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Regional Cooperation in the Area of Culture: The Promotion of Human Security and Development¹

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Regional Cooperation in the Area of Culture: The Promotion of Human Security and Development

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Executive Summary

The paper examines the relationships between culture and regional cooperation/integration and their implications for human security and development. While culture can be the content of regional cooperation, regional cooperation and integration entail flows of people, often in the form of (im)migration. While some (im)migration policies and other policy documents assume that such increased contact between peoples of different cultures will facilitate peaceful relations, research shows that increased contact can also lead to conflict. The paper explores ways in which cultural exchanges through regional cooperation can facilitate peace, rather than foment conflict. Regional cooperation has great potential to support human and economic development, as well as enrich cultural diversity. While protectionist measures risk impeding these advantages, other measures, such as subsidies for cultural programmes and directives requiring variation in cultural programming, are more likely to enhance cultural diversity. Policy recommendations are proposed to facilitate peaceful relations between diverse cultures, enhance intra-ACP cultural industries and cooperation, and promote cultural diversity.

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² The views expressed in this paper are the author's and are not representative of UNU or UNU-CRIS.

I. Introduction

Issues of culture, regional cooperation and integration, human security and development are complexly intertwined, and they inherently weave important issues such as migration into the fabric of the discussion. To address these complex issues, they will first be considered here in sets, beginning with the relationships between culture and regional cooperation/integration, then considering the relationships of these elements to human security and development. With this approach, it is possible to identify key questions that need to be addressed in order to gain a deeper understanding of potential implications and consequences of various policies in the area of culture.

Relationships between Culture and Regional Cooperation/Integration

Regional integration, like globalization, is often perceived both as posing a threat to, and as providing opportunities for, the promotion of cultural diversity. Emphasizing the opportunities, the ‘Draft Dakar Declaration on the Promotion of ACP Cultures and Cultural Industries’ (hereafter ‘Dakar Declaration’) expresses the potential for regional institutions to promote culture, cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue, as well as the potential for culture to promote regional integration (see Annex I). While the former part of this purported two-way relationship is self-evident, it is not so clear whether, and if so how, culture can promote regional integration. These questions will be examined below, also taking into consideration the implications for cultural diversity and human security.

Relationships between Culture, Regional Cooperation/Integration and Human Security

In the Dakar Declaration, the ACP Ministers of Culture make numerous assertions that imply certain relationships between culture, human security, and development (see Annex II). Similar assertions are echoed in the Maputo Declaration of the 4th Summit of the ACP Heads of State and Government (see Annex II), UNESCO’s ‘Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions’ and the EU’s ‘Strategy on Culture in the European Development Policy’. The basic assumption made regarding the relationship between culture and human security is that increased exposure between (people of) different cultures will facilitate peaceful relations between these peoples. Such increased exposure is concomitant to processes of regional cooperation and integration, often in the form of (im)migration. Thus, (im)migration is a core issue at the nexus of regional cooperation/integration and culture. Various approaches to (im)migration, as well as the social-psychological assumptions underlying them, will also be surveyed. Research provides evidence that increased exposure between different social groups does not necessarily facilitate peaceful relations. This paper will examine the assumptions made in such policy documents, as well as the conditions under which they may or may not be true. Implications for successful (im)migration policy will be considered.

Relationships between Culture, Regional Cooperation/Integration and Development

Processes of regional integration are (at least, traditionally) aimed at reducing trade barriers between States, in order to generate economies of scale and thus boost economic development. Due to resulting competition, some cultural artefacts are certain to prove more successful on the market than others. Similar to processes observed at the global level, this can lead to cultural ‘hegemons’ within the region, which thus can be perceived as threats to cultural diversity, since cultural products that are less commercially viable may also be less prolific in the market. On the other hand, larger and more accessible markets will also benefit producers of marketable cultural products.

Furthermore, the Dakar Declaration asserts the value of cultural expression not only for potential (direct) economic profit, but also for human development. Insofar as regional cooperation and integration provide increased opportunity for cultural exchange, these processes can facilitate greater awareness of other cultures and enhanced creativity. The implications of protectionist measures, such as those supported by the UNESCO Convention, for the potential advantages to development will be explored below.

