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Mafalda Dâmaso

Introduction¹

Europe undertook the leadership of the world with ardour, cynicism and violence. Look at how the shadow of her palaces stretches out ever farther! Every one of her movements has burst the bounds of space and thought. Europe has declined all humility and all modesty; but she has also set her face against all solicitude and all tenderness.

Frantz Fanon

If the challenges facing Europe are to be met, we need a Europe capable of solidarity, of independence and of cooperation.

Simone Weil

Although culture is increasingly recognised as a relevant focus of scholarly analysis in international relations studies, the European Union (henceforth referred to as the EU) has not yet been examined as a global cultural power. This book addresses this gap, offering a comprehensive overview of the multiple arenas through which the EU has emerged as a major cultural actor beyond its borders – one that regulates, funds, and manages cultural initiatives in multiple sectors, across regions, and with different purposes. And yet, when doing so, as the case studies compiled in this book suggest, the EU is *not* exercising a form of neocolonialism or using its cultural, political and economic weight to shape the preferences of populations in third countries to reinforce its soft power,² as will be explained later. Rather, through its global cultural action, the EU is beginning to emerge as an *enabling* power³ that supports cultural diversity around the world.

¹ This research was *funded by the Horizon Europe* programme of the European Union and the call HORIZON-CL2-HERITAGE-01-06 under the Grant Agreement No 101094769 (REBOOT: Reviving, Boosting, Optimizing, and Transforming European Film Competitiveness project). It does not reflect the views of the European Union. I am also thankful to Helder Verdade Fontes for his comments on an early version of the introduction.

² Nye, Joseph. *Soft Power: The Means To Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) and Nye, Joseph. “Soft Power.” *Foreign Policy* 80 (1990): 153–171.

³ This term is inspired by the pioneering work of Patrycja Kaszynska on the enabling dimension of cultural value, which is here brought to the arena of EU policy and international relations. See Patrycja Kaszynska, Diane Coyle, Emma Dwyer, Ricky Lawton, Patrizia Riganti, Sadie Watson, Mafalda Dâmaso, Yang Wang *Scoping culture and*

The chapters included in this book contribute to this argument in different ways. They provide examples of how the EU's global cultural action plays an enabling role: through trade arrangements, policy arrangements, financial measures, policy paradigms, and modes of governance and operation. These types of action overlap but will be presented separately for analytical purposes. As will be discussed, the EU has undertaken multiple steps to update its external trade policy so that it is guided by non-economic values, in particular cultural diversity.⁴ As for the EU's policy arrangements, its engagement with Latin American supranational media policy had the initial aim to solidify the industry and better compete with American markets but now supports the promotion of cultural diversity through regional policy schemes. Indeed, the Ibermedia programme, a network that aims to promote and develop the Ibero-American Audiovisual Industry and is funded by the EU, demonstrates that the latter makes active efforts to involve regional stakeholders, keep open channels of communication, and receive input from grassroots associations regarding its implementation.⁵

As for the financial measures developed by the EU, through the co-production requirements of ACPCultures+ (the largest audiovisual assistance initiative aimed at cultural workers in the Global South), the EU co-produces global African media in a way that supports not only cultural production but also economic and social development. This has resulted, namely, in the provision of financial support to projects shot in and with casts from ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries that are “intended to be viewed by global audiences”,⁶ seen not as a fixed entity but, rather, “as international networks of taste, affinity, and belonging”⁷ that emerge gradually and at the same time as the films that interest them are made and watched. More broadly, this EU financial scheme has enabled a paradigmatic shift towards a specific type of film that was originally seen as European and is now global: “while often associated with European modes of production, art house cinema [...] has become a form that circulates widely outside of Europe and is embraced around the global by audiences and audiovisual professionals”.⁸ A related point emerges when one considers how European stakeholders and the EU use Video-on-Demand platforms to “build the status of an internationally powerful actor in global cultural politics.”⁹ Specifically, the European film industry makes highly diverse and successful films with “strong appeal to global audiences, having the ability to penetrate well beyond its usual range of trade partnerships.”¹⁰

The EU's policy models also play a role in the EU's enabling power. The paradigm of

heritage capital report. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scoping-culture-and-heritage-capital-report/scoping-culture-and-heritage-capital-report> London: AHRC/DCMS, 2022 (1 September 2023) and Patrycja Kaszynska, “Enabling as the anchor for regenerative cultural policy,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. Forthcoming in 2025.

⁴ See Burri, chapter 9, this volume.

⁵ See Rossato Fernandes, chapter 6, this volume.

⁶ See Pearson, chapter 7, this volume.

⁷ See Pearson, chapter 7, this volume.

⁸ See Pearson, chapter 7, this volume.

⁹ See Vlassis, chapter 8, this volume.

¹⁰ See Vlassis, chapter 8, this volume.

International Cultural Relations (ICR), which guides the EU's approach to culture in foreign action and has the aim of building long-term trust and cross-border understanding through international cooperation and intercultural dialogue, has been adopted by not only EU organisations but also cultural practitioners and states. This is important because stakeholders involved in the implementation of ICR “potentially wield influence throughout international relations, for they contribute to establishing global norms, identities, and shared understandings and may have the potential to shape broader structural contexts”¹¹ from the bottom-up. A further example of such enabling power lies in the way how the Sustainable Development Goals are increasingly embedded in the EU's definition of its internal and, crucially, external cultural strategies, policies, and programmes.¹² This approach implicitly recognises the profound contribution of culture to the other dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic, social) and is likely to provide a gradual incentive for the EU to begin to support a wider – that is, more inclusive – variety of cultural pathways promoting sustainable development in its global action.

Regarding the modes of governance and operation that exemplify the EU's enabling role, there is increasing recognition of the need to include local perspectives in EU funding to mitigate the negative consequences of global asymmetrical power imbalances, namely through the rethinking of decision-making processes.¹³ Moreover, existing programmes and initiatives can also play such an enabling role. International cultural relations are made possible by EU programmes that were not originally designed to do so; for instance, between stakeholders involved in the European Capitals of Culture and in China's East Asian Cities of Culture. Indeed, “EU-China cultural cooperation policies have gradually formed a multi-level framework for cultural exchange”¹⁴ and this has the potential to foster further “connections between cultural and creative enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises and cultural entrepreneurs, and civil society and non-governmental organisations”.¹⁵

This being said, the book's chapters also recognise that these initiatives and practices coexist with persistent economic and symbolic asymmetries of power, limited budgets, potential but unexplored synergies between existing policies and programmes, a superficial approach to cultural cooperation in the EU's relations with non-EU countries, a mismatch between intentions and results, and the EU's support for free trade norms – which prioritise economic goals and its sustained position as a major potency over its role as an equal partner in multilateral arrangements and an enabler of cultural diversity.¹⁶

Arguably, the EU's global cultural action mirrors the internal lack of direction of the EU as a political project: what does it stand for? What are its priorities? These are questions to which this

¹¹ See Lamonica and Murray, chapter 2, this volume.

