



Is there a New Approach to Culture and Development in the Strategy of the EU Development Policy?

by Stefano Manservigi

Something seems to change in the international and, particularly, in the European debate on development and development policy. During the past decades, culture has been having, unfortunately a marginal role in the development policies of international institutions and donors. Still today, culture is too frequently the last item of long policy wish lists and is often left out of the development policy strategies due to lack of funding. However, in the last years, the European Union (EU) has been taking steps towards a redefinition of the **relation between culture and development**,¹ to the point that for the European Union, culture is now increasingly recognized as an important part of its main development policy.

As stated in the 2007 European Commission's Communication on *An European Agenda for Culture in a Globalized World*, culture has a double dimension:²

1) on one hand, culture has an anthropological nature, and thus, «culture lies at the heart of human development and civilization»,³ culture is what makes us what we are, it is the source of our primal identity and our values, the heart of our hopes and our beliefs, of our ways of relating to the others and to the objects that surround us. Culture is, to put it simply, the shades through which we see the world; 2) on the other hand, culture has a second nature, and that is the one that refers to the creative and innovative dimension: **arts and cultural goods and services**. In order to improve its development strategy and to make it more sustainable and more effective, these last years the EU has focused on both these pillars, trying to find the way how to strengthen the cultural development policy with ACP and other partner countries and striving to include a cultural approach in its development policies in general.

The European Commission believes that any successful development must build upon an appropriate cultural dimension as an element of **social cohesion and inclusion, social stability, empowerment of youth, women and the disabled, and promotion of democracy and human rights**. Perhaps this can be better shown by an example. In a recent intervention in the last edition of the European Development Days, held in October in Stockholm, Joy Mboya, Executive Director of the GoDown Arts Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, explained how youth stemming from deprived and marginal communities had come to be integrated in the Kenyan society through dance and through participation in common projects in her arts centre. Culture, and more precisely dance and the sce-



Wall painting, Dakar, Senegal. Photo by Marco Mensa. © Ethnos



nic arts, had given these marginalised youngsters a stable job and a passion to become part of their communities and to gain their acknowledgement as artists and as citizens.

Culture also plays an important role in conflict and post-conflict zones, for **inter-cultural dialogue** is a key element in brining about peace and reconciliation between communities. For instance, in recent years, the *Sarajevo Film Festival*, which held its first edition in 1995 in a climate of smoking guns and dire inter-cultural hatred, has been working hard to bring people in the Balkans together, encouraging co-productions of young directors from the different Balkan regions and promoting, quite successfully, an atmosphere of understanding, tolerance, and exchange of ideas and experiences.

Finally, culture and cultural industries have a **great economic potential**, either through heritage and responsible cultural tourism, or through economic revenues of cultural products. Paradoxically, culture is often misleadingly thought of as a weak economic sector. In reality, sound evidence shows the contrary. The cultural sector contributed to 2.6% of the aggregate European GDP in 2003. In the same year, the contribution to the European GDP of real estate activities was 2.1%; the food, beverage and tobacco industries contributed 1.9%, and the textile industry 0.5%.⁴ It is true that when it comes to developing countries it is difficult to find comprehensive studies or statistics concerning the economic share of the cultural sectors. Nonetheless, such studies, where they exist, prove the economic importance of culture. In Mali, for example, the direct economic weight of the cultural sectors reached 2.38% of the GDP in 2006, which is subsequently reflected in terms of employment in around 115.000 jobs in 2004, approximately 5.85%⁵ of the overall active population in Mali.⁶

A key issue for Developing countries is the **access to regional and international markets** for their cultural products and services: there the EU can make a real difference! **The link between culture, development, and social stability** is therefore clear and has different dimensions. Culture can be either a tool for dialogue and social inclusion or a powerful driving economic force. In addition, a creative and culturally active society is a dynamic element of economic and social innovation; it plants the seeds for original ideas to flourish and gives new and renovated inputs to the social body. Finally, culture needs to be present as an issue of concern in any development strategy.

In the past certain development policies have failed because policy makers have not taken into account cultural obstacles. In that sense, the European Commission is aiming for a **new approach** that overcomes the problems caused by the occasional clash of local cultures and development strategies. This new approach would like to introduce the cultural dimension as a holistic element of the European development policy strategy, **mainstreaming culture from the common trunk of development to all of its different branches.**

What is the Current Framework?

