to circumventing both NSA surveillance and Chinese censorship (this was recently proposed by the boss of Google, but it once again raises the question of banning illicit content and copyright issues, both of which could be impossible to control if there were widespread encryption).

Ultimately, is the internet something American that we simply have to submit to? No. It is something territorial that we can conquer. The internet is not hostile to culture, languages and territories; it is compatible with cultural diversity and with ‘cultural anomalies’. The internet is not a ‘tube’ but a puzzle. The world is not becoming flat. Instead of expanding horizontally and deepening vertically. The internet is not smoothing away differences but consecrating them. The fact that it is not global means that it does not erase identities but accentuates them. Our conversations are territorialised and will remain that way. Geography matters; context is essential.

Their failure to understand the internet that is on the horizon makes the enemies of the internet simply reject it, when they would do better to act upon it. Instead of throwing in

the towel and going under with the prophets of decline, it would be better if they opened up to the world and took action. The internet is not a neutral phenomenon, it is not in itself good or bad. It is and will depend on what we make of it, all together – on whether we are passive or active in the face of technology.

**Frédéric Martel** is a French researcher and writer. He presents the programme *Soft Power on France Culture* (Radio France group) and has written and published several books. In 2011 he published his book *Mainstream*, (translated into ten languages, no English translation yet available) on the global battle over culture and media. The end of April will see the publication of his latest book, *Smart, Enquête sur les internets* (Éditions Stock), a long-term field survey of the internet across some fifty different countries. This article addresses some of the ideas contained in this book.

**A cosmopolitan vision for the future** Emerging economic powers such as India, Brazil and South Korea have grasped the potential of culture and the value of soft power. They are stepping up the cultural component of their public diplomacy with a view to boosting their reputations as dynamic, attractive, self-confident and trustworthy nations. So where does this leave the ‘old’ continent of Europe in this age of new global players?  
*By Isabelle Schwarz*



With globalisation becoming ubiquitous and new global players emerging, Harvard political scientist Joseph S. Nye’s concept of “soft power” – “the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce as a means of persuasion” – is gaining in complexity and validity. If Europe wants to remain relevant in the world rather than turning the notion of a ‘dwarfing Europe’ into cruel reality, it needs to use its key assets much more strategically and effectively. Culture and cultural diversity are fundamental and powerful assets when it comes to Europe’s engagement with other continents. The EU has become more sensitive to the potential of culture in international relationship-building and has developed a novel policy framework with dedicated instruments and resources. Yet,

for Europe to become a genuine ‘smart’ power and for culture to blossom to its full potential, a more visionary, courageous, coherent and sustainable approach to its external cultural relations is needed. At national level, officials need to stand by Europe and avoid succumbing to provincialism and populism.

A brief reminder of the European policy context: since the adoption of the European Agenda for Culture in 2007, a new institutional framework for culture in the EU’s external relations has emerged in which culture is referred to as a strategic factor of political, economic and social development rather than as a means of showcasing individual cultural events and projects. The ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions by the EU and most Member States strengthens this new approach to culture. Moreover, article 167 of the Lisbon Treaty stipulates that the EU and its Member States “shall foster cooperation with third countries and competent international organisations in the sphere of culture”. In an effort to ensure greater coordination and consistency in EU foreign

policy, in 2009 the treaty established the European External Action Service (EEAS) that has a triple obligation regarding culture: to include culture in its strategic thinking and action (in response to the treaty); to implement the 2008 Council Conclusions on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and to reflect – and act in the best way possible – upon the European Parliament recommendations on the cultural dimensions of the EU’s external actions (Resolution of 2011). However, for the EU to deliver effectively in the field of external cultural relations, several conditions are required: structural capacities must be created within the EEAS; coordination between the EEAS and the various Commission services, as well as between the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States’ ministries of culture and foreign affairs must be secured; cultural focal points must be established within the EEAS and EU Delegations across the world; diplomats and desk staff must be trained; thematic and geographic priorities must be clarified; and efficient dialogue channels with civil society must be established. All this is challenging but worth the investment if the EU is serious about its desire to engage meaningfully with other cultures in the world and to remain a credible partner on the global stage.

Emerging economic powers such as India, Brazil and South Korea have grasped the potential of culture and the value of soft power (although their state cultural budgets are still relatively modest) and are stepping up the cultural component of their public di-

plomacy with a view to boosting their reputations as dynamic, attractive, self-confident and trustworthy nations. To quote Celso Lafer, Brazil’s former minister of foreign affairs: “cultural dynamism, the monetary stability, the process of social inclusion – all of that makes Brazilian culture a valid pathway for the exercise of soft power, a way to make our society better known and better understood by others” (New York Times, March 27, 2012).

### *The Chinese precedent*

China – one of the EU’s strategic partners – holds a particular place in this context. In 2007, it started a programme of massive investment in the country’s soft power infrastructure. This has led to the mushrooming of the state-run CCTV international TV broadcaster, cultural and language centres and Confucius Institutes all over the world. Although it is non-democratic and led by an authoritarian regime – which raises the issue of what the EU considers to be a strategic partnership and who it is prepared to engage with – it would of course be not particularly smart for the EU to downgrade its relationship with China, one of the world’s biggest economies and soon to be the EU’s most important trading partner. China therefore constitutes a test case for the EU. With the aim of promoting rapprochement and exchanges between civil societies in the fields of culture, education and youth, the EU-China Summit of February 2012 estab-

lished the High Level People-to-People Dialogue, complementing its High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue (2009) and High Level Strategic Dialogue (2010), in order to enhance political communication on bilateral and global issues.

In addition, the European Commission has set up an expert group on culture and external relations with the mandate of proposing a strategic framework for future EU-China cultural relations. Whatever concrete steps will be taken to follow up on the expert recommendations, it is clear that the ‘strategic’ aspect also requires reflection in relation to the EU’s aspiration to being a ‘normative power’ (a term largely based on the model of enlargement supporting transformation processes through which the EU aimed at spreading its norm), and to promoting universal values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, equality and the rule of law. This applies equally to the EU’s relationship with Russia, another strategic partner of the Union. The Arab Spring has forced Europe to rethink its pragmatic approach towards maintaining friendly relationships with dictators in the region as a means of ensuring stability.

The EU is now committed to supporting democratic transformation processes in post-revolutionary North Africa on the principle of ‘more for more’. Nevertheless, there is some discrepancy between Europe’s ambitions with regard to democracy and

the way it is applying the lesson of the Arab revolutions in its other relationships, and in particular in its strategic partnerships with non-democratic countries. This substantially weakens the position of Europe in the eyes of many actors, and ultimately jeopardises its recognition and appreciation as a global player. If the EU is serious about designing a values-based external relations strategy, it must apply its normative approach to its strategic partnerships by including freedom and democracy in its definition. While culture is vital to the development of foreign relations, meaningful, balanced and genuine bilateral or multilateral cultural exchange can only happen between countries that share democratic values, recognise the value of open societies, and have an authentic dialogue with civil society.

Depending on history, political governance and culture, expectations of European cultural exchange and initiatives differ greatly across world regions and from country to country. They are as varied as our relationships with the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China), MIKT (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey) and MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries and beyond, as diverse as our respective cultural aspirations and priorities. A distinction also needs to be made between expectations on the cultural practice side (artists, cultural operators and creative producers), the policy side (government) and the private sector. Hence, depending on whether we are referring to artist-led cultural exchange, government-led cultural diplomacy, or pri-

“The Arab Spring has forced Europe to rethink its pragmatic approach towards maintaining friendly relationships with dictators in the region as a means of ensuring stability.”

vate support for cooperative cultural projects with third countries, different strategies and approaches towards international cultural relations and exchange are at play.

With the emergence of an increasingly complex global landscape and new centres of influence, the EU and its individual member states have to re-imagine their external cultural engagement with different regions of the world and accept the fact that former hierarchies, privileges and preferences are being challenged. In the Arab countries, for example, Europe has to face the harsh competition of other soft powers such as Brazil, China or Australia when exerting its influence. In order to maintain its rank and image in the league of global players – already much affected by the political, economic and social crisis – but also to address regional and global challenges, Europe will have to build novel alliances, re-assess and in some cases re-invigorate its strategic territorial and institutional partnerships, and develop effective cooperation with regional organisations such as the Arab League and the African Union. Ongoing negotiations between the EU and the US regarding a Free Trade Agreement are promising in this sense. It remains to be seen how culture will be positioned and treated within the framework of these negotiations.

Globalisation has had a major impact on culture and led to the development of new centres of attraction and power, markets, horizontal networks, artistic circuits and cultural practices, which have opened inspiring pathways for international cultural cooperation and exchange. Thus, there

is an increasing capacity and desire on the part of cultural actors to intensify their engagement in the area of international cultural exchange. The translation of this aspiration into concrete, transnational, multi-directional cultural projects needs to be nourished, facilitated and supported. Cultural analyst and scholar Yudhishthir Raj Isar argues that: “cultural interactions are indispensable to the weaving of the complex cultural polyphony our interconnected and interdependent world so urgently requires” (White Paper, *Shifting economic power: new horizons for cultural exchange in our multi-polar world*, Salzburg Global Seminar, 2012). The imagination of artists, the creative minds of cultural actors, and the mobilising energies of civil societies across the globe will not suffice to unleash the full potential of the arts and culture in international relations.

Smart external cultural policies are needed to create the frameworks and conditions for this kind of dialogue and exchange to happen openly, fruitfully and effectively. Traditional forms of cultural diplomacy are not in tune with cross-cultural and interdisciplinary artistic practices nor with the needs of the artists and agents in charge of external cultural relations. For example, the Member States’ national agencies and ministries for culture often lag behind and assume their responsibility for international cultural exchange simply means organising nice cultural programmes to accompany official foreign state and trade delegation visits. There is much fear, insecurity and clumsiness when it

comes to real intercultural dialogue, cooperation, and especially co-creation. For this to change, new approaches and tools are needed at all levels to forge an inspiring and truly cosmopolitan cultural vision of the future.

What is the Unique Selling Point (USP) of EUNIC (the European Union National Institutes for Culture) in this context? Which forms of European external cultural relations make sense and really add value to the activities of the individual EU Member States?

EUNIC is unique because of a combination of factors: it is the only European network of cultural institutes – organisations that have been created to represent national cultures and interests abroad – that is globally active. It also has an extraordinary reach thanks to its members, who work in 150 countries with over 2,000 branches and more than 25,000 staff. These members have profound and long-standing experience in international cultural diplomacy, extensive knowledge of country-specific political and cultural contexts, connections to local cultural scenes and awareness of cultural trends. This, along with the network’s proximity to civil society and emerging independent

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artists, means that EUNIC has a range of assets that are not only enormously valuable in terms of European cultural cooperation and policymaking, but also in terms of international cultural relations.

However, I believe there is one crucial factor that is still missing: a collective vision and creative imagination regarding what the network can achieve. EUNIC already works fairly successfully in collaborative clusters and develops joint projects, but it has not yet attained the maturity to overcome its members’ anxieties about losing their sovereignty, visibility and even identity by fully committing to European thinking and engaging with European practice and policy. But the wake-up call is there for all to hear. If EUNIC does not awake from its cosy daydreaming, it will miss its opportunity to fulfil its aspirations by taking a leading role.

EUNIC should be about Europe going forward, about putting in place and implementing a strategy for a cohesive, resourceful, impact-rich and sustainable international cultural engagement. Its remit cannot be subsumed to the coordination of collaborative projects, economies of scale and pushy (or even aggressive) European funding development to compensate for shrinking resources at national level. This network must be about pushing forward, driving the agenda, sharing knowledge, networks and resources to scale up action and effectively impact international relations. Its leitmotif should be ‘A culture of sharing as a strategy of influence’. It should not only reflect on European and global issues but also define

and dare to articulate common European political, cultural, educational and institutional responses. For example, as a European organisation, it could do more to help independent voices in the host countries to gain international exposure and to support democratisation processes through skilled interventions at the crossroads of culture and political determination.

### *The need for a collective vision*

EUNIC already works collaboratively in different formats, in many countries and with diverse partners, both public and private. Now it should go a step further and exemplify how Europe operates cohesively in the world. By listening very carefully to the perceptions and expectations of local communities, responding with political and cultural sensitivity to country and region-specific contexts and needs, creating lasting links between professionals beyond the official circuits, developing fresh ideas for international exchange and collaboration, valuing the hybridism within its own cultures rather than ‘exporting’ traditional cultural images and forms of expression, investing in transnational artistic research and experimentation, supporting long-term creative processes, and engaging coherently and truthfully in European advocacy (making the link between practice and policy), EUNIC could become an inspiring platform that will introduce to the world a new ethos of sharing, mutuality and reciprocity.

The main obstacle to the realisation of this vision is the diversity of foreign cultural policies, practices and means among EU members and the lack of shared determination and enthusiasm. This makes it extremely challenging to set a common agenda. As stated by one of its members, “EUNIC still needs to prove it is more than the mere addition of individual European actions” (Ruth Ur, Head of Arts and Development, British Council on the occasion of the More Europe debate, Paris, 23 May 2012). If EUNIC is to transform itself into a genuine platform for European practice, learning and advocacy on EU external relations, then this implies new forms of governance and leadership, pilot projects to test out ideas, and increased capacities and resources. At a time when the EU is struggling with austerity measures and budgets are being axed, it seems hardly likely that such a far-reaching approach is on the horizon.

In conclusion, the global shift of power has impacted on the production, distribution and consumption of culture, and resulted in a new and fascinating cultural landscape. Nevertheless, it has not yet significantly reduced imbalances in cultural exchanges, nor has it led to better-resourced transnational and multilateral cultural cooperation. In the light of this reality, Europe cannot just sit back, navel-gaze and wait for others to lead the way. We must look at ourselves through the mirrors being held up by other regions. We must listen to voices from outside Europe, reflect, and come together as Europeans to act coherently and forcefully.

“EUNIC should now go a step further and exemplify how Europe operates cohesively in the world.”

These are challenging times for all, including the EU, EEAS, EUNIC, the networks and civil society actors who are involved in international cultural exchanges. They all have the urgent task of identifying their particular role in a multipolar world. They all need to find new partners and resources in order to gain critical leverage. But what is needed the most is a common understanding of what is the ultimate goal and desired effect of Europe’s cultural engagement with other continents. The EU’s developing external cultural relations strategy will have to bring all these partners on board and reconcile national ambitions with European imperatives, as well as public policy interests with civil society practices. “Sharing power as a strategy of influence” would be a smart way forward – valuing the knowledge and experience that each of the partners brings to the table while respecting the creative independence of the cultural sector and civil society.

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Chapter 2: **Messages from around the world – Expectations of Europe's external relations.**

The geopolitical situation of the new millennium has necessitated a revival of cultural diplomacy. In Africa, America, the Arab world and Asia, centuries-old trading and communication routes are being redrawn. Culture provides an opportunity for Europe to forge a New Deal with the world. The situation in neighbouring North Africa and the Middle East requires a historic reaction on the part of the old continent. Europe's relations with Africa need a fresh start in order to build greater trust. Europe's dialogue with Latin America has to encompass climate change, soil erosion, water pollution and over-fishing. Globalisation has provided a new context for democracy. Now it needs to be renegotiated, and not only in Asia. One thing is clear: whether it is climate change, crises, the rule of law or development, Europe holds answers to the challenges of our times and needs to invest more heavily in its cultural relations with the rest of the world. What initiatives should it take in its external cultural relations? And what expectations does the world have of these? How is Europe perceived in the world and how can its culture play a role in external relations? And finally, what are the advantages of a common European external cultural policy?

**Energy and peace** Along with the crash of the euro and the collapse of Europe's financial architecture, one of Europe's worst fears is the Islamisation of the South – and ultimately the whole continent. So what is to be done? The author argues for a new vision for Europe in the Mediterranean region. This could mean the emergence of alternative energy supplies and new financial markets and the EU could also establish itself as a peacemaker in the Middle East. *By Claus Leggewie*



also seem that the days of Yemen's Ali Abdullah Salih (in power since 1978) and Syria's Bashar al-Assad (since 2000) are similarly numbered.

The value of the first (partially) free elections in the Maghreb and Mashriq is not altered by the fact that they have led to political Islam gaining majority representation. And it would be fatal if Europe's concerns about stability and security in the Middle East led it to throw itself into the arms of the Saudi monarchy or allowed the Egyptian military leadership to play the Algerian card by cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood and once again persecuting political Islam.

The Arab revolution began in January 2011 with the uprising in Tunisia, which had been ruled for decades by the kleptocratic regime of the Ben Ali family. It was triggered by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 in Sidi Bouzid, a town 250 kilometres south of the capital on the peripheries of Tunisia and the Arab/Islamic world. Bouazizi earned his living by selling vegetables. His market stall was confiscated because he allegedly did not

European politicians have been struggling to deal with the unexpected political changes in North Africa and the Middle East, the largest global upheaval since the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. Optimists may feel that the Jasmine Revolution (the name given to the uprising in Tunisia, after the country's national symbol) has not brought the hoped-for results, but the region's democratisation is still continuing apace. Within a very short space of time, three dictators have disappeared off the map. This flies in the face of the widespread belief – both at home and abroad – that they would remain in power for the rest of their natural lives. These were Muammar al-Gaddafi, who was in power for 42 years; Hosni Mubarak, president for 30 years; and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali after 24 years at the helm. It would

have a permit, and his complaints to the city authorities proved fruitless. After being mistreated while in police custody, he set fire to himself and died in hospital of his injuries on 4 January 2011. This act of desperation on the part of the victim – described by French sociologist and ethnologist Émile Durkheim as an “altruistic suicide” which, unlike other suicide attempts, did not bring suffering to others – will never be forgotten, not least because of Bouazizi's youth (he was just 26 years old) and the seemingly trivial causes (official arbitrariness and police violence). This act of self-immolation sparked a global media frenzy on television, YouTube and Twitter because it presented the story of the Arab revolution in a nutshell. It just needed a tiny spark to ignite the powder keg. At its core, it was not about religion or family honour, but about dignity, freedom – and work.

What has remained of the initial hope? Many observers are now left staring in bewilderment at the Islamists' election successes and have been rendered speechless by the news and pictures emerging from the brutal civil war in Syria. Yet the Arab Spring has produced a very wide range of consequences, including the following:

- A moderate agenda of reforms undertaken by the Moroccan and Jordanian monarchs Mohamed VI and Abdullah II, who have introduced cautious constitutional reforms from above and who tolerate and integrate a moderate Islamic opposition
- A worrying 'graveyard peace' in Algeria, from where there have only been reports of isolated and often self-destructive protests
- A partially successful transition in Tunisia, where a secular president now shares power with an Islamist prime minister

- After the armed revolt against the dictator Gaddafi in Libya, which initially led the country to the brink of collapse, a generally liberal Islamic party gained a majority in government after democratic elections
- A fight for survival on the part of Egypt's military regime – which annulled the Muslim Brotherhood's victory in the parliamentary elections – against Islamists of various radical hues
- Protests of varying intensity in the Gulf States, whose rulers initially seem to remain unthreatened
- A precarious situation in Lebanon
- Protracted and brutal civil wars in Yemen and Syria.

Straight out of the textbook, the spectrum covers every form of transition from dictatorship to democracy. These include self-enlightenment on the part of the ruler (Morocco); power-sharing between old and new elites (Egypt); large-scale replacement of the political leadership (Libya, Tunisia); ethnic and religious civil war (Syria); and external military or police intervention (Libya, Bahrain).

In any case, the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) as a whole is a geopolitical construct in the tradition of European Orientalism (and analogous to the residual category of Central and Eastern Europe during the transition process after 1990). The differences between the social structures of Morocco and the Gulf States are too wide; the prosperity and development gaps too



large; the religious background too diverse, not only in terms of Sunnis and Shiites, but also with regard to the different types of regimes and their degrees of secularisation.

The region is bound together by two things: its impregnation with the Islamic tradition (hence the popular slogan, ‘Islam is the solution!’); and the separation of men and women and a pronounced homophobia that affects people’s everyday lives and work. Many proponents of Islam as the solution derive these views from their religion. And despite the fabulous oil wealth of some of these countries, the region is generally characterised by its low levels of human development and predominantly authoritarian and patriarchal regimes. The success of the transition is certainly not guaranteed, but the democracy movement is not dead and civil society has established itself in most areas, though of course without succeeding in shaking the autocratic structures or taming the forces of radical Islam. And they are on the move, as was shown by the demonstrations in Tunis and Cairo in the summer of 2012. A return of the pharaohs (as Mubarak was known) or the kleptocrats (such as Ben Ali and his family) seems as unlikely as the onset of Western-style secularisation or liberalisation.

Prior to 2010, the dogma of Arab authoritarianism was well-established, but since then social mobilisation and political change have demonstrated that Arab societies can indeed encompass civil and political freedoms and the political participation of women. There has been a widespread chang-

ing of the guard, and Arab societies have become more civil, including moves towards an independent judiciary, greater freedom of opinion, and increased artistic and academic freedom. It was extremely frustrating for the protesters and for many Western observers that the demands of the urban protest movements in Tunisia and Egypt did not translate into electoral success for those political forces that had neither grown out of the old regimes nor wished to be part of the Islamist camp. But the political transition after the Velvet Revolution in Eastern and Central Europe was not so different. It generally took the form of power-sharing between post-communists and an opposition that was often equally religious and ethno-nationalist, while the civil rights movements splintered and found themselves unable to attract lasting support among the public at large. Even in stabilised post-autocratic societies, it has often taken a long time for an effective third party to emerge and vie for power, or indeed – as in Romania and Bulgaria – this is a development that is still awaited. It seems likely that special Islamic forms of democracy will emerge and take root (as has been the case in Turkey, under different circumstances), which will be able to deal with

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the unease felt towards Western lifestyles and politics without disguising or reversing this Western influence on traditions in every area of society.

The Arab uprisings and revolutions, particularly in Egypt, have had a major effect on global politics and on the European Union’s approach to security and development. In the past, the former superpowers and Europe always prioritised security over democracy and generally exercised their influence by supplying arms. But the new post-autocratic regimes are less predictable and difficult to control in terms of their internal structures and attitudes towards the Middle East conflict. It seems likely that governments that possess greater democratic legitimacy and that are more religiously oriented will give in to the desire of the ‘Arab Road’ to intensify their enmity towards Israel.

It would also be illusory to believe that the usual (and indeed still fragile) internal stability would quickly return. Eruptions and escalations of violence would hardly be surprising in light of the backlog of domestic political and economic reforms that have built up in the MENA countries. All global actors – including the former superpowers in the Mediterranean region – are now facing enormous problems. But it would be trite to expect the European Union to provide some kind of panacea.

There is also much to be learned from the surprise of the Arabellion and the mistakes made in managing the crisis. The EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) proved largely ineffective in 2011. Instead,

the old (France, UK) and new powers (Germany) returned to their conditioned reflexes fed by old loyalties, spheres of influence and attitudes. It seems Europe has learned little from the Yugoslav wars, where the EU again failed to speak with a single voice. When the situation escalated in Libya, Syria and the Gulf, Europe had no mechanism for coordinated decision-making. The EU also had no Plan B for the MENA region, because its diplomacy was fixated on stability and normality, preferring to maintain the status quo rather than think about ‘unlikely’ situations and worst case scenarios. From this comes the sense of amazement that there can actually be a post-Mubarak and post-Gaddafi era.

So this diplomacy is totally turned in on itself; public diplomacy that included civil society in the MENA region was an unknown quantity and even today seems strange, apart from the German example of the activities of the political foundations, the Goethe-Institut and certain government-related think tanks such as the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Overall, until 2013, German and European policy towards the South remained astonishingly tongue-tied and passive. Neither the Chancellor’s office nor the Foreign Office really coordinates German policy, and there is no European coordination on national strategies.

This means that agendas such as Iran’s nuclear proliferation and the Israel-Palestine conflict are discussed and negotiated without really taking into account the new circumstances. It also means that the spe-

cial role of Turkey in the MENA region has not been considered and used to best effect. We should not ignore the fact that the former Ottoman superpower has been gaining respect in the region over recent years. The AKP's moderate Islamism could be a role model for the transformation of the Arab regimes, while the Iranian influence (via Syria and Hamas) is fading. The question also remains of whether the Arab rebellion could once again trigger protests in Iran in the wake of the brutal repression of the democratic movement in 2009. Without wishing to overstate the situation by calling it a 'Facebook revolution', there is no denying the fact that the new social media and TV channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya have created a new space for communication in the MENA region. Its power should not be underestimated, despite the region's relatively low internet penetration and state control and repression of the blogosphere.

In short, European countries and the EU need to increase their involvement in the region compared to what they have been prepared to do in the past. The aforementioned loss of influence on the part of the USA and Russia also contributes to this, along with China's reluctance to get involved, but above all it comes down to Europe's geopolitical position. One-size-fits-all solutions and panaceas for the whole region are quite inappropriate, but it is time for diplomacy to get itself into gear. It is time for a genuine common foreign and security policy and better-coordinated crisis management that includes civil society partners. This is the only

way to thwart attempts to establish an anti-Islamic clash of civilisations designed directly or indirectly to re-Christianise Europe and strike a chord within nationalist and populist circles. The doomsday scenario of 'Eurabia' that drove Norwegian Anders Breivik to carry out his attacks can be countered through inter-governmental and economic means. 'Eurabia' plans that revolve mainly around energy supplies and use secular models and methods of collaboration that are aimed at establishing autonomous civil societies and guaranteeing basic human and civil rights such as freedom of opinion and the press.

Right-wing populist factions in government strengthen the first scenario, while the second entertains the idea of business as usual with potentially reformed governments. This latter option promises to be the best way of creating a lasting union of equals among democratic Mediterranean societies based on a set of new foundations. This 'Eurabia' will of course be more Islamic, in that it recognises the presence of millions of Muslim migrants in the North and treats them with respect, despite inevitable frictions. And finally, the transnational diaspora communities bring the two shores of the Mediterranean closer together, both politically and culturally. This process may serve to heighten the contrast between secular/lay attitudes and politicised religion, which sees Islam, Judaism and Christianity not as private beliefs but as a set of categorical rules that govern society and politics.

In certain cases this includes missionary activities to convert unbelievers to the 'right'

religion. At present this is most prevalent in Wahhabism, the style of Islam promoted in Saudi Arabia, with activities including building mosques and establishing Koran schools, and among the radical minority of Salafists, who have recently intensified their efforts to recruit among the European diaspora. These groups are bitterly opposed to Western lifestyles and have declared their hostility to the democratic constitutional state. This has taken on a Jihadist form that aggressively declares war on the infidel (Christians, Jews and atheists) and revitalises the historic hostility between Christianity and Islam that has been simmering since the 7th century AD.

The mirror image of this is the Orientalist theory of the absolute impossibility of reconciling Islam, the 'child of the desert' with the Christian Mediterranean world stemming from Rome (and Byzantium). According to the famous (and subsequently simplified) thesis on Arab-Islam expansion expounded by Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, cultural entities have destroyed our world and set back its economic performance by centuries.

Instead of exaggerating this parting of the ways by calling it a 'clash of civilisations', we should remember the empirical multitude of everyday contacts, phenomenological intersections and theological/intellectual interactions, along with the syncretism and conversions between the monotheistic religious cultures of the Mediterranean region from

late antiquity to the early modern era. Judaism in particular played the role of mediator in this respect and despite all the conflicts and wars there were still phases of spiritual and everyday Convivencia (the name given to the period of peaceful co-existence between Jews, Christians and Muslims in Spain before 1492). Although we should guard against romanticising this period, today it is still expedient to misuse the ongoing historical tensions and sporadic exclusions as excuses for a clash of civilisations.

Overall, it is clear that a large number of the young protesters in 2011 – even if they were not oriented towards European policy – “were considering the liberal and democratic values represented by Europe quite naturally as their own and hence underscoring their universality”, to quote the words of Middle East expert Volker Perthes. “To some extent, Europe has received political support from a region where it would no doubt least have expected it. This is one reason why Europe's interest in achieving successful democratic transition in the Arab world should be as intense as it was twenty years ago on Eastern Europe.”

In the end, the governments run by the Muslim Brotherhood will largely be measured on how they handle youth unemployment, which currently stands at over 50 percent in Tunisia and Egypt. Can they offer societies a future in which up to two-thirds of the population are under 25 and where many in the diaspora regions of Europe maintain ambivalent relationships that oscillate between attraction and repulsion? It

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is already conceivable that the initial enthusiasm for political Islam will cool due to their inability to find a remedy in this respect.

The periphery of Europe, the EU Member States and candidate countries that have been worst affected by the euro zone crisis and the societies of North Africa and the Middle East that find themselves in a state of upheaval do not pose a threat to the European Union's economic stability, political security and cultural identity. Insolvency, Islamism, illegal activity – this is the distorted picture that has been presented for years, but it is now in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy if, beginning with Greece, the European Union begins to disintegrate and a shrunken core Europe seals itself off from the Arab world's transformation. Henri Pirenne would not believe his eyes if he saw how his fears of southern Islamic decadence have now become part of the everyday agenda.

In the European debate, too much time is spent dealing with the past. Older people complain that the younger generation do not understand the importance of Europe as a project for peace after 1945, while young people ask why Greece was allowed to join the euro zone. A new peace and development project that goes beyond core Europe can only be achieved if the South is also involved. Only then will it be possible to rectify the design faults in the Economic and Monetary Union, only then will Europe once again become a serious global player in the G-20 world.

The crisis in the South represents a

midlife crisis for the whole of the EU. It must be used as the starting point for radical reforms that will lead to its expansion and consolidation as a Euro-Mediterranean union. The enduring myth of the Mediterranean can be used and at the same time deconstructed, as it does not lend itself to being a projection screen for late colonial custodianship nor as a concentration of anti-imperialist resentment. At best, the North can only offer advice and financial aid to help the Southern Europeans make their economies and budgets more sustainable and assist the North Africans to achieve the best possible synthesis of Islam and democracy. At the end of the day, it is up to them to come up with the ideas and solutions that are needed. But instead of the fruitless alternatives of extreme austerity (the Fiscal Pact) versus stop-gap measures (the Growth Pact), the European Union can create meaningful incentives and thus mark its return to the Mediterranean region as a political subject.

The historic strengths of the Mediterranean region lay in its network of lively cities, the fluidity of its borders and the extreme density of passenger and goods traffic to and from its shores. The shift of the global axis to the North-West Atlantic and subsequent 'container globalisation' have forced the Mediterranean to the periphery, leaving it to survive as a tourist destination for sun, sea and sex and as a global brand (among the Indian middle classes, interiors from California are thought of as Mediterranean chic). Yet their spiritual and phenomenological inspiration remains uninterrupted and suffi-

“With a view to establishing a united Europe, the Federal Republic of Germany shall participate in the development of the European Union that is committed to democratic, social and federal principles, to the rule of law, and to the principle of subsidiarity, and that guarantees a level of protection of basic rights essentially comparable to that afforded by this Basic Law.”

*Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, Art. 23 (1) (1949)*

ciently alive for a new Convivencia of cultures and religions that has been forgotten as a result of fierce clashes of civilisations and bloody exercises of purification and that has been abandoned as being laughable, despite its sterling work as an interpreter of European and global culture. This loss teaches us that political union between Europe, Africa and Asia in the Mediterranean region is not to be achieved via imperial hegemony or nationalistic competition but through the co-operation of its urban agglomerations. Not primarily through the economy and statehood but through new cultural interpretation activities and knowledge-sharing. But has anyone heard about the Euro-Mediterranean Universities that are being established in Piran in Slovenia and Fez in Morocco?

The Mediterranean is a region without form and it was not only in the area of education that weaknesses became apparent in attempts to create greater Euro-Mediterranean integration after 1945. It was nei-

ther official accession nor the well-meaning culturalisation of the South that brought together Turkey and Greece, Muslims and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians (or Cypriots and Swedes). Instead it was a loose federation in which form follows function. The fundamental ideas underpinning the Union of the Mediterranean, which was initiated by Sarkozy, watered down by Merkel and ignored by the rest of Eurabia were in fact good ones: the promotion of democracy and human rights, sustainable development and a Euro-Mediterranean scientific community. But in terms of practical policy, the rich North was obsessed with defending itself against the influx of refugees and came across as a crony of Mubarak, Gaddafi and Ben Ali rather than as a friend of the rebels and protesters, who now risked being crushed between the gnomes of the ancien régime and the Brotherhood.

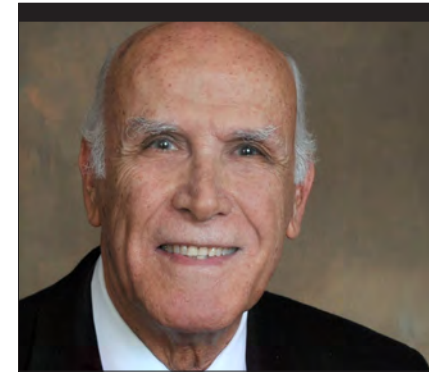
The first way of making amends – that please should not be delegated to the Goethe-Institut or the Institut Français – is to support the courageous popular movements around the Mediterranean. The second action is a revision of the regressive refugee policy and its replacement by a rational policy on migration and development that benefits both sides. If the government of the Euroméditerranée are then also treated with respect and as equals; if the 'baskets' of the Union of the Mediterranean are seized and the aforementioned future policy areas brought together, then there may a trans-Mediterranean energy union stretch-

“Has anyone heard about the Euro-Mediterranean Universities that are being established in Piran in Slovenia and Fez in Morocco?”

ing towards sub-Saharan Africa, a marine governance that intelligently combines protection and utilisation, a fair division of labour, particularly in agricultural production, a shift towards sustainable tourism and above all intercultural learning. These are the rudiments of concrete utopias or a European future in the South. Of course their realisation depends on two other major factors that finally have to be dealt with here: firstly, the quantum leap to a United States of Europe that must not be allowed to exhaust itself in the Directorate of a Brussels-based economic government, but that gains legitimacy through parliamentary control and the participation of civil society that then establishes a true European Demos. And secondly, Europe in the South and the North must extricate itself from the primitive control of the financial markets. What else but a political union of Europe and the Mediterranean can free the world from purely profit-related thinking and point the way towards a modern exchange of gifts?

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**The Tunisian tsunami and its aftermath** The European Union was taken by surprise when events in Tunisia triggered the start of the Arab Spring. In 2011 it was suddenly forced to decide whether it would make a multilateral response to the upheavals or whether its Member States would react individually, based on their own national interests. What is the outlook for joint EU initiatives in the region? *By Abdelwahab Hiba Hechiche*



On 19 March 2013, the world commemorated the tenth anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq. By coincidence, it was on 19 March 2011 that the Anglo-French intervention in Libya began. The USA's initial reluctance to be dragged into the conflict backed up our view that Paris and London were keen to seize the opportunity to re-establish themselves as regional and global powers outside Washington's control, after the humiliation of Suez in 1956, when they had to withdraw their troops under pressure from the USA and

the Soviet Union. This applies even more in light of the USA's declining influence in the region and the shift in US interests from Western Europe and the Mediterranean to Asia. In 2011 the EU was suddenly forced to decide whether it would make a multilateral response to the upheavals or whether its Member States would react individually, based on their own national interests. This emerging division within the EU was reflected in the opposition between the oil-rich and the poor countries of the Arab world. Once the tumult of the Arab Spring gathered pace, the oil-rich regimes were more effective at fending off attempts to unseat them. The King of Saudi Arabia provides a good example – on returning from a trip to the USA for medical treatment, he poured 140 billion dollars into social welfare.

At the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA) conference held in Washington D.C. in November 2013, there appeared to be a consensus that the Arab Spring had been exaggeratedly compared with other major revolutions of 1789, 1848, 1917, 1989 and with the post-Cold War period in Eastern Europe. One

of the speakers reminded delegates about the precursors of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt. Others described how the Tunisian revolution had certainly taken experts and laymen by surprise, both in Tunisia and elsewhere in the world. They believed there were two main reasons for the outbreak of the 'Jasmine Revolution' in Tunisia. The first of these was linked to the geography of the revolution since January 2008, with strikes breaking out at the Gafsa mines and spreading across the rest of the country. The second related to the role and discourse of social groups, social classes and elites.

Another talk underlined how spatial, economic, social and political marginalisation of one part of the country and society for the benefit of another was the origin of the revolutionary process that put an end to the mafia-like Ben-Ali-Trabelsi regime. At first the EU reacted hesitantly, but it gradually developed a more decisive response to the turmoil when it became a tsunami with waves that reached Egypt, Libya, Syria and even the Gulf states.

We should not forget how, in its formative stages, the European Economic Community (EEC) initiated a Mediterranean Policy because France, a former colonial country, wanted to continue to maintain its presence and influence, even after Tunisia and Morocco gained independence in 1956.

Algeria's war of independence began on 1 November 1954 and lasted until 1962. It is worth remembering the words of former German Foreign Minister and President Walter Scheel when he addressed the Euro-

pean Parliament during his term as President of the European Council in 1974: "Through the Community, Germany has become a Mediterranean country, and because of that, it is engaged in all the problems of that region." Yet, when in 2011 the events of the Arab Spring required a response from the EU, Germany decided to oppose the Anglo-French adventures in the region.

#### *Lobbying for a base in the Sahara*

At the beginning of the Arab Spring, the US initially seemed absent or undecided, but in fact Washington had already been considering creating a special presence in Africa. This was to be in the form of an institution that President George W. Bush had asked his Department of Defense to create in 2007: AFRICOM. In the same year, Karen Hughes, Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy, was in Algiers lobbying a reluctant Algerian regime for a base in the Sahara. This was in response to the expansion of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. The attack against the US diplomatic post in Benghazi on 11 September 2012, during which US Ambassador C. Stevens and three other Americans were killed, and the terrorist attack against an Algerian gas plant in the south of Algeria (Ain Menas) proved the

"The European Economic Community initiated a Mediterranean Policy because France, a former colonial country, wanted to continue to maintain its presence and influence, even after Tunisia and Morocco gained independence in 1956."

legitimacy of US security concerns. Shortly afterwards, France was forced to intervene in Mali. AFRICOM began to be more prominent after the debacle of the post-Libya crisis and the emergence of new Islamist groups occupying the northern half of Mali.

#### *A European military force*

For many years, France under President Jacques Chirac tried to create a European military force with the UK and Germany. This ambition can also be found in the Treaty of Lisbon of December 2007. Of the 62 amendments to its predecessors (the Treaties of Rome and Maastricht), 25 relate to foreign policy. The former European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was replaced by the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and its remit was expanded to include joint disarmament operations, post-conflict stabilisation, and, as if these were not taxing enough in themselves, the fight against terrorism. Ironically, less than 18 months after the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the EU stood on the sidelines as France and the UK carried out a military intervention on the Union's doorstep under the auspices of NATO. "Indeed, as the crisis in Libya escalated, no-one apparently seriously considered intervention under the framework of the CSDP. The belated decision of April 1, 2011 to approve a military mission to support humanitarian assistance in Libya smacked more of face-saving than effective intervention." According to

Professor Anand Menon, an unnamed European diplomat declared that the EU's security and defence policy was "closed until further notice."

The EU's timidity also drew criticism from the European media. The French newspaper *Le Monde* did not mince its words, when it commented: "The European Union, for its part, has failed miserably...institutional Europe has not faced up to the challenge. In the North Africa saga, it does not exist. It is incapable of agreeing or how to act or whether to recognise the Libyan opposition, and most of all on the legitimacy of the use of force. The disunity is total and particularly striking when it is a question of deciding on war. That is when history becomes a tragedy and it is necessary to move from frothy rhetoric about the rights of man."

#### *The EU's 'strategic patience'*

Although part of the problem may have been the EU's internal 'burden-sharing' – similar to the one between the US and its European allies within NATO – EU members have been struggling with the thorny question of cost. Other differences of an ideological nature emerged within France when philosopher Regis Debray initiated a sharp and public debate with former Foreign Affairs Minister Hubert Vedrine about the reintegration of France into NATO.

Despite its slow response to the Arab Spring, the EU did generally adopt a comprehensive, rational, and very generous pol-

icy towards its Mediterranean neighbours. Now it is time for the EU to recognise the new realities of the region:

- The Arab Spring has revealed the failure of neo-liberalism, showing that the market and economic growth on their own are not sufficient to bring about social change.
- After their united surge for liberty, Mediterranean societies have become fragmented and ideologically divided. Their thirst for freedom of expression and association led to the artificial creation of some 114 political parties, some of which had only 4 or 5 members.
- The re-emergence of an aggressive political Islam mixed with a new nationalism has become a polarising factor in the redefinition of national identity. This was and remains a critical factor in a relatively homogeneous society such as Tunisia which, while being proud of its Arab-Islamic heritage, has also always been very proud of its cosmopolitan society. Most Tunisians were devastated to see and hear the slogan 'Kill the Jews' being uttered during the official visit to Tunis of Hamas leader Ismail Haniya. It was remarkable that a large number of Tunisians, including women, came out in protest and reminded the world that Tunisia has its own Jewish children.
- Last but not least, the whole region of the Mediterranean has become deeply polarised. It becomes even more com-

plicated for the EU to offer assistance when it has to address each case according to its specific needs, as the countries are so different geographically, ethnically, and politically.