¹² See Dâmaso, chapter 4, this volume.

¹³ See Joffe and Magkou, chapter 1, this volume.

¹⁴ See Yang, chapter 3, this volume.

¹⁵ See Yang, chapter 3, this volume.

¹⁶ See Peredo-Castro, chapter 5, this volume.

volume does not pretend to have answers. However, in the current geopolitical climate, divided between liberal democracies that often prioritise the economy above human development or planetary boundaries on the one hand, and autocracies on the other hand, the idea that the EU is a global cultural actor is significant beyond the cultural policy sphere. In particular, it adds nuance to canonical and ongoing conversations regarding the global role of the EU and the tools that it has at its disposal to strengthen the liberal international order (LIO).¹⁷ Indeed, as has been noted elsewhere, “the EU’s relevance as a global actor is linked to its ability to advocate a global order which others can support. In a context where the LIO is contested, the Union might need to reconsider its approach.”¹⁸ The chapters included in this edited issue suggest that the cultural dimension of the EU’s external action is an underrated contribution to these efforts.

Beyond Normative or Soft Power

In the celebrated *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World*, Anu Bradford¹⁹ argues that the EU’s power is not declining. Rather, it remains a superpower that passes regulations that shape the global business environment. Although most readers of *The Brussels Effect* may have found the absence of references to the role played by EU cultural policy in its global action irrelevant, that is not the case. As the chapters included in this edited volume suggest, expanding the analysis of the ways how the EU shapes the world to the cultural sphere would have led Bradford to add nuance to her conclusion – according to which the EU’s regulatory power allows it to Europeanise the global environment *without* having to cooperate with third actors. Rather, the EU’s global cultural action differs significantly from what Bradford describes. In the business world, the author notes that the EU’s global regulatory power results from its use of directives and regulations to increase internal minimal standards in terms of consumer or environmental protection, to give two key examples that simultaneously harmonise internal trade and influence the behaviour of third countries interested in trading with the Single Market (henceforth known as SM). At the core of this process is the EU’s commitment to protecting European competitiveness and upholding social standards. As Bradford suggests, the ability “to shape the global regulatory environment and pursue global influence”²⁰ can be understood, then, as an externality of the SM’s internal dynamics. The EU’s focus on strengthening its SM allows it to bypass action in or with third countries to influence their business environment.

¹⁷ That is, as defined by John Ikenberry, “an open, rule-based system in which states trade and cooperate to achieve mutual gains” in John Ikenberry, “Liberal internationalism 3.0: America and the dilemmas of liberal world order,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 71–87, 72. However, as Helene Sjursen recognises and discusses, the empirical manifestations of the term are “slippery and ambiguous”. See Helene Sjursen, “Rethinking liberal order: the EU and the quest for global justice,” *International Affairs* 99 (6) 2023: 2203–222, 2206.

¹⁸ Sjursen, “Rethinking liberal order”, 2023.

¹⁹ Bradford, Anu. *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

²⁰ Anu Bradford, “How the EU Became a Global Regulatory Power,” in Bradford, *The Brussels Effect*, 2019.

This logic does not apply in the cultural domain. Within the EU's borders, the Treaties afford minimal competencies to the EU in the cultural sphere,²¹ and its Member States (henceforth known as MS) commit to cultural diversity and reject the harmonisation of cultural practices – although it must be noted that this coexists with a parallel process of the establishment of minimum standards in fields that interact with culture (e.g. workers' rights and social protection²²). That is, even though the Commission has gradually acquired legal competencies to act in the cultural field, it remains constrained politically in its internal cultural action, namely as a reflection of increasing popular support within the EU for nativist political powers that see culture with a communitarian lens.²³ Moreover, the European Commission is forbidden by the subsidiarity clause to engage in EU-initiated reforms in the cultural sector within its own borders; rather, its competencies are to “carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States”.²⁴

However, its international work does not face such limits. Since the Lisbon Treaty,²⁵ which stipulates that the EU is to promote cooperation with third countries in the field of culture,²⁶ the EU has gradually embedded culture within its external action – e.g. by including it in its own diplomatic efforts, which are parallel to those of its MS. Simultaneously, through its action in international organisations such as UNESCO,²⁷ as shall be mentioned later, the EU supports the dissemination of the fundamental values that are shared by its members.²⁸ What this means is that, in practice, the Commission's limited power within the EU's borders is accompanied by a framework that facilitates multiple forms of action to support and expand cultural diversity beyond its borders, namely in collaboration with stakeholders in third countries, whose space for action is *enabled* by the EU's own activities. This being said, it must be recognised that this value-driven approach to culture around the world coexists with the prioritisation of the competitiveness of the European cultural sector within the

²¹ In fact, as Anna Kandyla has noted, “Culture remained a rather marginal EU policy area until the adoption of the first-ever European cultural strategy in 2007.” See Anna Kandyla, “The Creative Europe Programme: Policy-making Dynamics and Outcomes,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 49.

²² Culture Action Europe and Dâmaso, Mafalda. *Research for CULT Committee – The situation of artists and cultural workers and the post-COVID cultural recovery in the European Union: Background Analysis*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2021\)652250](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2021)652250) (6 September 2023). European Parliament, Brussels, 2021 (4 November 2024).

²³ Mafalda Dâmaso, “From the cultural and foreign policies of western European far-right parties to the European Union's 2015–2018 Agenda for Culture – identifying and opposing nativism,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 24 (Special Number 6: Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations) (2018): 811–825.

²⁴ Article 6 TFEU. See European Union. *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007*. Brussels, 2007.

²⁵ European Union, *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007*. Brussels, 2007.

²⁶ Article 167 of the Treaty of Lisbon, ex Article 151 of the Treaty of Amsterdam and ex Article 128 of the Treaty of Maastricht.

²⁷ Christiaan De Beukelaer, Miikka Pykkönen and JP Singh, eds. *Globalization, Culture and Development: The UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

²⁸ For the sake of clarity, it is not being suggested that these values are exclusively European. Rather, they are shared by billions of people around the world *and* by the European Union.

