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## **Towards a European strategy on culture and development: Learning from the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the EU's recent attempts to formulate a policy position on culture in its external relations, and in particular in the area of development cooperation. The paper focuses on the blueprint for this that was set out in the EU-Caribbean Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) completed in 2008. The content and record of implementation of the EPA's cultural provisions are examined and situated within broader debates concerning the "instrumental" role of culture in development. Some of the lessons learned from the EPA are then used to draw out some critical reflections about the EU's emerging strategy on culture and development.

**Keywords:** Caribbean, cultural policy, diversity of cultural expressions, Economic Partnership Agreement, European Union, international development

### **Introduction**

There has been a growing interest over the last decade in the role that culture can play in the external affairs of the European Union (EU). An important milestone in this has been the adoption of the *Strategy for International Cultural Relations* by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (European Commission, 2016). Although there have been explicit references to culture in the EU's international engagements for some time, these have tended to be rather fragmented and without any overarching policy framework. They have also been inhibited by the fact that culture has been, and remains, largely a competence of Member States. The new Strategy attempts to overcome these issues by proposing a set of guiding principles for external cultural relations while signalling a commitment to a more coordinated EU approach on the issue. This reflects a chorus of calls from civil society, Member States and EU institutions over the last decade and forms part of the current Commission's priority to strengthen the EU's clout as a global actor.

In the words of Isar (2015), culture in the external relations of the EU is "an idea whose time has come". How this new vision will be translated into action however remains to be seen. In his account of the formation of this idea over the last decade, Isar (2015) suggests that the

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phrase which has come to be used by EU actors in related discussions and documents - “culture in external relations” - is itself indicative since it implies more than simply the ambition to enhance “soft power” that is usually contained in the more common phrase “cultural diplomacy” (which tends to be deployed by Member States but is used sparingly by EU institutions, if at all).<sup>2</sup> While soft power goals are undoubtedly present in the vision that has come to be articulated by the EU, the notion of “culture in external relations”, it is argued, has evolved to have a broader meaning for EU actors: it signals a commitment to the values of global cultural citizenship and the promotion of cultural diversity in a way that is driven by a series of “idealistic” rather than “expedient” or “instrumental” motives. In this sense, “the EU’s cultural diplomacy already operates ‘beyond’ its interests.” (Isar, 2015, 494)

We might question however whether culture can ever be something that is not deployed in an “instrumental” sense, not least from the point of view of policy. Figueira (2017), in a brief overview of the content of the EU’s new Strategy, has already noted how its rationale is clearly framed by reference to a series of assumptions about the increasingly important instrumental roles that culture can play in addressing contemporary challenges related to conflict and economic development. The result, she argues, is little more than a renewed commitment to some of the central themes of Western cultural policy that have become dominant in recent years.

Reflecting on the recent evolution of international cultural policy more broadly, a number of authors have noted how readily notions such as cultural diversity and cultural citizenship have become entwined with contemporary logics of economic and social management. This has been explored for example in Yúdice’s (2003) account of the “expediency of culture” and its transformation into a resource for economic and political development; Hale’s (2005) account of “neoliberal multiculturalism” and the ways in which the tropes of cultural diversity, cultural rights and cultural citizenship have tended to reinforce neoliberal and post-neoliberal governmental strategies; or Garner’s (2016) study of global cultural policy reform inspired by the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (CDCE).

Such work has critically examined the rise of cultural diversity as a reference point in a range of policy areas and its multiple uses or “instrumentalities” within governmental projects at local, national, regional and international levels. On one hand, it has been shown how these developments have often helped to open new channels of political and economic engagement and participation, while also contributing to an ongoing “democratisation” of notions of culture by expanding the traditionally elitist focus on the arts to include more popular cultural forms and broader notions of culture as a “way of life” (see Bennett, 1998, 102-105). On the other, however, the rise of the discourse of cultural diversity has also tended to dovetail with contemporary (neoliberal) dynamics that reproduce exclusion and inequality, as a series of policy narratives about cultural citizenship and the “cultural”/“creative” economy have been deployed as an expedient - and generally ineffective - solution to some of the difficulties associated with economic restructuring and the socio-political dislocation that has come with globalisation.

