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It is not surprising that a conference on Europe takes place in America. Five hundrend years after the Europeans discovered and began to form a 'new world' in America, they set out to re-discover their 'old world' at home. Will the European Union develop into a ever closer union or even a United States of Europe? Will it transform or even overcome the traditional nation-state? Only the future will provide definite answers. Nevertheless certain trends of futher develpment can be inferred from the present and past state of the Union.This paper focuses on a limited but crucial aspect of European development that may be called the cultural dimension and in particular, the role of the media in the European integration. The aim is to follow the evolution of cultural and media policy in the EU through a combination of conceptual and policy analysis and its participation to the construction of a European identity. France serves as case study, an example of the national vs. the European.

The existence of a European cultural policy, regardless its disputable character, presupposes, in a way, the existence or the possibility of a **European culture**. The **European Union** has made attempts to define this shared European identity or culture, reflecting, thus, a growing awareness that European integration might need more than just an economic space, shared by its members[1]. The projection of this pan-European space as a space of culture and identity has been supported by the **European Commission**: 'the creation of a large market establishes a European area based on common cultural roots as well as social and economic realities' (Commission of the European

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[1] Although the concepts of a common European culture and shared European identity are often used in official documents, there is not clear definition of what this identity might consists of. The European Parliament, in its Resolution on the European Community's Information Policy of 1986, has defined the 'basic values of European culture' as 'peace. social solidarity, freedom and rule of law' (European Parliament, 1987, pg 112). These values, though, are rather universal and can hardly be called as the exclusive property of Europe.

Communities, 1987, pg 3). 'If we were beginning the European Community all over again,' said Jean Monnet, its founding father, 'we should begin with culture"(Commission of the European Communities, 1984, pg 10), signalling this change of approach.

The **media** and particularly television have been given a very heavy role to play in Europe, that of creating, unifying a European identity. It is believed to be able to 'help to develop a people's Europe through reinforcing the sense of belonging to a Community composed of countries which are different yet partake of a deep solidarity' (Commission of the European Communities, 4/88, 1998, pg 4). What such a 'people's Europe' might be is another question. Television, therefore, can be vital as an instrument of integration. The Commission maintains that:

> 'Television will play an important part in the developing and nurturing awareness of the rich variety of Europe's common cultural and historical heritage. The dissemination of information across national borders can do much to help the people of Europe to recognise the common destiny they share in many areas" (Commission of the European Communities, Television Without Frontiers. 1984, pg 28).

This has caused a lot of controversy among policy makers and scholars, indicating tensions between the national and the supranational institutions. At the bottom of all this, lies the real question: does it exist, this much talked European cultural specificity that makes an intervention not only legitimate but also necessary? 'Is it possible to translate', as Kevin Robins asks, 'a multinational administrative unity into a meaningful identity and solidarity'? (Robins, 1989, pg 154). Are the differences, what the Commission recognises as 'richness' and 'cultural diversity', more significant in the creation of positive attachments and identities? (ibid.).

The playing factors for a further **European integration, cultural and political** are many. What we must recognize, here, is that there are forces working against cultural unification or uniformity, as many are afraid of. In the context of centripetal tendencies brought about by the globalization of communications, there are also centrifugal tendencies 'to protect and preserve native languages and cultures' (Gifreu quoted in Robins, ibid). The reactions, from the member-states, for an even closer union are mixed and France is an example of a European nation-state that is split between national interests and an active participation in the European integration.

The State has always played an important role in the construction and de-velopment of French national identity. The circumstances in which the

construction of the French nation took place created the supporting background for the ideologies of State domination, contributing thus to the continuation of a long tradition, dating back to the *ancient regime,* of State intervention in the cultural affairs of the country. Cultural and media policies[†] are directly linked with the survival and continuation of French national culture. France is probably the only member of the European Union with a very strong national position on cultural and audiovisual issues not only at a national and European level but global too as the GATT case proved. Yet, France has been a major force in the construction and integration of Europe. These opposing tendencies within the French politics are indicating a clash between national interests and the desire to play a leading role in the European and international political and economic arena (scene). These opposing tendencies were clearly manifested in the Maastricht referendum, in 1992, where about half of the French population, 49 per cent, voted 'Non'.

Europe in the Image of France[*]

> "Il se trouve que la france est seule à voiloir une Europe qui en soit une, à pouvoir la vouloir... Le drame de l'Europe, c'est qu'à part nous, il n'y a personne qui ait l'ambition d'être vraiment Européen" (de Gualle)

Europe for de Gaulle was not only the Franco-German reconciliation and the resistance to the Anglo-Saxonic hegemony. Europe was above all the image of France, as he believed that only the French had the true desire to be Europeans. The condition for Europe to be was that France should play the leading role. A brief analysis of France's role in the construction of Europe will be a good starting point as it will set the background.

Despite the changes, since 1958, in the internal politics, the Foreign Affairs policy of France has managed to maintain a continuity. Two were the main characteristics of this policy: the affirmation of the **national independence**, on the one hand and the **construction of Europe**, on the other. The national independence was fuelled by a desire to have the voice of France heard by the international community and the refusal to see France integrated in an Atlantic bloc dominated militarily and culturally by the United States. It was de Gaulle who put the foundation for this policy. From de Gaulle to Mitterrand and to the present date, France has tried to maintain a privileged relationship

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[†] As the objectives of cultural and audiovisual policies are, many times, difficult to seperate, especially in the context they have been examined here, they will be refered to as media cultural policy.

[*] This title is borrowed by Robert Gildea "France since 1945", pg 210.

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with the other francophone countries and protect its culture and language from the 'anglo-saxonne' influence. National culture has become a bastion of freedom, around which battles are fought in the name of the nation.

The construction of Europe, on the other hand, has been seen, by most French governments, as both an ideal in its own right and as an instrument for achieving other objectives (Guyomarch et al, 1998, pg 40). The first goal was a peaceful, prosperous, liberal and democratic Europe, based on mutual tolerance, co-existence and co-operation. The socond goal, rather crucial, was to create a united Europe capable to resist the two superpowers, the American and Soviet. As the French empire had lost its past glory, Europe provided the means to retain a role of international leadership (Guyomarch,1998, pg 41).

France's participation in the European Union has not always been very rosy. For most of the time French governments have been attempting to achieve national objectives within Europe by trying to ensure that policy and institutional developments are in accordance with the French priorities. As much as de Gaulle wanted a strong Europe, he also resented it, seeing it as a threat to French sovereignty and identity. He would never accept a Europe that could put into question France as a centralised, sovereign state. But he could not resist, either, the idea of seeing France playing a leading role in Europe. 'The precondition, of course,' as Gildea puts it, 'was that France should preserve its hegemony in Europe and that Europe should be constructed in the image of France' [2] (Gildea, 1997, pg 210).