Culture as a possible vector for development was already present in the *Lome III* and *Lome IV Conventions* that the European Community concluded with the ACP countries in 1984 and 1989 respectively. Nonetheless, the references to culture under this regime were scarce, and it was the *Cotonou Agreement*, signed between the EU and the ACP countries in 2000, that became the cornerstone for a strong

cultural development policy was laid. Through its Article 27, the agreement states that development policy in the area of culture shall aim at integrating the cultural dimension at all levels of development policy; at recognising, preserving and promoting cultural values, heritage and identities to enable inter-cultural dialogue; at supporting the development capacity in this sector, developing cultural industries and enhancing market access opportunities for cultural goods and services.⁷ But the *Cotonou Agreement* is just the first of a set of milestones for cultural development policy that came with the new millennium.

In June 2003, the ACP Ministers of Culture met in Dakar and concluded the *Dakar Plan of Action on the Promotion of ACP Cultures and Cultural Industries*,⁸ with provisions on regional development policy, capacity building for the cultural sector in ACP countries, and the intention of expanding development policy with the EU in the field of culture under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF), in the period of 2000-2007. Subsequently, following the *Dakar Plan of Action* several development policies were undertaken. Such is the case of the Santo Domingo ACP Festival of 2006, where artists and cultural actors of ACP countries came together to try to get their voice better understood.

These last years, the EU has also taken a number of actions that are highly relevant for culture and development. In December 2005 the *European Consensus on Development* recognised culture as one of the key features of **human development** along with health, education and gender equality.⁹ In the same line, the European Commission's 2007 Communication on a *European Agenda for Culture on a Globalizing World* places culture at the heart of development and calls for respect of cultural diversity. Simultaneously, it recognizes globalization as more than a mere economic integration. Globalization is, on the contrary, a cultural process that accelerates transactions and reorganizes time and space¹⁰ with a profound impact in cultures all over the world.

It is in view of protecting and guaranteeing cultural diversity in the globalized arena that, the European Commission has played an extensive role in the preparation and adoption of the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and the Promotion Diversity of Cultural Expressions* of 2005. Both the European Community and the member states are an active part of it¹¹ and are committed with its principles and its provisions, to the point that the European Commission is preparing a financial package to help in its implementation efforts. The Convention links the protection of cultural diversity to that of «human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, information and communication»,¹² and it gives the EU an additional and very important tool to support not only better policy making, but also the free participation of the civil society and the private sector in the development of societies at local and national level. The Convention also recognizes that «the cultural aspects of development are as important as its economic aspects».¹³

Following the spirit of the UNESCO Convention, the aforementioned *European Agenda for Culture* further develops the idea of integrating and mainstreaming culture in the EU development policies and of reinforcing inter-cultural dialogue in European external relations. The Agenda also shows the way for a clear support to cultural industries in ACP countries, and therefore it proposes the creation of an «EU-ACP Cultural Fund as a joint European contribu-



tion to supporting the distribution and in some cases the production of ACP cultural goods».¹⁴

Finally, In order to complete the general overview of the existing framework, I must refer to the two most recent milestones in the process leading to the emergence of a new European approach towards culture and development:

1) the inclusion of a specific Culture Protocol in the negotiations of the *Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)* between the EU and CARIFORUM, comprising most of the Caribbean countries, in 2008, opening up new possibility for the circulation of cultural goods and services between the Caribbean region and the European market;

2) the organization of the international Colloquium *Culture and Creativity as Vectors for Development*, which took place in Brussels in April of this year. This event, promoted jointly by the two European Commissioners responsible for Development and for Education and Culture, was

a great success in terms of attendance and endorsement, pooling together over 800 artists and professionals from 65 ACP and EU countries with 48 Ministers of Culture from ACP countries.

The main outcome of the Colloquium, has been the adoption, by the present artists and cultural professionals, of a *Brussels Declaration*¹⁵ addressing the policy makers with recommendations to improve the access to markets for cultural goods and services from the South, to improve the cultural sector's governance in developing countries, and to strengthen the cultural partnership and dialogue with the EU.