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<sup>2</sup> “Soft power”, a term often attributed to International Relations scholar Joseph Nye, is usually understood as the ability to persuade and co-opt others that stems from the cultural influence and attractiveness of states (in contrast to “hard power” tools such as the military). “Cultural diplomacy” is generally considered as one of the strategies used by actors (usually states) in the pursuit of such soft power, such as through cultural exchanges or the establishment of cultural institutes in third countries.

Analyses of the integration of culture in the EU's external relations have already explored some of the implications of its recent actions and policy pronouncements within the context of debates concerning the regulation of the relationship between trade and culture; the changing competences, coherence and authority of EU institutions in cultural matters; and the EU's contribution to the international implementation and legal standing of the CDCE (eg Psychogiopoulou, 2014; Souyri-Desrosier, 2014; Isar, 2015; Vlassis, 2016). However, such work has so far done little to situate an analysis of EU policy within some of the themes noted above regarding questions around the "uses" or "instrumentalities" of culture in the contemporary context. Existing work on EU policy in this field has also tended to take a Eurocentric approach in the sense that it has given relatively little attention to questions of the relevance and benefits of the EU's international cultural engagements from the perspective of other regions and partners (which, if we were to take the new Strategy at its word, should be a key area for examination).

This paper seeks to take these themes up through a focus on the EU's recent attempts to formulate an agenda for culture and development in its external relations. After briefly looking at the new Strategy in more detail, the paper will go on to consider the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) that was signed between the EU and the CARIFORUM grouping of Caribbean states in late 2008. This agreement included a novel "Protocol on Cultural Cooperation", guided by the EU's new commitment to the international implementation of the CDCE. Although the initial enthusiasm around the cultural components in the EPA cooled in the years after its conclusion, they referenced many of the core principles that form the basis of the new Strategy, and came to be hailed more widely as laying down important precedents in the broader international culture and development agenda as it has emerged over the last decade. The paper therefore goes on to look at the content and the record of implementation of the EPA's culture and development provisions in more detail, considering in particular the "uses" of the EPA's cultural provisions from the perspectives of different actors. Some of the lessons learned from the EPA are then used to draw out some critical reflections on the EU's approach that has emerged over the last decade and which has now become crystallised in the recently adopted Strategy. It should be noted here that, by focusing on the theme of culture and development, other important areas that are addressed in the new Strategy - such as culture in peaceful inter-community relations, and cooperation on cultural heritage - are outside the scope of this paper.

### **Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations**

The EU's Strategy for International Cultural Relations sets out three key areas for external cultural engagement: culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development; culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations; and cooperation on the protection of cultural heritage (European Commission, 2016). It notes that there are important areas of complementarity between these areas, particularly in the emphasis on how the promotion of intercultural dialogue and exchange, as well as strengthening the protection of cultural heritage, can stimulate trade in cultural goods and services and promote cultural tourism, boosting job creation and competitiveness both inside the EU and beyond its borders.

These areas of focus are underpinned by a series of core guiding principles, which stress in particular the value of cultural diversity, mutual respect and inter-cultural dialogue; the principles of complementarity and subsidiarity (concerning the respective spheres of authority of EU institutions and Member States); and encouraging the promotion of culture through existing frameworks of cooperation. In the international development context, these

existing frameworks include the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement<sup>3</sup> along with related financing instruments such as the Intra ACP Programme, which set aside €40m under the current European Development Fund (EDF) to support the cultural and creative industries across the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries between 2014-2020.

The reference to existing frameworks of cooperation has raised some questions, since the Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) have both suggested that no additional resources will be made available for implementation of the Strategy (a point queried by the European Parliament, which has called for a specific funding stream to be made available for international cultural relations) (Galeazzi, 2017). The Strategy does however involve the creation of new structures in the EU's foreign policy architecture, something reflected in the launch of an EU Cultural Diplomacy Platform in 2016. This is intended to give the Commission and EEAS greater leverage in promoting their vision with partner institutions around the world. A set of guidelines on the implementation of the Strategy has since been provided by the European Council, which gives the Cultural Diplomacy Platform a key role in carrying the implementation of the Strategy forward and establishes a working group to put it into action (European Council, 2017).