In 2014 we have to ask ourselves how the Arab Spring has affected the EU's Mediterranean policy and to what extent the EU has been able to reassure its Mediterranean neighbours that it has genuine and good intentions in the region. This is all the more relevant now that the destabilisation of the whole region and of some individual countries – particularly Libya and Syria – is making it more difficult for the EU to offer aid. At times it is very dangerous for the personnel who are based in these countries, some of which have already been infiltrated by jihadists.

The EU now has to deal with a great many concerns. These include the fear of more social polarisation at a time when the transition phase seemed so promising and when Tunisia was, and still is, considered to be the Arab Spring country that not only has the best chances of success, but also of being the best potential model for the other Arab states.

The EU's offer to help the Arab Spring countries to achieve sustainable economic growth is closely linked to the establishment of democratic institutions. These will be necessary for the creation of a peaceful socio-economic environment that is attractive to investors. Unfortunately it currently seems unlikely that there will be any major changes in the foreseeable future, due to the

fact that tourism is such an important source of income in Tunisia and Egypt.

The EU has been very wise in identifying the positive aspects of the Arab Spring, such as democratic elections. But here too, after a short period of optimism, the situation in Tunisia and in Egypt has now sunk into uncertainty. Too often, all we see are efforts to 'build a democracy without democrats.'

The EU's wisdom is also seen in its awareness that the transition towards democracy may take more time, perhaps years rather than months. This 'strategic patience' on the part of the EU is linked to some strict conditions. From the very first days of the Arab Spring, many EU leaders visited the Arab Spring countries and made official declarations committing the EU to providing a systematic aid package. These leaders included Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council; Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission and Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

#### *Aid comes with conditions*

Unfortunately, the economic situation of the countries in transition deteriorated dramatically between 2011 and 2013. In the

"It becomes even more complicated for the EU to offer assistance when it has to address each case according to its specific needs, as the countries are so different geographically, ethnically, and politically."

case of Tunisia, the politically-motivated assassinations of Chokri Belaïd in February 2013 and Mohamed Brahmi in July 2013 have increased the fears of Tunisians and foreign visitors alike.

The EU has made it clear that its aid comes with conditions. Its aid recipients have to play their part by creating the economic and institutional tools that lead to democratisation. To the €3.5 billion offered between 2011 and 2013, the EU added another €700 million for the SPRING programme. Other generous aid initiatives involve the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which will add another €1.7 billion to the pot. The European Commission is also supporting an additional European Neighbourhood Programme for agricultural and rural developments.

#### *The importance of regional integration*

In its clearest expression of support for its Mediterranean partners, the EU has also strongly recommended that the parties concerned should work towards their own regional integration. During EEC debates about the Yaounde Convention in the early 1960s and more especially during my time at the EEC as a guest researcher for the European Commission in the early 1970s, a German member of the Commission who was in charge of EU-Maghreb relations told me how difficult it was for the EU to convince the Maghreb states that it was truly in their

interests to achieve regional integration in order to be better equipped to negotiate with the EEC. While pursuing my research in North Africa, an Algerian member of the CPCM (Conseil Consultatif Permanent du Maghreb) showed me the dossiers and said “We have all the necessary tools to negotiate with the EEC, but our leaders do not have the political will.”

Today, the EU is very aware of the lack of political will in this respect among the Maghreb states, but it is powerless in the face of the Western Sahara conflict between Morocco and Algeria.

Going beyond geostrategic and geo-political considerations, the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours face a greater challenge: that of how to build a genuine co-existence based on mutual trust, respect, and tolerance within each country and across the Mediterranean. This dream was expressed at some of the Euro-Arab University’s summer sessions, particularly at a session held in Malta during the 1980s, where the focus was on the re-creation of a Mediterranean civilisation for the small islands. Although scholarships and academic collaborations already exist, it falls to EUNIC and its counterparts in the Maghreb and the Middle East (if they exist) to be very creative in initiating a strategic plan for forms of cultural, religious and civic cooperation. All of Europe, with its large Muslim com

munities and its Mediterranean Muslim partners, is facing one common enemy: the radicalisation of religious and xenophobic movements that are robbing the three

monotheistic religions of their Shalom! Pax! Salam!

In a letter dated 8 February 1952 from General Charles de Gaulle to the French Orientalist, Vincent Monteil to thank the latter for a copy of his book *Les Musulmans Sovietiques*, General de Gaulle wrote: “By reading you, we learn that everything is in the Islamic universe, and the problem of problems is in the destiny of Islam.” Half a century later, Europe and its Mediterranean neighbours find themselves facing many obligations. They have to find the best educational and cultural means of attaining maximum mutual respect and tolerance.

#### *Building a genuine co-existence*

Both sides of the Mediterranean should revisit the relatively recent World Congresses *Imams and Rabbis for Peace* (organised by the *Fondations Homme de Parole*) held in Brussels (2005), Seville (2006), and at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. What made those peace encounters so special was the fact that the first two were co-sponsored by three monarchs: the kings of Morocco, Belgium and Spain. Why has it become so difficult, and indeed for some nigh on impossible, to hold such a world congress in a Mediterranean Muslim country?

Seminars could also be organised on both shores of the Mediterranean to commemorate and study the pioneers of peace-making in the context of the general Arab-Israeli conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

The EU’s Mediterranean policy can never make genuine, meaningful progress without a final, comprehensive and just Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

To name a couple of examples, Andre Chouraqui, an Israeli of Algerian origin, and the Tunisian Mohammed Talbi could be good models for a systematic study using their writings and public initiatives. When H.M Hassan II of Morocco hosted Andre Chouraqui in February 1977, it was the first time that a Muslim Arab head of state had officially hosted an Israeli citizen.

The memory of another Arab leader could and should be honoured and remembered: President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia. A nationalist combatant and Tunisia’s head of government and state, Bourguiba included Tunisian Jews in his government (Albert Bessis and Andre Baruch). The other significant and courageous act by Bourguiba was his historic 1965 speech to the PLO in Jericho, in which he urged the Palestinians to sit down at the negotiating table with Israel.

The late French Orientalist Jacques Berque taught us a valuable lesson about Islamism. In his analysis of a book by Egyptian jurist Mohammed Aal-Ashmaw, he tried to show the connections between Islamists from Hassan Al-Banna to Ayatollah Khomeini. Berque’s key point was that throughout the

“Although scholarships and academic collaborations already exist, it falls to EUNIC and its counterparts in the Maghreb and the Middle East (if they exist) to be very creative in initiating a strategic plan for cultural, religious and civic cooperation.”

centuries Islam has not been used for theological debate but as a political and ideological substitute.

At a time when Turkey’s aspirations for full EU membership are encountering more and more obstacles (some of which are of its own making), let us not forget that it was in Turkey in 1992 that UNESCO, in association with two Turkish universities (Marmara and Istanbul) and the Euro-Arab University led by Dr Mohammed Aziza and Professor Xaviere Ulysse held a long conference on Tolerance in commemoration of the 1492 exodus of Jews and Muslims from Spain.

Ultimately, a parallel study of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a comparative study of religions will help EUNIC, Europe, and the southern Mediterranean partners to better understand the compatibility between Divine Law and Human Rights, especially at a time when there is a real and urgent need for global awareness and sensitivity towards the ‘Other’.

As for the dire and sometimes tragic problem of illegal migration from North Africa via the island of Lampedusa, the Mediterranean partners need to recognise its impact on relations between EU members, and in particular between major EU members that border the Mediterranean. In his book published in 2013, President Moncef Marzouki puts forward some important ideas for his northern EU partners in the context of the 5+5 dialogue.

In conclusion, we can turn to another great intellectual and expert in peace studies, Professor Johan Galtung. He understood

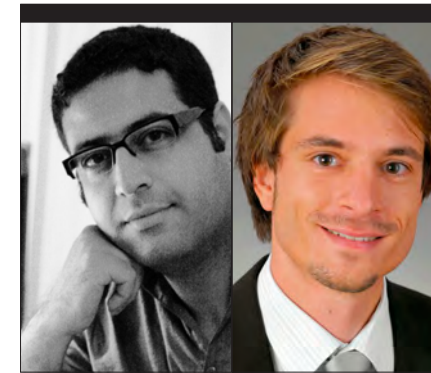




the culture of violence to mean those cultural aspects incarnated by religion and ideology, language and art that serve to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence. “If the opposite of violence is peace, then the opposite of the culture of violence is the culture of peace, that is the aspects of a culture which would serve to justify and to legitimise direct peace and structural peace.”

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**A yearning for emancipation** The Arab Spring was perceived in the Arab world as a final act of decolonisation. People are finally in a position to decide their own fates. Europe can now make a lasting contribution to the democratisation and development of the Maghreb through cultural and educational policy initiatives. In doing so, it can provide an effective blueprint for future policies towards other Arab countries in transition.  
*By Anis Ben Amor and Edmund Ratka*



Union and its Member States. These could offer an effective response to the challenges posed by Arab states such as Tunisia that are in the process of transition.

The mass protests in Tunisia and other Arab Spring countries such as Egypt were, among other things, an expression of a yearning for emancipation, and in particular emancipation from their countries' authoritarian rulers. Their patriarchal rule was met by popular demands for self-determination and for a life free from state despotism and with equal economic opportunities for all.

**F**or Tunisians, 14 January 2011 was the dawn of a new age that shed its light on the whole Arab world. The fall of President Zine el Abidene Ben Ali after two decades of ruling Tunisia with an iron fist marked the start of a complex and lengthy process of transformation. The break-up of the existing rigid political and social structures also presented new opportunities for culture and education in the country. By promoting and supporting development in these two areas, Europe can make a lasting contribution to the democratisation of Tunisia and, in so doing, provide an effective blueprint for future policies towards other Arab countries in transition. In this article we recommend five potential courses of action for future external cultural and educational policy initiatives on the part of the European

*Encounters of equals*

However, this process of emancipation, this 'reconquering' of the state by its citizens, also has an important global dimension. The protests against regimes that were often Western-oriented or indeed supported by the West were viewed by the Arab world as a final act of decolonisation that finally gave people their independence. It soon became clear that questions of national identity and national sovereignty need to be handled with much greater sensitivity in relations with 'post-revolutionary' Arab states.

With some of its countries burdened by their own colonial past, Europe can react at two different levels. First of all, it can adopt educational and cultural policies that treat the Arab states as equals, despite certain concrete imbalances (particularly in terms of budgets). This means accepting right from the start that cultural and educational relations are a two-way process. For example, European students could be encouraged to spend a semester in Tunisia, rather than just the other way round. The new Erasmus Plus programme is a step in the right direction and needs to be actively promoted. It is important for countries that have committed themselves to the process of democratisation to be allowed to benefit fully from the programme. Facilitating mobility between countries is also essential in order to promote cultural and academic exchange. For people in the Arab world, the issue of (temporary) access to Europe is a key indicator of just how serious the Europeans are when they promise genuine partnership with Arab states.

### *True partnership*

Secondly, Europe needs to recognise that true partnership means actually involving the target groups of European programmes in the design and development of these programmes from the outset. This is particularly true of civil society, which is experiencing an unexpectedly powerful renaissance in Tunisia. The fall of authoritarian regimes such as that in Tunisia or the moderate reforms taking place in countries such as Morocco and Jordan have opened up new opportunities that need to be exploited. It is heartening to see that not only political actors such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) but also intermediary organisations like the European cultural institutes have in fact been

making strenuous efforts to implement such a bottom-up approach since the Arab Spring.

The ‘Revolution of Dignity’ is a term often applied to the popular uprising in Tunisia that toppled a regime generally regarded as kleptocratic family clique. The self-immolation of a young street vendor in rural Tunisia at the end of 2010 sparked mass protests. Many Tunisians identified with the economic injustice and arbitrary treatment that he had suffered at the hands of the authorities. Demands for an end to the kind of clientelism that was at the heart of the Ben Ali regime continue to this day. Even since the revolution, there have been regular protests against the recruitment processes adopted by public bodies. In January 2014 protests broke out in Gafsa against an environmental agency over suspicions that it was still riddled with corruption and nepotism.

In the past, European policies – including cultural and educational cooperation programmes – may have also unwittingly contributed to strengthening the system of clientelism in countries such as Tunisia. During Ben Ali’s time in power, grants from bodies such as the German Academic Exchange Service (GAES) for students to study in Europe were often allocated by the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, so abuses of the system cannot be ruled out.

Since the revolution, institutions such as the GAES have taken the opportunity to contact their Tunisian target groups more directly by setting up their own offices in Tunisia and increasing the number of lectureships on offer at universities. This strategy should con-

tinue to be encouraged. In addition, advice and application processes should be designed in such a way (especially with regard to language) that as far as possible no stratum of society is excluded.

Despite the fact that there has been successful regime change in Tunisia, large parts of the state apparatus and other key public institutions are still dominated by the same elites and mentalities as before the revolution. Wherever possible, European cultural institutes should look beyond their normal practices and established relationships with local partners and endeavour to give opportunities to young people by offering then specific programmes with open, direct and transparent selection processes.

Anger at the growing levels of corruption and clientelism in the Ben Ali regime was not the only driving force behind the revolution. There was also a growing divide between the centre and outlying regions, between the well-to-do coastal regions and the country’s neglected inland areas. In the years leading up to the revolution, there had already been a number of protests in provincial towns, such as the mining town of Gafsa. In the end it was not the country’s capital but the poor region of Sidi Bouzid that provided the spark for the successful uprising.

“True partnership means actually involving the target groups of European programmes in the design and development of these programmes from the outset. This is particularly true of civil society, which is experiencing an unexpectedly powerful renaissance in Tunisia.”

Bridging the divide between the centre and the periphery is now a major challenge, not only for Tunisian policymakers but also for European cultural and educational cooperation. There is no doubt that the cultural life of the capital Tunis and other coastal cities is far more dynamic and visible than elsewhere. The quality of the universities in these cities also helps them to attract research partners from around the world. European cultural institutes and other intermediary organisations must guard against the temptation to concentrate only on these particular hotspots.

Of course the search for suitable partners in the provinces is more laborious and it takes more time and effort for projects to be successful. But the European cultural institutes can provide assistance – and not just for the deprived sectors of society – by setting specific programmes for marginalised regions and either opening local offices or at least establishing fixed local contacts and partners. By making it clear, for example, that access to culture and education is the right of citizens from all regions of Tunisia they can send a powerful message to the elites in the Tunisian capital.

### *Setting an example through dialogue*

After many years, the region’s authoritarian regimes have finally been forced to relax their iron grip on their countries. However, in some Arab states this has led to the emergence of cultural lines of conflict over the question of identity, whether ideological, ethnic or socio-economic. These lines of conflict have

intersected with struggles for the realignment of power, fanning the flames of civil war in Syria and spawning violent clashes between supporters and opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Even in a country like Tunisia, which is going through a relatively peaceful process of transition, the question of identity has assumed major importance. Mistrust is rife, particularly between the secular and Islamist camps. The political and public arenas have seen a great deal of controversy and debate about the precise role of Islam in the new constitution and how to deal with Salafist groups, some of which seem prepared to resort to violence to achieve their aims. This is probably the second biggest area of contention within Tunisian society after the centre/periphery issue and is reflected in the country's party system, with the Islamist Ennahdah and the secularist Nida Tounes representing the opposite ends of the political spectrum.

The fact that the end of decades of authoritarian rule in the country was accompanied by the repression of political Islam means that a new debate over the issue of the country's collective identity is unavoidable. There are two ways that Europe can help to ensure that this process takes the form of peaceful and constructive dialogue. Firstly, key European actors should set an important example by seeking dialogue with all groups that renounce violence. If only one side is seen to be receiving support, there is a danger that differences of opinion within the country over the issue of collective identity will become even more accentuated.

Secondly, European cultural and educa-

tional policies can create appropriate platforms for internal dialogue within Tunisia and provide programmes that will bring different groups together to discuss key issues. For example, all new parties, whatever their political persuasion, have a vested interest in developing an effective and democratic youth organisation. European intermediary organisations could offer assistance to all parties in this respect, which could incorporate joint seminars and educational trips.

Europe and its external cultural policy have reacted relatively quickly to the recent changes in North Africa. The EU and many Member States, including countries such as Germany that do not actually border the Mediterranean region, have already set up their own support programmes. Tunisia in particular is reaping the benefits from these.

However, transformation is a long-drawn-out process and this emergency aid for culture and education needs to be consolidated in the form of structural cooperation. Ad-hoc measures alone are not enough to meet the challenges facing cultural and educational policy in Tunisia and to establish Europe as a credible partner. All too often, such measures only benefit media-savvy groups that already enjoy high visibility and strong international networks.

If we look beyond financial issues, it is clear

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that European cooperation in the area of culture and education should be concentrated in two key areas. First of all, there needs to be a stronger focus on developing structures and creating multipliers. In concrete terms, joint projects with universities could involve students and lecturers alike. Universities could also be helped to redesign their curricula and set up research networks and graduate schools.

At a time of transition, when a country's citizens tend to put everything under the microscope, this kind of approach may well be the best way forward. In the Tunisian education sector people are acutely aware of the need for modernisation and internationalisation and so are keen to work with European partners.

#### *Need for more regional integration*

Secondly, projects by European cultural and intermediary organisations should not be launched only when the political climate means that funds are available. There needs to be a long-term commitment to such projects, including helping to guarantee their long-term viability, which includes efforts for secure follow-up funding. However, European cultural and educational policy stakeholders who make efforts at local level to work with these kinds of objectives in mind are often hampered by technical budgetary restrictions, such as the fact that funds cannot be carried over to the following year, and – particularly in the case of EU programmes – highly complex application procedures.

The protest movements of the Arab Spring took a remarkably parallel course. They were effectively a cross-border, pan-Arab phenomenon with young activists networking and inspiring each other. They also shared ideas (often only virtually) with people of like minds in other parts of the world, such as members of the Occupy and Indignados movements. The fall of authoritarian, power-hungry regimes in the Maghreb opened up new possibilities for regional integration in the future.

In addition, the popular uprisings all brought with them a feeling of national liberation (which in Egypt then took on a more nationalistic character during the difficult process of transition). National symbols such as flags and anthems were and still are an important component of the demonstrators' arsenal in the Arab Spring countries.

At a time when tensions are running high, Europe can make an important contribution to helping countries develop an enlightened and open sense of national identity that is not simply based on xenophobia and conspiracy theories but which opens the door to greater regional and Euro-Mediterranean integration. For this to happen, Europe itself needs to set an example. The rise in often xenophobic populism in many European countries and their restrictive immigration policies, especially towards the Arab countries in transition, means that Europe has seriously lost credibility over recent years.

In spite of these fundamental problems, external cultural and educational policies can still help to break down national barriers. On the European side, it is important to recognise that a trend towards the communitisation of cultural and educational policy is neither possible nor desirable, as individual national characteristics in this area are a reflection of Europe's cultural diversity. However, individual Member States' approaches should still be

incorporated into an overall European strategy in order to avoid duplication and competition and encourage multinational projects. For example, German Foreign Office funding regulations have made it difficult to involve nationals of other EU countries in special programmes for the Arab world within the framework of inter-university projects.

On the other hand, partner countries also need to be encouraged to commit to cross-border cooperation projects. The role of religion or the political marginalisation of young people and their lack of financial prospects are important issues in the whole of North Africa. Cultural and educational projects could create the platforms and networks needed to facilitate the sharing of ideas and experiences and in the medium term help to make progress towards greater political and economic integration.

In many instances, the euphoric sense of hope triggered in the early days of the Arab Spring has been destroyed by government brutality, ideological radicalisation, social polarisation, economic stagnation and geopolitical interests. However long and laborious the process of transformation proves to be, there is no doubt that the successful popular uprising in Tunisia in 2011 heralded the dawn of a new era in which European-Arab relations are increasingly being placed under the microscope. Over the years to come, joint cultural and educational projects that are adapted to the needs of the transition process and that take a long-term, dialogue-oriented and multinational approach based on partnership can certainly serve as role models.

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**Seize the Spring** Europe pursues a somewhat contradictory policy when it comes to the Middle East and North Africa. It flies the flag for the values and ideals of freedom, the rule of law, respect for human rights and solidarity. But then it goes on to pursue its own, largely economic, interests in its policies on trade, security and immigration. How can Europe make better use of the new opportunities for dialogue that have opened up as a result of the upheavals in the Arab world? *By Isabel Schäfer*



the intense dissatisfaction felt by civil societies with regard to their deficient political systems (lack of democracy and freedom, human rights abuses); socio-economic inequalities; unequal access to basic commodities such as accommodation and food; widespread corruption at all levels; and the effects of unbridled capitalism and the neo-liberal economic system on the national economies of the countries of North Africa and the Middle East.

The protest movements have also created a new relationship between people and politics. Until this point, civil societies had suffered what sometimes proved to be massive oppression at the hands of the region's authoritarian regimes. Now they have found their voice and are increasingly exerting their influence on political decision-making processes. After decades of repression and lack of political freedoms, the fall of the regimes suddenly revealed how political engagement on the part of individual citizens can bring about changes to the political system.

Certain civil society actors have opened up new spaces and instruments for political debate (such as in the new media and social

In the wake of the upheavals that have shaken the Middle East and North Africa since 2011 and rocked the societies of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, relations between Europe and the region are now undergoing a process of transformation and redefinition. The ties and relationships that bind these two extremely complex and culturally diverse regions with their very different institutions have always been politically difficult, burdened by their historical and cultural baggage and economic asymmetries. The historic turning point of the Arab Spring – even if this is no longer a spring – may now be used as an incentive to turn the spotlight on these relations, bring them up to a new level and give them a new, constructive impetus.

These upheavals were largely a result of

networks). This particularly applies to the countries' elites, the urban population and the younger generation. However, in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, certain sections of the population continue to remain excluded from this debate, whether as a result of lack of education, material disadvantages or inequalities in regional development.

Along with this 'awakening' of civil society and new political actors, the geopolitical changes that have resulted from the Arab Spring and the constant shifts in political power have led to the emergence of new political cultures. In the current 'post-revolutionary' phase, these societies are now experiencing a different relationship with Europe.

*High levels of expectation,  
low levels of trust*

These societies have very high expectations of Europe, but this is balanced out by their lack of trust as a result of past negative experiences. Above all, many of these societies are hoping Europe will start to view the region in a different light and not simply adopt a retrogressive donor mentality. The countries bordering the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean want to finally be treated as equals and full partners.

In the case of Tunisia, the people succeeded in overthrowing their dictator without outside help. Tunisia has little interest in a host of small, individual projects or in receiving the odd million in funding for in-

dividual programmes. Instead, it is hoping for more fundamental assistance in drawing up a lasting agenda of reforms for its economy, building up its industry for the future and increasing its competitiveness on the global market. At the same time, many actors are also hoping for fairer trade relations and greater empathy and trust on the part of Europe towards its democratic processes of transformation, combined with concrete assistance in certain areas such as regional decentralisation and development, administrative reform and reforms to the media, the environmental sector, the police and security sector and the legal and education systems.

In the past, Europe has lost many friends because of its long-standing collaboration with authoritarian regimes such as those of Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi. It was often accused of having double standards because its official policies did little to support civil society actors who were striving to achieve greater freedoms and basic human rights. Now Europe finds itself in dialogue with (moderate) Islamic actors, as the latter are (as in Tunisia) or were (as in Egypt) involved in the new governments of these countries. Many other stakeholders with a more secular orientation find this difficult to understand, feeling that Europe has now betrayed them twice. Many people expect Europe to demonstrate greater understanding and acceptance, even if the results of the elections do not coincide with European ideas. They are hoping for recognition and solidarity combined with more flexible assistance that is not steeped in bureaucracy.

It is difficult to measure Europe's potential influence on the transition processes of its southern neighbours, but generally it is limited. Of course the multitude of existing European civil society programmes and projects have indirectly played their part in paving the way for the recent upheavals. But it was the people of Tunisia and Egypt who succeeded in freeing themselves from their dictators without resorting to violence.

Now the international community needs to step up and accept its share of responsibility. It needs to constructively support the transition governments of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in their difficult challenges and help them to establish new political systems. This means that the international community and Europe in particular should, where necessary, tackle the socio-economic difficulties.

*Societies pushed to breaking point*

Many people's lives have become worse rather than better since the revolutions. The unemployment rates in Tunisia and Egypt have risen, economic growth has fallen and the tourism sector that is so critical to the economies of both countries has collapsed. The high unemployment rate, particularly among young people (Tunisia's youth unemployment rate is around 40%) is pushing

“Instead, it is hoping for more fundamental assistance in drawing up a lasting agenda of reforms for its economy, building up its industry for the future and increasing its competitiveness on the global market.”

these societies towards breaking point. This is due to globalised markets, reduced foreign investment and, in some cases, poor education systems. To what extent can Europe help in overcoming this crisis?

Those people in the Tunisian interior who set the revolution in motion are particularly intent on improving their social conditions and job prospects, but they are also keen to see greater decentralisation and infrastructure improvements. However, many civil society actors and intellectuals who played a major role in the success of the revolution are hoping that Europe will help them to achieve their goals: freedom of opinion and the press, respect for human rights, social partnership and the separation of religion and state. In contrast, Islamic actors such as the Ennahda Party are hoping to gain political recognition and equal treatment, along with economic cooperation and transfers of methodology and technology.

Transnational cultural relations are affected by a range of dynamics and phenomena, including increased global mobility and an ever-faster pace of life. In this fast-changing transnational context, relations between Europe and the Maghreb/Mashriq (countries to the east of Egypt and the Levant) present an anomaly, and not just because of their historic constellations.

They are also unique in terms of their simultaneous sense of closeness and distance. While networking and interaction has increased in the cultural, personal and educational areas, European migration and security policy is still governed by a Fortress

Europe attitude that lays down clear boundaries in the Mediterranean region. This also reveals the contradictory nature of European external policy. On the one hand it flies the flag for the values and ideals of freedom, the rule of law, respect for human rights and solidarity. But then it goes on to pursue its own, largely economic, interests in terms of its policies on trade, security and immigration, thus simultaneously contradicting its own values. This contradiction also means that, in the eyes of its southern neighbours, the EU often lacks credibility as a global player. However, the EU is also becoming increasingly aware of the cultural dimension of its external policies as it continues its work on integration and institutionalisation.

The cultural activities of EU Delegations in third countries (such as literature and film festivals, art and photography exhibitions) supplement the activities of the cultural institutes of the individual EU Member States. This inevitably results in duplication and overlap, but it also leads to greater cooperation between these cultural institutes and the EU Delegations. In parallel with the Europeanisation of foreign cultural policy, the EU Member States have their own distinct approaches to foreign cultural policy. These have grown out of complex historical processes and led to minority bilateral relations.

#### *Post-sovereign politics*

With its cultural activities, the EU is pursuing a kind of post-sovereign politics that

lies somewhere between the global and the nation state. The idea of not simply acting as the mediator of a 'cultural nation' but in a broader sense acting as the mediator of a European culture (even if it is artificially constructed, or even "imagined" to quote US political scientist Benedict Anderson) is not only echoed by the EU's representation of-fices but also by the local cultural representatives of the individual EU Member States.

The EU's cultural activities bring a broader European dimension to the table and enrich transnational cultural relations. In this respect it is generally less about the export of European culture and values and more about strengthening and promoting local and regional cultural sectors and industries (for example, promoting the regional integration of the film industry or setting up a North African authors' network). It also revolves around bilateral and multilateral joint projects in the cultural and civil society sector.

These kinds of projects contribute to the deeper and more permanent integration of the Mediterranean region as a bridge between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. In the near future there is no likelihood of the EU Delegations replacing national cultural institutes such as the Goethe Institut, Institut Francais, Instituto Cervantes and the British Council, but they will create an additional European context and framework that will allow the diverse cultural activities of other cultural operators to develop, compete and cooperate.

Transnational mobility affects the cul-

"In the eyes of its southern neighbours, the EU often lacks credibility as a global player."

tural sector, which of course requires individual freedom of movement for cultural operators within the Mediterranean region (on the South-North axis, and between the Maghreb and Mashriq countries), but it also has an impact on education systems. However, the transnationalisation of education systems does not necessarily mean homogenisation. Instead, it should provide greater transparency and flexibility between systems, to the benefit of all involved.

Europe's external cultural and educational policy cannot reform or finance the education systems of the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). This is the task of the various national governments. But it can make a contribution to developing civil society, promoting its issues and to encouraging exchange and intercultural collaboration between the civil societies of Europe and the Southern Mediterranean.

#### *Inadequate involvement of civil societies*

For years there have been warnings about the inadequate involvement of civil societies in multilateral intergovernmental cooperation at Euro-Mediterranean level – whether as part of the Barcelona Process established in 1995 or within the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) which replaced it in 2008. The fact that external cultural and educational work is an inherent part of building trust and partnership seems not to have permeated through to certain EU

decision-makers. However, since the beginning of the Arab Spring, the significance of civil society and cultural cooperation in a Euro-Mediterranean context has certainly increased. But the Arab Spring has also shown how institutional political cooperation is lagging far behind social realities. At the same time, many European intermediary organisations, foundations, cultural organisations, cultural institutes, networks and associations have for many years enjoyed close ties to the civil societies of the Southern Mediterranean. It should be the goal of European external policy to intensify, consolidate and enhance these cultural, academic and personal contacts.

#### *Rigid hierarchies*

When considering the deep-rooted causes of the high rates of unemployment among young people and academics in the Arab Spring countries, one of the main factors is inevitably their current education systems. There is no doubt that universities in North Africa are often outdated and hampered by rigid hierarchies, old-fashioned teaching methods and too little encouragement of innovation, originality, independence and critical thinking.

Research is also behind the times in certain fields. This is partly due to the difficulty of accessing international sources or because English language skills have not yet been adequately developed. This certainly applies to some – though not every – area.

In some disciplines, subjects and institutes, students and teaching staff are as up to date with the latest research as many European universities. But for the majority of students – often irrespective of the quality of their education – once they have qualified there are no or very few career prospects. A large proportion of study courses and vocational training is inadequately adapted to suit the needs and challenges of national and international labour markets.

#### *Need for long-term programmes*

If changes in the education sector are to have a lasting impact, they must be backed up by long-term support. It is essential to invest in long-term programmes rather than in initiatives that only last one or two years. Increased funding is essential, either as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or within bilateral funding programmes run by EU Member States. A more balanced distribution of funds between European and North African actors, institutions and organisations could contribute to more permanent change. Europe could help civil society organisations and associations to organise themselves, share methodology and contribute to promoting regional development and decentralisation.

Existing education and exchange programmes are important and should be intensified and expanded. The slogan of the German Academic Exchange Service, ‘Change through Exchange’, is still very relevant. At

the same time, many young academics are not necessarily particularly keen on moving to Europe or elsewhere in the world. Instead, they dream of getting a suitable, decently-paid job with prospects that allows them to start a family or live independently on their own terms. European educational policy can help to align all forms of professional training and integration more closely with the needs of businesses and the labour markets of the future.

One thing is clear: the structural asymmetry of relations between Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean is also reflected in their cultural relations. In order to achieve the overriding aim of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on cultural and educational policy, it is necessary to encourage cultural rapprochement, free circulation and the mobility of ideas, values, cultural operators/individuals and products in the Mediterranean region.

But there are a great many obstacles to be overcome. National and independent cultural operators from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries have a comparatively low presence and levels of engagement in Euro-Mediterranean joint structures and programmes. In addition, many independent cultural operators tend to be Euro-sceptics and often reject the idea of an official common European cultural policy.

Along with this, there is a lack of political will on the part of EU Member States to transfer their cultural responsibilities to the EU. However, some of the EU Member States still make use of the EU system by appropriating EU funding and structures in order to pursue their national foreign cultural policies. But if the EU is increasingly to become a global player and have greater foreign policy powers, then it needs to pay more attention to the cultural dimension of its foreign pol-

icy decisions and actions around the world. Cultural and educational programmes can increasingly be considered as instruments of development and conflict prevention.

It has been difficult to measure the results of previous European external cultural and educational policies, but over recent years – and particularly as a result of the Arab Spring – formal and informal transnational networks have sprung up around the Mediterranean in the areas of culture and education, while existing networks have been strengthened or expanded. Cultural operators and academics have appropriated the existing cooperation frameworks and the Mediterranean has developed its own particular dynamic as a cultural reference point or bridge.

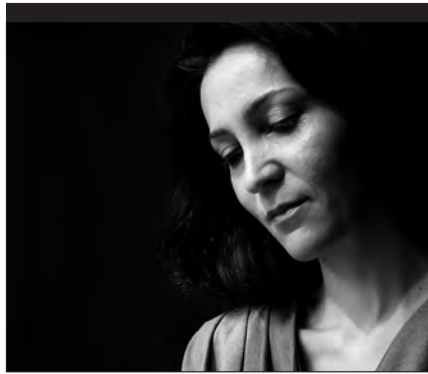
These actors define common interests, such as maintaining the material and immaterial cultural heritage, protecting diverse film cultures, promoting academic independence, permanent education opportunities and improved working conditions and mobility for cultural workers and academics in the Mediterranean region. It is vital to maintain, encourage and develop this trend.

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**Seeds of rapprochement** Outside of Iran, very few people are aware that every Friday sees the opening of new exhibitions in Tehran's galleries and that the city is home to a young and dynamic arts scene. It is also worth noting how many women play an active and influential part in this scene. Where Iran is concerned, culture is one of the most important – and indeed one of the few remaining – ways in which international relations can begin to germinate. *By Azita Ebadi*



For centuries, East and West have influenced each other in terms of culture, art and science, and this mutual fascination has not diminished with the passing years. Nowadays, the major element of this exchange takes place in the media, which have a significant role to play. The media not only provide information but also often construct their own images, which can have a strong influence on our perceptions. Unfortunately, media reports can also be misused for the purposes of propaganda. Dubious political self-interest is often at play and de-

liberately produces a distorted picture. The West perceives the Middle East as the home of fundamentalism, while the Middle East perceives the West as a place of moral decay. But just as Eastern culture and Islam cannot simply be equated with Islamic extremism, the values and norms of Western Christian culture can in turn not be considered synonymous with colonialism and imperialism.

Instead of focusing on what the two cultures have in common, these kinds of images are rooted in the fear and intolerance of certain groups and simply serve to intensify feelings of distance and alienation. This attempt to isolate oneself from other cultures for fear of losing one's own identity encourages a dualistic view of East versus West and vice versa. This jeopardises the cultural exchange that is so necessary for continuing to develop and sustain civilisation. This is where European external cultural and educational policy can step in to encourage exchange and act as an intermediary for dialogue between cultures. The focus should be on intellectual exchange as a means of opening up new perspectives.

The sole goal should be cultural exchange based on mutual respect, far removed from any kind of evaluation or judgement. In today's climate it is essential to widen our horizons, and EUNIC, the European network of national institutes for culture, can play a vital and pioneering role in this respect.

## Middle East

Messages from around the world

Of course culture is not a panacea, but under certain circumstances it can be a way of restoring lost trust and strengthening ties. As an ambassador for peace and tolerance, culture can create a new impetus for international relations. In turn, this positive progress can support joint projects in economic, environmental, political and social spheres and even help to redefine them. Where Iran is concerned, culture is one of the most important – and indeed one of the few remaining – ways in which international relations can begin to germinate.

Not infrequently, lack of information and poor communication are the reason why joint cultural projects fail to materialise. Outside of Iran, very few people are aware that every Friday sees the opening of new exhibitions in Tehran's galleries and that the city is home to a young and dynamic arts scene. It is also worth noting how many women play an active and very influential part in this scene.

### *Demand for Iranian art and culture*

After the Revolution, the number of female gallery owners, university lecturers, students and artists sky-rocketed and in many areas they now actually outnumber their male colleagues. General interest in the arts has also grown steadily despite lack of funding from the Iranian government and foreign institutions. As a result, the country possesses huge potential in the arts.

For many years now, Iranian artists have

had to work under very difficult conditions. Their works are proof positive of their courageous spirit as they document the way they perceive and interact with their surroundings. In the heart of a region where for decades now peace has been nothing more than a pipe dream, art and culture play a role that goes well beyond issues of beauty and creativity. These works bear witness to a culture that is trying to protect and safeguard its identity.

Iranian art and culture is also in demand around the world, but unfortunately it has never received the national and international support that it needs. Since the 1990s, Iranian films have gained recognition for their unique style and the annual Tehran theatre festival never fails to surprise the international theatre scene with its powerful plays. Even contemporary art has slowly but surely managed to establish itself, despite all the inherent difficulties, and over recent years it has been represented at art fairs, biennales and international exhibitions.

More and more Iranian collectors are investing in art, and the national art market has recently even managed to turn a profit. However, over recent months the Tehran art scene has been struggling under the burden of stricter sanctions, along with the precipitous devaluation and collapse of the Iranian currency. These have had a major effect on all areas of daily life, with the result that artistic production, activity and even the transportation of art has become more difficult than ever before.

European values are unique and can ser-

ve as a valuable inspiration to other nations. Rampant anti-Americanism has also opened up major opportunities for Europe to take on the role of intermediary and honest broker in the Middle East, but so far these have not been fully exploited. The old continent is still trying to find its direction in this respect, with the result that to date it has failed to make any significant contribution to stability in the region.

The tightening of sanctions has also not helped, as they cause severe problems for the Iranian people and give them yet more reasons to distrust the West. Despite all this, the younger generation in particular has not given up all hope of creating a partnership with the West. There are still considerable economic interests on both sides and these will sooner or later pave the way for an end to Iran's isolation.

There is no doubt that Europe is facing both a major challenge and a dilemma when it comes to its cultural policy towards Iran. On the one hand, Europeans are keen to maintain ties with Iran because of its critical geopolitical situation. But conversely they are also bound to listen to their partners, the USA and Israel.

In the past, Europe and Iran have not managed to treat cultural issues as being distinct from politics, even though this distinction is vital. I believe we can try to build rapprochement and bilateral relations based on cultural projects and commonalities. The current situation has been exacerbated by Iran's complicated domestic situation. Over recent years it has done great damage to the

country's culture and blocked its cultural interactions with the rest of the world.

### *Sole focus on language teaching*

As a result, the activities of the various foreign cultural institutes have been reduced to focusing solely on language teaching. This is partly because their activities have been curtailed by the Iranian government and partly because the institutes decided to put their cultural programmes on ice rather than seek out new opportunities for cultural exchange. This has been perceived by the Iranian arts scene as a lack of interest in their region's art and has led to the strength and intensity of existing ties being diminished.

The only active cultural institute in Tehran is the Austrian Kulturforum, which regularly offers cultural programmes and artist residencies. Very occasionally, the embassies organise one-off events, but these tend to have little effect, as it is difficult to impart culture in the space of a single evening. In order to make up lost ground, long-term projects are required with a focus on intercultural collaboration.

Iran also needs the EU to help it free itself from its isolation and from the embargo that has been in place for so many years. Each

“This attempt to isolate oneself from other cultures for fear of losing one's own identity encourages a dualistic view of East versus West and vice versa. This jeopardises the cultural exchange that is so necessary for continuing to develop and sustain civilisation.”

“It is time for an independent, internationally-active organisation to devote itself solely to culture and the arts, without any kind of baggage and restrictions, and with the involvement of all nations and cultures. Art is a global, universal language, so a zone needs to be established at international level in which the rules of individual countries are also respected. This should go beyond borders and pursue a common goal of Support, Sustain, Expand, in order to create a future without cultural barriers that will ensure a maximum of cultural exchange.”

*Shahnaz Zehtab, artist, department head at Tehran University of Art and co-founder of the artists' group 30+.*

side has its own set of conditions but these remain unacceptable to the other party. It is difficult to find common ground in light of historical events and the burning issues that beset the region.

### *Clarity and transparency*

When working together on cultural projects, misunderstandings can be dealt with through clarity and transparency. But it should be noted that this can only be achieved by involving local cultural workers, because it is they, and only they, who have the knowledge

that is needed to understand the opportunities and realities of the situation. In this way they can suggest appropriate formats and projects as required and weigh up their feasibility.

Funding for the arts and culture is vitally needed and the Iranian arts scene views cultural relations with the West as essential. Culture and cultural trends cannot be kept at bay or kept in isolation. They influence each other and this is the only way that young artists can flourish.

Wherever possible, assistance from international cultural institutes should be negotiated directly with galleries and artists. Reducing bureaucracy and focusing on individual project ideas opens up greater room for manoeuvre.

It is also essential to create an international meeting place for Iranian artists. This could be an artist residency in Iran or a neighbouring country, though this would first require the relaxation of existing visa restrictions.

It would also make a major contribution to enhancing cooperation if institutes were to promote workshops and lectures in Iran. If these were organised in conjunction with universities, they could reach a broad audience and also offer other opportunities in the realms of research and academia.

### *A kind of cultural immunity*

EUNIC – the European network of national cultural institutes – has a vital role to play in this respect. EUNIC has the advan-

tage of being a European association that has a kind of cultural immunity in Iran thanks to a transnational structure that goes beyond individual national interests. This lays the foundation for other cultural initiatives, but these also require the right conditions to flourish. In practice, out-dated methods need to be replaced by new flexible strategies that must be developed in conjunction with local cultural workers.