The framework encompassing the relation between culture and development has thus become broader and more fertile in the last decade. The mechanisms and instruments for cultural development policy in the field of development, either geographical or thematic, are also developing, but still too slowly.

WHICH ARE THE AVAILABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY INSTRUMENTS FOR CULTURE?

If we take a look at the *Strategy Papers and the National Indicative Programmes (NIP) of the ACP countries for the 10th European Development Fund (EDF)*, which covers the period from 2008 to 2013, more than 50 million € are devoted specifically to cultural programmes in seven countries.¹ On the same note, seven other countries² have recently requested to introduce cultural programmes during the mid-term reviews of their NIPs as a consequence of the successful debates aroused during the recent Brussels Colloquium on Culture. In addition, for the same period, 30 million € have been allocated to an interregional facility in support of ACP cultural industries, with specific focus on distribution and circulation, and to which we hope also some Member States will decide to contribute.

These provisions show that culture is slowly moving to the top of the agenda in the development policy between the EU and several ACP countries. Similarly, the Regional Indicative Programmes under the EDF can also be an important instrument of development policy, as outlined by the experiences of Western Africa³ and the Portuguese speaking states in Africa, the PALOP Countries.⁴

Nevertheless, cultural development policy does not end in ACP countries. The European Commission supports important cultural programmes in other regional areas that complete its development policy and make Europe an integral and global player in the field of development. *The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)* is undertaking important cultural actions in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Concerning this last region: the programme *EuroMed Heritage* has financed 33 conservation projects since 1998, with a total of 70.5 million € invested in the rehabilitation of buildings with cultural interest. *EuroMed Heritage IV*, spanning from 2008 to 2012, has a budget of 17 million € and its objective is not only the rehabilitation of cultural sites, but also its integration in cultural tourism development strategies and in local education and local access to heritage and cultu-

re. Also in the same region, *EuroMed Audiovisual*, with a budget of 6.5 million €, has boosted the local audiovisual arts and economy, fostering the professionalization of the sector and the exchanges between this region and the EU. Other areas of action for EU cultural development policy include Latin America (Mercosur Audiovisual programme), Asia (ASEM and ASEF initiatives) or the Middle East.

Besides these geographical programmes, however, the EU undertakes other cultural development actions under its thematic initiatives. In that sense, the *Investing in People* programme provides a distinctive value added approach and complements the geographical programmes, for it encompasses a specific area of activity that may be of interest to a group of partner countries not determined by geographic constrictions. In particular, "Investing in People" deals with human and social development, and it is a tool for the promotion and safeguard of cultural diversity and the strengthening of the cultural sector in developing countries. The programme works on a basis of annual call for proposals for projects to be carried out mainly by civil society organizations in developing countries. In 2009, the supported thematic line was access to local culture, and the budget allocated was 12.7 million €. For the period of 2008-2013, the whole sum available for the programme reaches 50 million €.

NOTES

- 1 - Eritrea, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Senegal.
- 2 - Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Niger, Togo, and Zimbabwe.
- 3 - The Regional Indicative Programme for ECOWAS under the 9th EDF promoted the creation of a regional fund for cultural exchanges.
- 4 - The 8th EDF allocated 3 million € to culture for the five PALOP countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome e Principe).

Challenges and Actions Foreseen

Through the previous lines I have tried to give an overview on the current strategies in EU culture development policy and the road that has led to the current framework. As we have seen, there are several instruments for development policy in the culture sector. Even if they are modest compared to those of other areas, the tendency in the last decade has been a positive one, and they have grown in number and scope. But there is a **still long road in front of us and important challenges that we must face** if we want to improve the quality of our actions.

Firstly, the **access to the European market** of cultural goods and services is a capital issue. In Europe we know that it is not always easy for cultural products from the South to reach our shores and if there will be the political will to do so, we have also the tools to make this easier. As a first step, as I already mentioned, the European Commission accompanied the negotiation of the EPA between the EU and the **CARIFORUM region** with a specific Culture Protocol that not only promotes cultural exchanges and facilitates the circulation of cultural goods, artists and cultural operators, but also foresees the possibility to promote audiovisual co-productions and to give technical assistance to CARIFORUM states to support a better circulation.