II. Exposé of Themes

The three sets of relationships addressed above can be translated into the following policy questions:

- Can culture promote regional integration? If so, how? What are the implications for cultural diversity and human security?
- Does increased exposure between (people of) different cultures facilitate peaceful relations between them?
- How might protectionist measures affect the potential advantages of regional cooperation and integration for economic and human development?

Each of these questions is explored below, beginning with the second one, in order to enhance clarity.

A. Does increased exposure between (people of) different cultures facilitate peaceful relations between them?

The idea that increased contact between people will lead them to like one another more underlies the contact hypothesis (Amir, 1976). The contact hypothesis proposes that, under certain conditions, the more members of different groups, such as different cultural groups or ethnic minorities and majorities, interact with each other, the more they will grow to have favourable attitudes toward each other. Founded upon this idea is the immigration policy of *multiculturalism*. *Active multiculturalism* is a policy approach that actively promotes cultural diversity, whereas in *laissez-faire*

multiculturalism, a multiplicity of cultures is accepted albeit not actively fomented (Moghaddam, 1998).

In contrast to multiculturalism is the immigration policy of *assimilation*, which also has two main variants: *minority assimilation* and *melting-pot assimilation* (Moghaddam, 1998). Minority assimilation policies encourage immigrants to adapt to the mainstream culture of their host, whereas the approach of melting-pot assimilation supports the mutual influence of various cultural groups upon each other. In both approaches to assimilation, the end result is that different groups become more similar to each other. The general argument for assimilation policies is that a homogenous society is more harmonious and cohesive. Underlying assimilation policies are two main assumptions that (i) similarity leads to attraction (similarity-attraction hypothesis), and (ii) differences serve as a potential basis for conflict (dissimilarity-repulsion hypothesis). (See Moghaddam, 1998, Chapter 8, for an overview of this literature.)

Regional cooperation and integration can be promoted from either a multiculturalism or assimilation immigration policy approach, and the Dakar Declaration and UNESCO's Convention on Culture, for example, have clearly taken a multiculturalism approach. However, these approaches remain theoretical. To understand the dynamics between culture and human security, it is necessary to examine how relations work in practice.

Let us begin with the assumptions underlying the assimilation approach. Research has substantiated that people are positively disposed toward those they perceive as more similar to themselves, both at individual (Byrne, 1971) and at intergroup levels (Brown, 1984; Osbeck, Moghaddam & Perreault, 1997). However, research has also shown that the perception of 'similarity' varies greatly with the context. Even the most trivial or random characteristics can be used to make distinctions between people. Research using the 'minimal group paradigm' has revealed that people show intergroup bias, even when the social groups are artificially created.

In this research, people have been separated into 2 or more groups, based upon random or trivial criteria, such as the number of dots one estimates are flashed onto a screen: Those whose estimations are fewer than 100 are assigned to the blue group, while those whose estimations are greater than 100 are assigned to the green group. Subsequently, the people have been asked to make various judgments about the blue versus the green group, and individuals show significant preference (bias) for the group to which they have been allocated. Thus, intergroup bias or prejudice is not even dependent upon any objective or relevant criteria. Given this interesting finding, the important question to ask is, 'How are perceptions of similarity or difference created? We will return to this question later.

Now we will examine the main assumption of multiculturalism immigration policies: that increased contact will make different groups more favourable toward each other (the contact hypothesis). Research on the 'mere exposure effect' has shown a positive correlation between increased exposure to objects or faces and people's greater liking of them (Bornstein, 1989; Zajonc, 1970, 1980; Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc,

1980). On the other hand, other research on intergroup relations (Sherif, 1951, 1966; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1953), as well as historical events, have demonstrated that tensions can persist tenaciously and conflicts can arise after social groups have spent a great deal of time together in peaceful relations. For example, an immigrant, Lusin Canacki, who has lived in Denmark since she was six years old lamented in an interview,

We are told to get an education, learn the language, learn Danish habits. But when we do, we are still one of 'them'. People I know know come up to me and say, 'It's not people like you, Lusin, that are a problem; it's all the others.' But politicians and newspapers don't say, 'Except Lusin'. We're all lumped together (Cohen, 2000).