In December 2012, EUNIC in Tehran created a cluster that could prove to be a promising starting point for improved cultural relations between Iran and the EU. If this excellent new initiative is to make progress, more strategies need to be developed and programmes encouraged that will make long-term contributions to culture and contemporary art.

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Transcending the role of victim Palestine has an urgent need for visionary cultural policies that help to establish connections between the diverse Palestinian cultural identities in exile, in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank, instead of simply preserving the Palestinians' ongoing political and geographical fragmentation. Culture should be a platform for imagining possibilities and directions for the future rather than perpetuating the role of the whining victim. What can Europe do to help? *By Yazid Anani*



cultural production in Palestine, as though Palestine only came into existence after these grants began to be allocated in 1996.

After almost two decades of cultural aid and recent cuts as a result of the global financial crisis, a great many cultural institutions in Palestine are desperate for any types of cultural grants, whether or not the theme fits in with their vision and capacity. These institutions are locked in a battle for survival that pushes them to constantly shift their goals and make lop-sided attempts to adapt to the conditions and themes of available grants and justify their eligibility to receive them. Most of these institutions are in extreme debt and survive day-to-day by writing applications for small grants. Cultural institutions in Palestine survive mainly thanks to cultural grants from international donors and they sometimes apply for grants and funds designated for other disciplines (such as the environment, human rights, gender issues and education). As a result, they have to adapt their institutional objectives in order to obtain the money they need to survive.

Nowadays it is rare to stumble upon any cultural projects in the West Bank and Gaza that have established themselves beyond simply conforming to the donors' ever-shifting choice of themes linked to the allocation of funding. The ongoing discourse adopted by Palestinian cultural institutions is geared towards the rhetoric of building a future democratic and sovereign Palestinian state in conformity with foreign cultural aid policies. However, this latest cultural direction is reinventing the history of

This has drastically affected cultural production in Palestine and has transformed it into a process of survival rather than a means of nurturing and cultivating a better society.

### *A yearning for universalism*

Another alarming factor in the Palestinian cultural realm is the lack of published critiques and public discourse on culture. Most of the discussion takes place on the international stage through conferences and journals, without a local discourse that establishes links between public and cultural life. If we take the visual arts as an example, there is currently a yearning for universalism. This marks a massive historical shift in the practice of visual arts over the last two decades.

The resistance art of the 1980s was rooted in the society and political ideology of that time. Now it has mutated into contemporary forms that tackle subjects reflecting the sense of fetish and exoticism of the Palestinian political struggle. These very popular forms, which are popular among younger artists, are widely exhibited at international art fairs, museums and galleries. Nonetheless, contemporary Palestinian visual art has developed an international language that is often incapable of conversing with the locals. Instead, it is structured grammatically to communicate with the global arts industry and the miniscule local intellectual strata that are part of the same global networks.

### *The Arab world as an elitist dissertation*

One of the main issues affecting culture in the Arab world in general and Palestine in particular is that it has become an elitist dissertation connected to the global but detached from the local. The leftist monopoly on the management of culture in the Arab world does not concern itself with understanding the alarming societal divide and the proliferation of extremism and sectarianism. It becomes even more problematic when we realise that in many cases this leftist monopoly consistently denies any cultural form of communication with the right with a view to creating forms of dialogue and understanding. Therefore, cultural production sometimes becomes very confined to smaller circles of society, apart from mere 'entertainment' activities, which tend to focus on mass audiences without tackling social or political issues.

Culture, as in the cultivation and nurturing of a person or a society, is a process that allows time, transformation, learning and exchange to happen and that eventually should enable institutions to focus on producing narratives that involve a more critical reading of the societal predicaments resulting from the process of political transformation. Furthermore, responsible cultural production is a process of researching history as a resource for understanding the present and imagining the future, rather than the current neoliberal discourse of tabula rasa and reinventing history.

There is an urgent need for visionary cultural policies that pave the way for establishing connections and linkages between the diverse Palestinian cultural identities in exile, in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank instead of simply preserving the Palestinians' ongoing political and geographical fragmentation. Finally, it is vital to use culture as a platform for imagining possibilities and directions for the future rather than perpetuating the role of the whining victim.

There is a need for a serious re-evaluation of the whole policy of cultural aid to Palestine. The following are some personal insights on how to shift cultural aid towards more creative and critical cultural production. These propositions are based on my particular experiences and involvement in the cultural field in Palestine and do not necessarily express the standpoints of the majority of Palestinian cultural producers.

One of the most important steps towards reform is to break away from funded projects that are limited to a certain age group or social group. If culture is a process that aims at cultivating a better societal wellbeing, then perhaps the term 'audience' should be replaced by its plural, audiences. The activities involved in each funded and supported project should be planned to target several social groups but not necessarily be combined

in one activity. By targeting audiences, the different stages of each project can generate discourse and bring the project to a wider spectrum of people.

### *Dialogue between generations*

Cultural aid has been disrupting the intergenerational ties between people working in the cultural field. It is vital to use project activities to generate a dialogue between generations in order to involve history as a way of understanding the present and constructing a better future. Another advantage of addressing audiences is the opportunity to generate a multiplicity of narratives and in particular a synthesis of popular and expert (scientific) narratives. This combination reveals discrepancies and contention between the lived and the hypothetical; the superstitious and the normative; the immediate needs and the possible potentials of other needs; the perceived and the imagined and so on. Such a step towards a change in cultural aid policy bridges the widening gap between the cultural elite and popular culture. Moreover, it is crucial to use cultural projects to create a foundation of dialogue and network-building between Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and those living in Israel in exile and as refugees.

Another important step towards a genuine shift in cultural aid policy is the urgent need to restructure the processes and methodologies of project production. The current

"There have been an abundance of cultural projects that have yielded events, exhibits, objects, publications and films that were strongly criticised by the public and local cultural producers but fêted by the donors."

interest of donors in supporting Palestinian culture focuses on 'product' as the sole justification for funding. There have been an abundance of cultural projects that have yielded events, exhibits, objects, publications and films that were strongly criticised by the public and local cultural producers but fêted by the donors.

### *Guaranteeing quality assurance*

Little is done by donors to guarantee quality assurance in the cultural field. Most of the evaluation process focuses on technical reporting – ensuring deliverables are met and project components completed. Below are listed some suggested methodological requirements that could be demanded by donors to in order to guarantee the quality of funded cultural projects.

- Ensure that a research phase is included within the structuring of the project where archival and qualitative research methodologies are used to create research material, which is then disseminated in the form of film, publication, papers or other means. This step is essential due to the fact that so many recent cultural practices have been reinventing history rather than researching what has been done and building upon it.
- Ensure that the project activities take place outside the institution itself and
- Education is the key to building and cultivating future generations. Most of the cultural projects that target education are confined to schools and curricula. It is important to think of education as a vital component of all cultural projects. All grants should focus on working with schools and university students, regardless of the institution that applies for the funding. Cooperation with schools and university students involves young people in cultural programmes in an educational and engaging manner. Instead of going into schools, it is a case of bringing schools to the diverse cultural spaces

target public space and/or are hosted by other institutions. It is important to encourage other forms of learning outside the confinement of institutions and buildings. For example, walking is a very healthy and dialectical method of learning about the city, its inhabitants, geography, nature, history, heritage, architecture and other contemporary issues. Participatory art is another example where artists, dancers, musicians and actors work together with people to produce their work. This is essential for bringing culture into daily life so that it can begin to lose its elitist image. Street festivals, parades, public interventions, cooking as a means of social gathering and so many other forms of public cultural activities are vital to the reinvention of cultural production in Palestine.

“A major component that is lacking in the Palestinian cultural infrastructure is cultural criticism and publications.”

in Palestine. Creative forms of activities such as walks, parades, talks and cooking should not be considered as an end in themselves but rather as subordinate activities that bring together knowledge in a grounded way en route to the final activity.

As in the domain of cultural exchange, the idea of exchange should be based on learning and networking rather than on production. One of the problems when international artists come to Palestine as part of exchange programmes is that projects are often based on 'political tourism' experiences that bear no relation to the real socio-political conditions. Within the space of a month, these artists produce objects for an exhibition, which then become reference points for Palestinian art in the international art market. And unfortunately in some cases this serves as a guide for funding policies.

### *A discourse that goes beyond political ideology*

Therefore, the production of knowledge through culture should also create a discourse that goes beyond political ideology. It should be based on local knowledge rather than on regurgitating stereotypes and superficial understanding. One of the main aims of cultural projects should be excavating the kind of marginalised knowledge that contributes to the development of society. Know-

ledge production should not be confined to describing crises and listing facts, but should use history as a lens for understanding the present and imagining the future.

It is also very valuable to take an interdisciplinary approach towards researching and examining this theme. For example, architecture could be viewed through a botanical or an astrological lens, while environmental issues could be investigated through animation or other kinds of film.

It is crucial to bring together different generations of cultural producers to work on the same projects. This helps to establish stronger cooperative networks between cultural institutions, provides a vital exchange of experiences and bridges the gap between generations.

### *The need for cultural criticism*

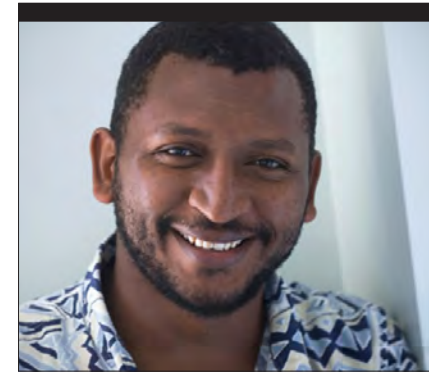
A major component that is lacking in the Palestinian cultural infrastructure is cultural criticism and publications. While most of the institutions are immersed in producing events, exhibits and other cultural products, there is very little written about these projects compared to similar productions in the region or around the globe. Cultural criticism should be published in a quarterly journal with a view to documenting the abundance of projects that are underway in Palestine and providing a critical analysis of these projects in light of local and global socio-political conditions.

Most cultural projects are focused on urban areas and in particular major urban centres such as Ramallah and Bethlehem, while only a few target outlying areas and villages. This is not to say that funds should only be granted to peripheral cultural institutions; on the contrary, the location of the project is the issue in question and not the institution that carries out the project. The selection of institutions should be based on merit rather than on location.

At the end of the day, culture should enable the formation of ideas and options rather than being confined to simply describing reality.

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**Taking the pulse of the continent** The EU needs to re-think its strategy, as many African countries are learning to survive without Europe. This has been intensified by changes in global geopolitics, meaning that countries such as China, Japan and India are more than capable of holding their own. Europe has to overcome its ignorance of Africa, throw out the fictive construct of explorers and missionaries in the past and try to take the pulse of the continent. *By Peter Kimani*



The European mantra of Christianity, commerce and civilizing the Africans has largely been nullified as a self-serving fiction. Europe's cultural hegemony in Africa has been shown to be an imposition grounded in a fictive narrative about the continent's perceived backwardness – itself an affirmation of Europe's ignorance of Africa and Africans.

Hence the question: how can Europe re-engage with Africa in the 21st century on issues of mutual interest, from culture to education, and achieve a meaningful level of success without the baggage from the past?

The answer is both simple and complex. Europe has to relearn what Africa truly is, beyond the mythical 'out of Africa' rhetoric driven by explorers and missionaries and their latter-day successors, the international news correspondents, who have abrogated themselves the role of reporting and explaining Africa to the world.

As the continent is so firmly associated with the expression 'out of Africa', it might be helpful to lay it bare on order to demonstrate the route that Europe has to take in its re-education of Africa. To achieve this, a genealogy of this misleading expression is a first natural step.

Slavery and colonialism are two traumatic experiences that have defined Europe's understanding of Africa. More recently, Africa has had to grapple with neo-colonialism, a concept broadly defined as the regeneration of colonial networks. These allow Europe to continue to exploit its economic influence on Africa without setting foot on the continent.

Unsurprisingly, cultural relations between Europe and Africa have often been filtered through those historical lenses. Meanwhile, Africa continues to grapple with the legacy of those two devastating experiences, while attempting to unravel the question of what made it possible for the mass deportation of millions of men and women in chains, before colonialism was introduced to enslave many more in their own lands.

In the fall of 2007, I participated in a series of lectures organized by the University of Iowa's International Writing Programme. I was on a writing fellowship there together with two dozen other writers from all over the world. The title of my lecture, *Out of Africa*, fell under a structured theme: writing in an age of migration, exile and diaspora. In my lecture, I attempted to map out how Africa has been imagined and re-imagined through different lenses over the past century years. This ranged from European colonial aristocrats like Isak Dinesen (also known as Karen Blixen), who made a home in Kenya, to narratives from former slave-turned-abolitionist, Olaudah Equiano (who came from what is now Nigeria).

### *Africa through different lenses*

In the 1930s, being black was seen as a source of pride by Africa's European diaspora. The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s also exhorted black pride among African-Americans, invoking the dignity that had been taken away from blacks in Europe and North America by centuries of oppression and cultural subjugation.

The main aim of my analysis was to evaluate what Africa meant to those who had been displaced, either voluntarily or forcibly, as well as to those foreigners who had made a home on African soil. I can now admit that my analysis was fatally flawed because I was harking back to a dominant narrative in Western scholarship in which the continent's history is framed within the confines of the colonial

experience, when the continent was 'discovered' by European missionaries and explorers, the harbingers of colonialism. Even then, the origin of the expression 'out of Africa' was not Blixen's novel, and nor was the phrase a recent phenomenon.

It all started with the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who teases out the epideictic principle of rhetoric creating character and identity. Even more perplexing, rhetoricians argue that Aristotle's statement extolling the merits of men enslaving fellow men set the tone for what followed in Africa centuries later, while his 'out of Africa' rhetoric is selectively quoted to justify colonialism.

As Harvey M Feinberg and Joseph Solodow write in their essay *Out of Africa* (2002), the phrase was "a proverb that originated in Greece no later than the fourth century BC." But Feinberg and Solodow could not tell for sure who originated the phrase, as it has been variously attributed to Rabelais, Pliny, Aristotle and Herodotus.

They went on to explain that the phrase 'out of Africa' was a truncation of 'ex Africa semper aliquid novi' – always something new from Africa – a Latin expression popularized by Pliny the Elder, but attributed to Aristotle, who first used it in his book on natural history more than 2,300 years ago.

"When so used, the sentence inevitably stands on its own as a general statement about the continent", Feinberg and Solodow write. "It regularly signals a particular uniqueness in Africa." But that was not always the meaning. The first time that Aristotle used the phrase – as far as Feinberg and Solodow could confirm

– was in his *Historia Animalium*, in which he explained the distribution of animals and their differences from one place to another. Feinberg and Solodow quote Aristotle: "A certain proverb, (paroimia) is current that Libya has wild animals that always produce something new," adding that although Aristotle's work cannot be securely dated, it is estimated that he was active in the late second quarter of the fourth century BC and throughout the third quarter before his death in 322.

"Let us note that the very name of the continent is itself a major problem", contests V.Y Mudimbe in *The Idea of Africa*, in which he argues that the conception of Africa by Europeans is a fictive construct that prevents the world from fully accessing the continent's pre-colonialism and pre-slavery narratives, which would engender a fuller view of the continent and its people.

"The Greeks named it (Africa) Libya and used to call any black person an Aithops. The confusion begins with the Romans. They had a province in their empire known as Africa... with the European 'discovery' of the continent in the fifteenth century, the confusion becomes complete."

### *A persistent dichotomy*

In their book *The Africa That Never Was*, Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow reviewed four centuries of British writing about Africa

"Indigenous African populations along the Kenyan coast had functional democracies that were organized around a system of elders representing each village on a rotation basis."

and came to an astounding discovery. "An early and persistent dichotomy divides sub-Saharan Africans into noble savages and bestial savages". The rise of a racist ideology paved the way for "the slave trade, slavery and empire."

One of the early British travelers to Africa was John Lok, a ship's captain, who not only succeeded in making good profits from his excursions – he gloats about making ten times his investment on one voyage – but who also displays rhetorical verisimilitude by using expected conventional images to describe Africa as "a people of beastly living, without a God, law, religion or common wealth..."

If the colonial writers funneled Africa's history within the strictures of ignorance and prejudice, the rhetoric has been epideictic: texts produced by generations of Africans and the diaspora have tended to seek to provide the other view of Africa, usually by responding to the slander already in circulation in Western scholarship on the continent. This approach fails to excavate a basic truth: that the Africa in Western narratives is an invention, as Mudimbe elaborates in his ground-breaking study, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*.

As Cynthia Brantley demonstrates in her book *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya, 1800 – 1920*, indigenous African populations along the Kenyan coast had functional democracies that were organized around a system of elders representing each village on a rotation basis. British colonial agents mistook this for a power vacuum because there was no apparent figurehead.



The same might be argued about Somalia, which has existed without a central government for more than two decades. The only interlude of stability for that country was around 2006, when a loose coalition of local militias built around the institution of elders took charge under the Islamic Courts Union. This system was quashed by Western-backed forces and replaced by the Transitional Federal Government. Unsurprisingly, the prescriptive approach adopted by EU and other Western powers towards Africa, often delivered with a dose of heavy-handedness, have yielded little outcome, which is why Africa remains poor even after a disbursement of more than 400 billion dollars over the last 50 years.

It can be argued that EU and other foreign powers have the right to ask how their bilateral loans and grants are utilized by the Government of Kenya. But other constituencies, like the Kenyan diaspora, have since surpassed those contributions, and they hardly make a fuss about what they give to the country.

### *Migration, exile and diaspora*

The EU will have to devise more culture-sensitive approaches to ensure that continued surveillance of Kenya and other African societies does not expose them to the risk of being driven out of town – a threat that was recently made against some EU countries by Nairobi.

This happened when EU foreign missions openly campaigned against the election of the International Criminal Court suspect Uhu-

ru Kenyatta, which only served to galvanize support for Mr. Kenyatta, who was elected to office early last year, demonstrating the growing anti-colonial sentiment in Africa.

This is not an isolated case. EU diplomats routinely gang up to address Kenyans on every national issue. This is a reflection of sheer hubris, since one cannot countenance the very idea of African diplomats meeting in London, Paris or Bonn to dictate what Africans think is best for Europe.

The EU needs to rethink this strategy, as many African countries are learning to survive without Europe. This has been intensified by changes in global geopolitics, meaning that countries such as China, Japan and India are more than capable of holding their own, and by the discovery of natural resources such as oil and gas that could potentially transform African economies.

A more consultative approach by the EU could yield more dividends and bilateral support for Africa could be more attuned to local needs. A recent report by an NGO, Development Initiatives, confirmed that while East Africa received some 9 billion dollars from the United States in 2011, the biggest chunk was channeled into health. East Africans' priorities, however, were jobs, income and infrastructural development.

“The EU will have to devise more culture-sensitive approaches to ensure that continued surveillance of Kenya and other African societies does not expose them to the risk of being driven out of town – a threat that was recently made against some EU countries by Nairobi.”

Similarly, tendencies to link development aid to the promotion of social rights that may seem at variance with Africa's cultural values – such as abortion and gay rights – are only likely to widen the schism between Europe and Africa still further. It can even occasion the enhancement of penalties, such as in Uganda, whose parliament recently endorsed life imprisonment for homosexuals. This was no doubt a protest against what it views as a meddling Europe.

In order to foster cultural, educational and foreign exchange with Africa, Europe has to relearn Africa by discarding the mythical Africa invented through ‘out of Africa’ rhetoric, venturing into the continent and discovering what truly goes on there. Such cultural immersion will have to go beyond European diarists and travel journalists, and cannot be driven by a European news agenda that seeks to fortify misconceptions about the continent and its people. Instead, the aim should be to discover what drives Africans and what they really care about, as well as how they intend to unravel the challenges that beset them.

Once Europe is able to transcend its ignorance of Africa, it will not only find the pulse of the continent, but most probably find something of value to export back home.

The most succinct wisdom is no doubt to be found in the Swahili proverb “aibu ya maiti, aijua ni mwosha” (only the washer knows the defects of the corpse). For only Kenyans know what troubles them the most about their country. After all, it is the only country they have and even when things go wrong, as they sometimes do, they do not have the luxury of fleeing in jets, or being evacuated in armored vehicles. That remains the preserve of European expats in Africa.

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**A region in flux** With the re-drawing of centuries-old trading and communication routes, culture could present Europe with the opportunity to forge a new deal with Africa. The resource-rich continent is demanding more balanced relationships that are driven by sincere promises based on shared interests. *By Farai Mpfunya*



Japanese art collector Soichiro Fukutane when describing his philanthropic work on the Naoshima island art project: “You are doing something wrong if you decide things without considering nature, people and their history.”

By 2050, the population of the 54 countries that make up Africa will have exceeded the 1.5 billion mark. The majority of this population will be young and urban. Many African states are enjoying rates of economic growth that are currently unrivalled anywhere else in the world. A diverse and more educated African middle class understands that the continent can leverage its vast human and mineral resources through new kinds of partnerships with other continents, especially those with whom they do not share a past characterised by fear and exploitation. As centuries-old trading routes are being redrawn, culture could present Europe with the opportunity to forge a ‘New Deal’ with Africa. The resource-rich continent is now demanding more balanced relationships that are driven by sincere promises based on shared interests. Forging a new deal that is based on the paternalism of a bygone

Many African countries are changing in ways and at speeds that some of Europe is struggling to understand. In parts of Africa this has resulted in the perception that Europe risks remaining in the past while new global players are offering new and alternative possibilities for international cooperation. Efforts have certainly been made with initiatives such as the Investing in People programme, but much remains to be done to change African perceptions that certain quarters of Europe still retain remnants of control over Africa’s independence. To a great extent, Europe’s engagement with Africa over the last few centuries is extent viewed as having been driven by Europe in the service of Europe’s own interests. This kind of position is simply not sustainable. To quote the words of

## Africa

Messages from around the world

era is both undesirable and unsustainable.

There are perceptions in many African countries that old paternalistic traits still linger in certain corners of Europe and that they are manifested within some European cultural institutions that still have the mission of ‘civilizing inferior African cultures and values’. These perceptions emerged in discourse around last year’s media coverage of Brett Murray’s controversial art work, *The Spear*. The South African president was depicted with his genitals exposed. The work was part of an exhibition whose curatorial conception proffered the view that good values were being eroded by the new custodians of power in the post-colonial and independent South Africa.

Just like Europe, Africa is shaped by its unique history and culture. Its diverse peoples see the world around them and transmit it from one generation to the next through sophisticated knowledge systems, beliefs, aspirations, customs, morals, traditions and habits. Specifically, African philosophies such as Ubuntu in Southern and Sankofa in Western Africa, weave a connectedness between the individual and the whole in communities and society in relation to time and space, the living and the after-life. Africans tested their sense of humanity and still test the highest values of their cultural being through a diverse range of philosophies and artistic expressions. Underpinning the so-called African Renaissance is a revival of the narrative that the continent is culturally diverse; it has a deep philosophical grounding linking individuals to time and space.

“Many African states have rates of economic growth that are currently unrivalled anywhere else in the world.”

While Zimbabwe and Europe have for centuries forged complex ties linked to religion, language, culture, the arts and commerce, there are perceptions that some Europeans remain reluctant to acknowledge that Africans have the right to total political, economic, spiritual and cultural independence. This includes the right to make mistakes. Europe has made its share of mistakes in the past and continues to do so. In the end, they provide an opportunity to learn. African concerns are founded on the observance of the mainstreaming of extreme right-wing views into Europe’s politics and hence its foreign policy agenda.

### *The right to independence*

Europe’s intended cultural cooperation agenda with Africa is well articulated in policies based on the following strategic focus: “Over the years, culture has been an integral part of the EU policy framework in the area of human development, as enshrined in the European Consensus on Development. The Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World highlights the role of culture in building bridges across countries and regions as well as being an important instrument for sustainable development.”

European institutions working in Africa are justifiably treated with a ‘trust but verify’ attitude because of the belief that their missions often reflect the need to favourably position the continent in the new scramble for

Africa's vast resources. Culture as a vector of sustainable human development will need to be considered carefully in the new deal, with due regard for Africa's nature, people and history. The historic aim of 'civilising' Africa was obviously not an agenda for sustainable development.

### *Equitable new deals*

So what has changed? What are the new missionaries of development bringing to the table with their world views and models? Why are missions to use the arts as an instrument – such as those presented to Africa by powerful networks such as EUNIC – perceived as being a threat to sustainable development? The answers to these questions may lie in the growing need for equitable new deals with Africa.

It is useful to consider Zimbabwe's agrarian reform history over the last decade when exploring new approaches to Europe's engagement with Africa's nature, people and history.

The Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation that was founded during a period when multilateral relations between the government of Zimbabwe and the EU were suspended. The country was on the precipice of an unprecedented economic melt-down. It was also during this period that Sweden, through its Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), found ways of remaining connected to the people of Zimbabwe by funding the Culture Fund

and enabling it to become the most significant development enabler for Zimbabwean arts and culture.

The Culture Fund of Zimbabwe was born from the desire of internal stakeholders to have the right of self-determination in the development of the country's cultural ecosystem. The Fund borrowed institutional best practices from Tanzanian experiences, where actors in the sector had recognised that northern European architects may not be able to design and build houses in Africa without an understanding of the nature, people and history of Africans. A new model for funding the cultural ecology was born based on imbued values. A hybrid of Europe's centralised and subsidised approach versus America's decentralised and tax-exemption incentives approach would be developed to suit local needs.

### *A new model for funding*

For nearly a decade, the Swedish government has entrusted all its development funds for culture in Zimbabwe to the Culture Fund. The Fund is administered by Zimbabweans and responds to local development needs and priorities. Programme governance is overseen by an independent board of trustees who chart strategies aligned to the development needs and priorities of Zimbabweans. Governance accountability is based on universally accepted norms, while external auditors and evaluators annually test organisational systems and processes for compliance. This model has set Sweden and Sida

apart among its community of European neighbours in Zimbabwe.

But the history of Zimbabwe-Sweden relations goes back much further than this. Sweden was supportive of Zimbabwe's liberation movement and recognised black Zimbabweans' right to self-determination at a time when others in Europe still felt it was premature. The Culture Fund's model of cooperation with Sweden has recently enabled a new two-year partnership with the European Union.

Indeed, the EU's external cultural relations with Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular are different in the various countries of Europe. Anglo-Zimbabwean relations are complex because of the colonial past and the cultural fulcrum of the white settler community. Because of their historic power base, the remaining small white community continues to wield a great deal of influence. Over the last decade, its continued existence in a new Zimbabwe has partly shaped British-Zimbabwean relations and in turn Zimbabwe's relations with Europe itself.

### *A real opportunity for engagement*

While Britain is seen as the EU country that is chiefly responsible for the political impasse between Zimbabwe and Europe, a

“Sweden was supportive of Zimbabwe's liberation movement and recognised black Zimbabweans' right to self-determination at a time when others in Europe still felt it was premature.”

real opportunity exists for re-engagement. For example, this could be buttressed by exploiting the interpersonal ties that are a result of the hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans who migrated to the United Kingdom following the country's agrarian reforms over the last decade. These migrants to Britain have been integrated into Europe and will open new avenues for cultural exchange and diplomacy in the looming era of détente.

African expectations of European external cultural relations are also drawn from the need to enhance cooperation. The focus is now on newer development priorities such as climate change and renewable energies. In recent years, the European Union has channelled its development assistance to Zimbabwe into areas such as human rights, democracy and good governance. Zimbabweans have become a highly literate and discerning people who are seeking progressive engagement with a wide range of ideas from different parts of the world. While they have traditionally preferred engagement with the North, they are also working with the South and the East.

### *African interests*

To date, culture has not been afforded an important role as a lever for human and social development. This position will need to change. As the balance of global political and economic power shifts to the East over the next few decades, Africa will increasingly be redefining its notions of universally-ac-

cepted human rights, democracy and good governance. What and who best serves Africa's interests will be key.

The European External Cultural Relations: Expectations from Africa Conference held in Brussels in 2012 made an honest attempt to review the intent and focus of the EU's 'renewed development cooperation policy'.

A resurgent Africa demands to become an equal partner with the EU because it has the right to be regarded as one. It is well aware of the vastness and wealth of its human and natural resources. Younger Africans have a new narrative that is cognisant of history and heritage, while resolutely focusing on a more assertive and prosperous future.

**Farai Mfufunya** is Executive Director of the Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust.

**Hip-Hop Borderscapes** A shared passion for the same urban youth culture can help people to identify with each other, build networks and transcend borders. Hip-hop brings together youth and protest cultures from all over the world. Senegalese rap paints a less than positive picture of Europe, depicting it as a global power that claims to be defending human rights while in fact it is abusing the human rights of illegal immigrants and pursuing neo-colonial interests in Africa. *By Nannette Abrahams*



Another problem with the 'self' vs. 'otherness' is that it tends to overlook the criss-crossing elements of agency that develop in a context of what the Canadian cultural anthropologist Hilary Cunningham terms "gated globalism". This refers to the simultaneousness of re-bordering and globalisation processes. Political geographers Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr have used the term "borderscapes" as an analytical tool that emphasises the mobility and relational dimension of the border.

Certain cultural phenomena are also without borders. One of these is hip-hop, which has developed in different ways in different corners of the world. A kind of borderless youth culture which at the same time emphasises national and continental (pan-African) cultural identity is characteristic of the Senegalese hip-hop scene. US-based hip-hop culture circulated to Senegal during the late 1980s via older relatives who had migrated to Europe or the United States. What began as an imported cultural product gradually became 'glocalised' and turned into a very specific Senegalese linguistic, normative and cultural form of expression. Hip-hop art is used as a

In Europe there have recently been a number of research projects that have examined how the continent as a whole is viewed from an external perspective. The aim of these is to create a European research area without borders and a means of transcending Eurocentrism in order to better understand how best to cooperate with other regions around the globe.

Cultural identity in the social sciences is no longer constructed as a fixed given but rather as something flexible, multiple and context-driven. Thus, when trying to use the analytical category of the 'external' it is important not to reinforce a primordial cultural notion of the 'Other' as a fixed entity, thereby neglecting the multiplicity and controversy that make up such heterogeneous categories as 'external perception'.

medium to critically reflect on urgencies affecting the everyday struggles of Senegalese people, such as recurrent floods, power cuts, illegal migration and youth unemployment.

But most of all, Senegal's rappers denounced the bad governance and nepotism of their political leaders. Hip-hop in Senegal is intrinsically tied to its political activism. This has been demonstrated by massive mobilisations of the country's young people which helped to bring about political change.

The first of these occurred in 2000 when Senegal's former president Abdoulaye Wade came to power, and the second during the regime change in 2012 when Wade was defeated by Macky Sall. Known as hip-hop Galsen (Senegal backwards in Verlan, a form of slang used by French youth), it developed within its own geography but is not disconnected from its European or American counterparts; rather it moves in translocal borderscapes. A shared passion for the same urban youth culture helps people to communicate, connect and exchange beyond certain barriers. This makes it a very interesting research perspective in terms of the European geopolitics of mobility and immobility and intercultural encounters.

### *African hip-hop youth and Europe's border regime*

One such example is the cultural activist organisation Africulturban. Africulturban was founded in 2006 by Matador, one of the

pioneers of Senegalese hip-hop, when he gave a solidarity concert for the victims of the floods affecting Dakar's banlieues (suburbs). Africulturban was built up on a full-time voluntary basis, primarily by young men living in precarious socio-economic conditions in marginalised urban spaces such as Dakar's biggest banlieue, Pikine, where the organisation is based. The members of Africulturban belong to the population segment that international migration experts have identified as those who opted to take fishing boats to the Canary Islands, a migration that peaked during 2005 and 2006. In 2006 the European border agency Frontex introduced new border practices in Senegal. The installation of a localised border regime for Senegal was embedded in bilateral agreements between Spain and Senegal with the technical support of various other European countries.

The introduction of the Global Approach to Migration that claims to manage migration for the benefit of all and to transcend a merely repressive and control-oriented agenda of migration policies by merging formerly separate policy fields such as migration, development and security is characteristic of the way European migration policies have been externalised as far away as Senegal.

Hip-hop youth belong to a group of people who are categorised as 'illegal' and targeted for development programmes focusing on youth employment as a means of combating 'illegal migration'. However, young people in the hip-hop movement widely believe that these supposedly productive actions for lin-

king migration to development and legal labour migration were tainted by the politics of nepotism.

### *Unequal relationships*

In the hip-hop milieu, Europe as a political entity (incorporating both the EU and its Member States) is perceived very critically, particularly with regard to so-called 'cooperation' between European and African states. According to perceptions within the hip-hop milieu, such 'partnerships' are founded on very unequal relationships. Europe is able to push its political and economic interests because of African leaders' lack of accountability towards their citizens. As a result, young people feel that such high-level political 'partnerships' are generally disadvantageous for the majority of the local population.

An example is the way a European border regime has been introduced to Senegal's coastal fishing towns, under the guise of it being a humanitarian necessity in order to save the lives of at-risk migrants. However, Greenpeace has provided evidence that it is contributing to overfishing and criminalising fisherman as traffickers. This perception of Europe as a global power that claims to defend human rights but actually violates the rights

"Hip-hop art is used as a medium to critically reflect on urgencies affecting the everyday struggles of Senegalese people, such as recurrent floods, power cuts, illegal migration and youth unemployment."

of illegal immigrants and pursues neo-colonial interests in Africa is a recurring theme in rap songs and in interviews with members of the hip-hop scene.

### *Alternative spaces of mobility*

In this context it is interesting to observe how Africulturban uses hip-hop culture to create alternative spaces of mobility for those categorised as 'illegal' by Europe's geopolitics of mobility and immobility. Their form of hip-hop activism enables alternative spaces of international exchange and encounter, primarily through their yearly hip-hop festival, Festa2H, but also through various other hip-hop projects. During the 10-day festival, European and American underground artists and cultural operators are invited to perform and participate in a range of hip-hop workshops. These international encounters are funded by various European cultural institutions such as the Goethe Institut, Alliance Française, and the British Council.

### *Hip-hop activism*

A shared passion for an urban youth culture is used to create spaces of international exchange which is enriching for both sides. The possibility for fairly unknown European artists to perform at a well-known African festival helps to promote their careers and authenticity and enables rare insights into the

everyday life of urban youth in Dakar that go beyond mere tourist encounters. At the same time, the participation of international artists helps underline the significance of Festa2H within its own geography. The skills of their guests and interns are used for different educational programmes that are can be accessed free of charge by the youth of the banlieue who rarely have opportunities for further education. Furthermore, networks built through such encounters often lead to other projects and joint productions in both Senegal and Europe. This enables members of Africulturban to travel to Europe legally, when otherwise they would probably have been denied a visa.

These encounters also provide a space for the kind of linguistic and intercultural input that today forms the backbone of key professional competences in a mobile and globalised working environment. However, they are rarely accessible to young people living in marginalised urban spaces in Africa and Europe. The example of Africulturban shows how important it is to support self-initiated intercultural projects in order to build bridges on both sides.

### *Structural inequalities*

The advantage of hip-hop mobility is that it allows alternative forms of South-North encounters, dialogues and partnerships. In contrast to political spheres, it is based on a

shared passion rather than political interests.

Obviously such encounters are not free from structural inequalities. It is much easier for European artists to come to Africa than vice-versa because they have greater access to the necessary funding and are more able to fulfil visa requirements. So if Europe wishes to strengthen its cultural external relations, it should also facilitate South-North mobility, especially for those young people who are trying to create change at home but who often fall under the category of the 'unwanted aliens'. South-North mobility is a necessary intercultural enrichment, not only for the travellers themselves but also for political education and cultural projects in Europe.

In 1997, British sociologist Ankie Hoogvelt remarked: "North and South, First World and Third World, are no longer 'out there' but nestled together within all the world's major cities." Despite the many differences, there are also many parallels between urban living conditions in the global North and South. This is particularly the case with regard to intercultural mobility, not only from South to North but also from North to South. European students or young people who are able to participate in intercultural or educational programs and travel from North to South generally belong to the academic elite, whereas young people who

"If Europe wishes to strengthen its cultural external relations, it should also facilitate South-North mobility, especially for those young people who are trying to create change at home but who often fall under the category of the 'unwanted aliens'."

grow up in marginalised (and often largely immigrant) urban spaces in Europe often lack access to such programmes.

### *Mutual exchange of expertise*

Networks such as EUNIC should play the role of facilitators, not only by providing project funding for local self-initiated cultural activist organisations from Africa and Europe but also by promoting networks. Organisations like EUNIC are ideally placed to network between high-level politics and more informal local organisations. It would be interesting to use the capacities of such networks to open spaces for the mutual exchange of expertise. The know-how of local organisations such as Africulturban is extremely valuable for the development of certain European programmes that target urban African youth or the cultural sector in general. At the same time, direct contact with the heads of European organisations that are active in this field can also provide useful information and contacts for local organisations as they build up cultural activist organisations in their vicinity.

There are many examples of how young people in Africa and, in another context, in Europe have demonstrated how they possess the creative potential to bring about socio-political change. There is no need to launch massive programmes to encourage creativity, rather it is a question of learning to use the

creativity that already exists and bringing together the players involved.

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**A partnership of equals** For many years, South Africa's cultural sector was cut off from international funding and collaboration. What opportunities are available today? Clearly, the expectations of both sides need to be formulated more precisely. When designing a project, it is essential to pay close attention to the aims of all the parties involved. What else is needed?

*By Georgina Thomson*



**H**ow are European external cultural relationships perceived in countries outside Europe? And what do countries outside of Europe expect of European external cultural relations? From a South African point of view, these are complex questions. Despite the fact that most people think we are better off than other African states in this region, it is not that simple. South Africans can access funding from institutions such as the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) and the National Arts Council, but the fact is, for professional arts practitioners it is an uncertain system that is something of a lucky dip.

Neither the National Arts Council nor the NLDTF (the main national funding organisations for arts and culture) have a clear concept of what the arts and culture actually

do. In South Africa, funding for the arts and culture is considered a luxury, and indeed, over the past ten years funding has been reduced and become more difficult to obtain. Funding organisations have a clear tendency to regard artists as 'part-timers' who have other full-time jobs. They sit in their ivory towers and make decisions that affect our lives and survival, but are not prepared to really find out what is happening on the ground. As it seems unlikely that this scenario will change in the near future, artists in South Africa need to have access to EU funding.

Unfortunately, the government in the new South Africa has not carried out the necessary research into the arts industry and in particular the professional arts sector. This lack of knowledge about the industry has resulted in an uncertain and complex funding system.

During apartheid, South Africans unconsciously got used to operating in isolation. All funding for arts and culture provided by the former South African government went to institutions they called Arts Councils. The capital city of Pretoria and the provincial capitals of Durban, Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Windhoek had fully-funded councils that



housed full-time ballet/dance companies, theatre companies, singers and orchestras, along with offices and performance spaces.

Other organisations that were set up outside of this infrastructure depended on private corporate sponsorship. When South Africa changed, arts funding also changed, but not always for the better.

### *Arts and Culture Task Group*

When South Africa's new constitution was being drawn up, the arts community ensured they became part of the process by creating ACTAG (Arts and Culture Task Group). This group compiled a white paper to ensure that the arts would play a part in the new South African constitution. The focus was to "realize the full potential of arts and culture in social and economic development, nurture creativity and innovation and promote the diverse heritage of our nation".

As members of the group that pushed forward the White Paper for Arts and Culture when the new South African government was appointed, we anticipated major changes and greater openness towards the arts and culture in South Africa. After carrying out research and closing or reorganising the old Arts Councils, in 1997 the government created the National Arts Council, which was launched to provide funding for all arts practitioners nationally. The bulk of this funding was taken from the money usually allocated to the old Arts Councils' production costs. This was done with a view to opening up opportunities

for practitioners to access funds and manage projects. However, the budgets they allocated for each art form were far from meeting the actual required funding for educational institutions and performing organisations. If they received anything, companies would only get a quarter of what they actually applied for. The launch of the National Lottery meant there was more money available, but the application process was very complicated.

For many years, South Africans were cut off from international funding and only began to have direct contact with European funders and/or partners around fifteen years ago. These relationships are still developing.

### *Fruitful relationships*

The Dance Forum's relationships with European countries began around 1996, when the Dance Umbrella was approached by Pro-Helvetia (the Swiss Arts Council) to include works from Switzerland in the Dance Umbrella festival. This opened the door for us to be able to present international dance works. Soon after this, we began working with the Institut Français and the Goethe-Institut. These relationships have proven to be very fruitful, despite the fact that our funding is limited and we can only cover costs incurred when the company is in South Africa.

Initially our EU partners expected to simply bring along a company to be part of Dance Umbrella without considering whether it had any connection to actual South African practitioners. I must admit we were so excited to be

able to present work from European countries that we were willing to work with anything and everything. But this was not a good idea, as it resulted in us missing out on many potential partnerships and collaborations.

It was also difficult to negotiate with the embassies about which companies could attend the festival, and initially they insisted on their own choices. The result was rather hit-and-miss, with some companies attracting audiences and others playing to half-empty houses.