Much of the policy content of the new Strategy will be familiar to those who have followed recent international trends in cultural policy, particularly the areas that relate to international development. The emphasis is on support for the cultural and creative industries as areas of activity that can play a “dual role” in sustainable development, given their simultaneously “economic” and “cultural” nature. In this formula, they are seen to be: 1) increasingly significant generators of economic growth and job creation, while also 2) vehicles for the expression of identities and the flourishing of cultural diversity, intercultural exchange and dialogue. This has become a key motif in international cultural policy since the late 1990s, and is a key principle on which the CDCE is built. The European Commission was delegated by EU Member States and institutions to play a part in negotiating the adoption of the CDCE at UNESCO, particularly given the strategic importance of this treaty in addressing European concerns over its cultural policy autonomy and its internal cultural diversity in the face of ongoing US pressures to liberalise access to the EU audiovisual market (Singh, 2008). The negotiation and implementation of the CDCE has thus seen the Commission gain competences for culture in external European affairs and, after ratifying the CDCE in 2006, the EU also became bound to implement its provisions in its international relations. Added momentum for this agenda came from the European Commission's *European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World* (adopted in 2007), which strongly echoed the CDCE and signaled a commitment to the promotion of “culture as a vital element in international relations” (European Commission, 2007).

Drawing heavily on the CDCE, the EU's strategy on culture and development that has emerged over the last decade has thus come to share broad similarities with what Singh (2011, 107) describes as the “Janus faced” character of the CDCE: it evokes broad notions of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue while its substantive provisions are in fact geared toward narrow conceptions of the cultural industries as these have been defined as priorities by a number of states since the 2000s. One of the limitations of this approach is that it has in fact tended to limit the diversity of voices that might advance claims turning on the

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<sup>3</sup> These are the EU's two major frameworks of engagement for international development. Through the DCI the EU engages with 47 countries in Latin America, South Asia and North and South East Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and South Africa. Through the Cotonou Agreement the EU engages with the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

recognition of cultural differences within or between states, or outside any obvious market calculus altogether (Albro, 2005). A related point is that the cultural sector is one which has tended to be of greatest interest to the more developed states/regions and their industry stakeholders, particularly within Europe (and Canada) as it has been engaged in a series of high-stake trade disputes with the US. In this vein many European actors have tended to frame the discussion around cultural diversity and development within their own particular concerns and terms of reference, and to lay down international norms and precedents regarding the treatment of the audiovisual sector in particular (an objective of EU trade negotiation policy that had been approved by the European Council as far back as 2002). This has widened the number of stakeholders sharing the same conception of cultural diversity, while often diluting and opposing alternative conceptions that have been of greater relevance to stakeholders in a number of developing contexts (Souyri-Desrousier, 2014, 212; Garner, 2016).

This is not to say that a number of emerging and developing regions have not also come to hold a stake in this framework of culture and development as it has taken shape over the last decade. The next section will consider a case where the EU laid down an early marker in the evolution of its new Strategy for culture in international relations through the conclusion of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the 15 states that make up the regional grouping of Caribbean states known as the CARIFORUM.<sup>4</sup> Many within and beyond the Caribbean region have noted the potential gains to be made from more effectively recognising and exploiting its cultural resources, given its world-renowned traditions in areas such as music, carnival and tourism, and its global linkages and diasporic ties. With this in mind, Caribbean negotiators found their European counterparts to offer some attractive proposals on cultural development cooperation, and the resulting agreement has been recognised as an important breakthrough in the implementation of the development components of the CDCE. However, the EPA also demonstrates some of the limitations of this framework and can be used to advance a number of critical remarks about the EU's approach on this issue, as well as to reflect more broadly on some of the broader questions noted above regarding the uses or "instrumentalities" of culture in the contemporary context.

## **The CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement**

### *A blueprint for culture and development?*

Completed in 2008, the EPA scheduled for 92% of bilateral CARIFORUM-EU trade to be liberalised over a 25-year period, with the process of adjustment and implementation to be facilitated through European aid and development cooperation. As with the EU's EPA negotiations with other regional groupings across the ACP, the objectives of the EPA were framed by the 2000 Cotonou Partnership Agreement, namely to deepen the integration of the region into the global economy by harmonising regional regulation, committing signatories to the widening and deepening of trade liberalisation, and bringing trade relations into conformity with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules by removing the preferential

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<sup>4</sup> Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St.Kitts & Nevis, St.Lucia, St.Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago. (Haiti did not sign the EPA until December 2009. Cuba is formally part of the Caribbean Community of states but does not participate in the CARIFORUM and therefore had no part in the EPA negotiations)

arrangements granted by Europe to the ACP since 1975 under the “Lomé” agreements.<sup>5</sup> European negotiators were given extra zeal for the EPA negotiations by the EU’s Global Europe strategy, unveiled by the European Commission in 2006: a “tough new approach” by European negotiators to “improve the competitive position of EU industry [and] open new markets for its exporters” (European Commission, 2008a). However, since its completion in 2008, implementation of the EPA has remained limited and at a largely provisional level, while less than half of the CARIFORUM states have ratified it (Silva, 2014).