'L Europe de l'ideal' was part of the rhetoric used for the construction of Europe. A Europe of diversity that shares a deep solidarity, a Europe in which France can prosper and find a new place in the world[3]. *'L'Europe de l'ideal'* was compatible with the French tendency towards big, ambitious projects: *'notre politique ne souffre pas la trivialité, la grandeur est son oxygéne'* (Cohen, 1988, pg 49). It was *'l'Europe de la nécessité'* , though, that had the heaviest influence. The economic crisis and the industrial pressures,

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[2] From Schumann and Monnet to Delors, all major figures in the constrUnction and unification of Europe, France dominated with her presence in the European project. According to Maurice Allais, this French predominance was favoured by the division of Germany. After the unification of Germany, the idea of a Europe in the image of France became obsolete (Allais, quoted in Krause, 1993, pg 15). Something that caused deep anxiety to French governments, as they feared that Europe will be dominated by Germany and France will, thus, loose its position in Europe.

[3] 'L'Europe de l 'Ideal' becomes also 'L'Europe de l'Ambition' as 'le rapprochement entre Européens a souvent été considéré comme le moyen par excellence d'exercer une influence internationale accrue' (Secrétariat d'Etat au Plan, 1993, pg 188).

persuaded the individual member states that only a strong united Europe can help them to fight the competition from the other side of the Atlantic. The impact of globalization on individual economies and cultures was felt very strongly by France, initially rather slow in catching up with the process. Europe thus became for the French, apart from a grand project in which they can take part, a necessity, the force that will push them into *'modernization'*[4]. *'L'Europe de la necessité'* was seen as a way to deal with the hard economic and industrial realities. Europe was offering France a way to come out of crisis and participate in the global economy but it also meant social and reglementation changes (ibid, pg 50).

These last changes were not taken without resentment. The fear has been that Europe could deprive the nation-states of their autonomy in decision-making at a national level. A further unification could pose, thus, a threat as France is organized as a collectivity though its State which is highly centralised, compared to Germany, for example, where the federal system of *länder* has given more power to the regions (Secrétariat d'Etat au Plan, 1993, pg 190). France has developed this fear of loosing its autonomy and especially its cultural identity and has fought on all levels to retain a sense of national unity and cultural independence. Europe is seen at once as an ally and as a possible threat. An example of this contradiction between national and European interests comes from Mitterrand himself:

> "... develop a European culture through the audiovisual media...We have satellites that will cover all of Europe. [But] First we must learn to be European, to say what is specific to us and second, to protect the diversity among Europeans. Take the Gaelic language. Who will save it if Europeans don't? And Flemish. Hungarian. Finnish. The first important language that would be threatened is German, then French.... All this is liable to be lost with total saturation by American films and Japanese technology" (Mitterrand, interview by W. Garrett, National Geographic, July 1989).

The above statement provokes many questions. How possible is it, for example, to create a European culture? Can such a culture co-exist with national cultures? Is it unitary or pluralistic and contradictory? How can we learn to be Europeans? And most importantly, can the media play this heavy role that has been assigned to them: the construction of a European culture? For some this culture has always been there, for others it needs to be developed. So, 'unity in the diversity' becomes the magic formula that

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[4]*'Modernization'* in this context, refers mainly to the post-war technological and industrial advancements achieved in the neighbouring countries such a Britain and Germany. In the French popular imagination, somehow, the British and Germans are ahead of them regarding *'modernization '*. This has been a shared collective anxiety.

accommodates these antithetic positions. The element of contradiction[5] is found in both French and European policies, in the way media cultural policies are conceptualized and implemented.

Media Cultural Policy: Europe's Battlefield

The preservation of cultural identity has been an issue in the political media debate within different European countries, with France in the leading position, for a long time. This tendency to relate media with culture comes from the belief that sees television as an agent of social transformation. The capacity of 'information' to forge feelings of belonging has been constantly reinvented over the last few years in Europe and the media appear as a solution to many cultural policy problems (Bourdon, 1992, pg 6). Preserving, though, national cultures through the media has not been an easy task. This is due to certain external forces which confront national broadcasting companies in their efforts to use television content as a tool for preserving national cultures and identities[6]. Certain countries, such as France, and organizations such as the European Union and the Council of Europe, have been actively involved in the protection of 'cultural rights', each from a different perspective.

The media have become a battlefield and in Europe a complex play of different strategies on different levels is taking place. The media are implicated at the level of trade, of national and global pressures, of perceived threats (often expressed in historical terms) and within the framework of law and rights. Media cultural policy has become, thus, a crucial issue in Europe as broadcasting cannot be separated from questions of identity and culture.

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[5] The history of Europe is dominated by a contradiction, as Delmas argues (1979, pg 10). From one hand, we accept the existance of a European civilization, as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladourie supported so fervently with his article: "L'Europe est d'abord une culture' (1979, pg 303-314). On the other hand, this common civilization has been shared by people whose relations have been characterized by a lot of violence. The history of Europe, according to Delmas, is its intellectual community and at the same time its desastrous wars, products of the division into nation-states, nationalism and economic interests (ibid). The birth of the European Union was based on this very conflictual character of the European history, the result of one more desastrous war that forced its participants to seek 'unity in diversity'.

[6] The reinforcement of national identity through television is still an issue as Michèle Pappalardo, general director of France 2, has recently stated in defining the channel's role: 'La stratégie de l'antenne de France 2 se construit autour d'une double mission de renforcement de la cohésion sociale et d'enrichissement de l'identité culturelle commune' (Pappalardo, 1997, pg 1).

Developments in the European audiovisual field: a brief account

A key concept in the analysis of the cultural aspects of media development in Europe is this of control: control of content and control of communication networks (McQuail and Siune, 1986). One way of attempting to ensure that a country's cultural values are presented in TV programmes is to have national control over programme production. This brings, in its turn, the question of the amount of home production which is an economic as well as a cultural issue and is closely interrelated with the dynamics of international programme production. However, most governments, not wanting to be left out from the developments in the new media technologies, embraced, willingly or not, policies to open up new commercial broadcasting markets. Most European countries experienced an increased deregulation in the media field, with privatization of national channels, like TF1 in France, and dramatic increase of commercial stations, like in Italy. These deregulatory policies, so vigorously pursued at a national level across Europe up until the 80s, led inevitably towards the internationalization of the new commercial market (Humphreys, 1996 pg 257).

The commercialization of culture on an international scale does not only pose a threat to cultural identity but also to the stability of the political institutions and systems (nation-state) which are assumed to rest on it. One sees therefore attempts to keep 'polity and culture' congruent, as Gellner has pointed out (in Collins, 1990, pg 206). The nationalist theory sees culture as vital in the sustenance of political units, as the case of the European Union has shown. The more Europe advances towards a political and economic integration, the more it requires a cultural dimension to go with its increasingly prevalent description of itself as a ever closer Union, aspiring to move away from the simple collaboration of sovereign states in a pragmatic economic association to something that resembles more the sovereign state. Cultural unities, Collins says, are required to fit the new political unities (ibid.). But can a European culture, whatever that might be, sustain a pan-European political institution and vice-versa? Can the national cultures and national institutions see this European culture other than a possible competitor and threat, even, to their survival and sovereignty? This is a rather unpredictable case, although we can still study the trends and draw some initial conclusions from the actions (and reactions) taken until now, on national and European level.