After a few years, we realized that this was not working, so we created a new way of bringing in companies. As director of Dance Umbrella, I would view work on DVD or during a trip to Europe and then ask companies to take part which I knew would bring something new and different to South African dancers and audiences. Having been isolated for so long, South Africans still have little access to the kind of really innovative and interesting new work that is being presented in Europe. So my focus is to bring in companies from Europe (and even from some of Europe's former colonial states in Africa) to show their work.

### *The complexities of EU funding*

EU funding for arts and culture in South Africa is somewhat complex and an unknown entity if it not organised in partnership with an embassy. I discovered this when I travelled

to Brussels last year for an EU briefing on the call to apply for ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States) funding for South Africa/Africa. During the briefing session, I discovered that South Africa could indeed apply – but not for projects happening in South Africa. This was apparently because of some agreement made between the EU and the South African government. This of course once again limits us and makes it more difficult to create partnerships within Europe. Why would I want money for a project that does not take place in South Africa?

In addition, when we look at EU funding invitations, it is not easy to understand the process or even whether our project is eligible. We have made progress by obtaining a PADOR number (Potential Applicant Data Online Registration), we but have not yet made a direct application for funding. Unfortunately there is no contact in South Africa that we can meet with to discuss the process.

Dance Forum recently partnered with various organisations in Europe to apply for joint funding for South Africa in 2013/14, but to date all the proposals have been rejected by the EU. Here again, I felt that the organisations in Europe only wanted to work with us in order to be eligible for the funding. There was no real conversation about what both sides wanted and what we hoped to achieve with the partnership. This is a problem, because if we are to really create a fruitful partnership it is essential for the project to meet the expectations of everyone involved.

The Dance Forum expects to create a mutually agreeable partnership with our EU

“South Africans were cut off from international funding and only began to have direct contact with European funders and/or partners around fifteen years ago.”

funders. An important aspect of this is development – we are not keen to simply bring in companies who perform and then leave again. Rather than just watching the work, we would prefer a more long-term process that is to the benefit of both parties.

### *The importance of development*

Many EU countries still interact with African countries in a way that suggests they do not know how to work professionally. This often causes misunderstandings and can lead to the creation of partnerships that are not a partnership of equals.

Over the past ten years, we have formed a close relationship with the Institut Français and the Goethe Institut. This is mainly because both organisations have always been happy to talk to us about what we want to do and have involved us in the process that led to the presentation of the result. Other consuls differ and some have not been as easy to work with as France and Germany. Projects have included bringing companies to South Africa to perform and organising small conferences and workshops to look at creating a dance archive and writing for dance.

Apart from direct partnerships with embassies to bring companies to South Africa to perform, we also received funding from the EU in 2008 from the Pretoria-based organisation CWCI. We applied for three projects that were collaborations with German and French artists to create works in residency in South Africa with South African dan-

cers and choreographers. These premiered at Dance Umbrella 2009 on the occasion of the festival's 20th anniversary.

We collaborated with DIN A 13, a dance company from Dusseldorf, working with able-bodied and disabled dancers based in Cape Town to create a piece as part of a six-week residency programme. During a South African residency, Robyn Orlin created a new work which looked at miners and their traditions of dance, and Vincent Mantsoe created a work called Men-Jaro, also as part of a residency in Johannesburg. This was the first time that we received direct EU funding, and the outcomes were good as all the works toured in Europe after opening in South Africa.

The Crossings project of 2010 and 2011 was the second project to be mainly funded by Europe/EUNIC. This was a workshop for choreographers, musicians, composers, dancers, light designers and sound technicians to work under the supervision of their international colleagues. During a two-week period, the participants, who mainly came from Africa and Europe, shared the studios of the four institutions and faced the challenges and problems of choreographic and musical interpretation and creation. Crossings was funded by the Institut Français in conjunction with the National Arts Council in South Africa.

### *Making connections*

20 dancers were also made available to work with the teams. This was an amazing project which connected South African ar-

tists to other people from countries all over the world. It was quite special to watch the connections being made between the facilitators, participants and even the audiences who attended the process. The Dance Factory, the Dance Forum, Moving into Dance and Vuyani Dance Theatre, referred to as The Newtown Dance Corner, joined forces with the Institut Français to create an international residency for young choreographers, as proposed and described by French choreographer Michel Kelemenis.

The purpose of Crossings was to create connections between South African and international artists. At the end of the two-week collaboration they presented the outcome on the Dance Factory stage. The participants included dancers and choreographers from Nigeria, Mozambique, England, Switzerland, USA, Mauritius, Portugal, Italy, France, Israel and South Africa. However, this project remains unfinished because there has been no framework for people to remain in touch and develop their relationships further.

The most recent EU-funded project worked on by Dance Forum was *Danse l'Afrique danse!* which took place in Johannesburg in the autumn of 2012. Funded mainly by France and other European funding agencies and hosted by RSA, this project provided an interesting platform for new contemporary African choreographers and dancers. The *Danse l'Afrique Danse* festival is presented

every two years in an African country for African artists. The process includes inviting choreographers from Africa to send a DVD of a work they would like to present at the festival. The programme is curated by the Institut Français in Paris.

### *Some major problems*

South African artists were selected to be part of the programme, which was a ten-day celebration of contemporary African dance works. Having attended this event in Madagascar and France, I know that one of the main objectives is to create a meeting place for dance practitioners and give the hosting country an opportunity to discover their counterparts on the African continent. It was quite shocking to see how the South African sector showed not the slightest interest, apart from a few who had been invited to show their work. So the problem remains that people in this country feel isolated and do not believe it is necessary to create connections.

However, Dance Forum's biggest problem with this project was that we in South Africa were not really allowed at any stage to be the producers. From the programming to the actual progress of the event, we were given strict and non-negotiable instructions about what we had to do. As a result, some major problems arose during the event. On the other hand, the South African partners in this project offered only very limited support. From the outset, the levels of interest, enthusiasm and general back-up with regard to contracts, funding,

“We are not keen to simply bring in companies who perform and then leave again. Rather than just watching the work, we would prefer a more long-term process that is to the benefit of both parties.”



publicity and the general hosting of the event left much to be desired.

Looking back at this project and others we have carried out with EUNIC/EU partners, I feel the expectations of both sides should have been formulated much more clearly. When putting the project together, more attention should be paid to what both parties want to achieve with the project.

The Dance Forum is extremely keen to continue working with these organisations, as it is not good to work alone, cut off from the rest of the world. But we have to work with equal professionalism, have a clear understanding of what we want to achieve and ensure that this is possible for both parties.

**Georgina Thomson** is Director of the Dance Forum in Johannesburg and Artistic Director of the city's Dance Umbrella Festival.

The question mark that is democracy Globalisation has created a new context for democracy. But it is not only in the Arab world and China that the issue needs to be debated afresh. Europe finds itself in a state of confusion and the USA has taken a blow to its self-confidence. Here too, the question of democracy needs to be viewed with new eyes. Poet Yang Lian claims that responsibility for this reflection on peoples, culture, tradition and the purpose of history now lies with the individual.

*By Yang Lian*



The Chinese have plenty of money! This is now the constant cry, whether whispered quietly or shouted out loud to the world. How can this be? Just 20 years ago, China was a communist country that was widely afflicted by terrible poverty. We were used to seeing pictures of shabbily-dressed people with emaciated faces. Yet today hordes of Chinese shoppers throng the streets of Paris, London, New York and Venice, buying designer goods as if they were Chinese cabbage, stuffing their bags with Prada and Louis Vuitton, buying everything in an indiscriminate and seemingly haphazard fashion. Shopkeepers' faces light up as they rush to greet their new customers with bows, while the average person on the street wonders where they have all come from. How

has China created such a miracle, seemingly overnight?

The Chinese have plenty of money. Perhaps what is more surprising is the fact that Europeans seem to have less and less of it. We are constantly reading about the 'crisis' that has befallen the countries of the EU, along with North America, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong. The people of these once-rich capitalist countries are now complaining ever more frequently about the difficulties they face. Families are now being forced to make cut-backs. They are going without holidays and restaurant visits and swarming to the post-Christmas sales to snap up a bargain.

And then of course there are the national austerity programmes, which have had a particular impact on culture, the arts and publishing – all that these countries have prided themselves on in the past. There is no doubt that this is the worst financial crisis since the Second World War. As far as China is concerned, we find ourselves asking the question: what is going wrong here?

We can no longer cling onto the rigid equation formulated during the Cold War that stated capitalism equals democracy

equals prosperity, while communism equals dictatorship equals poverty. Clearly this no longer rings true. Material prosperity used to be an indicator of an advanced society and the benchmark of a democratic society. But in today's reality it is a Chinese dictatorship that has the say while the West sinks deeper into poverty.

In fact, the Chinese government holds billions of dollars worth of US shares, and Chinese companies and individuals are buying American farms, British car companies, French vineyards and Italian fashion houses. It is strange when I remember how I fled to New Zealand after the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. I lived in a tiny attic in an apartment block and survived on chicken soup. At that time we were in the final stages of the Cold War and the word 'exile' alone was proof enough that democracy equalled prosperity. In light of today's realities, we feel more compelled than ever to ask where the system is going wrong. Are we drawing the wrong conclusions?

### *Behind the nouveau riche facade*

However, when we look more closely behind China's nouveau riche facade, we see another face of China – a face that is not at all new. A few years ago the company Fushikang captured the headlines in China due to its scandalously low wages and the fact that thirteen of its workers jumped to their deaths. Since then, all tall company buildings have been fitted with safety nets, which have become known as 'anti-jump nets'. Is

this a typical example of the consequences of a communist dictatorship? Not really. The truth is much more shocking. Fushikang is owned by a Taiwanese investor (who is currently involved in another scandal, this time to do with 100 million yuan in bribes). The company supplies US firm Apple with parts for their iPhones, so it is a typical global company that produces Western consumer goods at maximum profit thanks to low Chinese wages.

Company bosses who have to respect their own countries' strict labour laws circumvent the issue by simply opening a factory in China. Here they find they are in paradise when it comes to labour conditions, with workers who have no unions, social security or healthcare and who earn extremely low wages. They are quite happy to leave behind the basic rules and concepts of democracy that they respect at home. They are also happy to forget about the human rights that have been so hard-won in Europe and the USA since the Enlightenment. They simply focus on making a profit from a social system that in itself represents a contradiction: achieving the highest possible profits under the protection of a communist power. We are not drawing the wrong conclusions, but we are basing them on the wrong assumptions. Today the global capitalist system rules the world hand-in-hand with global slave labour. There is no trace of 'democracy'. In China and elsewhere it has been drowned out by the sound of powerful men clinking their glasses.

Democracy is facing two serious problems, one intrinsic and one retrospective.

The intrinsic problem is that democracy does not automatically lead to equality and justice, but is based on a class system. This began in ancient times in Athens, when free people benefited from democracy while slaves were doomed to serve. People practised democracy within the polity but beyond its borders they were imperialists. Thucydides throws light on this in 'The Peloponnesian War'. The concentric circles of this paradigm have determined the theory and practice of Ancient Rome, the British Empire and the USA right up to the present day. Even Western welfare systems are based on this long history of inequality. The global colonialism of the Europeans, followed by American economic imperialism; the world supplied the West with raw materials and the West was its market place, its factory and the sole beneficiary of the profits. But the welfare system of Western states was based solely on this and only functioned as long as the formula of democracy equals prosperity continued to be valid. Along with globalisation came a second, home-made problem. Now cheap labour in other parts of the global village and the easing of restrictions on international trade began to contest the Western world's status as the world's main manufacturing location. The big capitalists are shifting their

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businesses away from the expensive West and exploiting the communist slave labour system. They are also managing to bring the fruits of their labour to the public at large.

### *Breaking down cultural walls*

The real reason why the West is suddenly poverty-stricken is the collapse of the established world order as a result of globalisation, the breakdown of the cultural walls by which democracy's inherent inequality is transferred to the world. Now a few influential people enjoy the benefits while poverty increases around the globe. *Quo vadis*, democracy? How should we handle the challenges that democracy is facing and, above all, how should we redefine democracy within our new modern context? Do we need to rethink our individual values and codes of conduct? Democracy remains an unresolved problem.

### *An absence of values*

The question mark that is democracy is also closely linked to the end of the Cold War. The differences between the two ideological blocs evaporated overnight. Whereas in the past there had seemingly been a choice between socialism and capitalism, now there were suddenly no longer any alternatives. The credo of profit has ousted all 'isms', and today political parties are businesses that distinguish themselves through the efficiency of their management. Our times have never

before been so lacking in political and social ideas. From South Africa to Armenia, the picture is the same: even before young people have finished their studies their lives are predetermined, perhaps even over. The fault lies in a total absence of values. What can a human life seek in the narrow channels of profit? We have no choice but to go with the flow and fit in with what is around us. We join the scramble for profit and grab whatever we can.

The widespread spiritual crisis is in fact much more brutal than the economic crisis. We have been turned into words, numbers, a herd. We can say what we like, but it is all meaningless. The tone is set by egoists and cynics. This is not even based on mature reflection, it is just how it is. Once we appropriate this attitude for ourselves we suddenly find that things do not seem so strange. This is exemplified in the way a country can lead its people into a war under the guise of fighting terror (UK) or indulge in large-scale spying on its allies (USA). Individuals such as the young, white, right-wing radical in Norway who reached for his weapons and simply went out to kill.

This has nothing to do with ideology but is purely a case of acting on instinct. How are these changes viewed by people outside the once-privileged Western world? If in democracies it is still a minority that makes decisions for the majority, then how do they differ from dictatorships? Why should we seek our dream of happiness in a place where a nightmare is raging? Is it worth it?

Hungary is a good example of how free elections have been directly dominated by

the desire for profit. It was once considered one of the most progressive countries in the eastern bloc. Now it has a democratically-elected, right-wing populist government that, apart from its parochial nationalism, also does not shy away from restricting freedom of speech.

This example is symptomatic of so-called democracies in which elected majorities are created based on the principle of making a quick profit but without any sense of obligation to the ideal of an open society. On the contrary, 'democracies' are created in which daily abuses of power can and do take place. In extreme cases, they are based on Mafia-type power structures.

### *Turning a nightmare into an opportunity*

So what is to be done? I believe this nightmare harbours an opportunity. For the first time, the big question mark that is hanging over democracy provides an opportunity for the whole of humankind to address this issue afresh. We are now in a position to rethink it and the whole world can get involved in the debate about what democracy really means and how we should turn it into reality.

This has become a burning issue in places where democracy has long been treated as an old friend – in Europe and the USA. Perhaps we will now finally realise that democracy is not finite but is something that has to constantly argued. It is not enough to reduce the idea of democracy to a game of majorities. We need to look back at its

underlying principles, which means being truly independent in our thoughts and actions. In short, we need to return to the ideas of the Enlightenment. This has to be the basic premise.

It may be possible to move forward without this, but it is very probable that we will then have to fear and tolerate people and their greed. We will have to accept that people simply follow their instincts and make these the basis for their decisions. It is vital that we return to the questioning mindset and will to make critical judgements that were typical of the Enlightenment, rather than becoming bogged down in hackneyed, ready-made political correctness or reverting to the worn-out slogans of the Cold War era. These may appear to be political but in reality they are purely commercial. They speak of politics but actually mean business. They claim to be opposing the communist government but in fact are all about protecting their own market. They create a mountain of slogans, a foam bath, a tidal wave that buries the truth of our situation.

I believe it is essential that we carry out this fundamental investigation into the meaning of democracy. If we are to do this, then right from the start we need to free ourselves from the shackles of the unequal distribution of global profit. We have to create a level playing field for every single person,

“What can a human life seek in the narrow channels of profit? We have no choice but to go with the flow and fit in with what is around us.

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regardless of their ethnicity, culture and language, which goes beyond the boundaries of East and West and leads us to finally understand who we really are. What is my place in this world? How can I enter into an equal dialogue, argument and competition with all the other 'Is' in the world? How can we all come together? By nurturing this 'I' we give wings to the whole of humanity.

In July 2013, during my last month at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, the Egyptian people and its army were squaring up to each other on the streets of Cairo. Every day, worrying reports were emerging from the conflict. As a result, the Wissenschaftskolleg invited three Arab and one Turkish academics to take part in a panel discussion. The two-hour event produced some very fierce and heated debate. The argument revolved around the question of who held the power in Egypt – the military with its 'Western' background or the masses on the street, backed up by Islamic fundamentalists.

The panel members fought each other almost as hard as the people in Egypt, while feelings among the audience became increasingly heated. I sat quietly and listened, but gradually I felt myself being overwhelmed by a doubt that I could not shake off. Of course I am concerned about the safety of my friends in the Middle East. But during the discussion I found myself asking why the four panel members were spending two hours arguing about who should hold power in Egypt but never said a word about the future of the country and the ideological principles that should provide the basis for its democracy. In other words, how can

a country that is rooted in ancient Islamic traditions use self-reflection to transform itself into a modern state?

### *The democracy of ignorance*

If this is not what it was all about, why was there so much fighting on the streets? How does 'democracy' gain if power is transferred from a military dictatorship to a religious dictatorship? How can this be deemed a successful transformation? I still remember Iran in 1979 when the celebrations at the fall of the Shah quickly descended into bitterness. Free elections failed to bring about any real change. Simply changing a state's name without changing its mentality and dictatorial structures is surely a case of going from the frying pan into the fire. What I am trying to say is that without the ideas of the Enlightenment, our battle for democracy may lead to a degree of liberation, but what use is this if we have no idea why we want this liberation? If no-one in today's Middle East is trying to find their own path to modernisation out of the depths of Islam, then the Arab world will no longer be following the Iranian example of the democracy of ignorance but may end up with something that could be more extreme and dangerous than the existing Arab dictatorships.

In the end I could not keep quiet any

longer and had to have my say. I talked about China's new cultural consciousness during the 1980s, shortly after the Cultural Revolution, in order to demonstrate what China's cultural modernisation in the 20th century was all about. I also spoke about the quest for the essence of Chinese thought in our modern society. And then I quoted the words of my friend, the great Arab poet Adonis: "I am against Islam". With these words, he sets himself against a religious autocracy that abuses its power. In so doing, he provides me with a living example of what a modern Arab culture could look like: a great man of letters, an individual, a person who dares to challenge himself.

Our expectations of a modern democracy lie with this kind of independent thinker, someone who is capable of forming their own opinions, a person who has awareness and self-awareness. Globalisation has created a new context for democracy, but it is not only in the Arab world and China that the issue needs to be debated afresh. The question of democracy must now be addressed again in a somewhat confused Europe and a USA that has taken a blow to its self-confidence. There may be confusion about global values, but this does not mean that there is no longer a values system. It means that individuals are faced with greater challenges, particularly that of reflecting on their own values. We should not blindly follow the clamouring

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masses but start to think and look critically at every problem before making up our own minds. The responsibility for this reflection on peoples, culture, tradition and the purpose of history now lies with the individual. This applies to every area, including business, politics, society and culture, language and aesthetics. Perhaps more than anyone, it is poets who have long been representative of these independent thinkers. And then the age of globalisation would be the age of poetry. It requires everyone to become poetic 'Others', people who do not allow themselves to be rejected by politics and business but who themselves reject every form of control and coercion. Returning to China once more, if we still want to talk about the positive benefits of the painful nightmare that was the Cultural Revolution, then we should focus on the reflection on China's history and the questioning of its culture that took place during the 1980s in the wake of this nightmare. This took China's epic transformation into a modern state to a totally new level.

I am convinced that the earth is moving deep down beneath the bizarre tsunami of China's economic success. It is shifting thanks to a new mentality. Democracy is an unresolved problem, China is an unresolved problem. We are all question marks. It is time to create question marks.

**Yang Lian** is a Chinese poet who currently resides in Berlin. In 2012 he was awarded the prestigious International Nonino literary prize. The son of diplomats, he was born in Switzerland in 1995 and grew up in Beijing. In 1979 he joined a group of poets who published the "Jintian" magazine. At the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre he was in New Zealand and took part in the protests against the actions of the Chinese government. Shortly afterwards his works were blacklisted in China and his Chinese citizenship was revoked.

**Listening to the World** In a fast-changing world, diplomacy also has to change. This includes classical and public diplomacy, and along with them cultural diplomacy. International actors need to know how to skilfully conduct monologues, dialogues and collaborations if they are to acquire an attractive image and a solid reputation. How is the EU's image faring in the increasingly important Asia-Pacific region? *By Natalia Chaban*



A popular definition of 'cultural diplomacy' suggests that this type of international relations is about "exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding", to quote the words of American political scientist Milton Cummings. Many scholars of public diplomacy (PD) believe cultural diplomacy is an essential ingredient, while others, such as US political scientist Harvey Feigenbaum disagree.

In this essay I am using the definition provided by Nicholas Cull of the University

of Southern California. This describes cultural diplomacy as "an international actor's attempt to advance the ends of policy by engaging with foreign publics" and an "actor's attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmissions abroad". According to this definition, cultural diplomacy is part of public diplomacy.

There is no doubt that theoretical models of public diplomacy can assist in gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of cultural diplomacy and suggest some concrete ways to ensure a more effective outreach to the recipients of the messages. In particular, scholars and practitioners of cultural diplomacy could consider and apply forms of public diplomacy. The American communication experts Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault attempted to standardise public diplomacy using the terms monologue, dialogue and collaboration. Monologue is in place to advocate foreign policy strategies and is defined as a set of "one-way communication forms and outlets that are inherently self-contained".

Despite certain limitations imposed by a

## Asia

Messages from around the world

one-way channeling of information, there remains "a critical time and place for well-considered monologic communications in public diplomacy" (Ibid: 13). Importantly for cultural diplomacy, cultural works such as movies, books, poetry and works of visual arts are part of the PD monologue. Ideally, a successful monologue should lead to fruitful engagement based on dialogue.

Dialogue is the key to "exchange of ideas and information" (Ibid: 12), and respectful dialogue – when the Other is listened to and heard – leads to better international relations. Dialogue in PD scholarship is seen to be "critical both as a symbolic gesture that emphasizes that reasonable people can find reasonable ways to disagree and as a mechanism for overcoming stereotypes and foreign relationship across social boundaries" (Ibid.: 20). Finally, the collaboration mode of PD refers to an "effort by citizens of different countries to complete a common project or achieve a common goal" (Ibid.: 12). Both dialogue and collaboration are common modes in the conduct of cultural diplomacy.

According to PD scholars, the listening level of PD should precede and inform all PD levels, including cultural diplomacy. Listening is defined as "an actor's attempt to manage the international environment by collecting and collating data about the public and their opinions overseas and using that data to re-

direct its policy or its wider public diplomacy approach accordingly" (Cull 2008: 32).

In cultural diplomacy systematic listening becomes a critical condition in the design and implementation of effective dialogue and collaboration. This essay will elaborate results of one listening-oriented research – a transnational comparative project entitled *The EU in the Eyes of Asia-Pacific*, which systematically surveyed opinions on the European Union (EU) outside its borders – and will discuss its findings in the context of the EU and EU Members States' cultural diplomacy towards Asia-Pacific.

According to Gregory (2008: 275), "Europeans... focus on public diplomacy's uses in improving their economies, projecting identity, and achieving other policy goals". This focus has also filtered into the cultural diplomacy of European nations from the onset of PD in the 20th century. Gregory (Ibid.) argues that cultural diplomacy (as a PD-oriented activity) started for Europe in the 1920s, when European states were looking for ways to overcome the tragic divisions on the European continent following World War I. During the Cold War years, cultural diplomacy played an important role in linking ideologically divided East and West (and, arguably, Europe's East and West). Finally, in the present-day era of globalisation, where networks and governance occur "through global and regional associations, substate intergovernmental connections, 'countries within countries' ..., and the actions of nonstate actors in civil society" (Ibid.: 284), cultural diplomacy remains a powerful tool in realizing a successful dialogue between multiple poles of pow-

"Theoretical models of public diplomacy can assist in gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of cultural diplomacy and suggest some concrete ways to ensure a more effective outreach to the recipients of the messages."



er, as well as state and non-state actors. The swiftly-changing world requires changes in diplomatic practice across both classical and public (including cultural) diplomacies. As never before, skill with the monologue, dialogue and collaboration modes of cultural diplomacy is needed in order for an international actor to forge an attractive image and solid reputation. Both image and reputation are prerequisites to win in the competitions “for investment, tourism and political power, often on a global scale” (van Ham 2008: 129). Culture in this case is one key determinant of a polity’s ‘brand’, alongside political ideas and policies (Ibid: 128).

#### *A unique supranational entity*

Focusing on the notion of images and international reputations, this paper examines external images and perceptions of the EU in one geopolitical region – the Asia-Pacific. In today’s world of interdependencies and networks between state and non-state actors (including multilateral international organisations), the EU is an important international actor. Not a federation, yet not a loose inter-governmental entity, the EU is a unique supranational entity attempting a communal foreign policy. The newly created European External Action Service (EEAS) uses a diverse mix of outreaches to ensure the EU’s leading role in the world. One of these outreaches is the EU’s PD. Cultural diplomacy remains on the periphery of the EU’s PD – there is no ‘Europe House’ that would disseminate

a common cultural message to its international counterparts. Traditionally, the bulk of ‘European’ cultural diplomacy activities has been designed and executed by the EU Member States. Nevertheless, our systematic survey of EU images in the Asia Pacific reveals visions and perceptions which could be of significance to both the EU and EU Member States’ PD in the area of cultural diplomacy.

The data for this study comes from a comparative project ‘The EU in the Eyes of Asia Pacific’ ([www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.euperceptions.canterbury.ac.nz)). By 2013, it had studied EU images and perceptions in 20 locations (and a further two in Africa) (Holland et al., 2007; Chaban and Holland, 2008; Chaban et al., 2009; Holland and Chaban, 2010; Chaban and Holland, 2014, forthcoming). The geography of the project included North East Asia (Japan, South Korea, China, SAR Hong Kong and SAR Macao), South-East Asia (Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines), South Asia (India), Australasia (Australia and New Zealand) and the Pacific (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Cook Islands, the Solomon Islands and Russia). This pioneering project prioritised the generation of primary data from the three discourses in each location: semi-structured elite interviews (political, business, civil society and media groups); media content analysis of the press and television; and opinion polls of the general public.

Identical methodologically rigorous protocols were used in all locations to ensure meaningful comparisons between the elements of the study as well as across space and time.

This paper focuses on one element of this large research project: the opinions expressed by regional stakeholders. This group includes political elites (primary decision-makers, prioritising sitting members of national parliaments representing different parties, and government officials and public servants); the business elite (members of national official business networks and leading international traders); the civil society elite (representatives of non-governmental organisations and non-state actors); media elites (drawn from press editors and editors-in-chief, television news directors and producers, as well as leading correspondents from the national media). The elite datasets accumulated by the project from 2003 till 2013 include more than 1,000 semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted in 20 Asia-Pacific countries conducted in respondents’ native languages by pre-trained local researchers following a protocol of 18 questions.

#### *(Stereo)typical visions*

When asked what three thoughts come to mind when they heard the words ‘the European Union’, Asia-Pacific stakeholders often spontaneously mentioned the notion of ‘Europe’, ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’. These

“The European External Action Service is trying to ensure the EU plays a leading role in the world. Cultural diplomacy is more of a marginal issue – there is no ‘Europe House’ that would disseminate a common cultural message to its international counterparts.”

responses reveal dominant (stereo)typical visions among the regional decision, policy and opinion-makers, which illustrate that the image of the EU is intrinsically linked to a broader civilizational and cultural concept of Europe. A more nuanced analysis reveals a spectrum of perceptions of the EU’s/Europe’s cultural outreach. On the one side of the continuum are visions of admiration and cultural affinity, a recognition of Europe’s ever-present cultural importance, willingness to participate in cultural/education exchanges and an acknowledgement of shared heritage. On the other side are negative images of Europe’s vanishing cultural importance, awareness of growing ignorance and indifference among the Asia-Pacific public towards Europe and its cultures, along with feelings of resentment. Each side presents its own opportunities and challenges for EU and EU Member States’ cultural diplomacy (within a broader PD paradigm), therefore each will be considered in detail below.

The majority of the interviewed elites in Russia noted the EU’s and wider Europe’s ever-present cultural importance. Russia was seen as a part of ‘wider Europe’ and Europe’s culture was perceived to be closely related to Russian culture, and vice versa.

#### *Affinity between ‘mature’ cultures*

A slightly different, yet still highly positive, perception was observed in North East Asia and India. Stakeholders in these Asian powers mentioned a feeling of affinity between the

ancient 'mature' cultures, citing European and Japanese, Chinese and Indian cultures as examples. A businessman from Japan commented that "compared with other regions, especially culturally, the EU is really attractive to Japan. Their fashion, music, and lifestyle are highly appreciated by Japanese. Then, many states in Europe are culturally mature". An interviewee from SAR Hong Kong concluded: "due to historical heritage, Europe is more elegant". A civil society representative from China found the EU is "much more like China, with vast territory and diversified culture".

Key stakeholders in different locations also often expressed admiration for European culture. A Thai politician observed, "Europe is the number one in civilizations. To stroll along a street in Madrid, Venice or Paris is the best [experience]. The lifestyle of Sweden, Denmark and Norway is the best. Freedom in the Netherlands is the best. French cutlery is the best. German efficiency is the best".

Importantly, across the whole Asia-Pacific, the decisionmakers and policymakers who were interviewed all expressed an active interest in expanding cultural and educational exchanges with Europe: "It is a pity that when we think of influence, we think of superficial things like trade and military power... At the same time, such EU roles as a successful model of integration, or aid and education partner to Asian location are undeservingly overlooked" (an interview in Thailand). Stakeholders in Australia and New Zealand also mentioned their countries' shared cultural heritage with Europe, which warranted the EU's perceived importance in their eyes.

These views point to numerous opportunities for a meaningful respectful dialogue between the EU/EU Member States and the Asia-Pacific. They also suggest the potential for fruitful collaboration on a people-to-people level. Significantly, these positive perceptions may also inform the cultural diplomacy initiatives of the EU/EU Member States. They may influence decisions on which areas to invest in order to elicit the most positive reception and boost their reputation.

#### *Prevailing ignorance*

On the other side of the perceptions spectrum is the prevailing ignorance about Europe in general and the EU in particular. This was mostly found among the general public but also increasingly observed among stakeholders. The majority of these opinions came from the South East Asian locations in our study. The acknowledgement of indifference towards Europe in both North and South East Asian locations sounded a further 'alarm bell' for cultural diplomacy initiatives. An Indonesian respondent inquired, "Why should we care about Europe, which is far away from us? Asia is just here...".

Not surprisingly, feelings of resentment towards Eurocentric expressions of culture were also registered, most frequently in the former European colonies in Asia. For example, one Singaporean respondent sarcastically noted, "There is also still, in the world, a lingering – if slowly dying – belief that Western culture is somehow superior: Chinese cities

"The image of the EU is intrinsically linked to a broader civilizational and cultural concept of Europe."

have Western orchestras, but it will take a while for London to have a London Chinese Orchestra". Finally, in several locations the powerful influence of American mass culture was noted. In Australia, for example, it was seen as ousting European cultural heritage from the minds of the general public. The perceptions on the negative side of the spectrum are argued to arguably indicate a number major challenges for the EU/EU Member States' cultural diplomacy and indicate a deficit in the three modes of communication: monologue (the message is not eliciting response, and is thus met with indifference); dialogue (feelings of resentment indicate a heavy reliance on monologue and lack of listening skills); and collaboration (heritage links in place are under-utilised).

In summary, systematic listening activities in the form of surveys of external images and perceptions should become a regular practice of PD efforts of the EU and its Member States, including at the level of cultural diplomacy. Future systematic surveys undertaken in various geo-political regions, as well as among key global state and non-state actors, may focus more explicitly on cultural diplomacy. Both the EU's EEAS and EU Member States' external relations offices could cooperate in administering such a survey in the future.

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National identity versus post-modern scepticism Cultural exchange must be a two-way process, learning should be mutual. European cultural relations with countries such as the Philippines should be guided by the same principle that informs the European Union itself – that of mutual respect. It is respect that builds trust. And exchanges with European culture help to create an independent artistic community. *By Myra C. Beltran*



given our colonial history, it was inevitable that we would be introduced to the tradition of seeing dance in a theatrical setting. However, there are numerous regional festivals all over the Philippines that attract major funding because of their economic benefits, and these always include a street dance festival – indeed, it is often the main attraction. So dance continues to be strong in the Philippines, from formal concert settings to the more collective, spectacle-driven type of dance that plays a major role in the country's festivals.

So it is important to emphasise that any cultural initiative from outside the Philippines must be set against the historical backdrop of this particular art form and involve its current stakeholders.

European initiatives have been most fruitful and beneficial in the area of contemporary dance. Indeed, they played a role in the formation of independent practice in dance – something that I believe marks the birth of contemporary dance in the Philippines. In the late 1980's, our country was just emerging from years of authoritarian rule and although there were moves towards

European cultural activity in the Philippines has always been diverse. But through the years, I have observed that European cultural institutions in the Philippines have tended to favour dance in their programmes. Perhaps this is not unexpected, firstly because dance transcends language barriers and secondly because the Filipino people are naturally inclined to dance. Thirdly, dance brings people together, crossing cultures and local dividing lines.

Dance has always been an important part of the rituals of our indigenous culture. But

compensating for lost opportunities due to the exclusive policies of the authoritarian regime, dance was still largely presented within the existing framework. Of course it is difficult to make structural adjustments, but individual initiatives can at times speed up the process and provide alternatives to rigid structures that are still awaiting reform. Such individual initiatives on the part of Philippine artists were to some extent bolstered by the activities of European cultural institutions.

During the late 1980's and early 1990's, French, German and British cultural institutes based in Manila were able to introduce the Philippines to dance artists and groups with a more experimental bent. Perhaps it is in the nature of contemporary dance as it has evolved in Europe – and for that matter in the nature of contemporary art in general – to question rigid structures and question certain assumptions about the role of art in society, the production and consumption of art and the aesthetic consequences of these questions.

#### *Independent and somewhat chaotic*

This involvement of the European cultural institutes proved to be very healthy for the dance scene as a whole – perhaps also because the dance artists who came to Manila were very mobile and very current. The decision to bring these artists to the Philippines provided implicit support for a certain aesthetic, for art that is produced outside the cultural mainstream, for the 'independent' process of

creating art. By embracing this, the European cultural institutions recognised a process that was decentralised, independent, somewhat chaotic, but definitely, more spirited, a process that ran counter to dominant trends. This served as an inspiration for local artists. It also lent a certain degree of legitimacy to the efforts of independent artists. Today, the European cultural institutions still prefer bringing artists or art works of a more experimental nature.

Over time, the community of independent dance practitioners grew. Our network of independent contemporary dancers were involved in a EUNIC project in 2012 in which European contemporary dance artists performed and held workshops for local dancers, and participated in forums with local artists. This project was mainly successful because our network was already running a festival and had a mechanism by which a pool of artists could be engaged. In short, this project benefited from the fact that it came at just the right time.

A network of artists had already evolved and there had been constant interaction with European cultural institutions over the years. This may often have been only on a small scale, but it paved the way for this bigger project. Thanks go to the individuals who run the cultural institutions; for their willingness to engage and get to know the artists, the arts scene and its history in the Philippines. This is a critical factor that can mean the failure or success of such a formal project.

For us as a network of artists and managers, we had certain issues with the Europe-

“The involvement of the European cultural institutes proved to be very healthy for the dance scene as a whole.”

an Union as it was an unfamiliar entity for us, but most of these were ironed out in the course of this project. Management functions were clearly divided between us and our European Union partners. The participating European cultural institutes dealt with the guest artists and internal European Union issues. This left us free to do what we do best – bringing in and organising artists in pursuit of a common goal. This clarity of the process proved to be highly beneficial.

From this project and my experience over recent years with European cultural institutes, I have observed that Philippine dance artists look to Europe for its philosophy and forward-looking approach. We admire the individualism of European artists and feel that they in turn enjoy our deeply communal spirit. We are fascinated by the artists' processes and are keen to learn more about their context so that we can position our vision of contemporary dance within the full spectrum of contemporary dance practice. The most fruitful engagements with European culture were those that fostered close interaction with local artists, provided some kind of technological transfer and had a long-term element.

However, there is a certain degree of ambiguity in these engagements. The process and context of artistic practice in our country differs widely from that of the European artists who come to work with us. Whenever we create and present a work, we are also building the infrastructure for it because this infrastructure simply does not exist. We are also interested in our own Philippine iden-

tity. While our practice has benefited from the postmodernist scepticism that informs European dance artists' work, there is a limit to how such a thought process can be transplanted to our context, precisely because it arose from a European cultural context.

#### *Treading a thin line*

There is a thin line that one treads in cultural exchanges. There may always be a tendency to impose a certain viewpoint and homogenise the practice of the art form. Each partner in the exchange is at a certain stage of development. It must be a two-way exchange, learning should be mutual. European cultural relations with 'other' countries such as the Philippines should be guided by the same principle that informs the European Union itself – that of mutual respect. It is respect that builds trust.

#### *An empowering effect*

Over the years, I have witnessed how interaction with European culture by Philippine artists in various fields in the independent arts community has had an empowering

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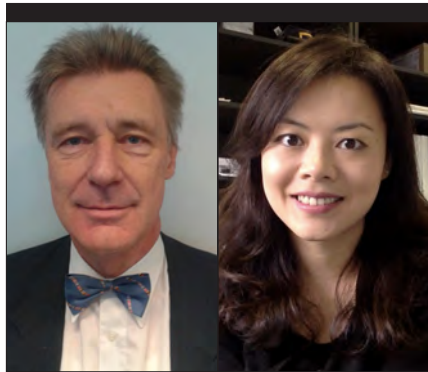
effect on these artists. The growing number of such artists, most of whom find affirmation through European cultural contact, is slowly changing the landscape of Philippine art. It has also meant that there is now an alternative to the kind of commercially-driven activity that often fails to provide stimulation for the mind. So it is essential to have this alternative in order to preserve and advance Philippine art and culture. It has certainly created a space in which a thoroughly new dance sector can emerge.

I really believe that great things could be achieved if European cultural initiatives could sustain this interaction with the independent arts community in a more systematic and deliberate way. We need a shift in orientation towards more guerrilla-like processes of engaging directly with artists in the field, with flexible and innovative ways of measuring impact, and taking into account the historical aspect of each art form and initiative. In other words, we need to provide a climate in which local artists can themselves transform Philippine society. This is what I believe should be the way ahead for European cultural policy.

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“What is soft is strong” The European ‘way of life’ – peaceful, cultural, multilateral and ecological – makes the EU attractive to the rest of the world. This attraction may be the least expensive and least Eurocentric way of projecting soft power, compared to the use of coercion through sanctions, force or violence. The use of military force is hardly ideal for handling complex non-traditional security issues and challenges in institution-building. *By Gerhard Sabathil and Wenwen Shen*



Some 2,500 years ago, the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tse said the words: “What is soft is strong”, adding that “whatever is fluid, soft and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard”. Indeed, the image of water on stones is frequently used in both the Chinese and German languages to describe an enduring force that can achieve the impossible. In the world of international politics, this is what we now call ‘soft power’. In Europe, the wedding policy of European Royals was another successful – if at times unhappy – use of ‘soft power’ in foreign policy.

The modern concept of soft power may be a new phenomenon, but it is not a new academic notion. It was first coined by the American political scientist Josef Nye. However, it is often argued that an effective use of soft power relies on the hard power of the state. If this is true, then the collapse of the Soviet Union was the antithesis of this. By its very nature, soft power is both relative and non-quantifiable. While hard power might be measured in terms of military assets, defence expenditure, population, territory, and so on, soft power is defined by influence, external perceptions, image and cultural attractiveness. A 2011 Global Ranking of Soft Power called for a better understanding of soft power, along with different ways of measuring it and the establishment of causal links between soft power and policy outcomes. This means that if soft power is to be effectively translated into public and cultural diplomacy and strategic communication, we have to understand what and who we are, what message we want to get across, and for what purpose.

If we assume that the EU is and should be a global power in the world, what is the relevan-

ce of soft power in today’s European context? Can cultural diplomacy be an effective tool to help the EU deal with the tectonic shifts in soft and hard power that are taking place in the world? How should the EU engage with strategic or important trading partners that do not share the same values?

The EU’s self-perception as a soft power comes from the common values upon which the Union is founded, namely human rights, the rule of law, good governance, ‘free’ trade and social justice. In practical terms, it probably dates back to the 1973 Copenhagen European Summit, where the heads of State and Government adopted a ‘declaration on European identity’, subsequently expanded at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 for the peaceful promotion of freedom and justice – known as the ‘Copenhagen criteria’. Less than 20 years later, the Lisbon Treaty specifically refers to the EU as drawing its inspiration “from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which has developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.” This is how the EU views itself, as a union that decides and acts in line with a common acquis.