EU's borders, reflecting the “implicit cultural logic of European economic integration”.²⁹ Indeed, scholars have even gone so far as to interpret the EU’s internal cultural action as “an *industrial* policy for Europe’s cultural and creative sectors, rather than a *cultural* policy for the EU”.³⁰ The coexistence of these two approaches to culture³¹ results in a “dualistic regime of the governance of cultural diversity”.³² This is symptomatic of the EU’s division in terms of the global model of development that it supports – an ambivalence that reflects its internal complexity, as shall now be discussed.

The EU's emerging role as an *enabling power* may also be understood as a complex and indirect reckoning with the spectre of neocolonialism. As a political union that includes several former members with violent histories of colonisation that only recently started to be officially acknowledged, and others that continue to fail to respect the rights of refugee and asylum seekers as well as those of its own minorities, the EU’s commitment to supranational law and principles such as human rights and cultural diversity in its foreign action is increasingly questioned. This is an understandable and fair criticism, which explains to a significant extent existing scepticism regarding the intentions that underpin cultural funding programmes in third countries financed by the EU. There is a significant gap between Ian Manners’³³ famous description of the EU’s *normative power* as a “promoter of norms which displace the state as the centre of concern”³⁴ reflecting common principles on the one hand and the EU’s action today on the other hand. In particular, the 2004 enlargement resulted in increasing divisions regarding the normative core that had been identified by Manners as distinguishing the EU from other potencies: democracy, rule of law and human rights, the balance between social solidarity and liberalisation, anti-discrimination, and sustainable development. This internal disagreement was epitomised by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom in 2020 following its 2016 referendum as a result, among other things, of opposition to the idea of the EU as a political union with common values.

Nonetheless – while one must acknowledge the EU’s limitations and its failure to uphold human rights and other fundamental values³⁵ consistently and systematically – the chapters included

²⁹ Rachael Craufurd Smith. “The Cultural Logic of Economic Integration,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7–24, 11.

³⁰ Craufurd Smith, “The Cultural Logic,” 22 emphasis in original.

³¹ It is important to note that these two approaches are not parallel but, rather, intersect in complex ways. Indeed, the economic strength of the EU’s cultural sector might explain why some actors in third countries are interested in participating in EU-funded or EU-led cultural programmes.

³² Mafalda Dâmaso and Andrew Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime of Cultural Diversity Management: The Concept of Culture in the Creative Europe Program (2014–2019; 2021–2027) and in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2016–),” *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy* 7, no. 1 (2021):153–184. <https://doi.org/10.14361/zkmm-2021-0108>.

³³ Manners, Ian, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235–58.

³⁴ Manners, “Normative Power Europe,” 236.

³⁵ This is particularly evident alongside the EU’s borders, as many authors have discussed in detail, but also in its trade and environmental policies.

in this edited volume suggest that the EU's commitment to a set of principles and norms³⁶ remains relevant when one considers its cultural action in third countries, and that the EU has begun to implement in its own cultural action the discursive shift that it drove in the international trade community “from the *exception culturelle* rhetoric [...] towards a more positive but also more proactive agenda under the slogan of cultural diversity”.³⁷ This paradigmatic change resulted in the adoption of two documents that must be mentioned in this context. First, the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions³⁸ – a legally binding multilateral treaty that gives cultural activities, goods and services a special status as purveyors of symbolic meaning, artistic dimension and cultural values, and thus as manifestations of cultural diversity (justifying the existence of cultural policies and measures to protect and promote them), reaffirms many principles of the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,³⁹ highlights the importance of culture for development, and recognises the need for international cooperation to support the cultural sectors of developing countries. Second, the 2016 EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations,⁴⁰ co-authored by the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President of the European Commission (who leads the European External Action Service), identifies several key principles to guide cultural cooperation between the EU and third countries: promote cultural diversity and respect for human rights, foster mutual respect and inter-cultural dialogue, ensure respect for complementarity and subsidiarity, encourage a cross-cutting approach to culture, and promote culture through existing frameworks for cooperation. These changes are accompanied by an active interest from non-European countries and their populations in European culture. As Peredo-Castro demonstrates in his historical analysis of conflicts around the definition of *Mexican* culture for this book, a highly disparate set of groups, often with opposing goals, have proposed to define it – since the origins of the South American republic until today – in an active and critical engagement with Europeanism and Americanisation. This reveals the existence of “a very complex network of alterities”⁴¹ in relation to which local cultural sectors in third countries change and evolve.

³⁶ Such as co-creation as discussed in Chapter 2, stakeholder engagement as analysed in Chapter 3, capacity building as discussed in Chapter 7, fairness as mentioned in Chapter 1, and diversity of voices, stories and perspectives as examined in Chapters 8 and 9, accompanied by a commitment to embedding into policy discussions the linkages between culture and sustainable development as discussed in Chapter 5 and cultural diversity as mentioned in chapter 10.

³⁷ Mira Burri, “The European Union, the World Trade Organisation and Cultural Diversity”, in *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 195–209, 196.

³⁸ UNESCO, *2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. Paris, 2005.

³⁹ UNESCO, *2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. Paris, 2001.

⁴⁰ European Commission. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations*. Brussels, 2016.

⁴¹ See Peredo-Castro, chapter 5, this volume.

Without questioning the argument of the continued global relevance of the EU that is made in *The Brussels Effect*, the discontinuity between the EU's internal and external cultural action, as well as the increased weight that it gives to co-creation and mutual trust as a recognition of structural imbalances in its relations with third countries, add nuance to Bradford's analysis, questioning the supposed continuity between internal and external EU power⁴² and the lack of involvement of third parties in its perpetuation.

The emergence of the EU as an *enabling power* is not without consequences. Particularly, it questions the idea that "not much has happened since the UNESCO Convention became operational". It remains true that "any 'offensive' action from the EU to force the Convention into the proceedings in the WTO [World Trade Organization] is hardly to be expected [...]. If the Convention's implementation in EU external relations is limited to cultural cooperation frameworks that only marginally alter the status quo, one may question the EU's commitment to a genuinely new role for cultural diversity at the international level".⁴³ However, the chapters included in this edited volume reveal that the EU has recognised the many tools that it has available to implement the principles of the Convention in international cultural exchanges by embedding its *norms* into international cultural programmes, and has begun to do so. It will take time to assess whether this is an offensive or a defensive approach – but a change, in any case, is noticeable.