The need for a supranational, pan-European regulatory authority became more evident towards the end of the eighties, when national-policy makers realized that the deregulation process was proved to be too difficult to be

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handled only at a national level. As the regulatory capacity of European countries declined, the European Community became an obvious institutional focus for re-regulation (ibid.). This first tendency towards a European-level media policy was an optimistic expectation, from the side of certain member-states, that it will serve in the protection of national cultures. At the same time, it was thought that a transfrontier broadcasting might give stimulation to the process of European cultural and political integration[7]. However, as Humphreys points out, the main thinking behind European media policy began, very quickly, to prioritize economic aims (ibid., pg 258).

Identifying the Problematic Areas: Cultural Differences and Harmonization of Markets and Policies

European media cultural policy revolves around four central themes: culture, legislation, economy and technology, with each one of them having its own problematic areas as a result of the cultural particularities of the European audiovisual space and the market forces. Apparent linguistic and sociocultural differences is the first of these problematic areas, followed by the issue of harmonization and the opposing forces of protectionism and neo-liberalism.

Linguistic and Sociocultural Differences

Despite all policy efforts to break the audiovisual barriers away, caused by the cultural diversity of the European audiences[8], the European television programme industry still suffers from a low rate of crossborder distribution and circulation of films and television programmes. The hope of European policy-makers that by distributing the same cultural products will eventually

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[7] It was towards the end of the 1980s that the idea of a 'European Audiovisual Policy' started to make sense and to give way to concrete common projects. The 80s was a period of speculations that stimulated a number of initiatives: Television without Frontiers (1984-1989), MEDIA (1986, 1990), Eureka (1988), (1989). It was not until the 90s, though, that we saw the application of several important legislative and policy measures taken for the protection and stimulation of audiovisual and media production and distribution (enforcement of the Media programme, Television without Frontiers). The idea of a single broadcasting system, or a transnational television was not a new one. Early efforts on the level of pan-European broadcasting led to the creation of Eurikon (1982), Europa TV (1985), Eurosport (1989) and Euronews (1993) (Coleman & Rollet, 1997, pg 12-15). A common problem with all these efforts (apart from Eurosport) to create a pan-European broadcasting system was the difficulty of integrating the cultural factor in programmes aimed at extremely diverse audiences.

[8] This refers to the directive 'Television without Frontiers' (Council, 1989) as a general framework for a free movement of television broadcasting services and to several other projects mentioned above, such as the MEDIA programme (Commission, 1990) promoting the creation and the distribution of European programmes.

lead to an 'identity of interpretation on the part of those who consumed it', otherwise known as the 'fallacy of the distribution', is rather unlikely to take place in Europe (Schlesinger, 1993, pg 12). What these policy-makers have not taken into serious account is the context of reception of culture. For them, the linguistic and cultural diversity is nothing more than a formidable obstacle to wider intra-European circulation of media products: "New technical possibilities must be used to the full in order to remove partitions between national markets and enable programmes to cross borders (European Commission, 1994 , pg 20).

They tend to forget that nationality plays an important role in the interpretation of audiovisual culture. Television programmes and films produced in one particular European country tend to be so nationally specific that audiences elsewhere in the continent find it difficult to identify with them. The linguistic diversity that makes transfrontier circulation more difficult seems most likely to persist. As Schlesinger points out, the development of official languages in Europe has been closely associated with the creation of state-supported media of linguistic communication - i.e. 'linguistic competence is largely coterminous with citizenship' (1994, pg 34). Taking this into consideration, we can understand why it is so difficult to have a single European audiovisual market. This market is, in fact, 'merely a collection of distinct domestic markets' and major European producers are more concerned with strengthening their positions within their national markets (Silj, 1992, pg 16, 37).

This assumption that there is a strong, homogenizing causal connection between media consumption and collective identity formation, is clearly evident in several official documents regarding European unification. Apart from this assumption, there is also the belief that **"Europeaness"** can be achieved through a better **informing system,** in which media can play a decisive role. The European Commission's Green Paper, 'Television without Frontiers', set the context as follows:

> "Information is a decisive,perhaps the only decisive factor in European unification... European unification will only be achieved if Europeans want it. Europeans will only want it if there is such a thing as European identity. A European identity will only develop if Europeans are adequately informed. At present, information via the mass media is controlled at national level" (European Commission, 1984).

It is rather naive to believe that information through the media at a European level can construct a **European collective identity.** In this effort to promote a further unification, the national level of media production and distribution is

seen as an obstacle. This is rather ironic, as Schlesinger so rightly points out, that, in order to 'legitimize the project of forging a **supranational identity'**, the European policy-makers have chosen the national model of media whose political prospects have been seriously challenged by the deregulation process, imposing an 'individualizing economic conception of audiences' (1994, pg 30). So, the project for the construction of a European culture through television was simply extended from one political level to another without taking into account that moving from a national community, defined by the boundaries of a single state, to an international community, defined by integrationist political economics, might have serious implications - such as clashing identities. The world is not a fractal structure wherein smaller components replicate the forms of larger ones.

Harmonizing Policies

Another problematic area is the **harmonization of policies** among the member-states. This has not been easy and that refers largely to France as the quotas case showed. As national media systems are seen more as an obstacle for further integration, one solution has been found in the harmonization of legislation. National media policies must fit in the European constitutional framework: national media law measures must not contradict to Community law provisions.

The 'Television without Frontiers' Directive stipulates that 'where practicable' members states should ensure that broadcasters reserve for European works ... a majority proportion of their transmission time, excluding the time appointed to news, games, advertising and teletext services (Council , 1989, art 4). Evidence shows, though, that the implementation of the Directive has met with resistance from the national broadcasters which shows that they are not willing or ready to follow European regulation (see Biltereyst, 1995). The report by a group of European audiovisual professionals, commissioned by the European Union (**Think-Tank**, 1994) and the Green Paper on the 'Audiovisual Policy of the European Union' openly indicated that despite the existence of a European media cultural policy there are still major problems to overcome, such as the absence of convergence between the different support mechanisms on a regional, national and supranational level (ibid, pg 27-28; European Commission 1994, pg 11).

Harmonization of support mechanisms and legislation in general cannot be achieved very easily, as the cultural diversity among European countries reflects in the national cultural policies. There are generally two kinds of legal

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approach in European counties of two diametrically opposed notions of culture. In some European countries, the programming of culture in television focus more on the social role of television (e.g. Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden). There is no distinction between the so called 'cultural' programmes and others. The cultural mission is found in the determination to maintain social cohesion (Robilliard, Machet, 1997, pg 96). In other counties, it refers rather to a conception based on national identity (France, Belgium) and focuses on programmes related to what is singular and specific in a society. There is the tendency to reduce the debate on culture to a political objective: the protection of the nation's cultural identity, or to a scheduling objective that favours certain categories of programme. This second approach to media cultural policy leads to government intervention and to the adoption of quantitative measures such as production and broadcast quotas (ibid, pg 97).

How can one harmonize policies that are so diametrically opposed? The existence of various levels of political responsibility for the audiovisual media makes the process of harmonization more complex. These different strata are superimposed on one another in a way which sometimes produces conflict between: the regional and the national level (as it was the case of Germany during the vote on the Television without Frontiers Directive), the national and the European level (in the case of Belgium and Netherlands which are concerned about the protection of their cultural identity in the face of the treat from the internal market), and the national/European level and the international level (as the case of France and the European Union showed in the GATT negotiations on the cultural exemption of the audiovisual products) (ibid, pg 98). Can the assertion of a genuine European cultural policy at a national, European and international level, provide a solution to these conflicts? Or, is it going to accentuate them even more? How plausible such a cultural policy can be, anyway? The way the issue of culture has been treated up to now by the European Union, shows how problematic this area is.