Given that the EU is the largest trading partner in the world, the EU’s single market allows it to dangle a very large carrot. But soft power should be more than just an economic incentive. When it comes to external relations, the EU is often emulated by others

“European inventions such as modern sport, classical music, literature, fashion and cuisine have all been copied around the world and become common goods of humanity.”

because of its ideas and values. The European ‘way of life’ – peaceful, cultural, multilateral and ecological – may therefore be seen as soft power at its best, making the EU attractive to the rest of the world and not just as a model of regionalism. This attraction may be the least expensive and least Eurocentric way of projecting soft power, compared to the use of coercion through sanctions, force or violence.

The limitations of hard power can be clearly seen in the Middle East. The use of military force is hardly ideal for handling complex non-traditional security issues and challenges in institution-building. At a time when sea levels are rising and waves of illegal immigrants are threatening the EU’s external borders, there is a need for thinking that goes beyond hard power capabilities. The EU has already demonstrated its soft power, given that 28 Member States have joined the EU and there has been a long period of unprecedented peace and prosperity on the European continent.

In foreign policy, soft power will be the key to strengthening alliances and strategic partnerships, especially in relations with the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the emerging markets, which will be highly influential in shaping the international system in the decades to come. However, the norms of these emerging economies often differ widely from the EU’s own priorities. In the European-Chinese context, economic independence and the EU as a model are closely interlinked. Neo-liberalists would assume that interdependence would automatically make China a responsible international stakeholder. Ho-

wever, soft power can also have an influence at a non-materialistic level, such as China's desire to adopt various aspects of European models, especially social models that may aid China's own reform processes.

The soft power instruments that the EU has used over past decades include development cooperation and humanitarian and civil assistance such as police and judiciary training in countries outside the EU. Sometimes soft power is combined with trade negotiations or sanctions. In recent times, soft power has been the cornerstone of the EU's security strategy. This approach has been very successful in terms of European enlargement, with many countries being attracted to joining the EU through incentives. But how can the EU become attractive to other countries that have no prospect of joining the EU? Can the EU develop its soft power in relation to both emerging and strategic partners? The answer should be a resounding yes.

For one thing, the EU is already an important potential role model for other parts of the world – Mercosur (the South American common market), ASEAN and the African Union, for example – because it has been able to achieve peaceful regional integration. This does not, of course, mean that the EU model is necessarily appropriate for all sets of circumstances. Many other social, political, economic or even cultural factors may have an influence on the success or failure of regional integration. If we look beyond the economic situation and the fact that the euro zone crisis has seriously undermined the EU's soft power and political clout, the overall image of the

EU in the world as a role model for promoting peace, reconciliation and universal values is still very positive.

#### *The world's largest trading partner*

Another important factor, and one that is often ignored, is the role the EU plays in promoting free trade and tackling climate change, along with the assistance it provides to less developed countries. The EU is the largest trading partner in the world and the euro is still the second most important global currency. When it comes to development aid, the EU is the largest donor and accounts for 60% of the global flow of aid. The EU also leads the world in sustainable development, environmental awareness and tackling climate change. Added to this is the fact that three of Europe's languages are also global languages and EU Member States have a unique cultural heritage. European inventions such as modern sport, classical music, literature, European tourist attractions, fashion and cuisine have all been copied around the world and become common goods of humanity. Europe also has the highest density of higher education institutions in the world and is a pioneer in or dominates many fields of science and the social sciences.

#### *Soft power as a policy strategy*

Europe is also one of the most culturally diverse areas of the world. In order to encourage multilateralism, the EU is party to an

extensive series of networks and to over 700 global, regional, association and cooperation agreements. This is not to say that the EU's soft power has no weaknesses or that the EU's identity based on "pooling its resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty" is sufficient in itself for the EU to promote itself as a soft power in its external relations, particularly in the context of the newly emerging powers. The attraction of developing deeper relations with the EU should lie at the heart of its soft power as a policy strategy. Simply offering the benefits of economic integration and trade cooperation is not enough when engaging with third countries. The EU needs to use its soft power to encourage other countries to undertake economic and political reforms. This might seem overly ambitious or Eurocentric, but this is what diplomacy is about – creating like-minded partners with shared interests and world views. Those who come closest to adopting EU standards should be the ones who profit the most. This is the principle of the EU's recurring message of 'more for more' in its fast response to the developments of the Arab Spring in last year's Communication on 'A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity for the Southern Mediterranean' and 'The Revised European Neighbourhood Policy'.

According to the 2011 Soft Power Index produced by the Institute for Government

“Culture is one of Europe's greatest assets, but its importance is often underestimated. Because it is hard to measure in concrete terms, culture is often considered to be 'too soft' to have any real influence on international relations.”

(IfG), 14 of the 30 countries listed are EU Member States. The USA tops the list, followed by the UK, France and Germany. But the fast-growing BRICS countries are also starting to gain points on the index, with China currently ranked at number 20 and Brazil at 21. The 'dominance' of EU countries in the rankings reflects the diversity and strength of European identities. Cultural heritage certainly plays an important role, as is clear from the sheer number of cultural and language institutes that are supported by many EU Member States.

Culture is one of Europe's greatest assets, but its importance is often underestimated. Because it is hard to measure in concrete terms, culture is often considered to be 'too soft' to have any real influence on international relations. However, culture certainly plays a primary role in diplomacy, and its potential in world politics is yet to be fully explored. While cultures can distinguish or sometimes even separate people from one another, culture also has the ability to connect people and overcome real or imagined borders. At national level, culture has long been recognised as an essential instrument of soft power in public diplomacy. However, at EU level culture has become something of a sensitive issue. Despite its official motto of 'unity in diversity', internally the EU has avoided using the term 'European culture'. Communicating values to the rest of the world is crucial for the future of the EU. Giving expression to the European identity and way of life is not just a rhetorical exercise in articulating what the EU is all about. It is a form of communication with the

rest of the world – a world with which we will be shaping the future.

This century, China has become one of the most important partners in the EU's external relations. And in 2012, China became the world's second biggest economy, accounting for 10% of all world trade. The rise of China has profound implications for European interests – economically, politically and culturally. While China has become a rising star that we are eager to grasp, we often forget that Europeans are not really understood.

Trade is a powerful instrument of economic growth in China and the EU. However, economic prosperity is not an end in itself and does not guarantee human dignity and a better society. As far as China is concerned, it will take longer to develop a mentality of tolerating dissent than it will to bring its people out of poverty. This is why domestic measures to enhance human rights are essential for a Chinese dream that will truly benefit its people.

The role of our foreign policy should not be limited by economic self-interest, but should reflect who we are and what we stand for as Europeans. While we are torn between interests and values in our relations with China, priority is often given to limiting the damage to normative concerns, such as human rights, instead of proactively communicating where we stand and why we attach so much importance to certain values that we deem to be universal. Beneath this trade-driven relationship with China – a country that is culturally so different from Europe – lies a fundamental difference in value systems. In diplomacy, these fundamental differences are often alluded to but rarely directly addressed. This is where culture should come into play.

The EU and China will face common challenges in the future, whether relating to climate change or their ageing populations. So it is important for Europeans to under-

stand how China works and vice versa. In particular, China needs to understand the EU's commitment to values and why it has such a commitment, while the EU needs to invest more in its soft power and encourage the younger generation to take part in educational exchange programmes. Without lecturing, the EU's foreign policy should pay more attention to enhancing cultural and historical awareness on both sides in order to effectively communicate what the EU stands for. If the EU wants to be respected, it is essential for it to clearly articulate and conceptualise its position as a soft power, particularly at times of economic crisis. The ultimate aim of cultural diplomacy should be to promote mutual understanding as a long-term strategy in order to address the gulf in mentalities.

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**On the EU train** The crisis in the euro zone suggests that the EU train is starting to slow down. It has also revealed that not all new EU members are totally behind this project. The Czech Republic, Hungary, the Baltic States, Bulgaria and Romania are all expressing this in their own fashion. Then there are others like Ukraine who sit at the back and refuse to pay attention but simply hope they will get there in the end, if only for strategic reasons. *By Slavenka Drakulić*



and national identity and fears of servitude to foreign capital. Interestingly enough, the political left and right came together on this particular issue of potential losses. Those in favour, especially politicians, spoke in a rather infantile fashion about the goodies they would get: foreign investments, jobs, funding. It made them sound like children waiting for Santa Claus. Stability and peace in the region were also mentioned, but it was not the most important item on their wish list. This seems most strange in light of the all-too-recent wars that have ravaged the region. Needless to say, nobody spoke about what Croatia and its people could contribute to the new union.

Those who propagated membership and those who voted against it in the referendum were in fact both right. Yes, the country will lose its political sovereignty to some extent (but not necessarily its national identity) and yes, Croatia will be more exposed to the brutal model of capitalism, although our own gangsters had already shown their skill at stripping the country of much of its riches during the privatisation process.

But the real dilemma behind the referen-

On 1 July 2013, Croatia finally became a member of the EU. I remember how we envied the Bulgarians and Romanians for being admitted before us a few years ago! We really felt this was unjustified, because – as our former president Franjo Tudjman used to say – Croats were “Europeans before Europe”.

The EU has changed over the ten years that have passed since Croatia set out on its accession process. Maybe this is one of the reasons why the turnout in the 2012 referendum was only 43.51%. A majority of voters, 66.27%, were in favour of joining the Union but the joy was spoiled by such low levels of participation.

Opponents of EU membership presented a range of arguments, including the possibility of the EU falling apart, loss of sovereignty



dum was this: could Croatia survive on its own, outside the EU? After all, it is not a rich country like Norway. There are no convincing arguments that a small country of 4.3 million people, whose main ‘product’ is tourism, could survive on its own. We spend more than we earn and cannot ignore the example of Greece in this respect. In the end, even the Catholic Church supported the referendum. For the clergy, membership of the EU provides definite proof that we Croats (as Catholics) are Europeans – while ‘they’, the Serbs (being Orthodox) are not! Yet the Serbs will also be admitted once they have resolved the problem of Kosovo.

### *The Balkan paradox*

I find this all rather peculiar, because only twenty years ago we in Yugoslavia were fighting wars in an attempt to break away from each other. Now it seems we simply separated in order to unite in a different, but similar union. This is what I call the Balkan paradox. For Croatia, in light of its recent war experiences, peace and security should be more important than potential economic gains.

Today, Croatia is still envied by Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo – all states that emerged from the former Yugoslavia – and also by Albania, Belarus and the Ukraine. But perhaps our neighbours should stop thinking we are so lucky. After all, many citizens of former communist countries that are now EU members such as Poland, the Baltic re-

publics, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary – and not to mention the people of the former GDR – now complain that Westerners are treating them like second-class citizens.

It is not hard to imagine how they feel. When I was in primary school in Yugoslavia in the late 1950s, we often went on school excursions by train. At the time, trains were divided into three classes. In first class, the seats were upholstered in plush red velvet like at the theatre; second-class carriages were less comfortable, with seats made of light brown plastic that would stick to your skin and smell of – well, plastic. And the third-class wagon did not even have compartments, much less seats. It had rows of hard wooden benches, and sitting on these you really felt like a third-class traveller. It was uncomfortable, dirty and smelly. But there was no chance of simply switching to second class – there was a teacher and also a higher authority, a conductor, who made sure we followed the rules. Our only consolation was that we all travelled on the same train.

If we carry this analogy over to the EU, the first-class wagon is divided between the core, the luxury club that makes the key decisions, and the rest of the euro zone. Then there is second class, which consists of the former communist countries, though there are great differences between Poland and Romania, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. They are all equal, but “some are more equal than others,” as George Orwell so succinctly described it in his 1945 novel *Animal Farm*

(though this was a metaphor for communist society). And then there is the rest, the third-class carriage with its wooden benches. And even this is divided between the bad pupils and the even worse pupils, between those who might get the right grades to make it to the next step, to second class, and the rest. The better pupils sit close to the teacher and listen carefully. Then there are those like Ukraine who sit at the back and refuse to pay attention but simply hope they will get there in the end, if only for strategic reasons.

But are we justified in once again bundling together these former Eastern European communist countries, whether they are inside or outside the EU? Those who are luckier or less lucky? After all, the communist bloc collapsed over twenty years ago and these countries finally gained the right to emancipate themselves from the common political denominator and take advantage of their historical differences. They deserve to be seen as individual countries with similar but different histories and even similar but different types of communism, such as goulash communism in Hungary, bunker-communism in Albania and liberal communism in Yugoslavia.

I think we are justified in looking at what was common to them all – from the Czech Republic to Serbia, from Poland to Albania – even if only for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of their post-communist

“Then there is second class, which consists of the former communist countries, though there are great differences between Poland and Romania, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.”

experiences and their current feelings of inadequacy and inequality. Even today, the fact that they all had similar experiences of communism is reflected in a range of common features. Many people there still demonstrate similar habits, behaviours, world views and values, that is to say a certain mentality. And this mentality is very hard to change.

### *Accidental collapse of Communism*

Communism in the USSR and the Soviet bloc countries collapsed quite accidentally, even by mistake. It is easy to forget that in the beginning, Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempts to introduce glasnost and perestrojka were meant to improve the political system and keep it alive, not abolish it. It was abolished for all kinds of other reasons, but this was surely not his intention. Gorbachev’s biggest contribution to the events of 1989 was that he did not react once the political changes got out of control.

Things were different in Poland, where the revolutionary Solidarity movement was active for many years but still failed to topple the communist government on its own. The collapse of the communist regimes happened more or less without the participation of the people. The system simply imploded. If anything, the passivity of the masses is a major common denominator that influenced the overall mentality.

Another part of this mentality is collectivism, as opposed to individualism. This is

a way of seeing ourselves as part of a mass, a class, a group, a nation, sometimes even a tribe. It is difficult for people to start acting as individuals because their experiences of communism make it difficult to believe that an individual opinion, initiative or vote can make a difference for the better, as opposed to just getting them into trouble. Besides, acting as an individual means taking on individual responsibility, something that takes a long time to learn, especially when people are used to blaming a higher authority, even for personal failures. This lack of individual responsibility is proving to be a serious handicap in the post-communist era.

### *An inherited mentality*

Another important feature of this inherited mentality is egalitarianism. Recent political and economic changes were understood to be promises of enrichment and a consumer paradise for all. But shifting from a totalitarian to a democratic political system, from a planned economy to capitalism, did not automatically translate into a better life for everyone. There is no doubt that the transition was characterised by a new kind of poverty and insecurity, a growing gap between rich and poor, high unemployment and severe corruption at all levels. Over two decades, disillusionment gradually took hold. Old dreams remained unfulfilled and most of the new promises failed to materialise. This was perceived as injustice.

### *Widespread mistrust*

What followed was a widespread mistrust of political elites, democratic procedures and state institutions. Lost in transition? Maybe. In the wake of the collapse of the financial markets and the euro crisis, it looks as if the locomotive pulling the train has slowed down. It has also become apparent that not every new member of the EU wholeheartedly supports the project, and this gap is widening. The Czech Republic, Hungary, the Baltic States, Bulgaria and Romania are all expressing this in their own fashion. Their dissatisfaction and distrust is clear, from the government crisis in the Czech Republic to protests against austerity measures in Bucharest and Hungary's mishandling of the media and the constitution, despite warnings from the EU.

### *A crisis of national identity*

To add to the complications, along with the East-West divide, another one has suddenly opened up between Europe's North and South. To the surprise of all of us, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal are now the bad pupils! The traditionally tolerant North is becoming overrun by right-wing populism as new nationalist parties such as the True Finns, Sweden Democrats and the Party of Freedom in the Netherlands are springing up. Some political leaders have quickly identified this growing feeling of anxiety and insecurity as a crisis of national identity.

When politicians have nothing else to offer, they push national identity in exchange for a feeling of security. It is easy to use immigrants as scapegoats, especially Muslims. If these leaders have little to offer, they can at least provide something or someone to blame, whether it is immigrants, globalisation, hedonism, decadence, capitalism, corruption, democracy, old communists, new oligarchs, the West or the Roma. Insecurity breeds fear – and fearful societies tend to close up. Some experts believe that the ultimate consequence of the current crisis might well be a crisis in the very model of global capitalism.

Yet, in June 2012 the Financial Times published the findings of a comparative study suggesting a different conclusion. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank conducted their study in 34 countries in Eastern and Western Europe. Although badly hit by the financial crisis and austerity measures, citizens of the former communist countries appeared to be more satisfied with their lives than citizens in the Western Europe.

It is easy to see why: for them life was still better than before! Does anybody in today's Eastern Europe who is under thirty remember that not so long ago toilet paper

was a luxury in the former communist countries? I suspect my generation is the last one to remember this, and when we are gone it will be entirely forgotten. People who were born after 1989 will ask in bewilderment: you mean there was no toilet paper? That's not possible! How could you live without it?

Now we have grown accustomed to the changes, but we have also developed a taste for much, much more. This makes us unhappy, because the desire to have much more will have to be postponed for a while in the lucky and less lucky countries, the second and third-class coaches alike. In this respect it seems we are all pretty equal. So even if for a few years the 'new' Europeans resisted the prevailing gloom and doom in the West, they are having to give in to it now.

### *The train is slowing down*

Before 2008 there was hope that the gap between East and West could be bridged more quickly because there was more money and greater motivation. Now, when the entire train seems to be slowing down, there is less and less chance for those at the back. Democracy has its weaknesses and capitalism is in crisis. But what is the alternative? Should we turn towards other neighbours in the East?

But even if their democracy is weak and their political elites corrupt, former communist countries that are now in the EU or on its threshold should remember what life was like only twenty years ago in the clutches of

“If these leaders have little to offer, they can at least provide something or someone to blame, whether it is immigrants, globalisation, hedonism, decadence, capitalism, corruption, democracy, old communists, new oligarchs, the West or gypsies.”

totalitarianism. Forget the soft toilet paper – it is peace and security that should always be on our minds. As EU members, we still have a chance to contribute in this respect. Now we are able to participate and be active in social, economic and political projects of common interest. Isn't it worth going on?

It should not be forgotten that it is all too easy to slip back into the past if citizens fail to safeguard their new democratic institutions.

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**Ukraine's games with Europe** Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovich, was keen to forge closer ties with the EU because he was tired of being dependent on Putin. However, the Ukrainians really do want to move towards Europe and have become pawns in a bigger game, according to Ukrainian author Andrey Kurkov. The West will need to relax its demands on Ukraine and offer more material and political assistance. *By Andrey Kurkov*



Ukraine moves in mysterious ways. During the Orange Revolution of 2004, rebellious Ukrainians successfully prevented the favoured candidate of a corrupt system from becoming president. But in 2010 Russia-friendly Viktor Yanukovich eventually managed to get himself elected anyway – using the kinds of slogans that are typical of his regional, political and financial circles. These included building stronger economic relations with Russia and giving the Russian language a new status alongside Ukrainian.

In 2013, Yanukovich even led people waving Europe flags into the Maidan, Kiev's independence square. In a TV interview, he suggested that while he did not really like protests (which have become known as Maidans in Ukraine), he did have some sympathy for

the current Euromaidan. I do not doubt the truth of this. I'm sure that when he was alone Yanukovich really did applaud those people camped out in the Maidan day after day, demonstrating in favour of closer ties between Ukraine and the EU. But only until he looked at the cards he had to play and compared them with the cards in Putin's hand. Whether we like it or not, it was Yanukovich who led the people into the Euromaidan and for a moment needed those people more than ever.

It all began when Yanukovich suddenly announced a change of direction "towards Europe". Many of his party friends were not happy. They failed to understand the point of such a move. But the president could understand it, and that was why he was president. He had become tired of fruitless discussions with Russian officials about making gas three or – better still – four times cheaper. He was tired of being publicly humiliated by President Putin and by repeated slights on Russian TV. Yanukovich wanted to get his own back. Really get his own back. He wanted to put President Putin in the same position he had been in for the previous three years: a position of pointless waiting. This was the

reason why President Yanukovich suddenly, and to the surprise of everyone, including the democratic opposition, pointed his hand in a Leninesque manner towards the West and, with his eyes brimming with passion, said “Comrades, towards Europe!”

### *Russia began to feel edgy*

Amazingly, while members of the ruling party were thrown into shock and struggling to understand their leader, the Ukrainian people simply chose to understand his actions the way they wanted to and were overjoyed. They soon started packing their things for the move to a civilised life, prosperity and the rule of law.

Russia began to feel edgy. It is well known for bearing grudges, and the first victim on the Russia-Ukraine trade front was Ukrainian chocolate. That summer, Russia banned the import of Ukrainian chocolates. I will refrain from listing all the other victims, as President Yanukovich did that for us during a meeting with his party’s parliamentary faction. He explained all the reasons for his change of direction and suggested that anybody who was unhappy with the changes should consider leaving the party and the faction.

And so Ukraine shot off at full speed towards Europe. And it might even have got there if it hadn’t been for Yanukovich’s old arch enemy, Yulia Tymoshenko, who was still in prison. The discussions on an Association Agreement with the EU constantly returned to the issue of her release or allowing her to go

to Germany for medical treatment. This issue allowed Yanukovich to keep forgetting about President Putin. Putin was in another country, but Tymoshenko was in Ukraine. His worry was that if she were released, it would rekindle the political power struggle in Ukraine, and it would then be easy to predict the outcome of the 2015 presidential elections.

But back to the Maidans, the protests in Kiev’s independence square. The main difference between these Maidans and those of 2004 is that the majority of protesters asked the opposition politicians not to turn up with their party flags. The students who have been actively involved in the protests in recent times, and who have organised strikes at several of the country’s universities, made the point that the aim of the protest was simply to force the government to sign the EU Association Agreement.

The protests were not against the government per se, otherwise the opposition would have had to lead them. The protests were an attempt to put pressure on the government. But the powers that be, as personified by Yanukovich, simply shrugged their collective shoulders and used the Maidans to prove to Putin that Ukraine actually has a choice when it comes to its future direction. Unless, of course, Russia were to make huge amounts of money available to resolve Ukraine’s internal budget problems.

Yanukovich was now in a position to show the EU and the rest of the world that the Ukrainian people would actually prefer an alliance with Europe. In reality what this means is that the West needs to relax its demands on

Ukraine and offer more material and political assistance.

I have no desire to denigrate the protesters or diminish the importance of the Euromaidans with these observations. Far from it. It is just that, once again, a typically paradoxical situation arose in Ukraine, where the genuine desires of the people could be misused by those in power as a bargaining chip in discussions with Russia. If talks with Russia had suddenly shown signs of success, the Euromaidans would quickly have turned into opposition.

However, President Yanukovich was deposed and has disappeared after meeting a few times with opposition leaders. One section of the opposition demanded an immediate return to the 2004 constitution, which was illegally amended by the country’s constitutional court in order to give the newly-elected President Yanukovich the broadest possible (practically dictatorial) powers. However, another part of the opposition – which includes Yulia Tymoshenko, who made a combative appeal to parliament – does not want a return to a parliamentary-presidential republic and is therefore not keen to revert to the 2004 constitution. Tymoshenko would like to see the president become a ‘constitutional’ dictator and clearly still harbours hopes of becoming president.

Meanwhile, the tenor of the Maidan shifted from the romantic to the more radical.

“Once again, a typically paradoxical situation has arisen in Ukraine, where the genuine desires of the people can actually be misused by those in power as a bargaining chip in discussions with Russia”

Not a single day went by without some kind of provocation against the demonstrators and, although an amnesty law had been passed, it had yet to be implemented. Maidan activists continued to disappear. The cars of AutoMaidan supporters continued to be set on fire at night. Tensions remained.

There were rumours in the city that 4,000 heavily-armed militants had entrenched themselves in the four occupied buildings and that their patience was quickly running out. And that they would attack first. But who? First the police, then parliament and its members.

It was not just the politicians who were to blame for this complicated situation, but their inability to think in a ‘coalitionary’ way. Every discussion between the parliamentary majority and the opposition in the Ukrainian parliament has traditionally been carried out from a position of power, the power of the majority. Ukraine will never be able to get itself out of this political hole, which all four of the country’s presidents have helped to dig, until it rids itself of this kind of negotiation culture. It promises to be a long and difficult process.

Deposed president, Yanukovich is, of course, the one who has dug the hole the deepest, but I find it hard to believe that he is capable of recognising his mistakes. More hope probably lies with the oligarchs of the old generation, who know better than anyone what is awaiting if the country experiences a political and economic collapse.

The Europe that asks what it can do to help Ukraine to gain a civilised future needs

to know that the future of the Ukraine lies with its youth. There is little to be gained from dialogue with its current rulers, as such dialogue cannot be truly open. The Ukraine is represented by politicians who are more concerned about their own futures than the future of their country. This is why Europe needs to focus on the country's students and open Europe to educated and engaged Ukrainian citizens.

The waiving of visa restrictions for travel to the EU is of course a long and difficult process. But perhaps Europe could at least make it easier for students or even all young Ukrainians to travel. Visa restrictions could apply after a certain age. Europe must also not forget about the undemocratic actions of Ukraine's rulers. Many Ukrainians believe that these people should be banned from travelling to Europe.

It is often said that democracy is not a one-way street. I would like to echo this opinion and see more European teaching staff at Ukrainian universities – and more young Ukrainians at European universities.

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“Russia is much better than you think” Nothing moves unless you move. These words perfectly sum up the cultural dialogue between Russia and Europe. There is no shortage of problems: intolerance towards minorities, visa difficulties and lack of resources for artists and academics. Russian president Vladimir Putin is not exactly a supporter of the arts and culture, blaming the ‘creative classes’ for the decline in reading standards and over-complicated school curricula. What is to be done? *By Valery Nechay*



The question of the differences between Russia and Europe has been raised many times over the years. The issue was hotly debated during the 19th century in particular, when Russian society was divided into two main groups: Westernists – people who believed that Russian culture was similar to that of Europe, and Slavophiles, who believed that Russia was a country with a unique mix of European and Asian culture. And while it might seem like a contradiction, some Slavophiles, such as the well-known Russian novelist and philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky, did not entirely reject the idea of a common Russian and European culture. They believed that Russian culture had its roots in Europe.

However, these debates stopped after the Soviet Revolution, when Russia was almost

totally isolated from Europe and the rest of the world during the communist era. Now, more than 20 years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the issue of Russia and Europe is being discussed once again.

A few years ago, one of Russia’s largest survey companies, WCIOM, carried out research into what Russian people think about Europe. The results of their study suggest that while Russians generally tend to believe that they have more in common with European culture than American culture, nearly half of them think that if Russia is a part of Europe, it is more in terms of geography and history than culture.

Meanwhile in Europe, some politicians are starting to wonder why Europe should spend time and money on cultural, educational and civil society initiatives in Russia if these programmes do not bring any immediate benefits to the people of their own countries.

However, I believe that it is only through exploration, exchange and mutual enrichment through each other’s values that we can build a solid foundation for joint relations and create a system of mutual security and

trust – something that is important to both sides. This kind of dialogue has many different aspects, so I would like to focus here on some specific cultural and educational issues.

To a certain extent, culture is a set of values and practices that creates meaning for society. Cultural dialogue is therefore a cornerstone for building bridges between nations. It helps governments to create a foundation of trust and mutual understanding through people-to-people contacts.

There is a general feeling that there is a huge demand for European culture in Russia. Indeed, Russian people really enjoy attending guest performances by European theatre companies, concerts by European music stars and exhibitions borrowed from European museums. Although famous British theatres have yet to visit Russia, their performances are shown in the cinema here. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that some of the most profitable events put on by the Aurora cinema in St. Petersburg were live broadcasts from the National Theatre in London: *Frankenstein* by Danny Boyle with Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller; *The Audience* with Helen Mirren and *Hamlet* with Rory Kinnear in the title role. The Russian public’s obvious interest in British and European theatre was clearly demonstrated by the many people who queued up to buy tickets for the various performances.

It was not only the live broadcasts from the National Theatre that proved to be popular. The first International Winter Thea-

tre Festival in December 2013 also attracted several thousand people, with all the performances playing to packed houses. During the festival, there was a much anticipated performance of Thomas Ostermeier’s version of *Death in Venice*. Not surprisingly, the actors involved in the story about the love of an old man for a young boy were worried about the possibility of being fined on account of the new Russian anti-gay law. But instead of being punished, they were simply greeted with applause.

### *Cultural spaces*

Russia has enough facilities to hold these kinds of events. The Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg has a new stage where contemporary performances can be shown; there are many creative projects (such as the ETAGHI loft project in St. Petersburg, the Ural Vision Gallery in Yekaterinburg, the Perm Museum of Contemporary art, etc.); and there is a plethora of places in Russia’s regions where creative industries could be developed.

Unfortunately, there are also some obstacles that can make it difficult for all these great plans and ideas to survive. First of all, the Russian government is not in favour of supporting these initiatives. Last year, for instance, Russian president Vladimir Putin blamed the ‘creative classes’ for the decline in reading standards and over-complicated school curricula. Secondly, travelling to Russia is extremely expensive and it is difficult to

“Last year, for instance, Russian president Vladimir Putin blamed the ‘creative classes’ for the decline in reading standards and over-complicated school curricula.”

get a visa. However, some cultural figures are now using a new way to enter Russia without a visa – new regulations make this possible for people travelling by ferry from Helsinki. Thirdly, the minority rights situation in Russia is highly unsatisfactory and discriminatory, especially with regard to the LGBT community.

Education, of course, is one of the most important drivers of progress. It helps to promote cultural, economic, political and social development.

Despite the initial enthusiasm of Euro-optimists with regard to the Bologna Process, this initiative has not become the driver for the kind of change, openness and cooperation within the European-Russian perspective that was expected.

### *Increasing mobility*

It is important to encourage European universities – which are themselves struggling with challenges occasioned by curricula and financial reforms – to establish new links with Russian universities at different levels. This should be done not only through the regular admission process, but also through short and long-term academic exchanges, dual degrees and doctoral programmes.

While one might argue that this is something that could be dealt with by each university on an individual basis, we still believe that it is important to create some kind of framework agreement and infrastructure,

similar to the Erasmus Mundus Programme, for example. This could help to increase the mobility of academics, students and young researchers at all levels.

In addition, some recent initiatives on the part of the Russian Government, such as grants to attract leading scientists to Russian educational institutions and grants given to leading universities to help them establish their positions in international university rankings, have resulted in a number of Russian universities becoming much more open to this type of cooperation. This is particularly prevalent in new, trending areas such as Data Science, Computational Social Science, Digital Humanities, New Media, and Bioinformatics, where researchers and – more importantly – institutions tend to be more flexible, younger and more willing to cooperate.

In addition to creating a general framework for cooperation, it is also vital to have access to new ideas and approaches to ensure continuing development. This is especially important for the social sciences and the humanities, which explore, promote and expand high ideals of tolerance and equality. Public lectures and special courses by European professors at Russian universities could help to promote public discussion and the dissemination of ideas.

Some experts argue that there are not enough grants and scholarships for outstanding Russian students who want to come

“Ask yourself: does the word ‘Russia’ conjure up charming and delightful pictures or horrific images of the mafia, bears on city streets and general poverty?”

back to Russia after finishing their studies. This issue needs to be addressed by the Russian authorities. The whole homecoming issue is a sore point. Europe should try to find ways of preventing these people becoming the migrants of the future.

### *Filling the vacuum*

The second problem is the visa issue, which cannot be resolved without high-level intervention. Could students and teachers be given priority when it comes to short-term visas? And to what extent should this policy be implemented? Unfortunately, inertia is a characteristic feature in this area, and years tend to go by before we see any results. However, there is one tremendous example of an institution whose work has produced some significant results. It is a private initiative developed to promote Russian culture in Europe, but which could also work the other way round.

Nothing moves unless you move. These words perfectly sum up the current situation. In our opinion, the Russian government is simply not doing enough to help promote intercultural dialogue between Russia and Europe. As a general principle, vacuums tend to be filled and in public life they are normally filled by public initiatives and civil society.

A few years ago, Russian-born economist Nonna Materkova, who had lived in the UK for more than a decade, decided to set up a charitable foundation to promote Russian contemporary art. The idea behind Calvert

22 appeared to face at least two formidable obstacles from the outset: the widespread belief that there was no contemporary art in Russia and the assertion that there was nothing ‘good’ in Russia at all. The media and the ordinary people in Europe had come to accept these myths. Ask yourself: does the word ‘Russia’ conjure up charming and delightful pictures or horrific images of the mafia, bears on city streets and general poverty? The aim of the foundation was to try to explode these myths under the banner ‘Russia is much better than you think’.

### *Modern art from Russia*

Breaking stereotypes is an extremely difficult and almost impossible task. It requires a great deal of strenuous effort and often produces no real results. However, with the right approach it is possible to achieve some fantastic results. The foundation, which in 2009 was no more than a small gallery, is now running several long-term projects relating to Russian modern art: the online Calvert Journal; the Calvert Education programme for outstanding students, artists and academics from Russia; and the Calvert Forum, the biggest creative industries’ think tank, which generates a programme of talks, reports and research on the role of creative enterprise in the economic and social development of Russia and Eastern Europe. Today Calvert 22 is one of the best-known institutions involved in promoting Russian contemporary art in Western Europe.



This example gives us an idea of just how important these new initiatives are for establishing closer links between artists and the public and for developing international creative networks. It represents the kind of path that cultural diplomacy could take and it could certainly be implemented by European cultural institutions.

One of the main causes of conflict lies in the fact that both sides usually just do not know enough about each other. Instead of entering into dialogue, they prefer to entrench themselves, wallow in unsubstantiated mutual suspicions and divide themselves into groups that are 'right' and 'wrong'. This is a vicious circle and helps to create stereotypes that can eventually become impossible to break. To avoid this happening, both sides need to stop making assumptions, open their doors and start talking. We already have a clear and intelligible language that makes it possible for people to find common ground. It is called culture. One day, this may well help us to answer the question of whether or not Russia is part of Europe.

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This spaceship called Earth The dialogue between Latin America and Europe needs to concentrate on three challenges: environment, inequality and financial chaos. We are not short of concepts, but we must also show that another type of management is achievable. This means a major cultural shift. Our Brazilian author is convinced that "we need more culture". Not culture in the sense of elegant meetings for the happy few, but a culture of change. *By Ladislau Dowbor*



What can we in Brazil expect of Europe? In reality, this question has changed and should now be: 'what can we expect from each other?' After all, we are all big boys now, and both sides have a lot to gain.

Latin America and other emerging countries can no longer be considered as late developers who are hoping to find a way of joining the developed world.

There are 7 billion inhabitants in this small spaceship called Earth and we are adding 80 million every year. And because we are all striving to maximise our consumption, we are all in trouble. We have to deal with climate change, soil erosion, water contamination, overfishing, rainforest destruction and other major challenges to the planet. And we are all facing rapidly-growing levels

of inequality. The reality is that we are not succeeding in building a sustainable future, so we all face a common challenge. Simply recognising this fact can be considered a step in the right direction.

In order to face up to the challenges of the environment and inequality, we need excellent collaboration, a strong political will and major communicative efforts. We need to ensure that people everywhere understand just what sort of mess we have got ourselves into and what the potential solutions may be. This means more democracy, and a major shift in the way we govern. We have all the financial resources, technologies and knowledge that we need to overcome these problems, but there are significant flaws in our governance: global problems, very weak multilateral institutions and fragmented national interests. This is why genuine collaboration between countries is now more important than ever.

### *The power of big business*

I believe collaboration is particularly essential at political level. The following statistics on the power of big business come from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology: 737 corporations control 80% of the corporate world, while a nucleus of just 147 control 40%. Some 75% of these corporations are financial institutions. Meanwhile, the Tax Ju-

stice Network claims that between 21 and 32 trillion dollars of investments are held in tax havens – at a time when global GDP is around 70 trillion dollars. The Economist put the figure at 20 trillion, but this does little to alter the fact that we have lost control over global business finances. And yet we need these resources to finance sustainability – to fund a paradigm shift in energy use, for example – as well as to finance the vast social programmes we need to rescue the 4 billion people that the World Bank elegantly refers to as the sections of the world’s population that “have no access to the benefits of globalisation”.

I would say that collaboration between Europe and Latin America, and Brazil in particular, must be centred on this triple challenge: the environmental conundrum, the growth in inequality and the financial chaos. This does not mean diminishing the importance of culture, education and science, but it does define their *raison d’être*. Inclusive development, sustainability, a green economy – we are not short of concepts. But it is not enough to simply declare that a different world is possible, we must also show that another type of management is achievable. This means a major cultural shift. We need more culture, not in the sense of elegant meetings for the happy few, but a culture of change.

Brazil has come of age. Over the last ten years it has succeeded in bringing its international relations into balance without any major disruptions or grand proclamations. Its excessive dependency on the USA in particular has been reduced, and commercial relations are now more evenly spread between

our neighbours, the EU and the rest of the world. This has been helpful for Brazil and other Latin American countries alike because of the sheer weight of the Brazilian economy. Multiple dependencies mean more autonomy. This has changed the way Brazil can relate to Europe, and allows us to build more balanced cross-fertilisation initiatives.

### *Access to knowledge*

Access to knowledge is a particularly interesting area. Brazil created an important initiative by publicly funding 100,000 scholarships for our students to study abroad. Of course a key issue is access to technical knowledge and in a few years’ time these students will return home armed with expertise and a number of friends in different countries. This will help build an important bridge for collaboration, benefiting us and the students’ host countries. Foreign ministries are very important, but when it comes to collaboration it is hard to beat a network of personal contacts. Now that Brazil has taken the initiative, how about supporting similar moves from Europe?

But it is not only students that need to travel, but papers too. Building on the open access initiative is another potentially rich vein. The UK is working with Jimmy Wales, the creator of Wikipedia, on a programme that will ensure free access to any publicly funded research. The EU is studying similar moves. This is hugely important for Brazil and the developing world in general, since access to knowledge is the key issue in an increasingly

“Foreign ministries are very important, but when it comes to collaboration it is hard to beat a network of personal contacts.”

knowledge-based economy. Joint initiatives to reduce the onslaught of restrictions that rely on often absurd patents, copyrights and other mechanisms could be of great importance.

We now have a number of important open access initiatives to make available university course content. These include the OpenCourseWare at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), edX at Harvard and some 20 other institutions, CORE (China Open Resources for Education) at the main Chinese universities, along with as ‘science spring’ initiative which is seeing thousands of scientists leaving heavy-handed middlemen such as Elsevier for PlosOne, ArXiv and similar open access spaces.

The 2003 Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities has already been signed by more than 450 institutions. A more modern coordinated approach to the negotiations on TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) would certainly make a difference.

One of the defining aspects of knowledge is that it is not a rival good. If I give my watch away, then someone else will have it. This is typical of the 21st-century economy. But if I give an idea away, then I still have it. Opening access to emerging countries will generate more markets, improve relations, and promote economic activities for all. Waiting for poorer countries to create these technologies themselves is just not realistic. And banning countries from producing life-saving medicines is not only economically absurd, it also tends to create a political and social backlash. Not only

is greed not a good thing, it just doesn’t work.

A better understanding of social policies is another promising area. Brazil has been innovative here too. Around 150 government programmes, many of them in partnership with the non-profit sector and private companies, have helped to lift 36 million people out of poverty, generate 18 million decent jobs and create investment for the new generations. They will not necessarily bring about an immediate growth in GDP but are essential for the future. The Bolsa Familia programme is well-known in Europe, but we have more than a hundred other inclusive programmes that may also be of interest.

### *Stimulating bottom-up initiatives*

One lesson we have learned is that stimulating bottom-up initiatives leads to better business for the traditional economic sectors and has enabled Brazil to navigate safely through the economic turmoil. More importantly, I believe we could also develop effective tripartite initiatives – with Africa, for example. I once accompanied former President Lula on a visit to several African countries. They are clearly on the move, and their receptivity to the idea of collaboration with Brazil is enormous. We face many similar challenges, such as maximising the potential of the African savannahs and the Brazilian Cerrado.

Tripartite joint-ventures could be much more effective than traditional bilateral programmes, where Europe has to carry the weight of its colonial past. I recently partici-

pated in a graduate management course where students from Portugal, Angola and Brazil, ten from each country, each spent a semester in Porto, Luanda and São Paulo. Such programmes could be developed in conjunction with public, private or non-profit sectors.

Social technologies, such as the water-gathering cisterns in the Brazilian Northeast, have proven to be enormously successful. Ensuring one's neighbours remain impoverished is not only poor policy but is also very short-sighted. How many walls are we going to build on the borders of Mexico or Palestine, how many rescue ships in the Mediterranean? We must give these people a better chance in their own countries.

One very practical and efficient way of cooperating can be achieved by forging agreements between cities. Organising major events certainly generates media coverage, but serious long-term relationships only really develop when individuals and groups get together to plan some form of lasting collaboration. There is a great deal that cities can learn from each other. Many Brazilian cities currently face the compounded challenges of poverty, inequality and fragile social services. While developing a number of recent initiatives, including Nossa São Paulo and the Cidades Sustentáveis network, we regularly turned to European cities for their help and expertise. Cidades Sustentáveis is in itself a cooperation network, involving roughly 30% of the Brazilian population.

The management courses we have been organizing provide many examples of potential European solutions, and supporting this

kind of initiative on a larger scale, including arranging technical visits and training could be very useful.