This same procedure will hopefully be applied to the other ACP regions during the next year, but this is not enough; in parallel to that a specific INTRA-ACP facility is in the way to be developed, with the intention of reinforcing particularly the distribution structures and chains in order to provide better access to the regional, European and international markets. The 30 Millions at present allocated to this are important but again not enough for the all foreseen period 2010-2013 and more financing to the facility from other donors would be advisable, in line with the principles of concentration, division of labour and Aid effectiveness stated in the *Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness* of March 2005 and at the Accra Forum of September 2008.

On a related note, **piracy and the lack of reliable systems of copyrights protection, royalty recollection and distribution** have become a huge threat to fledgling artists in the South. The European Union needs to be more active to cooperate with the national authorities of the partner countries, having the responsibility there to reinforce their legal frame against piracy and to set up strong and reliable systems of copyright protection and royalty recollection. This is another fundamental cornerstone to allow the young and promising artists to establish themselves in the market and to contribute to the development of their local regions and countries.

The cultural sector organization in many developing countries is still weak and lacks sustainable structures. A better structure can manage and serve its objectiveness in a better way, increasing also the ownership over development projects supported by European funding. Consequently improving the **governance of the cultural sector** and capacity building in partner countries should be priorities in our development agendas and the European Commission, together with UNESCO, is already planning concrete actions in this specific direction.

Governance of the cultural domain should not just apply to the public sector, but also to the civil society and private actors. The **grassroots level** is crucial, and, as shown by the support that programmes like *Investing in People* are giving to the private sector,

Un nuovo approccio a cultura e sviluppo nelle politiche di cooperazione dell'Unione europea?

Qualcosa sta cambiando nel dibattito internazionale relativo alle politiche di cooperazione e sviluppo, in particolare a livello europeo. L'articolo offre un'analisi di questo cambiamento di prospettiva attraverso un *excursus* delle politiche europee degli ultimi anni, concentrandosi infine sui limiti attuali e sui possibili sviluppi del fattore culturale applicato alle politiche di cooperazione e sviluppo.

Dal 2000, anno di ratifica del *Cotonou Agreement* tra Unione europea (UE) e Paesi ACP, l'UE si è attivata per ridefinire la relazione che lega cultura e sviluppo secondo una prospettiva che riconosce la cultura come parte fondamentale dei suoi principali programmi e strumenti di cooperazione.

Nell'*Agenda europea per la cultura in un mondo globalizzato* del 2007, la Commissione europea ha evidenziato una duplice dimensione dell'elemento culturale. Da un lato ha individuato la natura antropologica della cultura, legata al cuore dello sviluppo e della civilizzazione umana in quanto fonte della nostra identità primaria e dei nostri valori, delle nostre credenze e quindi del nostro modo di relazionarci a ciò che ci circonda. Dall'altro, ha posto l'accento sulla seconda natura della cultura riconducibile alla produzione artistica e ai beni e servizi culturali.

Per migliorare le proprie politiche di sviluppo e renderle più sostenibili ed efficaci, negli ultimi anni l'Unione europea si è focalizzata su entrambi questi aspetti, rinforzando la cooperazione culturale con i Paesi ACP e altri Paesi partner e cercando di includere l'approccio culturale nelle sue politiche di sviluppo in generale.

La Commissione europea crede infatti che una politica di sviluppo di successo debba essere costruita su un'appropriata dimensione culturale in quanto elemento fondamentale di coesione sociale e inclusione, stabilità sociale, valorizzazione di giovani, donne e disabili e promozione di democrazia e diritti umani. Un esempio concreto di questo approccio è stato fornito dalla direttrice esecutiva del *GoDown Centre* di Nairobi in Kenya, Joy Mboya, che in un recente intervento all'ultima edizione delle giornate europee dello sviluppo (*European Development Days*) ha spiegato come numerosi giovani emergenti provenienti da comunità disagiate e marginali, si siano integrati nella società keniana attraverso la danza e la partecipazione a progetti comuni nel centro artistico da lei diretto.



NGOs and other private actors, as the professional associations or consortia, have a lot to say in terms of income and employment in the field of culture. Cultural initiatives very often have more a bottom-up than top-down approach and therefore non-state and private initiatives can translate into important local development vectors.