Neo-liberal and Protectionist Forces: Contradictions at the Heart of European Policy

The controversial nature of the European policy is based on the argument around the cultural specificity of audiovisual products in conjunction to its economic sides. To start with, the hope that a united Europe can take a positive action towards the protection of national cultures has been based on a rather disputable motivation from the side of the European policy-makers. The interest shown by European institutions in specifying and implementing a

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common media cultural policy has been more the result of outside pressure, a reaction to American and Japanese domination in programming and hardware, as Delors so clearly declared in his definition of EU audiovisual policy: "il s'agit d'eviter une situation où des spectateurs Europèens passeront leurs tempts à voir des films americains dans des appareils japonais". The global politics of communication centres around the international 'war of images', the struggle between 'image superpowers'. Europe is clearly concerned about the power of these images: 'Where will these pictures come from? Who will capture the market - and the employment - for producing and transmitting them?' (Commission of the European Communities, 1986, pg 3). The creation of a pan-European media industry is imperative, if American dominance is to be challenged: 'the day of purely national audiences, markets and channels is gone' and the logic of development must be towards a 'European audiovisual area' (ibid).

There are two main approaches within the European media cultural policy, reflecting the opposing tendencies between the market forces and the cultural interests. One is the **neo-liberal/market oriented approach** and the other is the **protectionist/** *'dirigist'* **approach**, contributing in the creation of a contradictory policy (see Colins,1994). Although, the protectionists managed to keep the debate on culture at the centre of policy, it is the liberals that have been exercising the most influence [9]. The fusion of these two tendencies has given shape to the aim of creating a strong pan-European audiovisual sector that 'can compete on world markets and help European culture to flourish and

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[9] It is important to stress here that the neo-liberal model has crucially shaped and framed the policy initiatives of the EC in the communications and cultural sphere since the mid-1980s. The tendencies in the political economy in the 1980s had placed the emphasis on the benefits of the market forces and increased competition in all sectors of the economy and society. Part of these shifts was the tendency to downplay the role of the state or public sector and a denial of the notion of public service broacasting as well as a refusal to recognize the specificity of a 'public sphere'- both in terms of its political or cultural forms (Preston, 1994, pg 2).
[9] Examples of this tendency were the following EU documents : the White Paper on 'Growth, Competitiveness and Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century' (CEC, 1994) and the Green Paper on 'Strategy Options to Strengthen the European Programme Industry in the context of Audiovisual Policy of the European Union' (CEC, 1994). According to the latter, the 'foundamental requirements' for the future audiovisual sector in Europe are defined as follows: a) 'it must be competitive', b) 'it must be forward-looking and be involved in the development of the information sociey', c) 'it must illustrate the creative genius and the personality of the people of Europe' and d) 'it must be capable of transforming its growth into new jobs in Europe' (ibid, pg 1-2). The same document blamed the 'lame-duck' mentalities of many filmmakers who are 'experts in milking' public support mechanisms for domestic film production without a thought for petential audiences (ibid, pg 7). Criticism indicates the failure of these two policy documents in relation to the social and cultural role of the audiovisual sector (see Preston, 1994).

create jobs[10]. Unity therefore became the main motto for both groups, and the role of the audiovisual sector in fostering European unity was greatly emphasized.

The argument in favour of unity was given as a necessary condition for competitiveness (technological, economic, scientific, etc.) and therefore of hegemony. Unity became a meeting point of the cultural, industrial and economic interests of the various players (private and public) in the European states. The main idea was that only unity would enable them to defy the cultural influence of hegemony and the economic and technological influence (implying dependence and subordination) exerted by the great world powers in industry, technology and culture: the United states and Japan (de Moragas, 1995, pg 226). In the argument for an economic union as a condition of the survival of cultural diversity lies the difficult balance between unity, diversity, culture and business which the pro-European discourse has devised under the auspices a common audiovisual policy, an example of which has been the **Information Society** project.

Culture does appear in many documents and it is often mentioned the need to recognise the special cultural and political characteristics of the audiovisual products which in most cases are regarded as specific to each nation and thus integral to its identity. Delor's speech, for instance, at the *Assises de l'Audiovisuel* serves as an example of the usual cultural rhetoric used here to highlight not only the cultural imperative but also the necessary intervention of Europe[11]:

> "I would simply like to pose a question to our American friends: do we have the right to exist? Have we the right to preserve our traditions, our heritage, our languages? How will a country of ten million inhabitants be able to maintain its language - the very linchpin of culture - faced with the universality which satellites offer? Doesn't the defence of freedom, elsewhere so loftily proclaimed, include the effort of each country, or each ensemble of countries, to use the audiovisual sphere to ensure the protection of their identity?" (Delors, 1989, pg 23).

If this perspective is to be carried through to its logical conclusion, as Preston (1994) rightly points out, then it serves to limit and reduce the accelerated trends in market oriented policies. It is exactly at this point where one can detect a dilemma or even a schizophrenia at the heart of the media cultural policy. Is this claim about the need to recognize the special nature of audiovisual services as the prime carrier of culture in relation to national

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[11] The role of the media in constructing a European identity has been officially defined by counterposition to a culturallt invasive other, the United States.

specificity to be taken at its face value? Or is it to be taken as a 'self-interested legitimating devise for a very partial application within the context of a 'fortress Europe' approach' according to which the European audiovisual industry should compete with and even replace Hollywood's dominance of global audiovisual services and markets? (ibid, pg 20). The neo-liberal logic seems to overtake the argument on cultural specificity[12]. In the Green paper on strengthening the audiovisual industry, programming 'diversity' is mainly discussed in terms of the new European market scales associated with the proliferation of channels and the new media (EU, 1994, pg 19-20). The 'success and profitability of the European market' and film industry will somehow magically 'open the door to new markets ... where producers of different countries and languages, big and small will find a natural outlet' (ibid, pg 45). So, this is the way the European Union plans to protect those countries with low audiovisual production or capacity, by simply creating a European market. It seems that they forget the inherent characteristics which lead to concentration and monopolist structures in this sector.

The clash between unity and diversity, liberals and protectionists has not ceased. The issue of culture has remained unchanged mainly because of the lack of clarity, conceptual and policy wise, of its position in Europe. European media cultural policy has evolved within the framework established by the major European Treaties and declarations (Treaty of Rome and Convention on Human Rights[13]). The legal framework, though, has not been proved very sufficient in the support of extensive initiatives in the cultural field. Although the Treaty of Rome preamble has long given prominence to the process of 'creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe', there was practically no mention of culture in it. This lack of competence in culture created a 'grey zone' by invoking economic reasons for achieving cultural ends and while there was no intention to legislate, cultural matters came up as part of more general policies (e.g.. free circulation of goods, competition) or under the influence of court cases (e.g. free circulation of television signals, copyright)[14]. As a consequence, institutions within the European Union and

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[12] Certain cultural specificities such the language diversity, for instance, is perceived as a probelmatic issue, that of 'language barriers' which can be solved technically by developing an efficient subtitling and dubbing system.