This being said, one must stress that the original framework developed by Manners is not immune to critique. The scholar saw the EU's normative role as coexisting with, on the one hand, its civilian power, i.e., "the centrality of economic power to achieve national goals; the primacy of diplomatic co-operation to solve international problems; and the willingness to use legally-binding supranational institutions to achieve international progress"⁴⁴ and, on the other hand, with its emerging role as a military power, suggested by the emergence of a common foreign and security policy.⁴⁵ Besides the many occasions in which the EU has shown to be incapable thus far of being consistent with its stated values, as has been noted, the decision to frame the EU's foreign policy in military terms is questionable if not puzzling – indeed, it was precisely because "the union did not dispose of military means" that "its trademark in foreign policy was commonly seen as that of a normative or civilian

⁴² On this topic, one must also acknowledge the interpretation made by Jan Loosen, according to whom the UNESCO Convention "replicates the cultural mainstreaming obligation of Article 167(4) at the international level". See Jan Loosen, "The Implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in EU External Relations", in *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 210–224, 212.

⁴³ Loosen, "The Implementation of the UNESCO Convention".

⁴⁴ Manners, "Normative Power Europe", 236–237. Referring to Kenneth Twitchett, ed., *Europe and the World: The External Relations of the Common Market* (St. Martin's Press, 1976) and Hanns Maull, "Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 5 (1990): 91–106.

⁴⁵ Hedley Bull, "Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 21, no. 2 (1982): 149–64.

power”.⁴⁶ Moreover, Manners’ statement that the EU “seeks to redefine international norms in its own image”⁴⁷ does not apply neatly to the cultural sphere. Rather, as a global cultural power, the value that “predisposes [the EU] to act in a normative way in world politics”⁴⁸ is the principle of cultural diversity. That is, despite major internal fractures regarding what the EU is for – and even what it *is* – , it has begun to use its power to support the emergence of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder, trans-sectoral and transnational understanding of the governance of culture.

In doing so, the EU implicitly recognises the significant tensions that are faced by the liberal international order and the multiple *claims of justice*⁴⁹ that challenge it, aligning itself with those that understand justice as mutual recognition, thus “recognis[ing] that peoples’ particular experiences, different histories and unequal access to resources should be taken into consideration.”⁵⁰ This being said, if the EU is to be consistent, the recognition of cultural difference is only the first step of this renewed approach to the ILO and should be followed by the institutionalisation thereof into new or modified multilateral organisations.⁵¹

Whether this happens or not, assessing the EU’s global cultural power strictly according to Joseph Nye’s paradigm of *soft power* would be incorrect. As Lamonica and Murray write in Chapter 2, the ICR approach does not require “the mobilisation of soft power. Soft power implies a competition framework and, in that framework, it is yielded through cultural diplomacy policies. However, as EU policymakers have developed it, the ICR approach seems to rest on understanding the international system as a cooperative environment and on the ultimate purpose not to influence but to facilitate coordination towards fulfilling shared interests.”⁵² That is, the values and practices that characterise the global cultural action of the European Union (increasingly focused on equal collaboration to build trust, albeit with limitations) are misaligned with the language that continues to be used in most international relations scholarship to make sense of the deployment of culture in foreign affairs – which is guided by the idea of cultural influence as a tool to maintain power. It’s important to stress that the EU’s embedding of culture within its foreign action is *not* disinterested. However, it does not deploy culture to maintain power for its own sake but, rather, to reinforce liberal values and, in doing so, global support for the ILO.

At the same time, cultural actors in third countries do not engage with the EU’s and with European cultural references in a passive and acritical manner; rather, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, the

⁴⁶ Helene Sjursen, “Rethinking liberal order: the EU and the quest for global justice,” *International Affairs* 99, no. 6 (2023): 2203-2222, 2212-2213.

⁴⁷ Manners, “Normative Power Europe”, 252. Similarly, Bradford also identifies pathways that allow the EU to shape global makes unilaterally other than harmonisation.

⁴⁸ Manners, “Normative Power Europe, 252.

⁴⁹ Christian Reus-Smit and Ayşe Zarakol, “Polymorphic justice and the crisis of international order,” *International Affairs*, 99 (1), January 2023, 1-22, 1.

⁵⁰ Sjursen, “Rethinking liberal order”, 2217. The other two models of justice identified by Sjursen – as non-domination or as impartiality – are not as ambitious as the idea of mutual recognition.

⁵¹ Sjursen, “Rethinking liberal order”, 2218.

⁵² See Lamonica and Murray, chapter 2, this volume.

cultural links with the EU and with Europe that are actively maintained by such stakeholders are the result of lively intellectual debates in non-EU countries. In other words, the language of cultural influence that is used by Nye does not reflect the active engagement of actors in third countries with European culture and their desire to be an active part of the EU's global cultural action. For all these reasons, as has been noted elsewhere, the main policy framing the EU's use of culture in international affairs, the International Cultural Relations approach, "both in light of its governance and of the aims that it serves, changes the main function and the focus of the diplomatic use of culture away from persuasion or attraction (of third countries by the EU's values) toward strengthening civil society from the bottom-up (in third countries through the shared design and enactment of EU-funded activities in collaboration with local organisations, EU actors and the cultural institutes of its Member States)".⁵³ Both *soft power* and *enabling power* serve clear interests. However, the former is self-interested and guided by the goal of supporting uni- or multipolarity, whereas the latter recognises interdependence as the basis of the liberal international order. These goals are not mutually exclusive, but it would be wrong to see the diversity regimes⁵⁴ that they inspire as equivalent.

This analysis is only possible because of the transdisciplinary approach to cultural policy, media policy, and creative industries policy that characterises this edited volume. Many readers will not be surprised by this method. The transnational character of cultural consumption and production has led to the gradual recognition of the transnational as an important paradigm in cultural studies, as is illustrated by the series that hosts this edited volume. However, decisions regarding the regulation of culture continue to be mostly examined from the perspective of the state – illustrating the persistence of methodological nationalism in cultural policy.⁵⁵ Rather, this edited issue proposes not only a profound change in how the EU is understood but also a paradigmatic and disciplinary shift in cultural policy studies towards the realm of the transnational – an arena that, in opposition to the regional or the supranational, requires by definition an engagement with multiple actors, voices and views, and is thus epistemologically consistent with the ethos of cultural studies. Anchored in cultural studies and opposing a silo approach to cultural policy, the book's chapters allow for the identification of policy patterns and for a nuanced examination of the global cultural power of the EU.

Key Concepts

⁵³ Dâmaso, Mafalda. *The EU Approach to Culture in International Relations. Towards a New Paradigm: International Cultural Relations Management*. https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/default/files/Implementing%20the%20EU%20Strategy_12.14.21.pdf CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, Centre on Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California, 2021 (6 September 2023), 8.

⁵⁴ That is, the "system-wide norms and practices that [...] configure authority [...], organize diversity and create social and political hierarchies". See Reus-Smit, Christian. *On Cultural Diversity* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 189.