Brazil now has 85% of its population living in cities as a consequence of a chaotic and accelerated rural exodus that has created deep imbalances. Decentralised collaboration networks that create a kind of 'cosmopolitan democracy' could certainly use some support from national and EU policies. We are all bound to become culturally diverse societies in the long run. The planet is shrinking and intercultural coexistence and enrichment is a huge challenge for all of us.

Racial differences can easily be exploited to stir up volatile emotions. While Brazil is still a long way from having overcome such problems, it has tried to address them with a range of initiatives, including university quotas and support for quilombola communities (ancient communities created by escaped slaves).

Integration through cultural initiatives can be a particularly enriching experience when it is supported by productive inclusion. In spite of all the difficulties, it is possible to develop a kind of cheerful approach, a propensity to amused tolerance, which may not look very hochkultur but is prodigiously efficient in building bonds between communities. There is much potential for collaboration here – making people happy can be very productive.

What do we expect from Europe? Certainly not big banks, big business, big pharma or advanced weaponry. Europe is generally a nice place to be and this is hugely significant,

“More importantly, I believe we could also develop effective tripartite initiatives – with Africa, for example.”

as leading a pleasant life is basically what we would all like to do. Europe has definitely created its own culture. Americans say they are from Mars and Europe is from Venus. In Brazil, I think we tend to prefer the Venus approach. It is from Mars that we inherited our violent dictatorships. We are all hoping that this chapter is now closed. Let us just say that there is plenty of room for cultural and educational cooperation – and much goodwill besides – because we generally have positive impressions of each other. I think that what we expect from Europe is support in creating a new development culture, centred on quality of life, respect for future generations, respect for nature and a society built on solidarity. There is no reason why so many people should be suffering on what is, after all, an incredibly rich planet.

The French economist, Delavoye, wrote that it is easier to take necessities from the poor than the superfluous from the rich. I think we need to change this, and there is sound economic reasoning behind this belief. I believe we need to look again at what Willy Brandt had to say in North-South, the seminal document he wrote in the 1980s. America profited enormously from helping to rebuild Europe after the war, while Europe profited enormously from social and economic inclusion during the 30 golden years before 'greed is good' became the motto of the day. We can regard the huge challenges we face as problems, but also as opportunities. As we learned in Brazil, taking care of the poor, the abandoned territories and despairing parents who lack the means to provide for their fami-

lies can be good for everybody. It is certainly more efficient than building more walls and creating an invasive world security system. There is an apt Brazilian proverb: “Respeito e caldo de galinha faz bem à saúde”, “Respect and chicken broth are good for your health”. The doors are open.

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What does Latin America need? Mexico is a country with many different cultures and living languages, yet it does not practice multiculturalism and has no recognisable intercultural policies. As in Europe, popular culture tends to be dominated by the US. But Europe can make a major contribution towards building trust between cultural communities on both sides of the Atlantic through cooperation and exchange. With the creation of EUNIC, it is now time to start thinking about some more far-reaching initiatives. *By Carlos Ornelas*



In contrast to the global perception many of us share of the United States, we actually know very little about Europe's politics and its relations with the rest of the world. And yet its cultural influence is much more profound and long-lasting – not so much because of the influence of its popular culture and its communications media, but because of its history and development. However, Europe's diplomacy and cultural actions are no match for the power of the USA or for the influence of its popular culture.

I would like to delve what lies behind Latin America's impressions of European culture and in so doing attempt to answer the following questions: What kind of European cultural and educational initiatives are needed in Latin America? What kind of foreign cultural policies must Europe adopt

in order to open doors and create the kind of trust between the two communities that is necessary to promote the arts, education and intercultural dialogue? What would people in, say, Mexico like to see happen in this respect? How can Europe contribute towards building trust between the two communities on either side of the Atlantic?

European culture is incredibly rich and diverse. It is the source of what we think of as Western civilisation. But Europe is not only to be thanked for introducing certain art forms and for its developments in science and technology. I am referring to a particular way of thinking and a particular way of perceiving the world and its various relationships. Even Latin America, it is claimed, is dominated by a Eurocentric cultural vision. The most popular languages spoken in this part of the world, Spanish and Portuguese, have their roots on the old continent, while the old languages of the region have disappeared or are slowly dying out, despite recent efforts to promote multiculturalism and inter-culturality. Even the dominant religion and other more recently arrived Christian denominations have come to us from Europe.

The most influential art forms in the region originally came from Europe, while

the heavyweight legacy of the Renaissance continues to be felt in many forms of culture, especially amongst the educated classes. We admire European writers of classic and contemporary literature, including popular works. We still listen to the music of the great European composers and their operas still shape people's tastes. We marvel at the paintings of the great European artists and are fascinated by other art forms of European art. Our education system is based on the structure of European systems, especially that of France. In many parts of the region, history lessons in secondary schools tend to start with the influence of the Hellenic tradition, rather than looking at local culture. As a result, we generally know more about Greek mythology than about the rich and complex holy pantheons of the Aztecs and the Maya.

### *A heavyweight legacy*

European cultural dialogue is rich and abundant, but so far it has taken place predominantly between the European countries themselves. The offspring of well-educated sections of the community often grow up speaking more than one language, which facilitates the lively exchange of ideas amongst the countries of mainland Europe and, to a lesser extent, the British Isles. Maybe it was from Europe that Latin America also inherited the nationalistic ideas that tend to persist in the region. On the old continent they are doing their best to rid themselves of them. What this comes down to is that knowledge of Europe's cultural legacy is fundamental to understanding contemporary civilisations, not only in the West, but on all five continents. Today, many forms of communication and culture have their roots in

this legacy, even in Oriental countries with their own ancient cultures.

The other side of the coin is the fact Latin American countries – and, I suspect, other parts of the world too – are still suffering from the legacy of past colonisation by the major European powers. Many Latin Americans find it hard to forgive or forget the fact that European religion, culture and civilisation were imposed on the region with the help of the sword and the cross. They know that much of Europe's wealth came from stealing the natural resources of its colonies and exploiting their population. In the last century, Europe was the origin and main battleground of two world wars that brought intense suffering to humankind. Luckily, we now live in peaceful times, even if the participation of some European countries in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have somewhat shaken our pacifist consciousness. Added to this is the fact that EUNIC is now trying to build new cultural relations and present a new picture of a united Europe. Such an endeavour brings with it a new promise of progress and understanding between the old continent and Latin America.

Latin America's cultural identity is made up of an archipelago of local ideas – some more nationalistic than others – that are still subject to the hegemony of global influences. The idea of multiculturalism as a vision for Latin America as a whole barely exists. There is a sense of national pride in all of our countries, a pride which was unfortunately stirred up by the experiences of war. Each country's sense of identity was forged during the struggles for independence against the major European powers. In some countries,

such as those that had stable pre-Columbian civilisations (Aztec, Inca and Maya) there tends to be an even stronger sense of national feeling. This is due to what might be termed cultural syncretism, a mixture of beliefs that resulted from the clashing and combining of European and local cultures. In other parts of the continent, those that were more sparsely populated and where the people were less advanced, the imported culture generally prevailed and many native peoples disappeared – and with them, their languages and customs.

### *New forms of cultural expression*

I believe that Latin America urgently needs some new forms of cultural expression that acknowledge our past history while looking very much to the future. We need to develop a more cosmopolitan vision, one that takes the world and humanity as a whole into consideration. We also need to retain our pride in our own culture, but with a more global perspective. There are many types of cultural initiatives – especially in the formal education sector – which could be expanded beyond Europe to include Latin America. I believe the main prerequisite is that these initiatives should be seen as partnerships of equals. The countries on this side of the Atlantic must be treated as mature states in their own right and the old paternalism of Europe's colonial past must not be allowed to raise its ugly head. Cultural and educational diplomacy could be an ideal way to help develop closer ties between Europe and Latin America.

Artistic exchange still tends to follow the same old route: from Europe to Latin America. It is important that we make every effort to encourage exchange in the opposite

direction. In Latin America we have orchestras, music groups, sculptors and writers of the highest quality, who remain unknown in Europe. EUNIC could organise concert tours for these bands or exhibitions for the sculptors. They could also arrange for Spanish and Portuguese works to be translated into other European languages and promote their circulation. The same goes for translations from European languages into the Spanish and Portuguese spoken in Latin America, as opposed to that spoken in Spain and Portugal.

More resources are needed for the development of regular exchange within the formal education sector. There are already a number of scholarships available to Latin American students to study in Europe, but there could be more. Also, few Europeans seem keen to study in Latin America. Professors and postgraduate students come here to do research into what is happening in the region or to delve into our history, but not to get an education at one of our universities. In spite of some major shortcomings, our larger institutions have a great deal to offer at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and not just in terms of learning languages and studying anthropology. We want to be seen as partners, not inferiors. I suspect it may be difficult for some European countries, especially those with a significant history of colonialism, to easily rid themselves of certain traditions, including paternalistic attitudes and the acceptance of long-standing social structures. At the same time, it is also likely to be difficult for many countries on this side of the Atlantic to move away from a tenden-

cy towards nationalism, as it has become so entrenched over the years. Nevertheless, our history is challenging us to change our ways and to forge a different future.

In the main, it has been the national cultural institutes and certain European governmental authorities that have until now been responsible for organising exchange and cooperation programmes with Latin American countries. This has generated a wealth of experience which could be built upon and provide the basis for future cooperation at EU level. But it is worth repeating: if the aim is to create trust and open doors, then the traditional, paternalistic approach will be a major obstacle to progress. Cooperation between European and Latin American cultural institutions is one way to help create trust, build bridges and overcome language barriers. The internet offers a great opportunity to make learning European languages more affordable.

The number of routes in Latin America for culture tourists could be expanded to help ensure that visitors from Europe have the opportunity to get to know and better understand our cultural heritage, our pre-Columbian roots and our potential for integration into today's ever-changing world order. Messages of peace, democracy, mutual trust and mutual cooperation could prove to be the keys to open all these doors, without any nationalistic border controls standing in the way.

Mexico has so much to offer the world,

“Very little of our popular culture manages to transcend our borders, and when it does, it rarely spreads beyond the USA's Mexican and Latin American population.”

but our current approach to cultural activities tends to be too parochial. Very few of our writers, composers and sculptors have become well-known beyond our borders. We have a rich cultural history: our pre-Columbian heritage is there for all to see in the restored ruins; the work of great twentieth-century mural painters adorns the walls of prestigious public buildings and while Mexican symphony music is of the very highest standard, it is little known outside Mexico. Meanwhile, very little of our popular culture manages to transcend our borders, and when it does, it rarely spreads beyond the USA's Mexican and Latin American population. Over recent decades, the tendency to isolate Mexico has been declining. However, even though there has been some evidence of the country opening up at cultural level (such as through translations of classic, mostly European books; the import of musical and artistic forms of cultural expression; and the influence of European architecture), the country's closed economy still presents a serious obstacle to more significant exchange. Mexico's membership of GATT (the equivalent of today's World Trade Organisation) in 1986 and the start of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, saw some of these barriers start to come down. There has, however, been a substantial time-lag between these economic changes and improvements in the level of cultural exchange.

Mexico is a country with many different cultures and living languages, yet it does not practice multiculturalism and has no recognisable intercultural policies. The cultural persistence of the regime of the Mexican

Revolution – which some people called revolutionary nationalism – is clear to see in Mexico’s officially-promoted culture, but is particularly weak within popular culture. As in Europe, the US tends to dominate in this area and it is spreading rapidly with the advent of modern information and communications technology. US influence on the education sector is also growing steadily, especially in the university sector, even though many Mexicans would actually prefer to study in Europe, particularly in Spain.

I foresee many challenges facing education and the development of a cosmopolitan culture in Europe, because these tend to be of a predominantly national nature. It will fall to the more liberal-minded sectors of society to support these particular types of culture. But they will not be able to achieve this alone and this is where EUNIC can bring its intellectual resources and experience to the table. Europe can make a significant contribution to building trust between the cultural communities on both sides of the Atlantic through cooperation and exchange. With the creation of EUNIC, it is now time to start thinking about some more far-reaching initiatives. Should there be investment in a more ambitious form of cultural diplomacy at EU level, for example, rather than focusing efforts at individual nation state level? Exchange programmes like ALFA and EURIAS or projects such as the Comenius or Erasmus Mundus programmes could be strengthened and expanded.

European culture continues to dominate in the West, even if US American culture is clearly dominates popular culture. People’s cultural awareness has very deep roots that go far beyond what can be seen on TV, the cinema, or disseminated by modern technology. The search for these roots and their connection with universal cultural values

could be the starting point for a new, more substantial cosmopolitan culture – one that will have a much greater reach than simple multiculturalism and that will encompass not just individual peoples but mankind as a whole.

Perhaps the most important thing that Europe can do is to work together with Latin America’s cultural institutes to help sow the seeds for such long-term development. Peaceful coexistence is the objective and cultural exchange the means by which peace can be achieved and democracy can be spread through-out the world. This, at least, is my expectation.

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**Leading by example** The oft-cited ‘democratic deficit’ of the EU has its roots in the non-existence of a European public that is able to discuss European politics and thus not only legitimise European politics and policies, but also European politicians. This is why democrats all over the world, that is to say, people who believe in the power of collective decision-making and the importance of dialogue and deliberation, think of the EU as an unfinished project – but also as a promise *By Bernd Reiter*



What could a European cultural foreign policy look like? What are its strengths, its potential, its limitations? How are current EU cultural policy initiatives perceived abroad and what are the expectations of countries such as the United States, and indeed the Americas as a whole, when it comes to European cultural foreign policy?

My own ‘expertise’ in this field comes from the fact that I am a political scientist who has spent the last two decades in the Americas, mostly in Colombia, Brazil, and the last 15 years in the United States. Although I hold an EU passport, I have become a foreigner to the EU, which allows me to take an outsider’s view of EU cultural foreign policy while at the same time feeling connected to it. Instead of being an “outsider within,” (a term coined by

the US black feminist Patricia Hill Collins) I have become an “insider outside”.

What, then, could or even should a European cultural foreign policy look like or consist of? To address this question, it seems important to create some clarity about what foreign policy really means. Foreign policy, according to the Webster dictionary, is “the policy of a sovereign state in its interaction with other sovereign states.” Webster’s dictionary further explains that foreign policy consists of “General objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states.” The development of foreign policy is influenced by domestic considerations, the policies or behaviour of other states, or plans to advance specific geopolitical designs. Leopold von Ranke emphasised the primacy of geography and external threats in shaping foreign policy, but later writers emphasised domestic factors. Diplomacy is the tool of foreign policy, and war, alliances, and international trade may all be manifestations of it.

As any scholar of international relations will readily point out, foreign policy is by definition driven by national interests. The first of these is security, followed closely by pros-

perity, which means economic growth. In a nutshell, all types of foreign policy have the aim of increasing the wellbeing of those that live in that particular constituency. This cannot be otherwise, particularly if this constituency follows democratic rules of representation. The logic here is simple: it is not possible to get elected to represent a group of people by advocating the wellbeing of another group of people. This means – quite justifiably – that an ‘us first’ logic must necessarily dominate any foreign policy.

### *Sovereignty is an illusion*

I would venture to say that it is impossible for foreign policy to avoid pursuing this primary aim and that the only difference between countries is their ability (or ‘capability’, to use the jargon of political science) to actually act on their foreign policy objectives. Most countries cannot do this because they lack the power to pursue those goals that best advance their own interests. Their sovereignty is an illusion (see: Stephen Krasner, 1999: *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press). So the first lesson that can be drawn from this short exercise is that advocating a foreign policy – cultural or otherwise – that aims to benefit others is not only impossible but also naïve. Any elected French official who focuses more on the wellbeing of the Germans, Americans or Brazilians than that of the French will surely face a short time in office. From this ‘realist’ perspective, the question about the expectations that the US or Latin America have of the EU’s

cultural foreign policy can be answered in a word: none. At best they anticipate a cultural foreign policy that does not impact them negatively and that does not stand in the way of their own foreign policies that are aimed at advancing the wellbeing of ‘their’ people.

I suspect this perspective is predominant among people who are engaged in formulating and carrying out national foreign policy objectives. These policy professionals also know that for the sake of good bilateral and multilateral relations it is better if they avoid spelling out this obvious truth. Instead, they are expected to mouth largely empty phrases about ‘cooperation’, ‘joint efforts’, ‘mutuality’, and so on. After all, your own foreign policy is potentially in conflict with that of thy neighbour. As a result, diplomacy generally consists of cultivating the art of not saying what one knows and not meaning what one says – while at the same time smiling and shaking hands.

This perspective is, however, only one among many. It is strongly conditioned by the dominance of national interests and makes a strong argument in a world that is divided into nation states. The EU provides an exception to this general rule and, contrary to the widespread saying, exceptions do not prove the rule. Rather, they allow us to explore what lessons can be learned from such an exceptional, outlying, deviant, or perhaps crucially important example as the EU.

“The United States does not have a department of culture. Instead, different cities have departments or bureaus that seek to promote those cultural expressions that sell well, attract tourists and increase their revenues.”

For a political scientist like myself, the lessons we can learn from the EU are intriguing, and I venture to say that the expectations we who reside outside of the EU should have are of considerable importance. EU internal cultural policies offer lessons to our divided world.

### *Beyond national foreign cultural policy*

At the core of this lesson is the insight that national foreign policy objectives might be more successfully achieved through cooperation. This is particularly true in the context of small and medium-sized countries that do not have the capacity (or capability) to conduct their foreign policy independently and, if necessary, against the will of other countries or even a majority of countries. The only country that is still able to do so is the United States, and we should not be surprised if we witness the USA acting in their own interests – even if this means acting against the interest of other countries. Independence, after all, means not having to ask others for permission or support.

The EU, on the other hand, provides perhaps the only empirical example of how national foreign policies can be achieved more efficiently and hence successfully by fine tuning and clustering potentially divergent national interests. As such, it can teach a lesson to the world: there is strength in unity and the smartest way to actually achieve one’s foreign policy, cultural or other, is by joining other countries that would otherwise also lack the power, independence, and sovereignty to fully achieve theirs.

As a foreigner with an emotional attachment to the EU, I believe most of the world expects the EU to succeed in overcoming national divisions and by doing so set an example for the world, not only showing that such a thing is possible, but also how precisely it can be achieved. This is particularly the case for most Latin American countries, whose dreams of unity stretch back to the 1820s and liberators such as Simon Bolivar, along with influential leaders and intellectuals such as the Cuban independence fighter Jose Marti and Mexican intellectual Jose Vasconcelos. They all spoke enthusiastically of a Latin American soul that unites all of its people.

What, then, is the role of culture in foreign relations? What complicates a coherent answer is the problem of the concept of ‘culture’. What is it? Whose culture? Which culture should we be promoting? Tellingly, the United States does not have a department of culture. Instead, different cities have departments or bureaus that seek to promote those cultural expressions that sell well, attract tourists and increase their revenues. In contrast, most Latin American countries do have departments, secretariats or ministries of culture, but in most cases they have a similar task: to promote the saleable components of cultural expression abroad. Again tellingly, in many Latin American countries the ministries of culture are actually called ministries of tourism and culture.

Promoting certain cultural expressions bears the inherent risk of commodifying them. This leads to the trap of the ‘culture industry’, as has been well described by German social philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. It turns out that culture is similar to religion in that it does not always fare well when promoted by states.

To complicate matters still further, from a US perspective, the quest to promote cul-

ture abroad or even internally immediately comes up against the question: whose culture exactly? There is no coherent ‘American society’ that shares one culture. On the contrary, Irish-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, African-Americans, to name but a few, all actively seek to keep their cultural differences alive through cultural activities such as parades, the publication of non-English-language newspapers, and the maintenance of foreign language schools for their offspring – all in an effort to preserve ‘who they are’. As soon as governments step in to support the cultural expression of one group, it is likely that all the others will feel neglected and demand equality and recognition. But how many different religious holidays can and should we have?

### *A vibrant public sphere*

Similarly, the decision about whose cultural expressions deserve support is necessarily value-laden and in most cases biased towards the cultural expressions of the rich. It is not immediately obvious why supporting opera is more important than supporting card games or bingo venues. Supporting and promoting culture, in short, is inherently problematic and runs the risk of favouring one cultural expression over another. As populations almost everywhere are becoming increasingly multicultural, this risk is now unavoidable.

When analysed from a social science angle, culture and language must play a central role in promoting a shared public sphere. After all, as philosopher Jürgen Habermas has

explained at length, a vibrant democracy relies on a vibrant public sphere, where controversial ideas and proposals are discussed by a broad spectrum of citizens. The EU’s oft-cited ‘democratic deficit’ has its roots in the non-existence of a European public that is able to discuss European politics and thus not only legitimise European politics and policies, but also European politicians. The latter remain relatively unknown to the general public and their actions seem only tenuously connected to the interests of those they ‘represent’.

Those of us who believe in democracy, dialogue, and the overcoming of national borders and conflicts hope to see the EU actually practising what has been theorised about and desired for so long: a legitimate supranational democracy based on a vibrant public exchange of ideas and preferences through different deliberative channels and mechanisms.

However, the first, sine-qua-non condition for this to occur still remains unmet in the Europe of today: a shared language so that people from different countries can communicate and understand each other. This is a necessary though still inadequate condition for a European public sphere – and it can only be advanced by promoting language learning and interchange. Therefore democrats around the world hope that programmes promoting inter-European interchange and dialogue – such

“We expect the EU to work out and live up to its potential and promise so it can serve all of us as a model and provide us with the guidance and the arguments we need against all those who say that ‘there is no alternative’ to national competition.”

as Erasmus – will attract increasing support and adherence in order to enable the gradual formation of a European public.

Overcoming national borders and divisive cultural practices that highlight differences rather than commonalities is the most important and, dare I say, ‘noblest’ task of any cultural policy. This is even more the case in a world where ‘normality’ has come to mean ‘nation state’. This is why democrats all over the world, that is to say, people who believe in the power of collective decision-making and the importance of dialogue and deliberation, think of the EU as an unfinished project – but also as a promise. Europe is not an exception that proves the rule, but a crucially important case that has the power to demonstrate that overcoming national interests is possible and that much good can come from cooperation, including greater influence and power on the world scene.

A national foreign policy, cultural or otherwise, cannot by its very definition avoid promoting national interests over others and in most cases over all others. As such, it is not a viable, let alone desirable, utopia. In a game where everyone plays against everyone else and where the players’ sole motivation for action is the promotion of their own self-interest, any possible outcome is sub-optimal and unsustainable in the long run, as marginal returns will necessarily decline over time. We expect the EU to work out and live up to its potential and promise so it can serve all of us as a model and provide us with the guidance and the arguments we need against all those who argue that there is no alternative to national competition.

The first, very necessary step that the EU

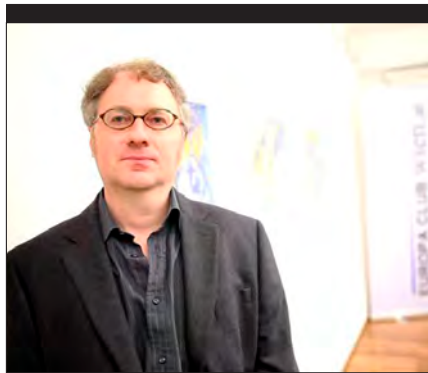
needs to take is to promote a stronger European public that is able to communicate, conduct dialogue, and deliberate across national borders. In this way it can create the kind of public sphere that is essential to a vibrant and true democracy.

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To remember or to forget? The death penalty, guns, Guantanamo, the NSA? So what? The United States and Europe are very different, despite all their talk of common values. In Norway, the mass murder committed by Anders Breivik was an anomaly, a once-in-a-century happening, whereas in the USA it is a cultural phenomenon that is almost part of everyday life. According to statistics, there is a spree killing in the USA every two weeks. What does this mean for European and US culture? *By Roland Benedikter*



How was the Breivik trial and the way Norway dealt with these mass murders perceived in the USA? Comparisons are now being made with the killings that took place in Aurora, Colorado in July 2012. This was also no classic gun rampage, but – like Breivik’s murders – a calculated mixture of organised mass murder, attacks and the apparent proto-cultural ‘self-assertion’ of an individual against the community.

On 20 July 2012, a frustrated former student, James Eagan Holmes, went on a killing spree in a cinema in the small town of Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight screening of the new blockbuster, *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises*. It was an apparent protest against his social situation and what he perceived as unfair treatment by the US edu-

cation system and society in general. Wearing military-style clothing, he killed 12 people and wounded 58 more. The 70 dead or wounded victims, whose ages ranged from 6 to 51 years old, made Aurora the biggest mass killing by a lone gunman in American history.

Holmes has been in police custody ever since. Because he begged the police for mercy, he was arrested at the scene without putting up any resistance. This was in contrast to the normal outcome of such situations in America and goes against the country’s unwritten rule that such offenders are shot dead at the site of their crime. However, he still potentially faces the death penalty, as Colorado is one of the states that still practices capital punishment.

The immediate reaction to the Aurora massacre was a huge increase in the sale of guns, not only in Colorado but also across the rest of America, and the renaissance of the slogan “Only an armed society is a safe society. If everybody is armed, nobody can kill more than one person”. Gun sales went up by 43 percent in Colorado in the week following the Aurora massacre compared to

the previous week, with a total of 2,887 guns being sold. That would be the equivalent of more than 150,000 new gun sales per year amongst a population of just over 5 million people (equivalent to the population of Norway) and with a similar population density.

The Aurora massacre also rekindled the nationwide debate on the advantages and disadvantages of America’s gun laws. While the overwhelming majority seemed to agree that it would have been highly unlikely, if not impossible, for such a massacre to take place without the existing, liberal gun laws, the results of a survey published by the Pew Research Center on 30 July 2012 suggested that the incident had had little impact on the views of the majority of middle America when it came to guns and gun possession.

This came as no real surprise, as this is a cultural issue. There is always a time-lag when it comes to culture – it has a different rhythm to politics, conflicts, business or technology. So it was not to be expected that one single incident would suddenly change everything. Is that good or bad? And what about the suggestion by the Norwegian government that one single two-day event – the Breivik massacre – changed Norway’s entire history at one fell swoop?

In fact, in contrast to Norway’s efforts to find some kind of ‘appeasement’ or ‘unity’ in the wake of the Breivik case, the main issue at stake with the Aurora incident from the US perspective is whether the perpetrator will still be seen as the ‘bad guy’ after he has had a year to put forward his views and arguments in front of the assembled media. And if not, if he is out of necessity elevated to the status of hero because, as the German director Wim Wenders once said, there are no images that are against something, only images that are for something: what can be done to stop him becoming some kind of cultural icon?

A cultural icon that may possibly have unlimited influence on society, but which that society fundamentally wants nothing to do with and wants to oppose?

#### *America’s coping strategies*

America’s main coping strategy in the wake of Aurora was to recognise the need to answer the following questions: how many killing sprees or mass murders actually take place in the USA each year? How many of the perpetrators are put in prison like Breivik and how many are shot while they are still trying to kill people or in the aftermath of the killing? What significance does this have for the general strategy employed by a country 63 times the size of Norway when it comes to dealing with mass trauma perpetrated by individuals against society as a whole?

The difference between smaller societies and huge nations is a key factor here. For Norway, Breivik’s mass murders were something highly unusual, while in the USA such killings are practically a day-to-day cultural phenomenon. Statistics show that in the USA somebody goes on a killing spree or carries out mass murder – as opposed to serial killing – on average every two weeks. According to the internationally-recognised definition from the US Bureau of Justice Statistics in Washington DC, mass murder is when more than 4 people are murdered at one and the same location within one event and in a relatively short space of time.

According to official statistics and studies by the University of Virginia and the Northeastern University in Boston, (headed up by James Fox and Jack Levin, who suggested that this kind of phenomenon first started to become a “naturalised, long-term” cultural phenomenon around 1966), there were on average three mass murders or spree killings per month in the USA between 1976 and 1985 with more than 1,700 victims in total during the ten years that were studied. Between 2007 and 2009 there were 79 spree killings and mass murders, if we only count mass murders with more than 4 victims – if we were to include murders with three victims, even the most cautious of estimates suggest that the figure would be five times as high, at around 400. Mass murders between 2007 and 2009 accounted for 1,600 victims. During 2008 alone, 421 workplace shootings were recorded in the USA, some of which fall into the mass murder category, and between 2004 and 2008 there were an average 564 work-related murders per year. According to ABC correspondent Pierre Thomas, the average number of mass murders in the USA between 2007 and 2009 was 25 per year.

### *A disturbing trend*

Fox and Levin believe the reason for the rapid increase in mass murders (“a disturbing trend”) lies in the growth of the US population and the resulting increase in competitive pressures, the ageing of the baby boomer generation of the 1950s with its associated

accumulation of despair, and a loss of the kind of ethical values that bind society together. Added to this is the advance of individualisation, especially in the shape of what, for many Americans, is an uncomfortable contradiction between competitive individualisation and (ethnic, social, national and gender) collectivity. This is an aspect that deserves special attention in the Breivik case, where an individual, lone killer without accomplices killed many people in order to save ‘the nation’ or the group, against which he himself was carrying out a violent act. In 75 percent of cases in the USA, the mass murderer is known to the victims, and in almost 100 percent of cases is a white male. While the Breivik murders in Norway resulted in a more than average number of deaths, they still basically followed the same pattern as similar mass murders in the USA.

The differences in the extent to which such murders are ‘embedded’ in society, along with the sheer numbers, mean that cultural coping strategies in the USA are quite different from those practised in Europe in general and in Norway in particular. While Europe’s backward-looking cultures instinctively try to come to terms with a past event through remembering and keeping it fresh in people’s minds, the more forward-looking US culture – in keeping with the American spirit and sense of self-identity – tends to try to overcome the past with a ‘one-time solution’, mostly through the violent removal of the perpetrator. The event is usually then deliberately forgotten about in order to concentrate on the future.

In Europe, the perpetrator is usually imprisoned and protected from revenge attacks and then becomes the centre of attempts to come to terms with what has happened. The perpetrator’s psyche is analysed and is necessarily culturally propagated. In America the perpetrator is usually killed and systematically forgotten. In Europe people tend to remember the names of the killers, while in the USA the identity of most mass murderers remains unknown and does not generally form part of a collective memory. One of the main reasons for this is the sheer number of murderers. Norway dedicated 13 months to coming to terms with one single mass murder. If the USA were to devote the equivalent amount of political, psychological, cultural and media effort to each of its spree killings and mass murders it would spend its whole time on exercising constant, unremitting coping strategies.

### *Aurora: an exception to the rule?*

In terms of the overall picture in America, Aurora was one of the few exceptions to the unwritten rule that anyone who commits

“In Europe, the perpetrator is usually imprisoned and protected from revenge attacks and then becomes the centre of attempts to come to terms with what has happened. The perpetrator’s psyche is analysed and is necessarily culturally propagated. In America the perpetrator is usually killed and systematically forgotten.”

spree killings or mass murder can expect to be killed on the spot and is only likely to be arrested in exceptional circumstances. If a police officer is wounded during the operation, then death is an even more likely outcome for the perpetrator. In accordance with an unwritten rule that is actively supported by the Republicans and silently supported by the Democrats, anyone in the USA who shoots a police officer will, with few exceptions, be hunted down and killed.

Since 1980, 80 percent of assassins have either been shot or have committed suicide or suicide by cop (deliberately allowing themselves to be shot by the police). In contrast to Breivik, who is incarcerated in a state-of-the-art facility that was specially built for him at a cost of millions, many of the remaining 20 percent face the death penalty. The same principle of ‘eradication’ applies, just with a time delay.

The Aurora perpetrator’s arrest was an exception that ultimately still proves the rule. The next spree killer, in Wisconsin on 5 August 2012, attracted even more media attention than the Aurora killer a few weeks earlier. He was immediately shot and then forgotten. Outside of the statistics office, no-one remembers these murderers’ names, nobody worries about what their motives might have been. They simply suffer a miserable and inglorious death. The Aurora killer himself is likely to face the death penalty if found guilty.

This ‘process’ of ‘eradicate, draw a line and move on’ is anchored in a particular US civil religion and mythology that emerged

from the country's pioneering expansion westwards from the 17th to the 19th century. Is this a less suitable response than the European method of remembering and appropriating, as Norwegian politician and diplomat Jan Egeland seems to think? In other words, from a cultural perspective is it inherently 'worse' to eradicate, suppress and forget than to remember and keep an event fresh in people's minds? Is the emphasis on drawing a line somehow less expedient than giving ourselves constant reminders? Which approach is more likely to lead to new beginnings and a better future? And which is better suited to helping people come to terms with traumatic events?

Firstly, compared to larger nations, small societies such as Norway have totally different social and family systems, not least in their economy of action, reaction and counter-reaction to events and the way they evaluate their significance to society as a whole in a historical context. Secondly, Norway has been the wealthiest country in the world for some years now, while the USA has been steadily dropping down the wealth rankings (in 2012 it was number 12). This can lead to a different perception of social conflicts, including crime. Thirdly, the USA, in contrast to European countries, is much more of an idea than a nation. As a migrant country it has a meta-national population, while Norway is a classic nuclear-family, uniform-culture nation. And finally, Norway is the only country to claim in its planning for the future that it 'will have lived' on its oil revenues – so it lives in the future perfect

tense – and has a basic situation that differs from most other countries in the world, making it difficult to pigeonhole in terms of its self-management.

By contrast, the programmatic, conceptual and systematic 'void' that characterises the cultural heart of America, particularly as a result of its relatively radical focus on the future (and which, among other things, has led to it not having a ministry of culture), owes much to its radical impartiality and openness, which encourages the country to anticipate everything, even though it may not yet have a concrete form, and stops it from conserving anything.

European societies, including Norway could be called cultures of past imagination, which live to deepen and expand these imaginations as stable, enduring, circumnavigable forms. America, on the other hand, is a culture of pure inspiration, in which nothing has or indeed should have a permanently fixed form, but in which everything flows like primordial, energetic, intensively possible pre-formal mass of future anticipation and only takes on temporary forms without ever settling on anything. Everything is provisional because it anticipates something in progress, which in turn, as it becomes reality, effectively actively develops into a pre-formal nascent thought or concept in its own right. While in European societies 'the work' is

“At the end of 2011, the Obama administration was the first to officially apologise for what happened and to begin the long, slow process of paying reparations to the Native Americans for injustice, confiscation of land and murder.”

the key cultural criterion, in America it is 'the becoming' that is important, in that all 'work' immediately dissolves, becomes fluid and returns to a state of becoming. To put it another way, Europe, from a typological point of view, is a culture of form and being, while America is a culture of energy and life.

### *Preservation vs. destruction*

Europe likes to preserve things and treat them with care, while America likes to destroy and renew. In other words, Europe finds gratification in its interpretation of the word 'Aufhebung' as preservation, while America understands it by its other Hegelian meaning, that of annihilation. It is no accident that European popular cultures still dream of one place, their 'Heimat' from which they derive their self-identity, while in American culture there is no concept of 'Heimat' that comes close to this. American culture dreams as much about self-destruction as about its future, as evidenced by the way its film industry delights in telling stories of destroyed cities, apocalypses and the destruction of US civilisation. America wants and needs to destroy itself in order to renew itself. It has as much desire for this as for its positive rebuilding. This is something that Europeans find endlessly fascinating, but which, from their own cultural viewpoint, they also find difficult or impossible to understand.

All this has an impact on how the different cultures deal with the issue of mass murder.

In Europe there is tendency towards caution, remembering and preserving, while in America the attitude is more one of drawing a line under things and eradicating past deeds from society's collective memory in order to be able to move forward. Both approaches have their own historical contexts, which help to justify them, but both approaches also have their undeniable weaknesses and problems.

Another reason why the USA has a different process for coming to terms with such events is because it has a different collective unconscious to Europe, and not only because of the different relative ages of the two Atlantic civilisations.

One very important factor, which is widely under-appreciated in the USA and even deliberately suppressed, is the latent violence of the collective US unconscious as a result of the genocide of the Native Americans, probably the biggest genocide of all time. At the end of 2011, the Obama administration was the first to officially apologise for what happened and to begin the long, slow process of paying reparations for injustice, confiscation of land and murder. Prior to that, every administration since 1776 had either ignored the subject or more-or-less denied that it had ever happened.

There can in fact be many advantages in an approach that represses and forgets in order to focus on the future – as America has historically done using violence – and if it is accepted that this is the price that must be paid for the past. It can be particularly advantageous in terms of speed of development and unfettered societal progress.

However, when it comes to the long-term resilience of open societies, there is also a disadvantage that should not be underestimated. This is the fact that this approach becomes a key part of the collective unconscious, as we know from the post-modern social analyses of Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard and Lacan. Indeed, this is the central paradox of America's present, anchored in its past: America destroys original cultures and ignores minority and group rights in favour of the uniqueness, cultural and ancestral dependence, powerful truth and distinctiveness of the individual, and, in doing so, radically favours the future over the past and the present through the principle of eradication.

But at the same time, and indeed because of this principle of suppression and forgetting in relation to the collective in favour of the individual, an unconscious has been developing over the decades and centuries that is rooted in this very principle of suppression.

The non-analysed, suppressed genocide of the Native Americans has had a huge influence on the collective future-oriented unconscious of America. But does this kind of unconscious make society more or less resilient? Is it the European or the American approach that can claim to have had a more powerful, lasting and positive effect on the robustness of their societies? From the perspective of an 'outsider' with as independent a view as possible, the answer is (at least hypothetically speaking) ambivalent to say the least, because both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages.

### *Suppression for the sake of the future?*

To a certain extent, Europe has too much memory, while America has too little. Europe has a culture of 'universal memory', a multi-layered culture, a culture of harmonised differences (and therefore a culture of 'one from the many'). America has a culture of the 'permanent Mnemosyne', a one-dimensional culture, a culture of 'one' future for the (many different) individualities in monochronicity (and therefore a culture of 'unity from the many' that is very different to the European concept). This is why Europe still has a culture of the past, while America has a culture of the present. Europe's over-enthusiasm for remembering and archiving simply creates more and more mythological ballast, which ultimately weighs it down, like Breivik, who has become a negative icon. On the other hand, America's destruction of its present and future in order to create more space for its future creates suppression, which in turn leads to a problematical unconscious that continues to work because it is not capable of dealing with itself.

Or, to be provocative, we could say that the past, even if we have come to terms with it, causes division. This is because it is associated with individual points of view, which in free societies are and must remain irreconcilable, in that what has already happened cannot be changed. However, a future that is achieved at the cost of destruction can bring people together because it is associated with possibilities and ambitions. In the same way, culture, in its oneness with politics and the boundaries of community in the sense of the classic nation state, can hinder the development of some forms of humanity that represent the only hope for the 21st century, because it is divisive. Meanwhile, technology, which is increasingly replacing culture, can

unite humanity because it serves to destroy the past. In principle, and with no exceptions, these two facts are tragic. And they are both extremely painful, not only for the individual, but for the community as a whole.

Open societies that are built on the past, such as those in Europe, are in effect built of the foundations of ongoing conflict, because the past is divisive. This is convincingly argued by French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard in his chief politico-philosophical work, *The Differend*. Their present is three-dimensional and 'physically' rich, and continues to be constantly enriched because they contain all of the past and their perception of the present is that a rich past has brought about the present – it is the fruit of the past and so is 'infinitely' valuable.

However, open societies like the USA that are built on the future are founded on the principle of a living, 'motivating' civil religion, on broad ideals that have the future at their heart, such as the American right to the pursuit of happiness, along with individual space, the development and expansion of individuality, the freedom to strive to be the best you can be. In principle, these types of civil religious ideals tend to have a unifying effect because of collective ambition and the pleasure, even pride, in what might be possible in the future.

Because America has a can-do mentality, civil religion is perceived as being directly associated with the striving of the individual and of society as a whole. The deeply-held belief in America is that crises and traumas cannot be effectively overcome without civil

religion, that is to say a trust in the ability to directly experience future possibilities and the mythological legitimisation and embedding of these possibilities in the collective unconscious. This is why much higher value is placed on motivation and the activation of ideals when faced with a traumatic event, whereas in Europe the contemplation of ideals means falling back on concrete certainties in an in-depth analysis. So we have two entirely different ways of looking at and coming to terms with specific events.

### *Collective myths*

But civil religion is inextricably bound up with collective myths of origin. To a certain extent, it represents the secular expression of these myths, even if they are expressed in quite different ways in the USA and Europe. In the USA this connection is immediately obvious because the American constitution is the direct, deliberate and conscious expression of Masonic, Rosicrucian and Enlightenment ideals, as the American founding fathers were keen to stress, and which has been confirmed by international research.

The same applies to Europe's spiritual, cultural and social history. Without community-shaping mythology, there would be no civil religion, and without civil religion there would be no social kit and no common foundation of fundamental ideas on which to base society, even if the role of civil religion is less pronounced and also less clearly visible than in the USA.

We have to assume, therefore, that the resilience of a particular society, at least at its deepest levels, must also be dependent on that society's civil religion and therefore on its collective myths, whatever shape or form they may take. This is an ever-present and accepted feature of American realpolitik, day-to-day policy, debates and election campaigns. However, Central Europe – which was hugely impacted by a form of 20th-century totalitarianism that was based on (bogus) proto and civil religious claims of supremacy – has long been highly sceptical of or indeed totally rejected it, and with good reason. Europe seems happier working with day-to-day secular politics than with civil religion.