Nevertheless, the explicit integration of development provisions in a trade agreement such as this marked something novel in North-South relations, and it laid down a number of precedents regarding culture in particular. The EPA attracted international attention as the first international trade agreement to make reference to the provisions of the CDCE, notably through the inclusion of a Protocol on Cultural Cooperation (hereinafter “Protocol”). UNESCO has referred to the EPA as a key instance of implementation of the CDCE (UNESCO, 2014, 22-23) and as including the first formal references to the CDCE’s provisions on international development cooperation (UNESCO, 2009). The Protocol was also highlighted in the first official five year report on the implementation of the EPA as a “major innovation in North-South FTA practice” (Silva, 2014, 49).

For its part, the European Commission was keen to use the EPA negotiations as an opportunity to lay down a marker in the context of wider international disputes (with the US in particular) over the status of the cultural sector in international trade. In giving its account of the inclusion of the Protocol in the CARIFORUM EPA, the Directorate-General for Trade of the European Commission explained that this was because they wanted to “move early” in order to signal Europe’s commitment to the CDCE and reinforce its international standing.<sup>6</sup> The Commission also referred to the Protocol as a “showcase of implementation” of the CDCE that could provide a model for future engagements with other regions across the ACP as well as Asia and Latin America (European Commission, 2008b; Loisen and de Ville, 2011).

There is a big gap however between the above pronouncements about the EPA and its actual content, particularly when it comes to aspects related to development. References in the EPA text to development cooperation are stated in very general terms and backed up with few or no time-bound or specific measures; in contrast, cooperation measures on market liberalisation are spelled out in considerable specificity in areas of special interest to European firms (see Girvan, 2008; Canterbury, 2009). In fact, the EPA appears to worsen the Caribbean’s already disadvantageous terms of trade, while also reducing policy space through the removal of tariffs (themselves significant sources of revenue for several of the small states in the region) and other policy mechanisms that could be used to spur diversification in the region. In light of this, Girvan (2013, 99-100) has argued that the EPA is characterised by “sweetification”: the highlighting of potential (and largely empty) benefits and the

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<sup>5</sup> These agreements have been the cornerstone of EU trade and aid relations with the ACP since 1975, and the framework in which Europe has maintained favoured trade relations in the region by granting preferential market access to its tropical agricultural commodities (such as, in the Caribbean’s case, bananas and sugar).

<sup>6</sup> The Trade DG’s explanation of the Protocol was referred to in a hearing on the implementation of the Convention at the European Parliament, 27 February 2008. (transcript in possession of author)

downplaying of certain costs of the EPA in order to sell it to stakeholders and placate its many opponents.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM)<sup>8</sup> that conducted the negotiations on behalf of the region's governments secured a number of concessions from European negotiators seeking to gain favoured treatment for major EU sectors such as telecommunications and intellectual property (Vlassis, 2016, 5). One of the CRNM's calculations was a recognition of the region's dependence on agricultural commodities, combined with the fact that more than half of Caribbean export revenue was now coming from non-traditional industries, such as tourism and the cultural and creative industries, which were not covered under the Lomé agreements (Heron, 2009).

In this context, culture came to play an important role in the negotiations. The CRNM Director-General referred to the Protocol as a historic concession on the part of the EU that could open unprecedented opportunities to the Caribbean's cultural producers (CCIN, 2007). This was echoed by the Caribbean Export Development Agency (CEDA), which emphasised the cultural industries as one of two priority sectors earmarked for expansion as part of the new trade and business relationships set to be built with Europe over the coming years (CEDA, 2008). The Director of the Caribbean Council<sup>9</sup> referred to the Protocol as "the most innovative part of the whole 1000-plus pages of the text", going on to note that it reflected the way in which a number of Caribbean states had prioritised the cultural sector as a "line the sand" in their negotiating stance (Jessop, 2008). He also noted that the high profile that had been given to the issue was also intended to ensure popular political backing should the negotiations fail.