⁵⁵ Christiaan De Beukelaer, "Ordinary Culture in a World of Strangers: Toward Cosmopolitan Cultural Policy," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 25, no. 6 (2019): 792–805.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify how the term culture, which has been the topic of extensive and lengthy debates,⁵⁶ is understood in this edited issue. For the purposes of this discussion, it is helpful to refer to a typology of understandings of culture:⁵⁷ professional (referring to a sector whose professionals are dedicated to the production and distribution of culture), anthropological⁵⁸ (linking cultural practices to specific ways of life), and civilisational (which assumes that cultural artefacts are associated with “a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development”⁵⁹ that often has elitist undertones). Moreover, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall foregrounded, culture can be understood as a static or as an evolving entity. In the former case, it refers to “the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes” that provide “frames of reference and meaning”;⁶⁰ in the latter situation, culture is “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’”.⁶¹ As has been further examined elsewhere, the EU’s embedding of culture in foreign affairs

leans heavily on the anthropological definition found in the 2005 UNESCO Convention (...). Although the professional definition of culture and the economic justification for supporting this sector abroad are also present, the promotion of cultural diversity emerges as a means of influencing the cultures and politics of third countries through cultural programs targeting civil society (bottom-up) rather than political elites (top-down). In doing so, the EU aims to adapt more flexibly to different kinds of cultural claims such as civilizational, ethno-national, religious stances (Reus-Smit 2018: 230). Thus, it rejects both a culturalist approach to diversity, which sees the international order as based on Western values and, therefore, perceives cultural diversity as a problem (Reus-Smit 2018: 226), and an internationalist view thereof, which argues that institutions neutralize culture, removing it from the public realm or delegating it to the domestic arena, paraphrasing Reus-Smit (2018: 229). Rather, the EU acknowledges that cultural diversity is a fundamental condition of international relations.⁶²

Moreover, the EU’s approach to culture in foreign affairs is aligned with the idea of cultural relations – guided by the aim of promoting trust and understanding between peoples, and supported by a transnational and flexible understanding of culture⁶³ –, understood both as professional activities

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2: The Culture of Cultural Policy in Bell, David and Oakley, Kate. *Cultural Policy* (Routledge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁷ Dâmaso and Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime”.

⁵⁸ Based on Edward Taylor’s foundational definition, which includes “ideas, values, institutions and practices”. See Taylor, Edward. *Primitive Culture*. 1871.

⁵⁹ Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press: 1976 [1983]), 90.

⁶⁰ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 227–237, 223.

⁶¹ Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 225.

⁶² Dâmaso and Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime”, 164.

⁶³ Dâmaso and Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime,” 166.

and in an anthropological manner.⁶⁴ When referring to culture, this edited book takes a similarly anthropological – and thus open, interdisciplinary, transnational – and flexible view thereof as more than a sector of activity, that is, as cultural practices, goods and services that are embedded with values and modes of social organisation. This also explains in part why the book links EU cultural and media policies. Doing so reflects both the EU's policies and practice and the approach to EU cultural governance that is suggested by Psychogiopoulou (2015) who proposes to examine both “cultural policies in the strict sense, that is, the policies concerned with culture as such, and the processes through which these are formed as well as the *whole range of policies* that relate one way or the other to culture. Cultural governance then naturally extends to the *instruments* that such ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit’ cultural policies involve, in the form of regulatory tools but also financial instruments and soft law or coordinating mechanisms.”⁶⁵ Reflecting this definition, the book’s examination of a set of EU policies, programmes, and funding schemes should be understood as allowing for a bird’s eye view of the multiple tools through which the EU contributes to the governance – or the management – of cultural diversity beyond its borders. Moreover, the book highlights the two-sided or interactional dimension of transnational policymaking in the cultural sphere, which requires openness from both sides – but particularly, considering the broader power imbalances discussed earlier, from the EU – to acknowledging criticism and to revising policy positions, as chapter 1 by Joffe and Magkou and chapter 6 by Rossato Fernandes clearly demonstrate.

Academic Literature and Debates

Delving into the assumptions, contexts and implications of the EU’s global cultural action, the chapters of the book combine qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the operations, impact and tensions of EU global cultural policy, asking the following questions: What characterises EU cultural and media policies and programmes beyond its borders? What are the assumptions and the goals that underlie such policies and programmes? What connects them? These are important questions that previous authors haven’t addressed. Indeed, most EU cultural policy scholars and experts fail to consider the impact of the EU as an organisation that acts internationally, while cultural policy scholars rarely engage with international issues – and, when they do, tend to focus on the diplomatic efforts of individual EU MS. Rather, the approach taken in this book is transnational and transdisciplinary. Its chapters include new research and perspectives from senior academics and early career researchers, as well as chapters that reflect more broadly on trends and tensions regarding the governance, goals, and broader implications of the cultural work of the EU around the world.

Considering this context, the book’s concerns are related to questions that have been raised by several authors in many fields. To begin with cultural studies, the book is aligned with scholarly

⁶⁴ Dâmaso and Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime,” 166.

⁶⁵ Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, ed., *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2 (emphasis in original).

discussions regarding the relations between culture and power across borders. This concern echoes work developed, for example, by the editors of *Global Culture: Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalization*⁶⁶ and *Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture*⁶⁷, which highlight on the one hand the decreased relevance of borders to make sense of cultural production and the functioning of the cultural industries and, on the other hand, the growing shift in cultural consumption patterns towards global platforms, thus supporting – in what questions optimistic readings of the political potential of the transnational sphere – transnational wealth accumulation and concentration or even, as the editors suggest, new forms of cultural imperialism. In common, both volumes question the chasm between the transnational dimension of cultural production and consumption on the one hand and the persistent methodological nationalism of most cultural policy analyses on the other hand. As a regional union with global impact across a set of policy areas, and increasingly functioning as a global cultural power, the European Union is an interesting platform from which to contribute to bridging this gap.

Several contributions support this effort directly and indirectly. Chapter 5 by Peredo-Castro positions the sustained influence of Europe and the EU in the Mexican cultural sector within a historical analysis of the roots of intellectual support for cosmopolitanism, cultural nationalism, and media imperialism among Mexican elites, correcting a persistent narrative that sees the dissemination of European cultural artefacts as forms of cultural imperialism or neocolonialism. The idea that the persistent global cultural influence of the EU is not the result of unidirectional fluxes of information but, rather, emerges from highly strategic decisions made by cultural actors in non-EU countries is also discussed by Pearson. As for the transnational dimension of cultural policy, this is increasingly reflected in technical policy conversations – exemplified by those discussed by Dâmaso in Chapter 4. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the idea that each country's carbon footprint and environmental behaviour have externalities beyond its borders and that, conversely, responsibility for the planet's environment lies with all. Likewise, discussions regarding the inclusion of culture as either a new goal or a new dimension of the post-SDGs reflect the idea that lively cultural ecosystems reinforce the other dimensions (environmental, social, economic) of the SDGs and have externalities across borders.