[13] According to the Convention's article 10: "everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers". Although, the convention was negotiated in the framework of the Council of Europe, it has been signed by the all members of the EU (Van Loon, 1993, pg 17).

[14] An exeption was the MEDIA programme, adopted in 1990, with the aim of assisting the film and television industries of the member-states to overcome cultural and linguistic barries to co-

some member-states have sought cultural power first by revision of the Treaty of Rome and later by inclusion of a culture article in the Maastricht treaty.

However, these efforts to bring a more active cultural policy within the European Union have been opposed by certain member-states. The revision of the Rome Treaty, for instance, was opposed, by Denmark and UK, on the grounds that 'cultural policy should remain an exclusive national competence' (European Parliament, 1989, pg 14). The unwillingness of these countries to accept the cultural policy initiatives prevailed and had as a result the limitation of Community initiatives in the media and cultural sector[15]. The only way left for dealing with this sector was through economic measures, an example of which was the 'Television without Frontiers' policy - result of the liberal attempts to create a single audiovisual market. The process that has led to the adoption of the Directive brought out all the internal oppositions, polarised between the DG III, more interested in establishing the free circulation of services, and the DG X, more attentive to the specificities of the cultural sector[16]. The latter has found itself regularly in a weaker position, because of a lack of a clear definition of its mission.

Interventionist policies have reflected this lack of a clear direction. At the beginning, intervention was promoted in order to rectify the perceived failure of European audiovisual market and to foster a single European culture. Unity was still the main argument as only a united Europe could help the national productions. Later, though, interventionists changed their argument focusing on diversity rather than unity, as they sought to compensate for what they felt was to be an undesirable reduction in diversity, too much unity, as Collins says (1994, pg 25). The MEDIA programme and the inclusion of European content quotas in the broadcasting Directive were part of the interventionist measures in the production and distribution of audiovisual programmes. 'Unity in diversity' has become the new goal.

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operation. The financial provision though was not substantial enough to make the programme succesful.

[15] Gaston Thorn, the president of the Commission at the time, in his introduction on the propossals for the 'The reinforcement of the Community action in the audiovisual sector' (1982) made clear that this initiative does not imply a cultural position, as such position would involve ideological and esthetique choices that the Community should prohibit (Lange, 1993, pg 86).

[16] There are more actors in this game of policy-formulation and implementation, each having its own interests to safeguard. Apart from DG III and DG X and their opposing interests, there is DG XIII which focuses on the promotion of new technologies, ie high definition TV, the European Parliament which is devoted in the promotion of the European integration with emphasis on cultural as well as the market aspects and also the Court of Justice whose job is to safeguard the EC Treaty's commitment to free exchange of goods and services (Humphreys, 1996, pg 261).

Culture after the Maastricht Treaty

The Maastricht Treaty renewed the opposition between interventionists and liberals, as the former wanted to incorporate culture in the Treaty in order to allow wider Community action and the latter tried to set limits to its application. The UK (the 'ultra liberal' member-state par excellence) firmly opposed the Article 128 on culture believing that it was not necessary, as effective cultural co-operation already existed and that the addition of a cultural article extending Community's competence would mean increased Community expenditure (Collins, 1998, pg 231). At the end the UK did not succeed in excluding the Culture Article from the Treaty but it did succeed in limiting its scope.

The Maastricht Treaty permits a more coherent Community approach to culture and more powerful interventionist initiatives by the Commission in the audiovisual sector. But, it does not exempt culture from the EU competence, although initially, some of the member states proposed and supported this approach. The Article 128 recognises that the major responsibility for cultural action lies with the member-states. There is no Community cultural policy, but Community encouragement of action among member-states, supporting and supplementing their action 'if necessary' (the **principle of subsidiarity**). 'Any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States' is excluded. If culture would have been exempted, it was argued, it would have led to many problems. Certain countries, like Germany and Belgium, for instance, both Federations, have many difficulties with the division of competences since they both leave cultural policies to the central government and economic policies to the Federation (Van Loon, 1993, pg 21). If the exemption approach was adopted, someone would have to decide which issues would be exempted from the Community competence because of their cultural nature. And as culture means different things to different people, it would have made this process rather difficult. Therefore, culture's inclusion in the Treaty is less substantial and more symbolic. Moreover, the Article demands that decisions in cultural matters should be taken unanimously, rather than by majority voting, which makes the decision-making more difficult. In addition, rather than opening the whole sector to Community intervention, the article confines the Community's competence in the audiovisual to 'artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual area'. This means that the audio-visual sector is not seen as an authentic locus of artistic and literacy creation. The liberals thus managed to limit substantially the power of culture in the Treaty.

Another important observation on the Article is the effort to balance the national and regional diversity with the common heritage, by carefully avoiding the previously used formula of a 'European culture'. Paragraph one of the Article reads: " The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the culture of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore". National diversity and common heritage come together, hopping for a happy co-existence. In the effort to resist fragmentation, adversity and even doubt in Europe, the emphasis has been put on a common European heritage. At the same time, the cultural diversity is too important to be ignored[17]. The question is whether the European Union can accommodate both levels, or even three, if we include the regional one. Perhaps lessons can be learned from the actions taken up to now on the media cultural policy. As it has been seen in the above analysis, the Community's policy on this field is not the product of a single and unified vision. Rather, it is the result of the interaction of differing priorities and perspectives of several distinct power centres. These power centres include the member-states whose cultural diversity reflects in the policy-making. The struggle over a common cultural policy is part of the bigger struggle to maintain and safeguard the national interests. France is a striking example of this struggle, split between national interests and a position in Europe and the world.

The theme of culture in the French debate on the European intergration

One would expect the French to react strongly to the Article 128, since it was touching the very sensitive issue of the French conception of the nation. However, the political analysis of the implications this article might have was limited within the Ministry of Culture. This lack of an official reaction in combination with the strong support of the French intellectuals and artists' for the Maastricht Treaty, shows two opposing tendencies. The pre-occupation about the position of national cultures in the Union is mainly coming from the political elites who fear for the loss of national sovereignty. Under the circumstances, though, the French politicians had to persuade the French public to vote for the ratification of the Treaty and, thus, could not afford to bring the issue of cultural identity to the debate. Mitterrand's speech to the French on the Maastricht referendum did not make a single reference to

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[17] The stress on diversity in contemporary community policy also reflects the failure of transnational broadcasting by satellite in the 1980s and the consequential recognition that Europe was culturally and linguistically diverse.

culture. Instead, he talked about the political and economic imperatives that call for a unified Europe:

" Je remarquerai seulement qu'une Europe unie, comme vous le propose le traité que je vous demande d'adopter, sera seule en mesure, avec une monnaie, une banque centrale et un marché unique, de faire front devant la puissance économique que représentent des pays extérieurs à notre continent, comme les Etats-Unis d'Amérique et le Japon" (F. Mitterrand, message télévisé, 1er juillet 1992, in Thomas, 1997, pg 208).