Given the significance that has been attached to the cultural provisions of the EPA as a breakthrough in the area of culture and development (both for the EU and internationally), and as a "line the sand" for a number of governments in the region, it is worth looking at their content in more detail.

### *Beyond "mere" cultural cooperation*

The provisions addressing culture and development in the EPA are mainly found in the annexed Protocol on Cultural Cooperation (CARIFORUM-EU, 2008, 1938-1941), with a scattering of further provisions found throughout the main text. The Protocol opens by aligning itself with the objectives of the CDCE and its concepts and definitions, stressing in particular the principle of the dual nature of cultural goods and services (with an emphasis on the audiovisual sector) and their special role in fostering greater cultural diversity, exchange and dialogue between the two regions. A significant expression of these principles in the

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<sup>7</sup> Opposition to the EPA came from a number of groups, including the International Trade Union Confederation, Caribbean Labor Council, Caribbean Policy Development Center, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, international NGOs such as Oxfam, Action Aid and the World Development Movement, and a number of protest movements in both the EU and the Caribbean.

<sup>8</sup> The CRNM became absorbed within the Caribbean Community Secretariat in 2009 and renamed as the "Office of Trade Negotiations" (OTN). For clarity I refer throughout to the CRNM. Critical observers in the Caribbean have pointed to the fact that, since the CRNM was financed by the EU, its ability to act independently on behalf of the Caribbean region was compromised.

<sup>9</sup> This is a European-based trade, development and investment consultancy focused on the Caribbean and Central American region. [www.caribbean-council.org/](http://www.caribbean-council.org/)

Protocol is the reference to Article 16 of the CDCE, which requires developed country parties to grant legally binding preferential market access to developing countries in the trade of cultural goods and services. The Protocol thus provides access to the European audiovisual market for co-productions between the two regions: a considerable concession, since this is historically one of Europe's most fiercely protected sectors. Such co-productions are not only envisaged as a form of joint cultural capacity building but, crucially, can qualify as "European" works and therefore satisfy the content and quota requirements of EU Member States, providing that Caribbean and European producers respectively contribute shares of the production cost not less than 20% and not more than 80% of the total - a formula that was described by the CRNM (2008, 5) as "generous" on the part of the EU. Other provisions highlighted by the CRNM include the possibility for the Caribbean cultural sector to access forms of technical assistance and funding from Europe (CRNM, 2008). There have been questions raised over the inclusion of such provisions however, given that such support was in fact already available to the region prior to the EPA (notably through the EU-ACP Support Programme for the Cultural Industries and the EU-ACP Film Fund) (Thiec, 2009).

Another significant provision relates to the protection of Caribbean intellectual property throughout Europe, and improved market access for providers of cultural services (CARIFORUM-EU, 2008, 1770-1772). Such an extension of legally binding market access to cultural practitioners was highlighted by the CRNM as a particularly significant concession (CRNM, 2008, 2-3) - even if, in practice, its benefits appear likely to be limited to a relatively small group of sector professionals.<sup>10</sup> Such provisions - which unlike the Protocol are covered in the body of the EPA text and therefore carry more legally binding force - mark a significant departure from the kinds of vaguer diplomatic agreements to promote "cultural exchanges" that have tended to characterise international cultural engagement in the past. As noted by both the CRNM and the Caribbean Council, such past arrangements were generally framed in diplomatic language where "culture was treated in a traditional sense of merely cooperation between nations and did not really address market access for cultural products and services." (CRNM, 2008, 1; Jessop, 2008)

It is worth reflecting on this reference to "mere" cultural cooperation, since it gives some insight into what was most valued by regional officials as a form of cultural engagement: namely, market access and material support that carries the potential to spur economic diversification and development. The negotiation of the EPA has coincided with a growing recognition in the region of the potential of the cultural sector and the need for provisions that could be used to develop a new development strategy, particularly in light of the expiration of preferential access to the European market in tropical agricultural commodities and the ongoing competition from East Asia in low-cost manufacturing (see for example CRNM, 2004; Nurse, 2006).