Moreover, considering the colonial past of several EU MS, an analysis of the global cultural action of the EU cannot be complete without a consideration of the relations between the EU's action and the issue of decoloniality. This link is made in Chapter 1 by Joffe and Magkou, who argue that although the EU has made advances to increase the fairness of its cultural action in Africa, more can be done to align ideas and practice, and suggest a set of epistemological principles to advance the decolonisation of European cultural cooperation. A similar point is made in Chapter 4 by Dâmaso,

⁶⁶ Diane Crane, Nobuko Kawashima, and Ken'ichi Kawasaki, eds., *Global Culture: Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalization* (Routledge, 2002).

⁶⁷ Jin, Dal Yong. *Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture* (Routledge, 2015).

analysing the EU's unbalanced incorporation of sustainability concerns in its global cultural action and linking this to decolonial debates regarding Global North–Global South relations. Other contributors also engage with cultural studies in a broad manner, particularly Chapter 2 by Lamonica and Murray, which – revisiting the aforementioned optimistic readings of the political possibilities of the transnational sphere – analyses the practice of cultural relations according to the communicative framework developed by Habermas⁶⁸ and others. These chapters confirm the continued pertinence of cultural studies to make sense of the power relations, tensions, potential, and ambiguities that characterise the global cultural action of the EU. Simultaneously, the volume demonstrates that policy-centred work can be a proficuous angle of empirical reflection that opens up new ways of engaging with a central discussion in cultural studies – the relations between power and culture – without repeating old clichés.

Another key discipline with which this book engages is EU cultural policy – although it must be noted that its focus on the global impact of EU policy, rather than on intra-EU institutional characteristics, tensions and/or agendas, differs from the majority of titles concerned with this sub-discipline. One area of common scholarly interest is the link between culture and broader internal EU policies. For example, *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*⁶⁹ critically examines the strictly cultural elements of European integration policies, whereas *Media and Cultural Policy in the European Union*⁷⁰ discusses the contribution of media and cultural policy to reinforcing a shared European identity, citizenship and community. In this edited volume, the focus lies not on the contribution of culture to political integration or to strengthening the EU's polis but, rather, on how culture supports the EU's ability to act in complex and highly disparate contexts while maintaining coherence, which it does by supporting the development of communities of practice (as argued by Lamonica and Murray in Chapter 2) or by embedding its values in its modus operandi (as argued namely in Chapter 1 by Joffe and Magkou).

Many other existing volumes focus on the specificities of EU cultural policy itself. For example, *Transcultural Europe: Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe*⁷¹ considers the main challenges encountered in the development of European cultural policy in the context of immigration and increasing cultural diversity, examining the overlaps between urban, national and European cultural policies. The recognition of cultural policy as a multi-levelled field is also present in *The*

⁶⁸ See Habermas Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1. Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Beacon Press, 1984) and Habermas Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Beacon Press, 1987).

⁶⁹ Shore, Chris. *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁰ Katharine Sarikakis, ed., *Media and Cultural Policy in the European Union* (Rodopi, 2007).

⁷¹ Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou, eds., *Transcultural Europe: Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Cultural Politics of Europe: European Capitals of Culture and European Union Since the 1980s,⁷² which examines the development of the European Capital of Culture programme since its emergence in the 1980s, arguing that “European cultural policy has to be seen as a relational, multi-directional movement, involving a wide variety of stakeholders and leading to conflicts and collaborations at various levels”. The idea of cultural policy as a reflection of not only cultural diversity but also disagreement also underlies *Creating and Governing Cultural Heritage in the European Union: The European Heritage Label*,⁷³ which provides an interdisciplinary examination of the ways in which the idea of European cultural heritage is created and governed via the European Heritage Label scheme – a process that supports the idea or, as the authors name it, the *narrative* of Europe. Contributors to this book also recognise the overlaps between urban, national and European cultural policies, as is evident in Yang’s examination of cultural urban prizes as de facto avenues for cultural diplomacy between European and Chinese stakeholders developed in Chapter 3. Crucially, overcoming the traditional dichotomy between diplomacy as an element of EU external action and domestic cultural action and policy, Yang sees cities as offering a potential new avenue to establish and strengthen transnational relations. This analysis echoes the idea of relationality and multidirectionality between stakeholders that was mentioned earlier; a point that is also echoed in Chapter 7, in which Pearson suggests that the global African media space is co-produced by a wide number of actors, namely European, and in chapter 5 by Peredo-Castro, which examines disagreement regarding the position of Mexican culture vis-à-vis Europeanism and Americanisation as the result of complex negotiations between local and external groups and elites. These analyses suggest that the EU’s global cultural action can be used actively by stakeholders in non-EU countries to support, question, and negotiate their own cultural narratives. Such a process of negotiation also characterises the EU’s own policies – as is evident in the chasm between its rhetoric, policies and practices regarding cultural sustainability (as discussed in Chapter 4 by Dâmaso) and in tensions regarding the embedding of cultural diversity in its trade policies (as discussed in Chapter 9 by Burri).

Other scholarly research focused on EU cultural policies examines more specific topics. However, its relevance and links to the present book should nonetheless be acknowledged. For instance, *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe*⁷⁴ discusses the governance of culture at the EU level namely in light of the different agendas of the Union, and *The Integration of Cultural Considerations in EU Law and Policies*⁷⁵ examines the accommodation by the European Community of cultural considerations in its law and activities to

⁷² Kiran Klaus Patel, *The Cultural Politics of Europe: European Capitals of Culture and European Union Since the 1980s* (Routledge, 2013).

⁷³ Tuuli Lähdesmäki, et al., *Creating and Governing Cultural Heritage in the European Union The European Heritage Label* (Routledge, 2020).

⁷⁴ Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, ed., *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁷⁵ Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, *The Integration of Cultural Considerations in EU Law and Policies* (Nijhoff Publishers, 2008).

support the preservation and enhancement of the cultural diversity of the EU's members. Several contributions to this edited volume continue these discussions. For example, Chapter 4 by Dâmaso maps the tensions between cultural sustainability and other EU agendas – such as innovation and growth – and Chapter 8 by Vlassis suggests that the high level of diversity that characterises the European films that circulate globally should be seen as a key characteristic of the EU's international actorness (and, thus, not only a reflection of the cultural policies of the EU's MS).