The United States pose a multiple threat, economic and cultural, to France which feels that only through a united Europe can fight back. It is not easy, though, to keep the balance between cultural and economic priorities and national and European interests, particularly when it comes to cultural policy and the audiovisual industries. The way the theme of culture hs been used in the French dabate on European intergration is an indication itself of the existing tensions within the nation. The issue of a futher unification under the Maastricht Treaty divided the French political parties some of which feared that Europe was now dominated by Germany and that France risked losing its autonomy and identity in a united Europe. The following quotation shows what level reached the debate on Europe:

"The nation must become again what it was: our founding principle. that implies the restoration of the State and the rehabilitation of the Republic. Nation, State and Republic, those are the means to build a Europe compatible with the idea that France has always had of itself" (Seguin addressing the Assembly, 5-6 May 1992, in Gildea, 1997, pg 214).

Seguin, a leading figure among the Gaullists on this debate, had rather litle to comment on issues concerning European cultural policy. He instead focused his attention on what he thought was a threat to national sovereignty. The issue of culture as it as expressed in Article 128 escaped heavy criticism, although, Seguin himself had commented earlier about the possibility of a European culture in which he argued: *"La culture: c'est elle qui fondde l'attachement national, mais c'est aussi parce que les Européens partagent un fond commun de culture que l'Europe pourra se construire"* (1991, pg 200). It seems that a European culture is not a problem to the nation, as long as it does not pose a threat to national sovereignty which comes first. Seguin explains that if a nation is deprived of its sovereignty then all is left is its naitonal identity which as a concept is rather imprecise. Therefore, his whole argument is based on the fact that the Article 128 refers only to national and cultural identity which seems to have replaced the nation in the European cultural policy. This poses serious problems to the independence of the nation as his above quotation shows.

The issue of culture apprears stronger in another Gaullist, Gilbert Pérol, who, in his book *La grandeur de la France* accuses the European policy makers of having deliberately sacrificed culture, by trying to create a culturally homogenised Europe. He fervently refuses to accept a European culture which he says is impossible anyway as culture means difference and Europe is full of different national cultures. He sees the efforts to create a pan-European audiovisual space (*les télévisions dites "européennes"*) as a way to destroy this cultural diversity (Perol, 1992, pg 220).

Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Max Gallo, representing the neo-jacobins of the left,also opposed the European intergration and its cultural dimension. Gallo (1992), for instance, opposed to the European audiovisual policy (especially its earlier expressions based on the Treaty of Rome and the Single Act), arguing that it is treating cultural creations the same way as comercial and industrial products. His criticism is based on the French myth that national culture should be free of material constrains which can kill creativity. He demanded the return of culture to the national space. Gallo, though, seems to overlook the fact that the European Union and its policies or lack of them are not fully responsible for the commercialization of culture. This has been part of the development of capitalist economy in which culture is a commodity. Nevertheless, his argument does go in line with the French protectionist tendency.

The reference to cultural and national identity are common to all those who opposed the European integration and its culturalistic and media dimension. The Gaullists prefered to refer to national identity as it has more institutional connonations but at the end the argument has been the same: protect the national cultural space and sovereignty.

2.3 France in the lead of the Protectionists

Compared with Britain's hands off and market-oriented approach, France is on the other side of the policy spectrum, giving a strong centralised support to culture. The reluctance of the former to participate actively in European ventures and policy formulation has led, as a consequence, to a Community policy that reflects more the interests of France, which, unlike Britain, has been consistently involved in Community audiovisual policy-making[18].

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[18] The importance of the French government in the development of the European audiovisual-policy was acknowledged at the Rhodes Council meeting of Ministers of culture in 1988 - which has been considered as the official birth of the Community's audiovisual policy.

France has always seen the European cultural policy as an extension of its own national policy and they wished to transfer their anxieties about their cultural identity and their national obsession regarding the **Americanization** of their culture, to a European level, through which they could fight better the cultural invaders from the other side of the Atlantic. As Riestra[19] stated: "the French are the most concerned with national cultural identity - in that sense they are very European in their thinking" (in Collins, 1994, pg 132). National cultural identity is a major issue for many European nation-states and the scale of American imports of television programmes and films has been a cause of official concern. The popularity of these products has been represented as a danger of Americanization and American popular culture has been seen in official circles and by cultural elites as constituting a threat to the national culture. This argument has been most articulated by the French who also believe that American popular culture has played an important role in the global clash between *la francophonie* and the **Anglo-Saxons**. France felt she was on the offensive. Television appeared "comme un moyen privilédie de maintenir, voire de renforcer les positions de la francophonie en Europe et au-delà, à condition que les professionnels de l'audiovisuel jouent le jeu..." (Bahu-Leyser, 1994, pg 214). This belief was articulated very clearly by Alain Decaux, the Minister of *La Francophonie* at the time, in a report in which he stated that:

> "il faudrait que, dès maintenant, touts les ministères concernés commencent à travailler ... sur une des plus considérables remises en cause culturelles qu'un pays aura su genérer: une offensive mondiale de l'audiovisuel francais" (Decaux, 1989, pg 7).

It is not unusual to encounter military metaphors in this context. *'La bataille mondialle des images'* mentioned in the same report (ibid, pg 8), is a battle which is now transported to a supranational level, where Americanization, in the official thinking, is represented as a threat to European culture. It is not surprising, either, that the creation of a common European culture through audiovisual programmes is conceived as a form of cultural defence, as Delors emphasized in his speech in the *Assises de l'Audiovisuel*. France managed very successfully to emphasise that both Europe and France faced the same problem of the *'tres forte preponderance anglosaxonne,'* to which the solution was to Europeanize the television production (ibid, pg 23, 40).

From this 'culturalist' perspective, the defence of 'Europe' has, therefore, taken the form of the defence of national cultures in the face of 'perceived

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[19] The Executive Secretary of Eurimages, an initiative taken by France in establishing a co-production support scheme.

encroachments of the despised lowbrow global culture, linguistically Anglophone and culturally American' (Richardson & Meinhoff, 1999, pg 75). The initiative taken by France and Germany to create a European channel, *ARTE*, was an attempt to appropriate 'highbrow' culture as the creation and property of Europe and distinguish, thus, itself from the American mass culture. Jérôme Clément, the president of ARTE, described this effort in the following way:

> "C'est la characteristique de l'Europe d'avoir fait de la cultrue une des ses prior-ités et cela la distingue du modèle américaine. Bien attendu, ARTE ne prétend pas au monopole de la culture ni de l'Europe, mais, elles peut s'enorgueillir de reintro-duire le temps dans le regard humain,le temps de la personne, le temps de l'His-toire, le temps de l'être, valeurs de notre continent, pour offrir à chaque téléspecta-teur une possibilité de mieux comprendre le monde qui l'entoure" (Clément, 1994).

However, the idea that high culture is European - at least as it was perceived by France - as distinct from Western, is unfounded. The channel has not been very popular as its programming has been perceived as rather 'elitistic', focusing on opera, concert and ballet productions (forms with a history of transcultural success, at least within the West). In adition, the different expectations and attitudes (inlfuenced by national interests) towards the channel by the co-sponsors, have created tensions, indications themselves of how difficult the project of a pan-European television can be.