Despite sustained contact and substantial efforts to assimilate to the culture of the host country, some immigrants feel they are not accepted. In such cases, true social integration has failed to take place.

Nonetheless, Sherif and colleagues have shown that even once in a situation of intergroup conflict, peaceful relations can be re-achieved. This can be done, for example, by establishing superordinate goals, which are goals that both/all groups want to achieve and that require them to cooperate. Given these findings, extensive research has investigated the conditions under which increased contact can improve intergroup relations (Amir, 1969, 1976; Pettigrew, 1986). Proponents of the contact hypothesis have stipulated that: (1) the social interactions should be intimate, so that people get to know one another, (2) the parties should enjoy equal status, (3) the social climate should be supportive, and (4) the purpose of the interaction should be cooperation rather than competition (Moghaddam, 1998, p. 500).

Given their ambiguity, it is necessary to examine more carefully these conditions under which contact can improve social relations to see what they mean in practice. To do so, we return to the question above: 'How are perceptions of similarity or difference created? In fact, we can ask more generally, 'How are social perceptions created?' The answer is that people generate their social perceptions by attributing meaning to actions, objects and persons within a specific context. This is done through discourse, and individuals draw upon their knowledge of the relevant culture in which the events are to be interpreted. For example, in Europe or the U.S., if a woman greets a business colleague by looking him in the eyes, smiling, and shaking his hand, her actions are interpreted as polite and perhaps friendly. In contrast, in traditional Muslim cultures, the same actions by a woman are likely to be interpreted as disrespectful and unchaste.

Research has shown that whether social interactions are conflictual or peaceful depends upon how people attribute meanings to the interactions and situation (see Slocum, 2001; Harré and Slocum, 2003). The way in which meanings are attributed can be broken down into three elements, referred to collectively as the Positioning Triad: the storyline, the positions of actors, and the social force of utterances (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999). The Positioning Triad is a useful tool for analyzing how meanings are assigned in social interactions. Drawing upon this tool, research has revealed certain patterns in how meanings are assigned in conflicts versus in situations that are socially harmonious (see Slocum, 2001). Thus, whether or not interactions become conflicts or not depends upon the meanings people generate and

assign in the situation. Within every culture, a multiplicity of discursive resources can be drawn upon to interpret the meaning of others' actions and to communicate meaningfully to others. In fact, it should be emphasized that discursive resources are constitutive of 'culture': they include and are intrinsic to language, cultural artefacts, traditions, rituals, and other symbols and signs.

When people from different cultural backgrounds interact, they can learn to interpret the meanings of actions and symbols within the context of the other culture. This corresponds with the contact-hypothesis condition that 'the social interactions are intimate so that the people get to know one another'. The condition that 'the parties enjoy equal status' can be reformulated as that they be positioned as equals. This reveals that the requisite proposed by the contact hypothesis that 'the purpose of the interaction is cooperation rather than competition' is a matter of interpretation. Given identical situations, some people might interpret the situation as competitive, while others interpret it as cooperative – and this will influence their actions. If everyone interprets the situation as one that requires cooperation, then that is the way it will become, as reflected in their actions. In other words, the 'social climate will be supportive', which is the final condition proposed by proponents of the contact hypothesis. Given that individuals draw upon the available cultural resources to attribute meanings, cultures that provide a diverse and flexible arsenal of discursive tools for generating peaceful relations will better facilitate peace, in contrast to those which will be more prone to conflict.

Discursive tools are generated and learned through social interaction (discourse) and fomented through creativity. Thus, cross-cultural exchanges are an ideal medium through which to promote diversity in discursive resources. However, for these to promote *peaceful* relations – as opposed to fomenting hatred and conflict, it is imperative that resources be designed with this goal in mind. In other words, media must aim to promote real understanding of other cultures and acceptance of differences. This requires large-scale programs to educate people, including 'cultural actors' on the processes and consequences of meaning construction.