Moreover, the book's argument also adds directly to ongoing discussions regarding international relations and EU external action such as those developed in *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Between the Domestic and the International*,⁷⁶ which analyses the EU's attempt to develop a strategy for international cultural relations, *Culture and External Relations: Europe and Beyond*,⁷⁷ which examines how culture is used in the external relations efforts of several regions, and broader discussions regarding the relations between culture and international relations such as *International Relations and Heritage: Patchwork in Times of Plurality*,⁷⁸ which discusses the plurality of links between international relations and the preservation of cultural heritage, and examines the tension between the top-down instrumentalisation of heritage and the creation of alternative fields of action through bottom-up engagement. The issue of instrumentalisation is also further examined in "Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?",⁷⁹ which analyses the contexts surrounding cultural diplomacy, the forces that drive them, and their relation to the national interest. All these publications are aligned with the expanded understanding of diplomacy that is proposed in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*.⁸⁰

Despite being connected to these discussions, the current book differs in the approach taken. Rather than focusing exclusively on a specific topic – such as European cultural diplomacy or heritage – the chapters make possible the identification of continuities and disjunctions between different dimensions of the EU's external action. Moreover, rather than focusing on the agendas of political and other stakeholders and the implications thereof, the analysis provided highlights tensions in the implementation of such agendas, as is illustrated by the analysis developed in Chapter 6 by Rossato Fernandes, which compares two different forms of engagement of the EU with Latin American supranational media policy. Finally, instead of asking if a transnational approach to cultural action and policy is possible, the book starts from the assumption of transnationality as a fact – which allows it to eschew traditional dualisms and identify new issues and dimensions for a productive scholarly

⁷⁶ Caterina Carta and Richard Higgott, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Between the Domestic and the International* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁷⁷ Jozef Bátora and Monika Mokre, eds., *Culture and External Relations: Europe and Beyond* (Routledge, 2011).

⁷⁸ Rodrigo Christofletti and Maria Leonor Botelho, eds., *International Relations and Heritage: Patchwork in Times of Plurality* (Springer International Publishing, 2021).

⁷⁹ Ien Ang, Yudhishtir Raj Isar and Phillip Mar, "Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015): 365–381.

⁸⁰ Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

engagement. This is exemplified by Chapter 3 by Yang, which sees city cultural cooperation as a de facto form of bottom-up diplomatic exchange between stakeholders in the EU and in China, and by Chapter 2 by Lamonica and Murray, which contributes to the theorisation of international cultural relations as a practice of “communicative action”, extending extant scholarship in public diplomacy. All in all, the book continues the analysis developed in several key publications across cultural studies, cultural policy, and international relations, raising issues that are largely left unexplored within the literature and building bridges between disciplines.

Finally, the contributions to this book also add new insights to a key debate: that between culture and trade. As Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 discuss in detail, most scholarship on this topic originally focused on the geopolitical competition between the US and Europe. Today, it also impacts the relationship between the EU and the Global South. While the EU continues to support trade liberalisation to support development through growth, it has maintained a dominant position in the trade system that allows it to influence its regulation and dispute settlements. That is, outside its borders, the EU encourages a multilateral trading system, promoting trade alliances and adherence to WTO principles. However, within its internal borders, it maintains a protectionist stance. Following sustained criticism⁸¹, the EU's acknowledgement of broader geopolitical changes, and the emergence of rising powers with whom it will have to gradually share power in international fora, the EU has been revisiting this model, in particular since the European Security Strategy,⁸² which called on the Union “to reappraise partnerships in light of the EU’s broader foreign policy priorities”.⁸³ As Chapter 9 by Burri discusses in detail, the EU's commitment to cultural diversity now permeates its trade agreements. Alongside this, the EU is gradually (and slowly, as the second part of Chapter 4 by Dâmaso suggests) shifting its approach to audiovisual policy – seen no longer exclusively as a trade issue but also as a new arena for cooperation, as is demonstrated by Chapter 6 by Rossato Fernandes and Chapter 8 by Pearson.

While the influence of the Single Market is expected to decrease alongside the ageing of the EU’s population and the increasing strength of the economies and innovation capacity of other countries and regions, the particularities of the EU as a global cultural power– supporting and disseminating a diversity of cultural expressions, and enabling others to use their own ability to create, experiment, and reimagine the futures of their societies from the bottom-up – can and should be recognised as an important tool in upholding and reinforcing the LIO.

⁸¹ See, for example, Nahtigal, Matjaz and Dâmaso, Mafalda. “Active globalization and the EU as a strategic actor: toward more inclusive, decentralized and sustainable international development,” in Andreas Schieder, László Andor, Maria Maltschnig, Ania Skrzypek, eds., *Progressivism after COVID: Experiences, Impulses, Ideas* (Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Renner Institut, 2023).

⁸² European Communities, *European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World*. Brussels, 2003.

⁸³ Islam, Shada. *Strategic Partnerships: The European Union’s Quest for Global Clout*. <https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Occasional-Paper-33.pdf> SAIIA, May 2009, 3.

Structure

For the reasons indicated before, and as the previous section demonstrated, this book is purposefully multidisciplinary and focused on occasionally overlapping concerns and conversations. Only this approach can provide a general overview of the complex action of the EU beyond its borders. Nonetheless, for the sake of clarity, the analysis of the arenas through which the EU has emerged as a major cultural actor beyond its borders is structured into two parts (Culture in Foreign Policy and Development; Media and Trade). Its chapters explore the EU's action in and across cultural diplomacy/relations, culture in international development, cultural history, global media policy, and trade policy, among other issues.