In this context, the EU's offer of market access has coincided with the ambitions of Caribbean policymakers and negotiators as the most significant element in the framework of

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<sup>10</sup> The improved access requires that Caribbean applicants for entry to the EU have completed a "bona fide contract" to supply an entertainment service, and that they fulfil the same criteria as other Caribbean business professionals that are granted improved access to the EU. This indeed grants new access to Caribbean professionals but, as Girven (2009) notes, there is a double standard here in that the EPA mandates the countries of the Caribbean to open the majority of their markets to imports of European goods and employees of European firms, while reserving Europe's right to maintain tight restrictions on the inflow of Caribbean workers and visitors.

cultural cooperation, while hastening the transformation of culture into a “resource” for economic development (in the sense used by Yúdice, 2003). This was the main point driven home by one of the major reports commissioned by the CRNM in the 2000s to explore the potential of culture for development in the region: “The conclusion is that the cultural industries should be viewed as a critical strategic resource in the move towards creating sustainable development options.” (Nurse, 2006, 6-11) To date, however, there has been very little to report in terms of actual benefits accruing to the region’s cultural sector from the EPA, and the implementation of its heralded cultural components has been very limited. We will explore this below.

### *A spoonful of culture: the EPA’s bitter aftertaste*

One of the areas that was highlighted as a key breakthrough in the EPA, particularly in terms of its recognition of the link between culture and development, was the reference to Article 16 of the CDCE, through which the EU offered preferential market access for co-productions between the regions. However there has been barely any interest expressed so far in negotiating such co-productions (Silva, 2014, 49-50). It is worth noting that capacity in audiovisual production in the region generally remains thin and concentrated among a handful of countries, a factor which is likely to be important when it comes to seeking forms of international co-production and assistance (which tend to favour more established operations). Of the three awards that went to the Caribbean region in 2009 under the [already existing] EU-ACP Film Fund for example, it is indicative that these went to proposals from partnerships between groups in the UK and Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Barbados (CEDA, 2009). Meanwhile there remains some confusion over how co-productions under the EPA might be operationalised. During a CARIFORUM-EU business forum in 2009 it was pointed out to the region’s producers by one European delegate that co-productions in the cinematographic and audiovisual sector are not in fact a European competence since they are bilateral agreements subject to the economic and political objectives of the particular states involved (Thiec, 2009). Uncertainty in this regard has increased following the Brexit referendum in 2016, given the particular historic and linguistic ties that the UK has with the region.

Implementation has also been limited by a lack of relevant programmes of data collection and knowledge in the region. Jamaica is the only Caribbean country to date to have undertaken a full assessment of the contribution of the copyright and creative industries to GDP and employment, while a few others (eg Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago) have only recently begun to develop some partial estimates (Hendrickson, 2012, 29-31). To try to address this lack of momentum from within the region, a Regional Task Force on the Cultural Industries (RTFCI) was established following the conclusion of the EPA in 2008, financed by UNESCO and the EU’s Hub and Spokes Programme (an “aid for trade” programme which provides support to policymakers and key stakeholders in ACP countries in the formulation of trade and development policy). However, take-up of the RTFCI’s recommendations across the region has been very slow and governments continue to be urged to respond with legislative, policy and institutional reforms (Patterson, 2015).

In short, it is difficult to see how the culture and development agenda that European and Caribbean negotiators struck agreement upon in 2008 represents anything more than a “sweetener” (to recall the phrase used earlier) aimed at tying the EPA up and making it more palatable to its opponents. Soon after the conclusion of the EPA a number of external actors began to express unease over the way in which Caribbean actors appear to have had, in the words of UNESCO’s Caribbean Culture Consultant Kris Rampersad, “the wool pulled over

their eyes” (cited in OneCaribbeanLtd, 2010). Meanwhile some disquiet also emerged from a number of EU Member States and cultural sector stakeholders about the precedent that such arrangements appeared to set by bringing the offer of improved market access for culture into the sphere of trade negotiations as a “bargaining chip” to gain access in other sectors, particularly where this involves countries with relatively developed cultural sectors that might actually threaten the position of European firms in Europe (these were concerns raised for example over the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation that was included in the trade agreement with South Korea in 2009) (Loisen and de Ville, 2011; European Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, 2009).