What makes the Breivik case so special is the fact that, as one of the first postmodern and secular European nations, Norway has for the first time in European post-war history recognised the fundamental significance of the civil religious aspects of the case, and also expressed it in political terms by systematically incorporating the civil religious layer into their attempts at national healing. Norway's focus on values in dealing with the mass trauma was nothing less than the rediscovery and reactivation of civil religion as a political force within Europe.

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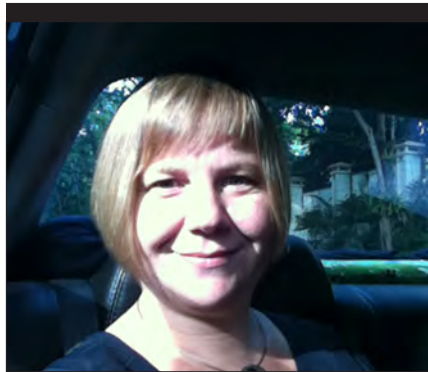


### Chapter 3: Taking EUNIC to the world – a roadmap for the network

It's all in the mix: EUNIC, the European network of national institutes for culture, is active in every corner of the globe. Working in more than 150 countries with over 2,000 branches and more than 25,000 staff, its members reach an extraordinary number of people. The network's cultural institutes have many years of experience in international cultural diplomacy, along with extensive knowledge about the politics and culture of specific countries. They have a feel for cultural trends, connections to local cultural scenes and access to civil societies and independent artists. It is vital that the European Union makes the very best use of this expertise in its external cultural relations.

What is the best way for EUNIC and other European institutions to improve their relations with other world regions? Which forms of cooperation really work in practice and what is needed for the future?

From conversation to ‘conversAsian’? In Asia, large-scale development is taking place in the arts and culture, logistics, infrastructure, tourism, information technology, broadcasting and new media – resulting in economic growth, creative wealth and social participation. Clearly it is now time for Europe to re-invent its cultural engagement in Asia. The typical ‘Asia Club’ can no longer be confined to India, China and Japan, with Korea as its latest member.  
By *Katelijan Verstraete*



Europe’s cultural engagement with Asia is much more complex than any geographical notion of Asia. The differences between South, Southeast and East Asia are far greater than the diversity found in Europe. And it is not simply about Europe in Asia, but about Asia in Europe. Europe is a large market for Asia, and culture is what attracts most Asians to visit Europe. But Asia also wants to be seen in Europe. The economic attraction of Asia needs to be translated into a deeper cultural interest on the part of Europe. In Australia, where the dominant culture is still very much inspired by Europe, the government aims to build up more ‘Asia literacy’, as mentioned in the 2013 white paper Australia in the Asian Century.

Given Asia’s economic importance, this is also something the EU should be looking into. The EU needs to consider Asia as more than India, China and Japan, with Korea as a recent new addition to the generic ‘Asia club’. It also needs to place its engagement in the context of other players in the field such as the US, which still has a crucial impact with its music, film and media exposure in Asia. The current EU-funded research by a consortium

The 21st century is the century of Asia. Asia is asking for a more balanced relationship with Europe and wants to take a greater share of cultural leadership on the global stage. How should Europe respond to this? And when we talk about Asia, what ‘Asia’ do we mean in this globally and virtually connected and interdependent world?

I am based in Singapore and cover a region that encompasses 14 Asian and Asia-Pacific countries. It is clear to me that Asia is increasingly interested in regional exchange rather than in exchange with far-off Europe.

of partners to advise on culture and external relations will fund in-depth analysis of cultural cooperation and perceptions of Europe’s engagements. But unfortunately this research is quite limited and only addresses those few Asian countries that seem to be of current strategic economic importance to the EU.

Research should include cultural relations between the EU and ASEAN, both complex groupings of a diversity of cultures. The EU needs to strengthen its engagement with ASEAN in cultural matters. Europe’s experience in building cultural communities can serve as an inspiration for ASEAN’s similar endeavours.

The geopolitical landscape in Asia is changing and this also has an impact on cultural engagement between Asian countries. Japan’s interest in cultural engagement with the VIP (Vietnam-Indonesia-Philippines) and TIP (Thailand-Indonesia-Philippines) countries, Korea’s active engagement in ASEAN cultural development and China’s eagerness to be more involved with ASEAN are all examples that the EU should bear in mind when formulating its strategic approach to cultural engagement with Asia. Bi-regional co-operation is as high on the agenda as bi-lateral co-operation. There is keen interest in working with the EU on bi-regional programmes, as has been clearly expressed by the head of the Philippines Film Development Council, who is leading the Film ASEAN initiative.

Asian perceptions of Europe’s cultural engagement depend on several factors. Whether organised by EUNIC, EU Delegations, embassies or NGOs, the frequency, quality, pro-

motion and context of the project are all critical. In Vietnam, Thailand and to a certain extent the Philippines, local audiences have welcomed EUNIC cluster initiatives in areas such as contemporary dance, literature and street theatre. These initiatives certainly help to raise awareness of Europe as an entity rather than as single nation states or as simply the ‘big three’ (France, Germany and the UK).

#### *More imaginative programmes based on real needs*

The film festivals that are coordinated by EU Delegations locally need to go beyond being just showcases. The sector does not generally perceive these festivals as being innovative and they are often poorly attended. Film exchanges between Asia and Europe bring with them many opportunities for collaboration. The confusion (or is it competition?) between EU and EUNIC initiatives does not currently do anything to boost Europe’s image. It is important to clarify roles and encourage better communication between institutions.

Cooperation should go beyond ‘showcasing Europe’ towards more collaborative programmes that are open to proposals from outside. The bilingual EU-China Cultural Compass was a great research initiative between EUNIC members in China, but sadly it was barely promoted. The idea for the publication came out of discussions in the EU-China Dialogue Platform, a laudable initiative.

“Asia is increasingly interested in regional exchange rather than in exchange with far-off Europe.”



ative often criticised for being ‘too official’, but actually a good platform for civil society and governments to come together and build relationships based on trust.

In general, more imaginative EUNIC programmes are required that are based on real needs and true engagement. They need to translate the hard-core branding of ‘Europe’ in Asia into a joint European presence that is embedded into local initiatives. I see great opportunities for EUNIC to focus more strongly on imaginative literature or ‘word’ programmes to increase knowledge of Asia in Europe and vice versa. Asians find most Europeans know very little about the diversity of Asia, and literature is an excellent route towards better mutual understanding. New technologies now provide a range of opportunities to engage with the world of words.

One example of good European collaboration at regional level is ARThinkSouthAsia, an arts management and cultural leadership programme in South Asia. This was initiated by the Goethe-Institut in conjunction with the British Council and is now being managed and expanded by an independent local organisation. The EU-funded doc.net project focuses on documentary film in Southeast Asia and is another example of the Goethe Institut working with its French counterpart in specific ASEAN countries. Empowering local organisations is the best way to build trust and create sustainable models. Such programmes could be expanded to include more diverse European participation. In general, we need more high-quality, collaborative, EU added-value projects. These can reflect the

European spirit of unity in diversity, respond to local demand and at the end of the day it makes more economic sense to work together in pursuit of common goals

### *Need for greater visibility*

Clearly, perceptions of European cultural engagement in Asia are not only shaped by the initiatives of EUNIC and the EU Delegations. They are influenced more powerfully by the sector itself through the work of networks and NGOs. culture360.org, the online platform of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), gives a strong sense of what is going on in a multilateral context between Asia and Europe. The platform has been warmly welcomed by practitioners in Asia, but few people know that this ASEF-run platform has been financially supported by the EU since 2006. EU-funded projects should be made more visible and promoted more strongly by the EU – in Europe and through its Delegations abroad.

Perceptions of Europe’s cultural engagements are strongly influenced by the media. The ‘EU Through the Eyes of Asia’ study carried out by ASEF and its partners investigates mutual perceptions, but arts and culture were unfortunately not included. Social media research can reveal what respondents think about Europe and the keywords that are used in relation to Europe. In the UK, the innovation research organisation Nesta carried out a study in 2012 on how British creatives could use Chinese social media platforms such as

Douban to better understand Chinese users’ interest in creative content from the UK.

It seems that Europe has a much more joined-up policy and greater visibility in the media and higher education sectors, with programmes such as Media Mundus and Erasmus Mundus. A well-promoted ‘Artes Mundus’ programme would not only allow for strong visibility but also show the EU as an enabler of co-funded initiatives in areas where it believes engagement is vital. People in Asia will only care about Europe if Europe offers them something that is relevant – and well-communicated. In order to achieve more engagement in Asia, the EU Delegations and EU centres in Asia need to play their part in putting the European cultural sector and creative industries more squarely in the spotlight. Cultural Contact Points should also exist outside of Europe. There is clearly a role for EUNIC, but it must be adequately funded.

If we want to know where Europe should get involved, we need to understand the nature of the ‘cultural revolution’ that is now happening in Asia. The growth of the cultural infrastructure in many Asian countries (as observed in China, Hong Kong and Korea) is creating wealth and sustaining their booming economies. This merits the close attention of all those in the European cultural sector who are keen to get a slice of this growing pie. Large-scale development is taking place

“Clearly, perceptions of European cultural engagement in Asia are not only shaped by the initiatives of EUNIC and the EU Delegations. They are influenced more powerfully by the sector itself through the work of networks and NGOs.”

in the areas of arts and culture, logistics, infrastructure, tourism, information technology, broadcasting and new media – resulting in economic growth, creative wealth and social participation. By 2025, 20 of the world’s top 50 cities in terms of GDP will be located in Asia. Some of the world’s heaviest users of social media can be found in the Philippines and Indonesia. Asia is home to the world’s largest populations with the fastest-growing middle classes, which are now increasingly turning their attention to cultural pleasures.

However, the concept of cultural development in Asia is not only to create new industries and business services, but also to promote Asian values. This combines with competition between Asian cities to position themselves as Asian cultural hubs (Hong Kong and Singapore). It also involves countries such as Korea which are vying to take on a leading role in defining the Asian narrative.

### *A burgeoning middle class*

The burgeoning middle class has an enormous appetite for cultural consumption in all its forms. The large young population, especially in ASEAN countries, presents an investment opportunity for other Asian countries. For example, Lotte Cinema from Korea wanted to open 100 cinemas in Indonesia. However, cultural business investments in Asia are not as easy to negotiate as in other sectors. There is a strong cultural awareness in Asian countries that patterns of neo-colonial behaviour should not be repeated, yet at

the same time investment in culture is badly needed.

The interplay of business, technology and culture is forever changing the landscape of cultural development, and in Asia this is happening on a scale that is unimaginable in Europe. The boundaries between making and enjoying culture have become indistinct and this blurred relationship between commerce and art is very visible in Asia. The way cultural organisations connect with audiences, as they shift from being consumers to prosumers, is changing around the globe. And this is where businesses are now spotting a huge potential market – connecting with consumers through arts and culture. A most striking example can be found in China with Clouday, a digital platform that brings together 1.6 million writers with readers who ‘consume’ stories and pay the authors to write more. Online content is also adapted into films and TV dramas. Clouday is interested in distributing English novels on its platform and having their writers translate English content into Chinese for their readers.

### *Changing landscapes of funding*

So how does this change the landscape of cultural engagement? What are the needs in terms of the development of culture in Asia and what role can Europe play in this? Many Asian governments are interested in liaising with Europe on the development of cultural policy in the creative industries, as this is a focus for most countries in Asia. Certainly, Eu-

ropean models are no longer seen as the only models, but there is still interest in learning from experiences in Europe, and particularly the UK. But the learning is mutual.

Given the changing landscape of cultural funding in Europe, Europe is also looking for better models of public-private-people partnerships in the development of culture. Both Asia and Europe can benefit from research into how the arts and creative industries can best be nurtured.

The development of the physical cultural infrastructure in many Asian countries creates many opportunities for European organisations. But once buildings are built, the need for skills development is enormous and there are significant opportunities to transfer knowledge from Europe through capacity building in arts management, technical skills, programming and audience development for cultural spaces. The current supply of skills is inadequate for the needs of the sector in China and most ASEAN countries.

There is also a growing investment in arts-related education. More and more people in Asia will be pursuing studies in arts and humanities, instead of engineering and business degrees. Not all can afford to study in Europe, Australia or North America. At present, the growth in study programmes in Asia does not have the necessary infrastructure to host, teach and develop suitable curricula. There is an increasing need for local or Asia-oriented curricula that do not refer solely to Western models and modes of knowledge-sharing. This is an interesting area for academic cooperation, as European students and faculties should also

be more aware of non-Western approaches. Arts management education and arts entrepreneurship are seen as key areas where development is needed to ensure graduates have the skills required to pursue their professional ambitions. This applies to Europe as well as Asia. So working on joint programmes to develop arts and creative entrepreneurship could be a rewarding area of mutual learning. The British Council has strong experience in this field through its Young Creative Entrepreneurs Award and its initiatives in the creative industries in many Asian countries. This is an area where other EUNIC members could collaborate with the British Council.

But apart from formal education, many opportunities lie in informal education. Culture professionals need the kind of opportunities for professional development that are currently not on offer in many Asian countries. Asia needs to cultivate a new generation of cultural leaders who can take up the challenge of how to handle the sharp growth in cultural development in Asia. Investment in ‘software’ needs to match the infrastructure investment in ‘hardware’.

Audiences want to learn more about arts and culture and engage creatively, but the offer in most ASEAN countries is limited. Audience development and engagement is something where most cultural organisations are keen to learn from European experiences. In general, there is a need for more creative development in societies where individual creative expression has long been denigrated. Expo-

sure to a wider range of cultural offers is important. The digital shift is producing some answers, but direct experience of the arts is still the most transformative experience.

Europe’s cultural scene is highly valued in Asia and the growth of festivals, museums, performing arts centres and exhibition galleries brings a need for good quality content which is creatively presented. So there are more opportunities for European museums and galleries, music groups and classical music orchestras to present their work in Asia and organise Asian tours. But at the same time Asians are increasingly interested in Asian works. This could also provide an opportunity for European organisations to be co-investors in Asian work. Collaborative approaches are certainly the way forward.

Of course Asia also wants its works to receive greater exposure in Europe, so it is important for Europe to consider how it can present better artistic work from Asia in Europe. In addition, European organisations can improve efforts to cater for Asian cultural tourists visiting Europe, especially in terms of their language needs. Cultural organisations in Europe can certainly learn a great deal from their counterparts in the retail and fashion industries. Many luxury brands understand that their market is increasingly non-European and have elaborated creative Asian-centred approaches.

It is clear that Europe needs to re-imagine its cultural engagement with Asia. It needs to take the diversity of Asia into account in the development of a cultural policy for culture and external relations. Europe’s common

“Many Asian governments are interested in liaising with Europe on the development of cultural policy in the creative industries.”



narrative should be based on value promotion instead of self-promotion. Its activities and policies should reflect a true interest in the 'Other' and address shared needs beyond mere economic needs. This would entail a radically different way of thinking and working, in a truly collaborative spirit and with new approaches to partnership.

At the 2012 Salzburg Global Seminar entitled Public and Private Cultural Exchange-Based Diplomacy: New Models for the 21st Century, we came together with artists, cultural professionals and academics to reflect on four themes: how public and private roles in international cultural engagement can be re-imagined; how shifting economic power in a multi-polar world is influencing this; how more culturally diverse environments can be created in cultural engagements; and how social media is radically transforming relationships. In conclusion, we called for a common area of engagement, 'a third space' where transnational cultural interactions happen in a "realm of curiosity, meaning, collaboration, enterprise and learning, not directly beholden to either political or economic interest".

These 'third' or 'shared' spaces are based on principles of trust, reciprocity, responsibility and respect, the basis of shared human values. They should form the foundation for a re-imagined cultural engagement between Europe and Asia, a re-conceptualised enterprise adapted to the present, shifting times.

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**Partnerships of equals in the century of the South** The 21st century belongs to the South. Africa is turning its gaze to both East and West, to Asia and Latin America, not on economic and political issues, but also in the cultural sphere. The days of bilateral exchanges between Europe and the various African host countries are long gone. The focus is now on establishing platforms for discourse and on working together to research, learn, teach, found and create. *By Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte*



To find an answer to this question, we first of all need to try to map the main issues involved in cultural education. It is surprising to see how many similarities there are between the two continents. Theorists and practitioners in Europe and Africa alike are concerned with the same key issues: teaching formats, interdisciplinarity and certification, though of course they may be operating under different conditions.

The results of a study carried out by the Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg on non-formal cultural education in sub-Saharan Africa has laid the groundwork in this respect, highlighting the desired outcomes and the issues that need to be tackled. The authors of the study are historian and cultural theorist Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, writer and linguist Fouad Asfour and journalist Judith Reker. For the Goethe-Institut, this study marked the beginning of its new focus on the non-formal sector of cultural education in sub-Saharan Africa. It provides the basis for a fruitful and very collaborative cooperation with partners from various African countries. It will doubtless result in the creation of a range of new and innovative methods, practices and theories.

What kind of contribution can be made by a continent or a community of European states such as the EU when it comes to promoting culture and cultural education in sub-Saharan Africa? Should we even be asking this question, or does it immediately sound like a paternalistic statement that suggests there is a need for development work to drag the 'lost' continent up to our level? We are also loath to go into the whys and wherefores in case we find ourselves echoing the responses of colonial or even pre-colonial times. So we need to ask a quite different question. What topics relating to culture and cultural education are of equal interest to both parties in exchanges between Europe and Africa (the European Union and the African Union), and how can both sides make a contribution?

Without going into further detail at this point, it is worth emphasising how the recommendations made in the final chapter of the study point out that aid or collaboration with organisations from the North are of little use if they are not based on issues of common interest. They quite rightly demand that models should not be imposed, but redesigned based on the combined knowledge of the parties involved.

### *At arm's length*

Therefore, the next question should be what role the European External Action Service (EEAS) can play in this process. Should it get actively involved or – like many European countries – use intermediary organisations to advance its external cultural and educational policies? Experience has shown that it is better for governments to keep culture and cultural policy at arm's length in order to avoid the risk of it being instrumentalised. Culture cannot and must not be allowed to become a tool of politics or business. Cultural exchange must be allowed to develop independently. This is something that can only be achieved if dialogue is guided by content rather than by official channels. However, this does not mean that the EU should not create a framework in which such cultural exchange can take place. Budgets must be made available, communication and travel facilitated and framework agreements signed between governments and official bodies.

Who could act as the EEAS's intermedi-

ary organisations? The answer is simple, as these organisations already exist. EUNIC is the network of European cultural and educational institutes that come together in many countries to form clusters with the aim of supporting the process of integration within Europe and strengthening cultural exchange between Europe and other countries of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), EUNIC is represented by a regional cluster. This makes up EUNIC SSA, which was founded in 2011 with the following charter:

“The overall focus of EUNIC SSA is culture and development’ as articulated in the following areas:

- Multilingualism
- The arts and their development (including the creative industry)
- Cultural education and training
- In general, and particularly in SSA, EUNIC is not a donor organisation and its main task is not the propagation of European culture. Instead, it aims to build platforms and networks that benefit all those involved.

What kinds of projects and institutions does EUNIC work with?

- Projects that expand cultural structures, support cultural businesses or cultural education, and/or
- Projects organised by EUNIC members and supported by at least two other members, and/or
- Projects that require European expertise or experience.“

It is sufficient to meet just one of the above-mentioned criteria. The primary aim of EUNIC SSA is collaboration on cultural projects that focus on the economy and education in the cultural sector. It may well be that projects arise that do not involve European expertise or involvement. This is an essential factor in a partnership of equals. The important thing is the content of the project rather than the import or export of expertise. The focus is not on the individual interests of each country, but on sharing experiences and growing together. If they are to be credible, such projects must once and for all discard the notion that they have to include ‘something European’.

### *The role of EUNIC*

But what kind of role can EUNIC play on a continent such as Africa? Can it even play a role, other than the essential but very marginal and unsatisfactory role of a donor who makes a contribution to the always-inadequate project budget and sees its name included in the list of sponsors under the banner ‘supported by’? This would relegate cultural institutes in the global North to being nothing more than donors – or is this already the case? How can they really participate in a dialogue with the South?

One thing is clear – the 21st century belongs to the South. Africa is turning its gaze to both East and West, to Asia and Latin Amer-

ica, not only with regard to economic and political issues, but also in the cultural sphere. It also looking inwards towards Africa itself and no longer – or only sporadically – north and northwest in the direction of Europe and North America (including Australia). Africa is becoming emancipated, not just from its colonial past but also from its post-colonial depression – and it is artists who are leading the way. New ideas are emerging, new approaches, new values and new formats. A new world is being created and the EEAS and EUNIC need to be a part of it. The days of bilateral exchanges between Europe and the various African host countries are long gone. It is no longer a case of each side demonstrating their cultural achievements, their amazing arts scenes or what kinds of cultural fusions they can produce together. Now the focus is on establishing platforms for discourse and on working together to research, learn, teach, found and create. The role of European cultural institutes is to support these, drive them forward and bring them to the world – which includes Europe.

At this point I would like to use the example of the Goethe-Institut to outline a potential role for EUNIC in SSA. The Action Africa programme launched by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in 2008 provided the Goethe-Institut with an opportunity to give itself a thorough overhaul. It was able to significantly expand its network in Africa and was also now in a position to support projects that made collaborations with local partners much more enduring and fruitful for all concerned. The requirement for

“Africa is becoming emancipated, not just from its colonial past but also from its post-colonial depression – and it is artists who are leading the way.”

projects to have a direct German connection was waived.

We set ourselves the goal of promoting exchange within Africa by bringing together artists from across the continent in places where creativity and dialogue was flourishing. These included festivals, conferences and workshops organised by our partners in cities across Africa. One example is the Moving Africa programme. This invites African artists to take part in certain African festivals, providing an opportunity for them to share their knowledge and experiences and learn more about other artistic directions.

This allows the festivals to reach their target groups in Africa and build a more closely-knit network on the continent. The Goethe-Institut is not doing this based on pure altruism. The concept is grounded in its specific desire to participate in what we could call the imagined global future of cultural worlds.

With the advent of Action Africa, the Goethe-Institut and stakeholders in the sub-Saharan region finally had an opportunity to take their work in a new direction. Now they could not only strengthen but also redefine cultural relations and adapt them to global conditions.

Now the Goethe-Institutes in sub-Saharan Africa can really act as a forum for the arts and a platform for social discourse, encounters and networking. They encourage co-productions and the distribution of art in every sector, and cultural education has become a new focus of their activities.

Expanding their networks and supporting

dialogue inside Africa are still important activities, but cultural education is now a primary goal.

This is being achieved through cultural management seminars and other training opportunities in a range of cultural areas, along with providing grants for residencies at cultural institutions in Germany. The aforementioned study on non-formal education has made a major contribution to this, but it has also been supported by the Condition Report conference that was organised by curator and cultural manager Koyo Kouoh, along with the accompanying publication. The Goethe-Institut, the British Council, the Kulturstiftung des Bundes [German Federal Cultural Foundation] (KSB) and the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) had good reasons to support this conference and publication, as they revealed the current state and needs of private art centres in Africa and how Europe can assist in this respect.

There is no doubt that cultural education in sub-Saharan Africa is primarily rooted in the non-formal sector, while arts education in schools remains sorely lacking. The Goethe-Institut has consistently orientated itself towards the work of its partners in the African arts scene.

So what could and should EUNIC actually achieve in Africa? It is a continent that is still widely perceived as being little more than a backdrop for hunger, disease, war and vio-

“There is no doubt that cultural education in sub-Saharan Africa is primarily rooted in the non-formal sector, while arts education in schools remains sorely lacking.”

“I dream of a time when funding agencies will see it as one of their fundamental tasks to change the ways of measuring the value and quality of art and of artwork itself. Such funding agencies would help us to distance ourselves from an understanding of culture as ‘pastness’, a matter of customs and traditions, heritage, monuments and museums. They would help us to realize that culture is not yet another form of ‘service delivery’, but the way human beings imagine and engage their own futures. Without this dimension of futurity and imagination, we will hardly be able to write a name we can call ours or articulate a voice we can recognize as our own.”

*Achille Mbembe, Cameroonian political scientist and expert on post-colonialism*

lence. But this stereotypical thinking is now gradually being eroded. This is particularly obvious in major cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, Luanda and Johannesburg, where growth is not just limited to the economy. Their growth is also providing a massive cultural impetus, leading to the creation of centres for new artistic formats and creative workshops.

### *Countless polarities*

The direct ties between Africa’s major cities and Asia or Latin America mean they have become important protagonists – not only in

the African dialogue but also in the cultural dialogue of the global South. The innovative contributions and creative expression of African avant-garde artists have their roots in the countless polarities that exist in their home countries, such as between rich and poor, traditional and modern. These contributions are increasingly attracting attention on the international stage. EUNIC needs to be involved in these developments and discourses and support them as they emerge and move forward. Possible formats include platforms (real or virtual), festivals, residencies and particularly workshops, conferences and seminars. This kind of equal partnership is particularly important in light of the continent’s colonial history.

So the aim of the EU’s external cultural and educational policy – and hence the aim of EUNIC – is not the presentation of European art or indeed the imposition of European educational models or curricula. Its aim is to observe, participate and globalise. The future of the arts is not national but lies in individual, creative productions by global artists, or, to quote the words of Cameroonian expert on post-colonialism, Achille Mbembe: “Cultural expression, creativity and innovation today is less about clinging to dead customs than about negotiating multiple ways of inhabiting the world”.

Europe’s expertise in the areas of diversity, multiculturalism, multilingualism and different educational formats can help it to be a special partner that can also participate in the exciting growth of Africa’s artistic and educational scenes. A European Action Africa

programme, conceived and put into practice by the EUNIC cluster together with its local partners across Africa would constitute an initial step towards creating a successful European external cultural and educational policy on the African continent.

And one final argument: if an Action Africa programme driven forward by 10 EUNIC clusters in sub-Saharan Africa seems promising, then the idea could be transposed to the 7 EUNIC clusters in the 7 countries of South America in order to create an Action South America. Latin America is also part of the Southern Hemisphere and plays an extremely active role in the South's discourse on the future.

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**A practical test at the Cape Since its establishment in 2006, EUNIC – the European network of national institutes for culture – has been opening doors for Europe. With its more than 80 clusters in over 70 countries it works to promote understanding between cultures. But what does the work of EUNIC actually look like in practice? How does its cooperation with local partners work on the ground and what has proven successful? We attempt to answer these questions by taking a look at one specific EUNIC project.**

By **Hanna Schühle**

Keen to illustrate the successful work of EUNIC, its supporters often point to its worldwide presence in over 70 countries and list the many events that it has been involved with. However, little is known about the size and activity of the clusters, their cooperation in joint events and their success. As a result, it is impossible to get an accurate picture of how EUNIC clusters really work worldwide. But this kind of picture is essential if we are to evaluate to what extent the network's cooperation is really effective, what works in which places, what kind of expectations there are on site and whether changes to the cooperation are necessary. Research into international cultural relations highlights the importance of cooperation based on dialogue. This is also reflected in two of the main goals of EUNIC as stated in the EUNIC Charter: strengthening international dialogue and cultural cooperation. What kind of practical experiences are there? Every location requires its own specific approaches to carrying out projects. Only if there is detailed information about the cooperation with different actors is it possible to draw conclusions about what might be successful elsewhere. It is most helpful if the perspective of the local coopera-

tion partners is included in the evaluation of the work of EUNIC clusters. Often EUNIC events are organised in collaboration with one local partner. With its six local partners, the dance project Crossings #2 in South Africa was therefore a comparatively big cooperation project. French dancer and choreographer Michel Kelemenis developed Crossings, a training workshop for South African and international choreographers, dancers, composers and light designers. Over a period of two weeks, the participants worked together to explore the relationship between dance, music and light design in workshops in Johannesburg. Crossings #2 appears on the list of EUNIC events organised in 2011, however this does not necessarily mean that it was a project organised in cooperation with local partners and that these local partners considered the event to be a major success. Nor is there any information as to why, after the success of Crossings #1 in 2010 and Crossings #2 in 2011, there was no Crossings #3 in 2012, despite the firm belief of initiator and facilitator Michel Kelemenis that Crossings would continue with subsequent editions. In 2011 the majority of the 28 young participants came from South Africa, but there were also participants from

other African countries, Europe, the USA and Israel. During the application process, the difficulties experienced by lighting designers in South Africa when trying to access professional training were taken into account and only applicants from South Africa were accepted in this category. Travel and accommodation expenses were paid for all participants. During the first week the choreographers, dancers and composers worked in daily-rotating groups with one of the four facilitators, while the lighting designers had the opportunity to experiment and learn more about their profession.

During the second week, groups were formed consisting of a choreographer, a composer, a lighting designer and four dancers to work together on the creation of a piece that was performed for an audience on the last day of the workshops. In addition, as part of Crossings #2, videos about the relationship between dance and music and between staging and lighting were shown and discussed.

In the brochure for Crossings #2, EUNIC and its work are described in the following words:

"[EUNIC] seeks to facilitate cultural cooperation, to create lasting partnerships between professionals, to encourage greater understanding and awareness of the diverse European cultures [...]."

With this in mind, the question arises why the Crossings series was not continued in 2012? The local partners certainly considered the event to be a success, so is it important to include their perspective in the search for explanations.

#### **A possible explanation**

The local partners provided studio space, performance space and expertise in the participant selection

rocess. In addition, the Dance Forum Johannesburg successfully applied for financial support for the event from the National Art Council of South Africa, as it does not allocate money to foreign institutions.

Georgina Thomson, Director of the Dance Forum, highlights how in Crossings there was a real sense of partnership with the European institutions, in contrast to the usual relationships with European countries where they often provide funding but have little real interaction with their South African partners. She feels that one reason for this lies in the fact that the Dance Forum played an essential role in obtaining the necessary funding for the event. This strengthened the role of the South African partner in the cooperation and thus led to a more balanced relationship between the partners.

Georgina Thomson feels this cooperation during the organisational part was not the only positive aspect of Crossings #2. She also feels the cooperation in the course of the event itself was very special. She believes Crossings was an innovative project because something like this had never happened before in the South African dance scene.

"It is incredible for people to have that connection with each other and meet, see, experience another country, experience other dancers, other concepts, other ideas. I think it is extremely inspiring actually."

The main idea behind both Crossings events was that it is not first and foremost the result that matters, but the process. By providing participants with an opportunity to work together, learn from each other and jointly create something, the event offers the best conditions for successful cultural exchange. So in light of this, what led to the end of the cooperation?

When he first developed the idea of Crossings, Michel Kelemenis (a French native who had previously already

worked in cooperation with South African dance companies and choreographers) presented the idea to the Institut Français South Africa. So the first edition of Crossings in 2010 was primarily a cooperation project between the Institut Français South Africa and the South African partners (and largely remained so for Crossings #2).

For Crossings #2 the project turned into a EUNIC South Africa event. The Institut Français South Africa continued to play a major role in the organisation of the second edition, as Georgina Thomson remarks:

"EUNIC was definitely on board with it, but the main sort of facilitators and people we worked with was the French Institute".

**"EUNIC was definitely on board with it, but the main sort of facilitators and people we worked with was the French Institute."**

Georgina Thomson

Evidence for the leading role of the Institut Français South Africa in Crossings #2 can also be found in the event brochure. Here, the institute is given particular prominence, as it is the only European institute for culture listed and described as an event partner in addition to EUNIC.

EUNIC South Africa consists of six members (Alliance Française, British Council, Goethe-Institut, Instituto Camões, Institut Français, and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura) and three associate members (the Embassy of Austria, the Embassy of Slovakia, and the Embassy of Spain). Crossings #2 was especially supported by the Institut Français, the British Council, the Embassy of Austria and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura. For Georgina Thomson, it did not matter that countries from Eastern and Northern Europe were not represented in the

event. However, she noted an imbalance when it comes to presenting the diversity of European cultures, especially in the organisational part of Crossings #2: "It was definitely very much a French project."

#### Differing expectations

One of the main hopes that Georgina Thomson had for Crossings #2 was that people involved in the project would continue to collaborate, even after the end of the two-week workshop. She feels that Crossings provided an ideal basis for this, adding: "But unfortunately that has not happened and I think the main reason for that is funding. I saw young artists creating work that I would love to be able to invite to come back to South Africa into a residency program in my space to work with people he connected with or she connected with in the process but I do not have the money."

Several of the participating choreographers, for example from Israel or England, tried to continue the working process, but it did not work out. Georgina Thomson sums it up as follows:

"This happens so often with projects like this: the project happens and everybody goes and that is it". Yet she still found it surprising that the entire project did not continue: "The French [...] decided that they were going to take it to Cape Town without any consultation with the original Dance Corner people [the project partners in Johannesburg] who were part of the process."

According to a representative from the Institut Français South Africa, the National Arts Council South Africa suggested Crossings should be moved so that audiences from other provinces could benefit from the event as well. This shows that local partners may have differing expectations of

a EUNIC event. They may also have different degrees of influence on it, depending on the roles of the project partners.

In the end the plan to bring Crossings to Cape Town in 2012 did not come about because of a lack of available space (dance studios) and funding. However, it is planned to hold the third edition of Crossings in Cape Town in 2013. Like the first edition, Crossings #3 will be organised entirely by the Institut Français South Africa and will therefore no longer be a EUNIC event.

**"There will be a Crossings event in 2013, but like the first edition it will be exclusively organised by the Institut Français and will no longer be a EUNIC event."**

Changing the concept of an event is not necessarily a problem in itself, but when it happens without taking all the initial partners into account the existing partnership can suffer as a result. It might have been helpful if local partners in Johannesburg had been included in the planning process for a Crossings edition in Cape Town, for example by taking advantage of their contacts.

This example from South Africa shows that EUNIC still has its work cut out when it comes to creating lasting partnerships. More continuation of partnerships, for instance in terms of established, regular annual EUNIC events, would benefit the EUNIC members themselves, as their planning often has long lead times. If EUNIC events take place on a regular basis and are scheduled well in advance, it may facilitate their work and commitment within the EUNIC clusters. A single EUNIC member played a leading role in the organisation of Crossings #2. However, it may be desirable to have a more balanced distribution

of tasks within a EUNIC cluster when organising an event. This could better reflect the diversity of European cultures and turn a mainly French project into a European one, while also increasing the likelihood of longer-lasting partnerships. The implementation of an event or project would be less dependent on one single cultural institute and responsibilities would be distributed more widely. Thus, if one of the members (temporarily) wanted to leave the collaboration with a local partner, other members could step in and guarantee the continuation of a successful partnership.

Although the series was discontinued, one thing has to be kept in mind: with its focus on cooperation and interaction, especially in the workshops, Crossings #2 was, according to Georgina Thomson, a great success. Despite the disappointment over the way the series ended in 2012, Georgina Thomson is confident that there will be more Crossings projects in the future. However, she recommends that "the partnerships and conversations need to be more inclusive of the proposed partners in South Africa". Crossings #2 was only one of many EUNIC events held in 2011 and by no means represents the work of EUNIC as a whole. Nevertheless, individual EUNIC events, especially when they are discontinued, should be evaluated in detail in order to see how the work of EUNIC can be made more sustainable. In addition, it would be beneficial for the respective EUNIC cluster to look into the successes and failures of certain events together with their local partners. This information is not only valuable for the EUNIC cluster itself but may also contribute to the successful work of other EUNIC clusters around the world.

EUNIC should therefore collect together detailed information on events and make it available to all clusters. It is important that EUNIC success stories are not just reduced to numbers

or event titles, but that there is a focus on the real stories behind the projects. Better documentation and more information that is accessible for all clusters should be one of the main tasks of the young network in order to learn from best practices and make cultural exchange, intercultural dialogue and cooperative projects more sustainable.

**Hanna Schühle** is studying for a PhD in European Ethnology and writing her dissertation on the work of EUNIC. She has undertaken fieldtrips involving prolonged stays in various branches of the network, including Berlin, the Ukraine and Vietnam. In 2012 she was a scholarship holder in ifa's Culture and Foreign Policy research programme.



*An opera village in Africa? And in Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries on the whole continent? At first glance, the Opera Village Africa project that was initiated by Christoph Schlingensiefel (who died in 2010) seems to be nothing more than an artistic utopia. But it has become one of the most interesting cultural projects in the whole world. And more prosaically, the country now has a cultural space and an intercultural location.*

Opera Village Africa lies 30 km from Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. Sixteen buildings have now been constructed on a piece of land provided by the government of Burkina Faso, including houses, workshops, a canteen, a primary school (which opened in 2011) for 150 boys and girls, a clinic and a maternity ward. Along with all the usual subjects, the school also encourages the children's creativity in film, music and the performing arts. By 2015/16 we will have reached our maximum capacity of 6 classes and a total of 300 children. The monthly cultural programme in the Opera Village attracts people from far and wide. Concerts, films, theatre evenings and workshops are supplemented with events to keep staff and villagers up to date on the status of the project and construction works. Because the village is still not finished – we have a general idea about the future of this project, this organism, but we don't know exactly where it will lead us.

So what is it all about? Why an Opera Village, and why in Africa? Why all this together? What is the artistic approach? Where could and should it lead? Of course it is a controversial idea: a white artist from the Northern hemisphere brings opera to the Africans and creates a village around his vision. But opera is a real artistic form and at the same time a symbol of the varied modes of expression that exist in the arts and culture. In this way, the cultural approach steers the post-colonial discourse. The village is a place for Europeans and others to gain awareness of their image of Africa; a place where they can learn to make distinctions; but also a place where utopias should be al-

lowed to grow and where the concept of arts and culture can be constantly revisited.

The Opera Village is given its special quality and cultural drive by the essential components of encounter and exchange. The Village is a place of intercultural encounter while also being a real village where people live, learn, play, look at and create art, talk about art, fall ill, are treated, are born, work and – of course – die. A village represents the whole of life. The Opera Village represents a life with and in art. But art in life and life in art, as a chance for us to discover the well of creativity.

It is a place that is growing, thanks to donations from all over the world and the support of the Goethe Institut, the German Federal Cultural Foundation and Grünhelme e.V. But above all, it is growing because of the hard work of a great many individuals. Art is artificial, but the village is a real place, with real people who live their lives there. A living organism has been created that is slowly becoming (and should become) self-reliant, in order to take its inhabitants onwards into the future. A community has been created that is already something of a role model because of the special way that integrates art and creativity into its school curriculum, along with extra-curricular activities such as workshops on film, theatre, music and dance.

Construction work on the clinic is currently being completed. It is being supplemented by an out-patients unit, maternity ward, pharmacy and dental care unit, helping to fill the gaps in healthcare provision for the inhabitants of this region of Burkina Faso. It is also planned to involve Burkina Faso itself more closely. This means working with local people on the construction of the school and clinic and involving local artists who organise workshops or support existing projects. It also relates to funding: at the end of the construction period, Burkina Faso will take over responsibility for funding the clinic.

Christoph Schlingensiefel died on 21 August 2010. By then, his village was beginning to take shape, with the cornerstone having been laid on 8 February 2010. His

idea has gone out into the world and been assimilated and understood by many people. One major goal is to build a festival theatre in the centre of the village. As a central place for encounter and exchange, it will be a visual symbol of the heart that beats so strongly in this village.

Thoughts and ideas cost nothing, so the Opera Village will continue to involve itself in projects that reflect its own vision and help take it to the world. From 8-10 January 2014, artists took part in the Festival au Désert at the invitation of Christoph Schlingensiefel's Opera Village Africa and the Partnership with Africa Foundation e.V. This was held in Germany for the first time and included workshops, films, discussions and a huge concert in Berlin. Other plans include an African reply to Via Intoleranza II, where five African theatre-makers will tackle Christoph Schlingensiefel's last play and express their views on its themes of colonialism and intercultural exchange. It is also planned to hold literacy courses for adults in the Opera Village's school. And, as part of an agricultural co-operative, an agricultural programme is now due to begin on the village's 5 hectares of cultivable land, supported by Germany's Welthungerhilfe organisation. Another project is tackling the idea of artistic exchange. This is an in-situ art programme in the Opera Village. Houses are under construction, so that artists can be invited to come and spend time in the village and use its living and performance spaces. With events in Germany, this programme will be supplemented by a critical discourse on the potential of intercultural exchange in order to develop visions and find new possibilities for the Opera Village and the idea of the Opera Village.

Christoph Schlingensiefel's Opera Village Africa is an

idea that has been turned into reality. It continues its progress, without anyone really knowing where it is headed. But it always retains a clear view of life with regard to art, artistic creation, sharing experiences and the ongoing discourse with the reality of the village. This idea exists in one place but is not bound to that place. The artistic and cultural approach does not exclude the realities of the inhabitants' existence, but assimilates and examines them in a very special way.

Exchange brings knowledge and understanding, encourages curiosity, raises awareness, eliminates fear and fires the imagination. Europe's external cultural policy needs to look at the existence of people in other countries. But this time not as colonialists, but with a view to getting to know each other. The idea of Africa as a continent that is solely of anthropological interest prevents any real exchange. No-one can say where this is headed. Part of the idea is discourse and exchanges on art and culture will set something in motion. Can the Opera Village make the world a better place? Is this just a utopian dream? Yes it is, but the dream is a reality: a village, its inhabitants, people who take the idea and carry it out to the world so that it can then return to Christoph Schlingensiefel's Opera Village Africa.