Part One: Culture in Foreign Policy and Development

Part One is composed of five chapters examining multiple uses of Culture in Foreign Policy and Development by the EU. In Chapter 1 ("The payer, the piper and the fairness tune: on EU–Africa cultural cooperation"), Joffe and Magkou examine EU–Africa cultural cooperation projects and initiatives developed in the context of the EU's Strategic Approach for International Cultural Relations,⁸⁴ and argue that fair practices and conditions are a requirement to adopting a genuine cultural relations approach between former colonising powers and former colonies based on human values that go beyond dichotomies of power and a unidirectional understanding of the potential of culture for development. In Chapter 2 ("Enhancing the Theory and Practice of EU International Cultural Relations") Lamonica and Murray continue this reflection from the perspective of diplomacy and cultural relations theory and training. Their chapter discusses the origin and development of the EU's strategy for culture in external relations, along with the obstacles that it faces in its implementation, highlighting the benefits that could be gained by incorporating insights from Practice Theory into the strategy's theoretical framework. Chapter 3 ("Rethinking the Cooperation between European Capitals of Culture and China's East Asian Cities of Culture") continues the reflection on cooperation programmes and practices from a new angle. In her chapter, Ziling Yang proposes to examine the particularities of EU-China cooperation (and limitations therein) through two programmes that are officially not understood as having diplomatic goals. Opposing this idea, the analysis of the cooperation between a number of European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) and East Asian Cities of Culture (CCEA) highlights how the EU's role as a global cultural actor is supported in unexpected contexts. Finally, Chapter 4 ("The EU's Disjointed Engagement with the Cultural Sustainability Agenda: Rhetoric versus Action") examines the extent to which the Union's cultural, media, and cultural relations policies align with the ethos, goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) based on an extensive analysis of the EU's action across several policy fields and a brief

⁸⁴ European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations*. Brussels, 2016.

examination of EU–South Africa cultural relations focused on the film industry. Together, these chapters examine how the EU’s cultural cooperation practices for development and diplomatic purposes (either *de jure* or *de facto*) engage with a diversity of stakeholders and sociopolitical and cultural contexts, and the consistency (or lack thereof) of such initiatives with the EU’s rhetoric, policies, and principles. The research reveals that, despite existing inconsistencies between the ambition of EU policies and values on the one hand and their translation into the implementation of existing programmes on the other hand, the integration of culture into the EU’s diplomatic action and its international cooperation for development moves at a slow but steady rhythm towards the systematic inclusion of relevant stakeholders across the planning, implementation, and evaluation cycle, and the recognition of the Union’s global power as an international norm-setter.

Part Two: Media and Trade

Part Two has five chapters and focuses on Media and Trade. It starts with a historical overview of EU–Mexico film relations. In Chapter 5 (“Between Europeanism and Americanisation: Mexican Culture from the Origin of the Republic to the World War II and the Present”, Peredo-Castro considers historical attempts to de-Americanise and de-Europeanise the cultural sector in Mexico from the mid-twentieth century, and positions such attempts within debates between cultural universalism or cosmopolitanism on the one hand and Mexican cultural identity or cultural nationalism on the other hand. In Chapter 6 (“The Influence of the European Union on Latin American Supranational Policy”), Rossato Fernandes examines the EU’s efforts to shape media policy in Latin America through two Latin American supranational spaces – Mercosur and Ibero-America –, identifies weaknesses and strengths in both models and suggests adjustments to the media policy relationship between the EU and Latin America that are likely to apply to other regions. In Chapter 7 (“Co-Producing Global African Media: Linking ACPCultures+ Co-production Requirements and Textual Outcomes”), Pearson explores the network of European co-production funding aimed at film and TV production in Africa and the Caribbean through an analysis of the ACPCultures+ programme. This discussion is followed by Chapter 8 (“The EU in the global digital audiovisual politics: searching for recognition and influence”), in which Vlassis explores the current action of the EU in the field of global digital audiovisual governance, which is guided by the goal of challenging the dominance of the US. Finally, Chapter 9 (“Has the EU External Cultural Policy Been Digitised?”) continues this global reflection but shifts its attention to the EU’s external trade policy. In it, Burri examines the tension between the EU’s strong commitment to cultural diversity protection and promotion on the one hand and its cultural concerns (or lack thereof) in several free trade agreements on the other hand.

Continuing the discussion developed in the first four chapters, Part Two discusses the governance, goals and assumptions of several EU policies, programmes and funding schemes supporting the circulation of media, adding to the central argument of the volume a reflection on the scales at which the EU operates as a global cultural actor: national (Mexican), regional (Latin America)

and global (the circulation of content on Video-on-Demand platforms and EU trade agreements). Altogether, these chapters identify a set of historical continuities and transformations in the global action of the EU, reflecting the shift from an economy divided into mostly independent states and sectors to the transnational and transdisciplinary digital cultural economy, from the traditional film industry to online streaming platforms, and, finally, from culture as one form of (or exception to) trade to the concern for cultural diversity within free trade agreements (or lack thereof). While Part One reflects on cultural diversity in diplomacy and foreign affairs and on the models of development supported by the EU's cultural action across its borders, Part Two directs the focus of the volume to the relations between media and trade and demonstrates that the EU's cultural action in this regard is central to its continued role as a global potency.

Final Reflection

The emergence of this nuanced reflection would have been impossible without the diversity of disciplines and viewpoints that characterise the book's contributing authors. First, there is gender diversity among the authors (six of them being female and five male). Second, the authors represent several continents. Africa is the subject of chapters 1, 4 and 7 and home to one author (Joffe), Asia is the subject of chapter 3 and the origin of its respective author (Yang), and Latin America is the subject of chapters 5 and 6 and the origin of one author (Fernandes) and home to another (Peredo-Castro). That is, several contributors invert the traditional direction of global cultural studies and policy books, which tend to look at the Global South from the Global North. Third, the book's contributing authors are at different stages of their academic careers, ranging from individuals in senior positions, including a full professor, to PhD and post-doctoral students. This results in the combination of rather technical discussions with emerging academic debates, which can be of interest to a broad range of readers. All in all, the chapters bring together an international team of experts, enabling a thorough examination of the multifaceted cultural action of the EU across policy fields, international institutions and regions that foregrounds the tensions and contradictions of said action.

This being said, despite the breadth of topics and the substantive efforts that were made by the editor via several social media networks to find a wide range of contributors, not all potentially relevant issues are covered in this issue. Moreover, in an ideal situation the book would have included a wider number of contributors based in academic institutions in the Global South, critically examining the EU's global action from that perspective. Unfortunately, the search for contributions revealed the weak incentives for Global South researchers to develop such work. EU policymakers and academics interested in supporting the gradual decentering of EU studies⁸⁵ should, therefore, consider making funding available to support future research focused on better understanding how cultural (and, more

⁸⁵ Keukeleire, Stephan, and Sharon Lecocq, "Operationalising the Decentring Agenda: Analysing European Foreign Policy in a Non-European and Post-Western World," *Cooperation and Conflict* 53, no. 2 (2018): 277–95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48512975>.

broadly, foreign) EU policies are implemented and perceived on the ground. This evidence and analysis would support the EU's efforts to establish real partnerships that respond to the needs and urgencies of populations in non-EU countries, improving the effectiveness of EU policies and programmes, and building long-lasting trust. I hope that this will be the first of many examinations of the global cultural action of the EU beyond its borders and that future iterations of this edited volume include an increasing number of authors based in the Global South.

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