Such unease resulted in a change in the Commission’s strategy after 2009, resulting in a cooling effect on the negotiation of similar cultural cooperation protocols. After the South Korea agreement in 2009, two further agreements on cultural cooperation were negotiated alongside trade agreements with Colombia & Peru (2012) and Central America (2012). However, these were not given the same standing as the CARIFORUM Protocol (a standalone Agreement on Cultural Cooperation in the case of Colombia & Peru; a protocol attached to the Association Agreement with Central America, but not to the trade part) (Souyri-Desrosier, 2014). They were also less committed on questions of market access - no preferential treatment was granted to the audiovisual sector in either agreement for example - marking something of a return to forms of “mere” cultural cooperation.

### *Cultural diversity and cultural indifference in the Caribbean: limited stakeholder involvement*

Implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA’s cultural provisions is likely to take some time to work through, and so it would be premature to dismiss them altogether. However, the picture of inertia and frustration that has been painted above is not only a reflection of the fact that implementation is still at an early stage. It is also a product of how the culture and development agenda found its way into the agreement as an issue that resonated among a relatively narrow group of stakeholders clustered around the EPA negotiations and the wider international culture and development agenda - namely, the Secretariat of the Caribbean Community, the RTFCI and CRNM, as well as UNESCO, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the relevant actors from the EU.

Beyond such groups, the calls for regional consolidation and adjustment in the cultural sector have only carried to a handful of countries and sector professionals. This is partly due to the fact that some territories in the region have more developed cultural sectors and longer connections with export markets than others: notably Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago and St Lucia - in contrast to Guyana, Suriname, Haiti and the other six members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States that come under the CARIFORUM grouping. Furthermore, export capacity is further restricted to a few sub-sectors (music, book publishing, visual arts and film/television) which are better placed for development since they are more commodified and commercialised and have had a longer experience of exporting goods, services, and intellectual property (Nurse, 2006, 6).

In addition to this limited appeal of the EU’s culture and development agenda in the region, there has been frustration at the way in which the EPA negotiations and related initiatives aimed at building the cultural sector have proceeded with little consultation with relevant stakeholders (CCIN, 2007; CCIBN, 2008). Those that have taken an interest in the culture and development provisions of the EPA have reacted with caution to the claims that they are now a key source of competitive advantage and a priority in the region’s development

strategy. The founder of the Caribbean Creative Industries Business Network (CCIBN, which formed in 2004 in response to the EPA negotiations) referred to the cultural components of the EPA as part of a “happy-ever-after fairy tale” about the prospects for creators and creative enterprises (Leonard, 2009). More widely, those stakeholders among the region’s wider cultural sector that have been identified by the architects of the strategy as important beneficiaries have had very little relation to the kinds of initiatives taken by regional and international negotiators and policy elites so far. In one study of the Caribbean music sector in 2009 for example, Burke (2010) interviewed a range of stakeholders across 10 countries in the region and found that the majority of practitioners were not even aware of the EPA and its implications for their industry.

This all points to a clear disconnect that exists between agencies such as the CRNM, the EU and UNESCO on the one hand, and many of the region’s governments and cultural producers on the other - not to mention the antipathy and mutual distrust that often exists between policymakers and those involved in the cultural sector in the region (about which, see Nurse, 2005, 324-333). There are signs that this situation has begun to change, as some governments are shifting their stance on cultural policy and recognising the potential of reconceptualising and harnessing culture as a resource for economic growth and development. However where this is happening - such as in Barbados over the last decade - many cultural practitioners remain wary, if not resentful, of all the talk of their new importance as generators of national wealth. The lack of consultation and the selective and elitist ways that policymakers tend to engage with practitioners in the sector has contributed to a sense that the new discourse of the cultural and creative industries has been of more concern to a handful of policymakers and the few stakeholding companies, and their interlocking directorships, that control and manage the Barbadian economy (Best, 2012, 141-144).