2.3.1 Clashing Policies: *"La Tumultuese Saga des Quotas"*

One of the biggest problem of the European audiovisual sector lies in the fact that 80 percent of its productions never go beyond national borders. The consequences of this situation are many: one film in ten is profitable, two out of ten cover their costs of production and the rest generate a loss (Burgelman & Pauwels, 1992, pg 177). An improvement in the distribution of audiovisual products was therefore necessary. This was the objective of **Television without Frontiers**. Initially a Green Paper, the draft of the directive targeted 'the opening up of intra-Community frontiers for national television programmes'[20]. The directive stated that:

> " ... Member States shall not restrict the reception and re transmissions to their territories of broadcasts from other Member States for reasons which fall within the fields coordinated by this Directive' (Commission, 1989, Article 2.2).

The French position, during the formulation stage of the Directive, became pivotally important. Although enthusiastic about the creation of an internal

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[20] The Directive, submitted to the Commission on 30 April 1986, was meant to extend the Treaty of Rome regarding the free exchange and flow of European audiovisual products.

market, the French position was at the same time in favour of the adoption of protectionist measures. The radical national policies of liberalization had forced the French broadcasting system to rely heavily on imported popular entertainment programmes, mainly from the USA. When the French Socialist returned to power in 1988, they were very eager, under the pressure of a very powerful film and television lobby, to persuade the Community to adopt a policy of external protectionism along the lines of their own domestic broadcasting laws. To protect the cultural and linguistic heritage and the European television industry, France proposed a quotas system, requiring from the European broadcasters to dedicate 60 percent of their programmes to European creations. France, which had already established a system of quotas at the national level, hoped by this measure to find new markets in Europe for its own productions (Burgulman et al, 1992, pg 177; Humphreys,1998, pg 271-72).

However, the idea of such a tight quota was met with resistance by the liberals and was finally abandoned under pressure from Britain's lobbyists. Britain feared that such protectionist measures would provoke reprisals from countries outside the Community. The controversy related to quotas went beyond the European Union's borders, at the end. The USA reacted in a very negative way to what was perceived as European protectionism. For the American government, this protectionist measure 'would infringe the principles of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)' (Humpheys, 1996, pg 273)[21]. This put an immense pressure on the European Union and as at the time the Commission needed the Americans in its battle against the Japanese concerning HDTV, it found it difficult to oppose the demands of America.

The French, though, did not leave the battlefield easily. Jack Lang objected to the 'eurocompatibilité' of the French legislation regarding the quotas, saying that:

> "l'idée que l'on peut se faire de la construction de l'Europe audiovisuelle, laquelle est actuellement en bone voie, ne consiste pas, pour notre pays, à se modeler sur des règles imposées par tel ou tel comité ou prises sous la pression d'une majorité d'Etats qui voudraient concevoir un système de télévision qui ne serait pas conforme à nos traditions nationales" (Assemblée Nationale, 1988, pg 4).

It seems that France has been applying double standards when it comes to European media cultural policy. It is only when the latter reflects its national position on media that it is acceptable. The battle of the quotas is probably the

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[21] The issue became a very serious matter and a key topic during the GATT meeting in Geneva, in August 1990 and later during the GATT negotiations in 1994.

best example of the opposition between France and the European Community regarding audiovisual issues. This part of the Directive provoked many reactions and underwent many modifications before its final adoption in 1992[22]. The French obsession over the Quotas nearly stopped the policy process and it was only at the last moment, and under the threat of a legal prosecution, that France accepted to put its legislation on quotas in accordance with the Directive.

Since then, more modifications have been introduced, changing probably some of the figures in the percentage of quotas requirement. However, what is interesting in this case of quotas, is not so much the final result but the whole process (initial positions, negotiation-modifications, final agreement) which indicates the degree of interaction between national and international forces. Even if the dilution of the quota measures, as they were initially proposed by France, marked a retreat by the French and a disappointment for the protectionist league in the European Parliament, the French did not loose altogether. There was a trade-off for their compromise, as many French-inspired projects on the audiovisual sector were financially supported by the Commission (Humphreys, 1996, pg 276).

The criticism on the Quotas system has continued over the years. The last Green paper on the revision of 'Television without Frontiers' Directive, concluded that 'there is an urgent need to restructure an industry which must in the long-term survive without protectionism and subsidies' (Fuller, 8.04. 94). There are those who believe that quotas encourage a dependency culture, yet it is feared that immediate withdrawal would leave Europe exposed to colonization by its US competitors. If the European audiovisual industry does not move from quotas it will never become fully competitive, yet if it moves too quickly it will be crippled (O'Sullivan, 11.03.94). The dilemma is still there and as long as the protectionist forces persist in Europe, the audiovisual sector will retain its dependency on the quotas.

France is probably the only member of the EU with a very strong national position on cultural and audiovisual issues. The French follow 'une politique de resistance'. In many cases, this tactic has managed to block or postpone final agreements at an international level, like in the case of GATT negotiations. Even if France did not managed to impose its position on ', it still remains a

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[22]Regarding the quotas requirement, France was the leading figure in the group of opponents against the group of member-states with a more liberal policy (UK, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and Luxenbrough) Rapport no 384.

remarkable effort from the point that it succeeded to make her position the official position of EU in the GATT negotiations. This means that France, a nation-state member of an international organization can still influence the decision-making at an international level. It also means that the concept of nation-state is still very strong.

2.3.2 'Variable Geometry'

When France can not achieve its aims directly within the Community, she either seeks the support of institutions outside the European Union, like the Council of Europe for instance, as it was in the case of Eurimages, or simply takes the initiative to sponsor events that would involve other Community members, such as the Paris *'Symposium International sur l'Identité Culturelle Européenne'* and the *'Assises de l'Audiovisuel'*. French media cultural policy provides a 'text book example' of the way 'variable geometry'[23] has been used to achieve European policy goals.

[Eureka Audiovisuel]

When the MEDIA programme was introduced in 1986, the aim was to encourage the development of the European audiovisual industries[24]. However, very soon, it became clear that its budget was rather insufficient for such an ambitious project. The French attempts, later on, to increase it failed. The need, therefore, for further action was felt by the French government which suggested another audiovisual programme, complementary to the MEDIA, in the European Council meeting that took place in Rhodes in December 1988. To launch this project, the French government, then holding the EC presidency, organized a major conference in Paris in October 1989, called *'Les Assises de l'audiovisuel'*. The new programme aimed to give boost to the supply of European-made programmes in order to counter the trade imbalance with the United States. It indented to stimulate the production, co-production and co-distribution of programmes across Europe and also to do more than

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[23] 'European variable geometry', as it has been described by Richard Collins, is the use of European institutions outside the European Community by a Member State of the Community, to achieve goals unachievable through the institutions of the Community. The Council of Europe has provided a forum for developing such initiatives (Collins, 1994, pg 133, 135).