On a practical front, idealists have set up the Festspielhaus Afrika GmbH. This organisation coordinates construction plans and cultural projects and secures funding. The latter is a major challenge that faces us every single day. We are motivated to continue searching for funding by our sense of responsibility towards the people and the vibrancy of the idea. The Opera Village is art brought to life. There is no better way of promoting culture.

*"Artists can be invited to come and spend time in the village and use it as an incentive to make use of its living and performance spaces."*

*Contributed by the team at Festspielhaus Afrika GmbH*

**Europe in the world – EUNIC Within Europe, EUNIC – the network of European national institutes for culture – is working to create a European identity and improve the continent’s integration. Cultural work outside of Europe should lead to better understanding between societies and promote dialogue in an increasingly globalised world. A report on EUNIC and its initiatives and activities in 2013. [www.eunic-online.eu](http://www.eunic-online.eu)**

EUNIC has made a significant progress in 2013 thanks to a stable permanent secretariat, an active Board of Directors and the commitment of the Strategy Group and EUNIC members. EUNIC membership increased substantially in 2013. At the summer General Assembly in Leuven we admitted three new members from Greece, Latvia and Belgium. And at the General Assembly in December a member joined from the EU’s new Member State, Croatia. Now EUNIC has 32 members from 27 EU countries. The same development was observed with the EUNIC clusters. Over the last year the number of clusters increased from 83 to 89. Altogether, 6 clusters have been created in Ottawa, Uruguay, Iran, Frankfurt, Israel Cameroon and Casablanca. A major success was the development of a range of valuable services that are offered to all EUNIC clusters. This includes project ideas in the form of ready-made model projects, positioning papers on strategic issues for EUNIC and communications support in the form of individual sub-websites, intranet, newsletter, social media guidelines, visual identity and the EUNIC Handbook. EUNIC also provides training opportunities and direct funding from the EUNIC Cluster Fund for to promote innovative projects. We are currently in the process of strengthening the offer. We are preparing an application for an EU programme, which will give the clusters an opportunity to receive additional staff support. We are also developing a system to facilitate channelling information on funding opportunities to network members. We see EUNIC as a foundation for internatio-

nal engagement on the part of its members and clusters. EUNIC’s role is to work together in Europe and be recognized as a ‘port of entry’ for cultural relations projects worldwide. The national cultural institutes that make up EUNIC are continuing to strengthen their positions through their focused cooperation via the EUNIC network. Inside Europe EUNIC work focuses on shaping European identity and strengthening European integration. Cultural work outside Europe is designed to be part of the process of achieving better understanding between societies and shaping a dialogue between partners in an increasingly globalised world. There are still areas for improvement in the areas of capacity building and developing a better understanding of international cultural relations in today’s world. However we are very happy to see that EUNIC members are willing to share their strategies for more efficient operating models for working together in EUNIC clusters. Finally EUNIC would like to extend a sincere word of thanks to the many people who have supported the Association over recent years and helped us to consistently improve our services for EUNIC clusters worldwide.



Charles-Etienne Lagasse, EUNIC President



Helena Kovarikova, EUNIC Global Director

#### European Union National Institutes for Culture

EUNIC is the network of European national institutes for culture. Formed in 2006, it is a recognized leader in cultural cooperation. EUNIC has 32 members from 27 countries and over 80 clusters around the globe. EUNIC’s members work more than 150 countries with over 2,000 branches and thousands of local partners. They work in the arts, language, youth, education, science, intercultural dialogue and development sectors. The members employ over 25,000 staff and have a combined turnover of more than €2.5 bn. The EUNIC network is based on open cooperation, working in a bottom-up, NGO-style with a compact, independent and flexible administration. EUNIC’s mission is to promote European values and contribute to cultural diversity both within and outside the EU via collaboration between European cultural institutes. EUNIC’s aim is to expand the role of culture in Europe and strengthen cultural dialogue, exchange and sustainable cooperation worldwide.

#### EUNIC is:

- An active network that implements projects directly or through its members and clusters;
- A learning network for sharing ideas and practices between members and other stakeholders;
- A partnering network for developing partnerships with like-minded organisations;
- An advocacy network for raising awareness and improving cultural relationships between people, worldwide.

Its expertise and world-spanning network makes EUNIC a vital partner in international cultural affairs. Serving as a competence pool and think tank for European institutions, EUNIC complements EU initiatives and activities in the field of culture. EUNIC projects contribute to connecting culture with such key areas as development, ecology, conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

The projects also foster innovation and development in creative economies.

#### EUNIC’s global projects

##### European-Chinese cultural dialogue – 5th dialogue session in Xi’an

This year, a major step was taken in cultural cooperation between Europe and China. On 16 October, the 5th European-Chinese Cultural Dialogue SPACE-CULTURE-OBJECT was launched in Xi’an. The content of the 5th Dialogue organised by EUNIC, the Chinese National Academy of Arts (CNAA) and other partners, revolved around the theme of sculpture (in the broad sense of the term), the role of culture in urban space, sustainable urban development, social cohesion and climate change.

The 5th Dialogue was a two-day event with a conference featuring keynote speakers from reputable cultural institutions from both Europe and China. It also included group sessions, in which artists, experts and other participants could explore the differences between Chinese and European perceptions of a range of issues, including public space, urban design, plastic arts and regional culture. A week-long sculptors’ residency preceded the conference in Xi’an. This attracted the participation of artists from China and Europe (France, Ireland, Romania, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Italy and Austria).

Part of the 5th Dialogue programme was devoted to new media, with input from the Xi’an Academy of Arts (XAFA) and Le Manège Mons from Belgium. The ultimate goal of the 5th Dialogue in Xi’an was to expand existing cultural relations, convert bilateral exchange activities into structured partnerships and to jointly reflect on the common challenges that face Europe and China alike.

#### The MENA Project

##### Mission statement

The overall theme of our work in the Middle

East & North Africa (MENA) revolves around the creative sector, articulated in the following objectives:

- Developing new and realistic approaches in cultural policy that reflect evolutions in the region and that are responsive to civil society movements and expectations;
- Supporting capacity building and professionalising the creative sector and the independent cultural scene;
- Improving and developing mobility and exchange of artists and cultural operators within MENA and between the EU and MENA;
- Promoting the values of dialogue and cultural diversity in the MENA region through cultural projects.

Our approach is needs-based. Our target audiences are young people and women, along with civil society actors, the private or independent sector and public authorities. Our work is based on establishing strategic partnerships and trust and creating links between all stakeholders. In a shared common language with our partners and target audiences, we advocate the values of culture, diversity, dialogue, peace and the freedom of expression, speech and assembly. In this, our main goal is to place culture and civil society at the forefront of democratic transformation.

#### Background

The mission statement of the EUNIC/MENA programme is based on the consultation process carried out in 2011 and 2012 in MENA, and more specifically on the recommendations of the Euromed Forum on Creative Industries & Society that was organised by the EUNIC cluster in Jordan, Dead Sea in May 2012. This brought together 160 representatives of the creative sector from 7 Arab and European countries.

Based on this consultation process, three main areas of work have been identified: cultural policies, capacity building and mobility and exchange. Because of the current socio-political context of upheaval, we believe this is a crucial moment for empowering cultural actors by giving them the tools they need to

contribute positively to the changes.

#### The MENA Incubator

EUNIC’s MENA programme has been designed to be an incubator for projects that focus on capacity building in the creative and cultural policies sector. This incubator will operate through training, research, conferences and debates, web platforms and so on. The principle behind EUNIC’s MENA Incubator is to develop projects, addressing the needs that are identified – together with expert organisations from Europe & MENA. Such projects could be also proposed by EUNIC Global, Heads, and Clusters. EUNIC Global will play a coordinating role in the following ways:

- By matching creative projects with resources from the network and other stakeholders (EC, foundations, private sector, etc.);
- By creating synergies between clusters and with European and MENA expertise;
- By designing projects together with clusters, expert organisations and strategic partners;
- Through monitoring and evaluation.

#### Pilot Project 1: MENA/European training in culture and creative sector management

In the framework of EUNIC’s MENA Incubator, EUNIC is planning to develop a training programme entitled ‘MENA/European training in culture and creative sector management’, in partnership with Association Marcel Hicter (Belgium), Association Racines (Morocco) and the Lebanon Development Union (Lebanon).

The objective of this training is to raise the skills and competencies of MENA cultural practitioners as follows:

- By supporting capacity building and the professionalisation of the cultural and creative sectors’
- By managing cultural projects and programmes, particularly with regard to cultural cooperation;
- By mapping creative industries and cultural policies.

## Multilingualism

### Poliglotti4.eu and Language Rich Europe

In autumn 2012, Poliglotti4.eu, a EUNIC-led project co-funded by the European Commission and developed within the Civil Society Platform to promote multilingualism in Europe entered in to its final stage. The project brought together 9 member organisations from the Civil Society Platform. It combined PR events, networking and research in a three areas: early language learning, adult education and social services.

The Language Rich Europe networking project was set up to discuss and develop better policies and practices for multilingualism. In May 2012 it released the initial draft of a research publication analysing trends in language policies and practices in 24 countries and regions of Europe. The survey covers languages in education, the media, cities and business. Tilburg University's Babylon Centre for Studies of the Multicultural Society carried out the research in collaboration with partner institutions and experts in participating countries.

In March 2013, the outcomes were presented to policymakers in Brussels. Ten recommendations were made in the fields of education, business, media and press, public services and spaces and language policy.

## Culture and Development

### Launch of the online edition of Culture and Development – Action and Impact

In late 2012, the online version of the brochure 'Culture and Development – Action and Impact' was published on the website [capacity4dev.eu](http://capacity4dev.eu). The objective is to demonstrate the fundamental role culture has to play in the area of development and the leading role EUNIC members can take in this field. This new version of the brochure focuses on the Mediterranean region and so links in well with EUNIC's priority of engaging in dialogue with civil society in the Middle East and North Africa in order to support democratic transition.

## Culture in external relations

### Preparatory action and More Europe

EUNIC Global is an associated partner in the consortium made up of the four national cultural institutions and specialist organisations that won the bid for the EU preparatory action 'Culture in external relations'. The aim of the preparatory action is to collect data and information through mapping and consultation in a large number of states in order to analyse the resources, strategies and opinions relating to the role and impact of culture in external relations. The mapping will define concepts that relate to culture and diplomacy issues. Countries covered by the projects are 27 EU member states, ENP countries, Croatia and 9 strategic partner countries.

EUNIC strongly supports the More Europe campaign, an external cultural relations initiative launched in December 2012 that aims to convince policymakers to place cultural relations – one of the strongest assets that Europe has – at the heart of the EU's external affairs. Based on best practice evidence and research, More Europe calls on Member States, civil society and EU institutions to work together to combine their visions, pool resources, and coordinate their activities.

### Activities of EUNIC clusters in 2013

Clusters – the networks of EUNIC members in a given city, region or country – constitute the most important part of the network. It is the clusters that are most active in developing and running various events and activities in different locations around the world. In October 2012, for the first time EUNIC launched the EUNIC Cluster Fund. This is designed to provide funding for projects developed by EUNIC clusters and encourage cooperation. The Fund has the following objectives:

- Stimulating cluster activities;
- Implementing EUNIC strategic topics;
- Enhancing inter-cluster cooperation
- Presenting EUNIC as a multilateral player that brings European added value

In 2012/2013, 37 EUNIC clusters applied for cluster funds, and 12 received funding totalling €80.147. The following projects and clusters have received support:

**Austria:** 2nd EUNIC Week in Vienna

**China:** EU and creative industries/EUNIC Footprint

**Croatia:** ArtEnergy: Creative visions of nature and technology

**Egypt:** Diploma in cultural management – feasibility study/MENA region

**Estonia:** Cultural diplomacy in the changing world

**Georgia:** EU Literature Night

**Hungary:** 'Promoting multilingualism' competition

**Jordan:** Sights and sounds of Europe

**Palestine:** Gestures of return: a cultural programme examining questions around Palestinian displacement

**Turkey:** European Day of Languages and teacher-training

**Washington, USA:** 'European creative place-making'

**Belgium:** How to build a European project-training for EUNIC staff

The objectives of the EUNIC Cluster Fund 2012/2013 were particularly met in the following areas:

- Improving the visibility of EUNIC joint action for partners and interlocutors
- Reaching wider audiences and different layers of society
- Providing information on EUNIC activities in third countries
- Paving the way for future collaborations and sponsorships
- Designing new formats to be shared across the network.
- Strengthening relationships with local communities and gaining a better position on the local cultural scene
- Positioning culture as an indispensable tool of external relations
- Promoting fundamental European values and multilingualism inside and outside the EU

- Consolidating and professionalising EUNIC clusters that are supported by the Fund
- Improving the image of Europe in countries that have an ambivalent attitude towards the EU
- Capacity building for the whole EUNIC network

## EUNIC clusters and multilingualism

One of EUNIC's main interests lies in supporting multilingualism. On 26th September each year, many EUNIC clusters organise events celebrating the European Day of Languages to promote multilingualism. In 2013, the clusters were especially active and creative in the events they organised for the day. Here are just a few examples:

**Transpoesie** is an event created in 2011 by the EUNIC Brussels cluster in collaboration with the STIB and the Loterie Nationale. The 2013 edition of Transpoesie began officially on 26 September, to mark European Languages Day. This year, no fewer than 25 countries have joined in to offer the population of Brussels and the users of its public transport, a series of 25 poems in their original languages (23 languages in total) and translated into French and Dutch.

In Spain, European cultural institutes opened their doors once again to celebrate the European Day of Languages. 20 cultural institutes in Madrid took part in the activities this year, with the aim of promoting interest in language learning, showcasing less well-known cultures and allowing the public to discover artists and gastronomy from other parts of Europe. There were over 40 activities throughout the day, including plays, food tasting, cinema workshops for kids, guided tours, language classes and storytelling.

For the second consecutive year, EUNIC Peru organised a European Day of Languages at the Italian cultural institute. During the afternoon, promoters of European culture presented a range of activities that included traditional dances, European food and introductions to various European languages. This event happened in parallel with the Working with languages: interpretation and

translation conference.

In Hungary, for the fourth time the EUNIC cluster organised the European Languages Cocktail Bar (ELCB). 22 institutes participated and 16 different languages were represented. The traditional Cocktail Bar programme was jazzed up with an online quiz, a poster competition and the presentation of the European Language Label award.

## European Literature Nights

The European Literature Nights initiative is coordinated by the Czech Centres in cooperation with EUNIC. The aim of Literature Nights is to provide a platform for European countries to present their contemporary writing in translation and to present new European literary voices in a creative way. The European Literature Night concept is based on the assumption that literature is a unique and creative tool that reflects the elementary dialogue between individual voices and cultures through a shared reading experience. Literature is the tool of mutual understanding that helps to break down communication barriers.

In 2012 literature was presented in its various forms in a number of European cities, including Amsterdam, Banská Bystrica, Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Bucharest, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Edinburgh, Yerevan, Kutna Hora, Kiev, London, Lvov, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Prague, Riga, Sofia, Stockholm, Warsaw, Vienna and Zilina. In 2013 the initiative continued in cities like London, Bucharest, Prague, Vilnius, Warsaw, Lisbon and many more.

In Prague the audience enjoyed a range of experiences in just one night, including public readings of contemporary literature performed by well-known personalities at attractive and unusual venues.

In Bucharest books and their lectors began seeking out listeners in the city's crowded cafés, alternative clubs, noisy intersections and other unexpected venues such as a petrol station and the Bucharest Stock Exchange. The lectors came from the ranks of the most prominent Romanian actors, journalists, poets, rappers and celebrities. In London European Literature Night 2013

featured a wealth of prose that was as wide as the continent itself. There were personal family stories, including the comedic Catalan tale of four brothers who had never met, an Austrian exposure of generational estrangement, an ancient Belgian family mystery and a portrait of German domestic bliss that was in fact masking deep divides.

## Culture in external relations

### Strengthening the creative industries

Another main focus of the EUNIC network is the role of culture in the EU's external relations. Here are a few examples with regard to this topic:

#### Zimbabwe

Under the banner of EUNIC Zimbabwe, the Alliance Francaise, British Council and Goethe-Institut launched the Creative Zimbabwe Programme in partnership with the European Union on the 18 October 2013. The European Union is supporting the programme with a financial contribution of €495,000, to be used over the next 18 months to contribute to the professionalisation of the cultural sector in Zimbabwe.

#### Jordan

Throughout 2012 and 2013, EUNIC Jordan was tasked by the EU Delegation in Amman with supporting the development of the creative industries in Jordan. For the first time, EUNIC Jordan brought together representatives of four different sub-sectors and helped them to recognise that they share the same needs and face the same issues. To voice the needs and summarise the opinions of those sub-sectors EUNIC Jordan commissioned a study that was published in form of a Call for Action proposing solutions to common challenges.

#### South Africa

The EUNIC cluster in South Africa has developed an initiative aimed at strengthening relationships between the EU and South Africa in the field of creative industries and supporting the development of this sector of the economy in South Africa. This project

is a result of a successful application for funding under the EuropeAid 'European Union – South Africa Trade Development Agreement Facility'. One of the elements in this programme is promoting dialogue in order to strengthen policy debate between the EU and South Africa.

EUNIC South Africa was one of the organisers of the annual three-day conference held on 6-8 August 2013 at the University of Johannesburg. It brought together representatives of the South African arts and culture sector to tackle key issues and opportunities concerning the creative economy in the region.

#### Training activities

##### 5th EUNIC Summer Academy

At the beginning of June 2013, 18 participants from EUNIC member institutions came together for the 5th EUNIC Summer Academy. Organised in cooperation with the Bureau International Jeunesse, the week-long training revolved around the theme 'Get into Urban Arts!' The training resulted in three videos on the urban world of arts, each produced in a different Belgian city. These were presented to all EUNIC Heads when Summer Academy participants joined the EUNIC General Assembly in Leuven on 14 June 2013.

##### EUNIC at the training session for future Heads of EU Delegations at EEAS

In July 2013 EUNIC had an opportunity to present the association and the network of EUNIC clusters at the training session for the future Heads of EU Delegations at European External Action Service (EEAS). This aroused the interest of participants to engage with EUNIC clusters situated in their respective countries. This made a contribution towards stronger collaboration with EU Delegations.

##### How to build a European project

The How to build a European project training programme ran in Brussels from 6-8 November 2013. This project was financed by EUNIC Global and organised by the EUNIC Brussels cluster, bringing together some 38 members from the EUNIC network. Seminar

participants included experts and people with experience of building cultural projects at European level, along with the European Commission's Head of Unit, Karel Barták, who presented the Creative Europe 2014-2020 programme.

##### EUNIC Croatia Cultural Fellowship

With a view to identifying emerging Croatian cultural leaders from both the public and private sectors and engaging them with cultural institutions in the EU in a way that will create a lasting impact, EUNIC's Croatian cluster, in cooperation with the Croatian Ministry of Culture, has decided to create a EUNIC Cultural Fellowship. 2013 saw the second round of fellowships, which were awarded to Vanja Zanko, Ivana Katic and Gaella Gottwald.

##### The Annual Internship Programme for Young Russian Curators 2013-2014

This programme was created by the members of the EUNIC-cluster in Moscow – the Austrian Cultural Forum, the British Council, the Goethe-Institut, the Embassy of Sweden and Moscow French Institute. The aim of the programme is to help young Russian curators acquire experience while working in leading European cultural institutions. The applicants will be given a chance to undertake internships in one of five countries, to see how the leading galleries and museums work, collaborate with local curators and develop their own independent curatorial projects.

#### EUNIC Governance

The EUNIC General Assembly is a decision-making body that brings together the CEOs, Presidents and Secretary Generals of EUNIC members. The General Assembly approves new members and clusters and sets the strategy, budget and internal rules for the network.

13 – 14 December 2012, Brussels, Belgium

13 – 14 June 2013, Leuven, Belgium

12 – 13 December 2013, Brussels, Belgium

#### EUNIC Strategy Group meetings

This group brings together 12 senior managers from EUNIC members, along with the EUNIC Global Director and EUNIC President. Its role is to advise the Board of Directors and the Heads on the major issues affecting EUNIC and to make recommendations. The group draws on the experience and expertise of colleagues within member organisations and externally.

4 – 5 December 2012, Brussels, Belgium

14 – 15 March 2013, Brussels, Belgium

24 – 25 October 2013, Brussels, Belgium

#### Regional cluster meetings

EUNIC Regional Meetings gather together representatives from EUNIC clusters. The meetings are organised in five different regions: Europe, Americas, MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The overall objective of the meetings is to share knowledge, instigate new initiatives that can improve the work of clusters and discuss opportunities for future cooperation.

MENA Regional Meeting 14 – 16 November 2012, Beirut, Lebanon

European Regional Meeting 3 – 5 February 2013, Warsaw, Poland

Inter-cluster Meeting 19 – 20 November 2013, London, UK

#### Board meetings

The Heads elect a Board of Directors comprising three of their own members: a president, a first vice president and a second vice president. The Board of Directors acts as the executive committee between Heads meetings. The second vice president also acts as treasurer.

#### EUNIC Board (July 2012 – June 2013)

Delphine Borione, Director for Cultural Policy and French Language at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – EUNIC President  
Charles-Etienne Lagasse, WBI, Belgium – EUNIC Vice President

Annika Rembe, Swedish Institute, Sweden – EUNIC Second Vice-President and Treasurer

#### EUNIC Board since June 2013

Charles-Etienne Lagasse, Wallonie-Bruxelles Internationale, Belgium – EUNIC President  
Annika Rembe, Swedish Institute, Sweden – EUNIC Vice President  
Rafael Rodriguez-Ponga, Instituto Cervantes, Spain – EUNIC Second Vice President and Treasurer

#### EUNIC Global Office

##### Full time staff

Helena Kovarikova, Director since July 2012  
Kamila Gawronska, Network and Communications Officer since November 2011  
Khadija El Bennaoui, MENA Project Coordinator since November 2012

##### Interns

Anna Frederike Steiff, Communications and Administration Assistant, September 2012 – February 2013  
Maxence Viallon, Communications Assistant, December 2012 – June 2013  
Roxana Apostol, Communications and Administration Assistant, March – September 2013  
Corina Pirva, Communications Assistant since September 2013  
Eleonora Parisi, Communications and Administration Assistant since September 2013

#### EUNIC Yearbook 2012-2013

The EUNIC Yearbook 2012-2013 entitled Culture and Conflict – Challenges for Europe's Foreign Policy was published by ifa in early 2013. It deals with the role culture plays in conflict regions. It carefully analyses opportunities and challenges, the risks and limitations of cultural engagement in regions beset by crisis and conflict. The Yearbook is trying to answer the question: what kinds of external cultural policies does Europe need to embrace to allow art, education and intercultural dialogue to open doors and build trust between communities – and help prevent conflicts around the globe?

#### EUNIC Website, Newsletter and Social Media

The website [www.eunic-online.eu](http://www.eunic-online.eu) contains key information and updates on activities and projects developed by EUNIC Global. Activities run by EUNIC cluster are presented in EUNIC cluster subsection on the EUNIC website.

The EUNIC e-Newsletter is sent monthly to members of the EUNIC network and external subscribers to inform them about activities undertaken by EUNIC clusters and EUNIC Global.

EUNIC is very active on Facebook and Twitter. We update the network at least once a day with interesting news and initiatives from the cultural affairs world, funding opportunities, and so on. In 2013 we established EUNIC on Flickr and YouTube. The Poliglott4.eu website and Facebook and Twitter pages are also updated on a daily basis.

#### Launch of the EUNIC Handbook

The EUNIC Handbook, launched in June 2013, is EUNIC new comprehensive guidelines document, providing network members with all the information they need. The Handbook provides a general overview of EUNIC activity and governance, its focus themes, meetings, groups, members and clusters and includes EUNIC policy papers, an outline of organisational structure and relevant contact details. The Handbook is also a first reference manual for EUNIC clusters, replacing previous EUNIC Cluster guidelines. It provides guidance on how to set up and run a cluster with a focus on practical issues. It also provides all necessary templates, benchmarks, examples of model projects and gives advice on how to secure funding from the EU. Launch of EUNIC's new visual identity EUNIC new visual identity was launched in June 2013. It provides a 'brushed-up' logo for EUNIC Global and EUNIC clusters, new visual identity guidelines and a set of stationary templates that includes EUNIC leaflets, roll-up banners, e-mail signatures, EUNIC folders, invitation cards for the events, PowerPoint

templates, letterhead, business cards and envelopes to be used by the whole network. In December 2013 EUNIC launched a new website with intranet. It provides all clusters with individual sub-websites and is more user-friendly.

#### Finances

The Board of Directors provides a yearly financial report to the EUNIC General Assembly. Additionally, every two months the EUNIC Global Office distributes a budget-tracking report to all EUNIC members. This gives an overview of income and spending for the current budget year. EUNIC Global Office also provides the Board of Directors with a regular update on the financial health of EUNIC.

With the aim of promoting transparency and providing a complete overview of its activities, EUNIC presents an annual financial report to its members. The report is prepared with the help of an external accounting firm, which receives copies of all invoices. An external audit is commissioned every year to accompany the financial report.

#### EUNIC members

Austrian Cultural Forum  
Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs  
Wallonie-Bruxelles International  
Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs  
Bulgarian Ministry of Culture  
Foundation Croatian House  
Czech Centres  
Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture  
The Danish Cultural Institute  
Estonian Institute  
The Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes  
Institut Français  
Alliance Française  
French Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Goethe-Institut  
ifa - Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations  
Balassi Institute  
Società Dante Alighieri  
Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Culture Ireland  
Latvian Institute  
International Cultural Programme Center  
Lithuania  
Centre Culturel de Recontre Abbaye de Neumünster  
Dutch Culture  
Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Instituto Camões  
Romanian Cultural Institute  
Slovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport  
Instituto Cervantes  
Swedish Institute  
British Council

#### **EUNIC cluster activities in 2013**

##### **Multilingualism**

European Languages  
March 2013, EUNIC Netherlands, Language Rich Europe  
April 2013, EUNIC Melbourne, European Languages Festival 2013 'Carnival'  
September 2013, EUNIC Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Day of Languages  
September 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Speak Dating  
September 2013, EUNIC Rome, Parleuro Pa-Il Rally delle lingue  
September 2013, EUNIC Lithuania, European Literature Nights  
September 2013, EUNIC Lithuania, European Day of Languages  
September 2013, EUNIC Georgia, European Day of Languages  
September 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, European Day of Languages  
September 2013, EUNIC Bucharest, European Day of Languages  
September 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Day of Languages in Toronto  
September 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Day of Languages in Montréal  
September 2013, EUNIC Estonia, European Day of Languages  
October 2013, EUNIC Jordan, European Day of Languages  
November 2013, EUNIC Vietnam, European Day of Languages

##### **European Literature**

January 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Toronto  
February 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Vancouver  
March 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Toronto  
March 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Montreal  
April 2013, EUNIC Canada, Lisez l'Europe/Metropolis Bleu in Montreal  
May 2013, EUNIC Netherlands, European Literature Night  
May 2013, EUNIC Vietnam, European Literature Days  
May 2013, EUNIC Bucharest, European Literature Night  
May 2013, May 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Toronto  
EUNIC Ireland, European Literature Night – Words on the Street  
June 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Vancouver  
June 2013, EUNIC Paris, Literature Night  
June 2013, EUNIC Denmark, Festival of European Contemporary Playwrights  
July 2013, EUNIC Georgia, European Night of Literature  
August 2013, EUNIC Cordoba, FILIC – Festival Internacional de Literatura en Cordoba  
October 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Toronto  
October 2013, EUNIC Canada, Europe @ IFOA in Toronto  
November 2013, EUNIC Canada, European Book Club in Toronto  
November 2013, EUNIC New York, New Literature from Europe Festival

##### **Arts**

###### **Visual arts**

January 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
February 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
February 2013, EUNIC Estonia, Nova's Cinema Club, Supernova Cinema Club  
March 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
April 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Cinéma sans frontières  
April 2013, EUNIC Brazil, European Film Festival

April 2013, EUNIC New York, Disappearing Act V, European Film Festival  
April 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Film Festival in Curitiba  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, European Film Festival  
May 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
May 2013, EUNIC Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Film Week  
June 2013, EUNIC Senegal, Festival Image et Vie  
June 2013, EUNIC Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kid's Festival Sarajevo  
June 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
June 2013, EUNIC Vietnam, 5th European Documentary Film Week  
August 2013, EUNIC Namibia, EUNIC Film Festival  
November 2013, EUNIC Ireland, Short Shorts from Europe!

##### **Performing Arts**

January 2013, EUNIC Netherlands, Shadows of Heaven  
January 2013, EUNIC Senegal, Cycle de petit déjeuner  
February 2013, EUNIC Lebanon, Zoukak Sidewalks  
February 2013, EUNIC Senegal, Cycle de petit déjeuner  
February 2013, EUNIC Croatia, Symposium 'Supporting art - various European practices'  
February 2013, EUNIC Estonia, Debate Club  
March 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, European Voices  
April 2013, EUNIC Vietnam, 'Hanoi Sound stuff'  
April 2013, EUNIC Jordan, Jazz Festival  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, European concert  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Gastronomic Festival  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, European Bazaar  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, European Running Competition  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Charity Tennis Tournament  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Europe's Week Regatta  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Charity Football Match  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Launching of the cuisine book

May 2013, EUNIC Estonia, Europe Day  
May 2013, EUNIC Canada, Europe Day in Toronto  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Jazz concert  
June 2013, EUNIC Senegal, Cycle de Petit Déjeuner  
June 2013, EUNIC Paris, Semaine des cultures étrangères  
June 2013, EUNIC Bucharest, Open Night of the Cultural Institutes  
June 2013, EUNIC Lebanon, Fête de la musique  
July 2013, EUNIC Rome, Concerto per l'Europa a Gavoi  
September 2013, EUNIC New York, Moving Sounds Festival  
September 2013, EUNIC Jordan, Sights and Sounds of Europe  
September 2013, EUNIC Vietnam, European Festival of Contemporary Dance 'Europe meets Asia in Contemporary Dance'  
September 2013, EUNIC Slovakia, EuroCine Club  
September 2013, EUNIC Croatia, Zagreb Film Festival  
September 2013, EUNIC Jordan, Concert Saint-Louis Blooze  
November 2013, EUNIC Bogota, Festival Dame tu lengua  
November 2013, EUNIC Senegal, Cycle de petit déjeuner  
December 2013, EUNIC Bucharest, European Comics Festival  
December 2013, EUNIC Paris, Europe in a day  
December 2013, EUNIC Rome, European Christmas Concert

##### **Culture and development**

January 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Villes littéraires, villes européennes: Munich  
February 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Villes littéraires, villes européennes: Madrid and Porto  
February 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Villes littéraires, villes européennes: Ferrare and Bordeaux  
March 2013, EUNIC Croatia, Cultural Fellowship  
May 2013, EUNIC France Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Village européen  
July 2013, EUNIC Croatia, ArtEnergy

November 2013, EUNIC Rome, A Vinci don Chisciotte e Democrazia Cosa ci fa sentire davvero europei? Public discussion  
November 2013, EUNIC Chile, 50 Years of the European Southern Observatory

##### **Creative Industries**

May 2013, EUNIC Jordan, Festival Platform for the Creative Industries  
October 2013, EUNIC Jordan, Step Into The Future

##### **Discussion forums, lectures, workshops, conferences and projects**

January 2011 – 2013, EUNIC India, EUNIC Lecture Series  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Brazil and Europe: facing global challenges - seminar  
May 2013, EUNIC Brazil, Seminar about sustainable development  
June 2013, EUNIC Jordan, Development of a study of the creative sector  
October 2013, EUNIC New York, The Origins and Impact of World War I: An Interdisciplinary Conference

##### **Conference report**

#### **"Europe from outside" ifa conference, Brussels, 12 December 2012**

An attempt to sum up the conference in 10 points.

*By Charles-Etienne Lagasse*

##### **1. Positive views of Europe**

My first point concerns the paradoxical views of Europe when seen from outside. Nathalia Chaban presented several positive concepts in this respect:

- Economic giant, strong, euro as a strength;
  - Unification, friendship, association, pacification;
  - Modern, efficient;
  - Smart, ethical, gentle;
  - Scandinavia of the world;
- All the countries surveyed see the EU pri-

marily as a commercial actor, but also as an important player in the field of science and research. The global best scores in the perception of Europe come from India, Thailand, Russia, and Korea.

These positive views are confirmed by surveys on mutual perceptions of Chinese and Europeans. In 2010, a public survey of 3,000 individuals in 6 Chinese cities conducted by the University of Nottingham with Chinese, Dutch, German, and other British partners produced some interesting results. One of these is that Chinese people have the most favourable impression of Europe as an entity and of European citizens compared to other countries. A more detailed analysis shows that these positive impressions refer to European attitudes in the following fields: scientific progress (85.2%), environmental protection (81.6%), global economy (75.4%), peace in the world (69.8%).

The study demonstrates a very positive attitude towards European culture, including fashion, music and film, and also towards innovation, ways of doing business and the idea of democracy.

In addition, the Chinese view Europeans as the least aggressive foreigners. It seems that the more people know about the EU, the more they view it positively. The first conclusion to draw from these findings is that Europeans need more confidence in themselves.

##### **2. Negative perceptions**

Along with these positive views, the speaker showed us that the concept of Europe was also linked to negative perceptions, with such associated terms as:

- Protectionism; -Disunity;
- Financial Gargantua;
- Local giant but global pygmy.

Several countries no see longer Europe as an important player in world politics or the world economy. According to the speaker, only two countries believe Europe will remain in the first rank in future: Russia and ... China! All others view us as a power in decline or as a minor or secondary power. Europe is only considered as a 'soft power'.

Let us remember the adage: “The US fights, the UN talks, the EU funds”, or this one: “The EU is not a player, but only a payer”. Unless we resign ourselves to becoming provincial players on the world stage, we have to build a European foreign policy and abandon the paralysing rule of unanimity. But, at the same time, we must capitalise on our assets and continue to build a European soft power.

**3. Still playing stand alone?**

In Europe, the persisting divisions in European structures and procedures, along with divisions between European actors who often play one against another in their relations with foreign authorities, are an obvious weakness. We heard a plea for more European political unity. Again, it is necessary to improve European decision-making procedures in the Common Foreign and Security Policy. But in the short term, in so far as culture is not a real European competence, EUNIC is the right response and could be an ‘arm’s length’ tool of a cultural foreign policy, particularly as it has a less bureaucratic structure. EUNIC needs to have more day-to-day cooperation with European structures: in Brussels, with the DGEAC, DEVCO, EEAS and even the European Parliament and outside of Europe, with the European Delegations. The expertise of EUNIC members should be harnessed to make European diplomats aware of the cultural dimension of their work. How about a training programme for newly-posted diplomats? Or regular dialogues between the EUNIC clusters and the European Delegations?

**4. Europe as a huge museum?**

In countries like China, Europe is often seen simply as a huge museum, a swathe of heritage and antiquities, without taking into consideration its exceptional creativity in scientific, technological and cultural areas. Most European countries have launched ambitious programmes of scientific and technological development, placing them at the forefront of world excellence. A new industrial age is coming into being based on

the golden triangle of education, research and businesses. In the Member States and European politics, the mottos are ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’. Statistics from the European Patent Office demonstrate European productivity in the area of patents. From 2008 to 2012, the number of patents coming from European countries averaged 92.000 patents per year and were more numerous than those coming from Asia or the USA. The cultural aspect of foreign policy is not a matter of heritage or even of classical arts; it encompasses the promotion of the creators in all fields related to culture: performances, visual arts, film, publishing, music, design, fashion, new image technologies. The growing contribution of the cultural industries to GNP is one of the responses to the economic crisis.

**5. An arrogant Europe?**

At the conference we also heard about the difficulties of relations with countries that are having problems with democracy and where even digital tools can be under the control of the authorities.

YEARS	EUROPE	USA	CHINA S.KOREA JAPAN
2008	93.359	61.193	56.416
2009	87.544	53.901	61.193
2010	92.762	60.776	61.193
2011	91.967	60.137	77.576
2012	94.060	63.504	84.996

The EU is also seen as a “normative power” “arrogant”, “paternalistic”, that seeks to change other countries and teach them lessons. These kinds of attitudes have little effect, the only way forward is dialogue. The conference proffered several examples in this respect: the Cultural Dialogue between Europe and China that has been ongoing for 5 years by EUNIC and EUNIC’s Europe-China Cultural Compass; co-curation and bilateral work as exemplified by the Culture Fund of the Zimbabwe Trust (Farai Mpfunya); the Iranian art magazine Art Tomorrow; and the Austrian Cultural Forums.

**6. A contradiction between values and interests?**

A first response to dealing with the critical issue of the conflict between promoting our values and defending our interests (including economic interests) is to try to negotiate an upgrading of universal standards at economic, social, environmental and ethical level. Let us remember the UN Covenants of the 19 December 1966 on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the UNESCO Convention of the 20 October 2005 on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; and bilateral EU agreements with different countries.

A second response is to tackle common challenges. For examples: what does ‘cultural diversity’ mean, not only on the international stage, but also in our own countries? How can culture help us with the sustainable development of our cities? What is the right distance between the state and the artist? How can we reconcile the freedom needed for cultural creation and expression on the one hand with the necessary support from public authorities on the other?

**7. What is special about Europe?**

All too often, Europe is regarded as part of American civilisation and as an English-speaking area, without taking into account its exceptional cultural and linguistic diversity. The strength of Europe lies in its multilingualism and multiculturalism. Unfortunately, the European Commission often fails to set an example. Despite official speeches on multilingualism, the practical behaviour of the Commission too often takes the opposite direction. For example, in its accession negotiations, Bulgaria peopled its delegation with French-speakers, but at the last minute, the Bulgarian authorities discovered that the European negotiators were unable to conduct the negotiations in French. As a result, they were forced to change all their staff. And in Brussels, in a country where the official languages are Dutch, French and German, the Commission and other European institutions usually prefer to use only English for

their communications with the public (for instance for notices posted on the official buildings). It is only after complaints from citizens that some notices have been translated into the national languages. Since its creation, EUNIC has considered multilingualism to be one of its main fields of action, and has participated in several programmes and projects in this area: Poliglotti4.eu, the Multilingual Online Language Observatory, Language Rich Europe, Languages days, European Literature Nights, etc. To return to what makes Europe special, we should draw attention to real European values. One of these is Europe’s social model that combines liberty, equality and secularity. The current crisis is has arisen because the three poles of this magic triangle are jeopardised. Europe has to multiply its independent positions in world politics. A good example of this was its active role in the defence of the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.

**8. Talk to young people**

The aforementioned surveys show that in some emerging nations such as China, it is young people who have the least positive image of Europe. We need to target our actions and use the appropriate media to speak to this age group. The speakers gave us some examples of initiatives taken in this direction, including social networking, contemporary dance and hip hop. By pooling actions led by its members, EUNIC could launch a European Young Leaders Training Programme.

**9. Working only with elites?**

At the conference, we heard that Europe has been criticised for working with local elites (for example, in Africa). Surveys show that civil societies have insufficient knowledge of Europe, and that the more people know about Europe, the more positively they view it. We need to target our actions towards civil societies; and once again, one of EUNIC’s strengths is the ability to establish spaces for dialogue. Several examples were given during the conference.

I would also like to mention the ongoing development of a EUNIC support programme for the cultural sector in the MENA region. Instead of building a unilateral offer for the cultural actors of the region, EUNIC organised several meetings with artists and operators to listen to their needs. This was the case in Rabat in September 2011 and in Beirut in November 2012. In May 2012, thanks to the Jordan cluster, 180 representatives of the creative cultural sector met in the ‘Euromed Forum of the Dead Sea’ and were able to express their needs. For many of them, it was a first opportunity to get to know each other. In July 2012, the Tunisian cluster organised a Forum in Bizerte to exchange experiences on the role of regional cultural centres in the development of cultural democracy. The EUNIC MENA programme is extremely oriented towards the needs of its participants.

**10. Culture as a tool for development**

The African speaker and others stressed that culture is a tool for development. EUNIC certainly believes that it has a role to play in the field of development. The network was involved with DEVCO and the Belgian presidency in 2010 in the publication of the brochure Culture and Development, giving several examples of concrete projects led by EUNIC members or clusters linking culture and social or economic development. Therefore, cooperation between clusters and EU Delegations is essential. With its comprehensive network of 29 members from 24 member states and 83 clusters around the world, EUNIC is an obvious partner for the European institutions. EUNIC is able to complement the EU’s plans and actions in the field of culture, both inside and outside Europe. The network has a great deal to offer and is asking for a regular dialogue with these institutions, not only in Brussels but worldwide.

*Charles-Etienne Lagasse is General Inspector of WBI (Wallonie-Bruxelles International) and Vice-President of EUNIC.*

## Editorial information



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