Indeed in some parts of the region many of those involved in the cultural sector formed part of the active resistance to the EPA, emphasising the broader implications of the agreement beyond those surrounding the cultural and creative industries. For those involved in the Bare APE (Block the EPA) coalition in Haiti for example - where worker and peasant organisations were joined by groups such as the Dahomey Dance Troupe, the peasant musical group AWOZAM, artists from the Chandèl organisation for popular education and awareness, musicians from the popular protest group Boukman Eksperyans - the EPA’s gestures towards partnership and cooperation were seen as a new tactic in the EU’s wider, neocolonial strategy of aggressive liberalisation that has been pursued in the Caribbean in the recent period (Haiti Support Group, 2007). As the Bare APE coalition set out in their joint statement addressing the EPA: “We cannot accept a continuation along the same path. Agreements like the EPA will accelerate the destruction of our economy [...] Why jeopardize the future of more than 60% of the Haitian population to satisfy the desire of the European powers?” (Haiti Support Group, 2007) Such opposition to the EPA widened the gap between many civil society actors and those committed to the EPA, and has contributed to the poor appetite that there has been for implementation (and, in this particular case, was a factor in persuading the Haitian government not to participate in the initial signing of the EPA in October 2008).

## **Conclusion**

As the EU consolidates the approach to culture and development that has evolved over the last decade, there are a number of observations that can be drawn from the analysis that has been attempted here. It has been argued first of all that we need to be read the deployment of

notions of cultural diversity and cultural cooperation in the new Strategy carefully. At first glance these may appear free from self-interested or “instrumental” motives, as we saw earlier in considering the analysis of Isar (2015). However the experience of the negotiation and implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA demonstrates that these notions have not only been clearly related to a set of instrumental aims involving the cultural sector’s role in economic and social development (which should come as no surprise, since it is questionable as to what extent culture can ever be disentangled from such aims), but that they have also been deployed as part of the EU’s pursuit of an aggressive international political and economic strategy over this period, aimed at advancing the global interests of European firms. In fact, given the lack of political will and resources that were attached to the EPA provisions aimed at culture’s role in economic and social development, the practical “utility” of culture proved more significant in the latter sense as a tool of the EU’s broader international strategy. Ironically, this use of culture in the negotiations became possible in large part because it was now increasingly recognised as a resource to be managed and deployed for social and economic development - and therefore something that European negotiators could put on the table in a trade and development context in a way that went beyond “mere cooperation” (through offers of market access, co-production arrangements etc).

For their part, Caribbean negotiators saw the EU’s proposals on cultural cooperation as an opportunity to offset some of the losses involved in EPA adjustment and to develop a new strategy of economic diversification. Some of the provisions on market access and international cooperation to build cultural sector capacity that can be found in the EPA do potentially offer significant gains in a region which is rich in world-renowned cultural expressions and has extensive global diasporic and cultural-linguistic ties. However, if this is to be a model to extend to other developing regions then from the point of view of its partners the EU would need to back such provisions up with much more substance, for example by devoting more reliable streams of finance and assistance than was seen in the EPA, and doing more to recognise some of the limitations in productive capacity that exist in developing contexts.

The EU will also need to find a way of offering meaningful commitments on areas such as international cooperation and market access without alienating Member States and the European cultural lobby. This is a difficult balancing act to achieve, because from the perspective of some European actors it appears that the EU’s commitment to protecting and promoting cultural diversity within its own borders runs counter to making international commitments on preferential market access. This is a tension that, as we saw, resulted in the European Commission scaling down its approach in seeking further cultural cooperation protocols after the controversies of the South Korea agreement in 2009.

Meanwhile, the renewed attention to culture and development that has been expressed in the Strategy adopted in 2016 does not appear to have the same sense of urgency that drove the EU’s activism in the previous decade, when the European Commission was anxious to “move early” to strengthen the international standing of the CDCE and widen its ratification around the world. Although the new Strategy adopted in 2016 appears to signal a renewed commitment to culture and development in its external relations, the other two areas of international engagement that it identifies (peaceful international relations and the protection of heritage) currently command a greater sense of urgency as political attention becomes directed towards the issues of violent radicalisation, refugees and migration, and conflict and instability in its neighbouring regions.

The experience of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA also exposes the relatively narrow basis on which the agenda for culture and development that has emerged over the last decade has been struck, and the limited involvement of stakeholders in this process. It remains unclear how exactly the strategy of cultural development that came to be proposed by the EU, CRNM and supporting international agencies can benefit the region beyond a handful of countries and the relatively few well-positioned producers and professionals that have taken an interest. The smaller and less developed countries in the region - as elsewhere across much of the developing world - have less stake or existing capacity in the cultural and creative economy agendas. Indeed in the poorest country in the region, Haiti, the mass mobilisations involving actors in the cultural sphere were a factor in articulating opposition to EU strategy in the region - a reminder of the multiple uses to which culture can be put.

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