When it comes to development, however, financing is not all. Intentions and sensitivities are also important. Culture plays a capital role there. As I already remarked, there have been errors in the past. Sometimes ambitious development projects and plans have failed because the cultural factor has not been sufficiently taken into account. This is the case of issues such as **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**, a practice against which the European Union is strongly committed.¹⁶ FGM is a matter of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, but also a matter of cultural behaviours, of changing traditional practices deeply rooted in the cultural social imaginary of certain communities. Culture is not only a positive source of richness, tolerance and adaptation, but when “captured” and manipulated by certain social groups, can become a tool for maintaining traditional power structures and practices or induce confrontation between communities. The solution to such challenges can only be effective if built around the cultural dimensions of the issues and if the appropriate “cultural tools” will be used.

As the example of FGM shows, the cultural dimension is embedded in the heart of the development and human rights issues; it is not an additional feature, but an integral factor. One of the main challenges that we will have to face in the future when defining our development policies will thus be the **mainstreaming or transversal aspects of culture**. In order to increase our effectiveness when considering the cultural dimension of the communities on which we act, we need a better understanding of them; we need a new approach that seeks not just tolerance, but empathy. This emphatic approach is a challenge for the very concept of development and of international development policy. It aims for symmetry in relations and flows: the cultural dimension is probably the only one guaranteeing a real dialogue at the same level and bringing to the human development equation elements of dignity, receptiveness, mutual dialogue and ownership of the perspectives and plans for the future of a community.

That is why culture mainstreaming shall be a priority in our development agenda for the future. But mainstreaming is a task where the European Commission cannot act on its own, and consequently member states and other donors should also be committed to this shift in the development approach.

Development is therefore a task in which Europe and its partner countries must go hand in hand, and in which both have responsibilities. As I already stated, when it comes to development, the European Commission is not just a mere cash dispenser! It is an institution made up of people with hopes for a better world and with passion for what they do, eager to communicate and aware both of the differences and of the common characteristics between communities. Culture can provide us with the tool to better understand each other. Moreover, culture and creativity are also powerful economic and innovation forces and can provide sustainable development, employment, and a decent life to millions of people all over the world. The fundamental factor is to identify the right tool to make this happening.

A first concrete action, close to our EU and EC specificity, will be the support to improve the access to our market and to the international one. Diversification of the markets and of the cultural contents in circulation it is not only on the advantage of the partner countries but also on our own interest, first important element to guarantee the possible success and solidity of a sincere development policy framework.

In the European Commission we think that it is time for a new approach to culture in the European development strategy. **It is time for culture to finally catch up and claim its rightful place as a priority in the development agenda**, a spot from where it should have never been absent.

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NOTES

1 - Already in the *Lome III and IV Conventions* (1984 and 1989) culture is regarded as an important sector for development. However, it is through Article 27 of the *Cotonou Agreement* between the EU and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, that the EU takes a big step towards acknowledging the full importance of culture in its development strategies. Moreover, the 2005 *European Consensus on Development* recognizes culture as one of the main features of human development.

2 - Concerning this double dimension, for Raymond Williams culture is at the same time the informing spirit of a people and the manifestation of its social order. For further details see R. Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*, Chicago 1981.

3 - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0242:FIN:EN:PDF>

4 - P. Jeretic, *Culture as a Factor of Economic and Social Development*, Brussels, 2009. This report was first presented and discussed on the 9th-11th November in an internal workshop of the European Commission organized by EuropeAid in close collaboration with DG DEV.

5 - *Ibid.*

6 - These figures may be even higher if we take into account the strength of the informal economy in Mali, where many people work in culture-related jobs such as *artisanat* or other different crafts on an informal and non-registered basis.

7 - http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/Cotonou_EN_2006_en.pdf

8 - http://ocpa.irmo.hr/resources/docs/Dakar_Plan_of_Action-en.pdf

9 - http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european_consensus_2005_en.pdf

10 - See A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge 1990.

11 - The need to ensure cultural diversity is already present in the *Treaty of Rome* of 1957, where Article 151 sets the scene for the European cultural action.

12 - <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001429/142919e.pdf>

13 - *Ibid.*

14 - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0242:FIN:EN:PDF>

15 - <http://www.culture-dev.eu/colloque/Culture-dev.eu-declabxl-en.pdf>

16 - See the European Parliament's resolution of 24 March 2009 on combating female genital mutilation in the EU. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0161+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>