[24] The MEDIA programme (*Mesures pour l'Encouragement et le Développment de l'Industrie Audiovisuelle*) was initially launched by the European Commission in 1986 and agreed by its ministers in 1990. According to the proposal submitted to the Commission on 4 May 1990, it 'sets out to improve the environment of audiovisual businesses without directly intervening in production'. It is meant to 'strengthen ... the national industries through the distribution of their products on a community scale to a potential audience of 320 million people [and to] establish ... arrangements for cooperation between these industries based on increased production and distribution capacities on the international market' (Commision, 1990, pg 73).

compensate for the negative effects of the EC's single market. Many countries feared that, in the absence of compensating action, the single audiovisual market would actually increase Europe's exposure to American cultural penetration. America was not the only threat to diversity, though, as countries with small media industries were unlikely to benefit from the single market as much as other neighbouring European countries with larger and more competitive ones. The Community was expected, therefore, to take compensatory action to help these countries to maintain their cultural industries (see Burgelman and Pauwels, 1992). France was in the lead for an active interventionist cultural policy in the audiovisual sector but the liberals put obstacles. The French, not to be discouraged, simply went outside the aegis of the Community to pursue their goal. It is also interesting to note here that *Eureka Audiovisuel* happened at the same time as the difficult negotiations on the Directive of Television without Frontiers and the battle over quotas, fought by France.

Collins sees the support that the project received by both the Commission and the Council of Ministers, despite its not being an official EC programme, as a sign of 'the strength of the commitment of major sections of the European Community to a *dirigiste* policy and programme for the European audiovisual sector' (1994, pg 136). It was an indication that there was a tendency within the Community for a more active European media policy. From the French point, it was a very clever move. By opening the *Eureka Audiovisuel* to countries outside the EC, they managed to overcome the reservations of some member-states about the Community's involvement in cultural affairs. But the project was not based on cultural criteria only. It also aimed to stimulate the production of the programmes needed to feed the envisioned European HDTV system and help, thus, the latter to become a market success. Cultural and industrial policy merged under the same project [25] (Humphreys, 1996, pg 282-83).

France did see this project through its own lenses which were focusing on safeguarding their national culture and market and also their own conception of what Europe and European culture is, as Mitterrand's speech in the *Assises* points out:

> " ...l'Europe d'il y a cinq siècles était plus avancée dans l'echange de ses cultures qu'aujourd'hui. La culture circulait, la culture française a connu des heures de gloire. A tour de rôle, nous sommes propriétaire, possesseurs, inventeur d'un patrimoine qui nous est commun, qui inspire d'autres continents. Des centaines de millions d'hommes, des

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[25] *Eureka Audiovisuel* was modelled on the technological Eureka, as earlier project established by France as a Europe wide industrial research and development initiative.

milliards à travers la terre, sont formés par notre culture, sont sensibles à notre culture...
faut-il que nous soyons capables de protéger pour la développer l'identité dont nous
sommes les héritiers et que nous avons pour charge de transmettre dans la **vocation
universelle** qui est la nôtre" (Mitterrand, 1989, pg 22).

This *vocation universelle* of the French culture has, according to Bourdieu,
an imperialist character. He explains that the fact France has for national
culture a culture of a universalist character, gives the French the feeling of an
authority (at least until the Second World War) *"à une forme d'imperialism
culturel qui revêt l'apparence d'un prosélitism légitime de l'universel"*. This
imperialism de l'universel is perceived as an *imperialism libérateur* which
means that there is nothing better than be colonised by France (Bourdieu, 1992,
pg 149). It is exaclty this attitude that has driven the French to believe that the
European audiovisual space should be based on their national model of
cultural policy making. French cultural universalism is a strong element in
the French elite discourse about the nation, the future of which is a reoccurring
source of anxiety for both politicians and intellectuals whose fear for cultural
decline has fuelled nationalist reactions. The result of this national obsession is
the continuation of a strong foreign and national cultural policy. In fact, the
French never stopped trying to restate the greatness of their national character
and the European Union provides a new chance for them.

[Eurimages]

Eurimages was another example of 'variable geometry'. France, again, was the
principal driving force behind this project, the most active participants in its
projects, the principal contributor of funds and the main beneficiary[26]. France
tried to initiate a film and television subsidy programme and to encourage
pan-European co-productions. These aspirations were blocked by other
Community members able to use the blocking powers they possessed in respect
of initiatives developed under Article 235 of the Treaty of Rome. France, thus,
turned to the Council of Europe which provided a forum for developing this
initiative and securing the eventual adherence of all members of the
Community to Eurimages.

The establishment of Eurimages followed a succession of Council Resolutions
which affirmed the importance of the audiovisual sector to the nurturing and

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[26] Eurimages was established at the end of 1988. By 1991 France had participated in 59
Eurimages projects, in 23 of which she was the dominant partner. Comparing France's figures
with Germany's participation in 28 projects, Switzerland in 21, Spain in 20, and Belgium in 17,
one can easily conclude that France was the principal recipient of Eurimages (Collins, 1994, pg
133)

promotion of European culture and identity. The aim of one these resolutions, as it was described by the Council, was to achieve:

> "... a genuine and diversified European audio-visual production capable of meeting the needs of television viewers and of encouraging closer unity between peoples as well as the mutual enrichment of cultures... Without increased and competitive audiovisual production, there is a real risk that the new channels will be fed by re-broadcasts of existing programmes or extra-European programmes (Council of Europe, in Collins, 1994, pg 131).

Eurimages had a triple mission, apart from developing the programme industries, it intended to 'take advantage of the new communication techniques and meet the cultural and economic challenges arising from their development' and promote European cultural identity (ibid). Once again, economic interests are involved in cultural policy planning. Sometimes, it is not clear which one comes first. Although France appears to have culture as a priority, one cannot help but noticing economic and industrial aspirations, as many projects initiated by France have shown (the Satellite initiatives of TDF1&2, the involvement of the French group Thompson in the development of a European HDTV industry etc.) (Bahu-Leyser, 1994).

The initiatives taken by the European Union and France have had a certain impact in the audiovisual sector but not the one expected. There has been an increase of imports from major exporting counties (including the big European production states) but the proportion or the share of non-national European imports seems to be decreasing slightly. Imports from the US continue to dominate the flow of the images in Europe. Research (see Biltereyst, 1995) shows that the cross-border dissemination of European audiovisual productions is characterised by a declining trend. The rule on the majority proposition of European works has not been followed by most stations in the European member-states, especially when it comes to the drama and fiction category of programmes (ibid, pg 20). A major conclusion from research on this issue, illustrating the disputable effectiveness of the European media cultural policy, highlights the fact the increasing competitive sphere in most countries seems to push the channels to a retreat to national strategies and to a stable dependency on American products. One notices 'a net tendency of growing (bi-) polarization into domestic and US programming' (ibid).

The above results show that a European communicative space constituted by means of television and cinema is not so easily achievable. It is rather contradictory and defensive as it is based on the opposition between European cultural identity and Americanization. In addition and most importantly,

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such an identity has to confront national resistances. The national characteristics still persist and there is little evidence that 'a quick, technorationalistic fix' as Schlesinger points out, 'is available to solve the continental problem of cultural identity' (1994, pg 22). We cannot expect, either, too much of 'the identity-conferring potential of audiovisual media in a transnational context' (ibid). The construction of identities takes time and a sense of a common destiny in which the media can play a role but not the decisive one.

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