Similarly, UNDP's (2004) *Human Development Report* proposes that the solution is not to stop immigration or limit diversity, but to build more inclusive and diverse societies, arguing that the suppression of cultural identity – not diversity in itself – leads to conflict. The lead author concludes that, 'The challenge is to design policies that widen rather than narrow choices, protecting national identities while also keeping borders open to new people and cultures and ideas.'

B. Can culture promote regional integration? If so, how? What are the implications for cultural diversity and human security?

The above insights have illustrated that 'culture' is constituted by discursive tools, or meanings. Through discourse, regional cooperation or integration can be promoted or discouraged. Regional integration can be (and is) portrayed by some as a threat and by others as a panacea – these are meanings it is attributed; whereas the former discourages regional integration, the latter promotes it.

The exchange of culture, including meaning-systems, viewpoints, value paradigms and the like, can be facilitated through cross-cultural interaction between or within regions in the form of interpersonal dialogue, which can entail (im)migration, or through ‘cultural artefacts’, such as films, theatre and other art forms. Only insofar as such exchanges lead to mutual understanding and the development of shared meanings, do they promote deep social integration. To the extent that these cross-cultural exchanges generate discursive tools conducive to peace, they can also help prevent conflict.

However, if the focus is merely upon the trade of cultural artefacts, and ‘regional integration’ is interpreted merely as increased trade, then a culture policy that results in increased trade can be said to promote this thin understanding of regional integration. However, in this case the implications for human security are ambiguous. As discussed above, there is no guarantee that such trade exchanges will facilitate peaceful relations and are equally viable methods to foment conflict.

The EU provides an interesting case study in this regard. While at the global level, the EU has resisted liberalization for the cultural industry, ‘the creation of a single European market is perceived as strengthening the development of both a competitive cultural industry and a strong cultural identity’ (Formentini and Iapadre, 2006, p. 5). Thus, inter-regional exchanges of cultural artefacts, facilitated through economic integration, are seen as a tool for promoting both social integration and economic development.

The implications of regional integration in the area of culture for cultural diversity are complex. On the one hand, increased inter-cultural exchange within and between regions can buttress creativity, as well as provide larger markets for the exchange of cultural artefacts. On the other hand, concomitant to exchange – whether it occurs between or within cultures – is adaptation. Such adaptation is reflected in certain changes dubbed under the term ‘globalisation’, such as Californians’ incorporation of Spanish words and traditions, Asian or European art that incorporates African influences (and vice versa), and the proliferation of the use of English across the world. Even within a given ‘culture’, sub-groups influence each other: teenagers’ neologisms are absorbed by the mainstream. Due to this inherent dynamism, cultures can be said to be ‘living’. Since the resulting adaptations and changes are intrinsic to discursive exchanges, they cannot be prevented and thus should not be perceived as threatening to a culture. It can be argued that a stagnant culture is ‘dead’ and, to extend the metaphor, a mal-adaptive one ‘ill’. In contrast, a healthy culture will adapt to and initiate change.

In order for a culture to have influence and be (partially) absorbed by others, it needs to be represented through various media. Naturally, those cultures that are less prolific in cultural artefacts and expressions have less opportunity to be influential. However, it is impossible to control the level of absorption of the aspects of one culture versus another. Rather, people can decide whether or not to adopt the cultural (discursive) tools provided to them. To increase the prevalence of a given culture, policy makers can implement policies to encourage the proliferation of artefacts, but there is no guarantee that these will become absorbed, dominant, or extinct.

C. How might protectionist measures affect the potential advantages of regional cooperation and integration for economic and human development?

Protectionist measures are understood here to be policies that discourage or limit cross-cultural exchange within or between regions. Such measures will reduce cross-border trade in cultural artefacts. For those producers of cultural artefacts that are commercially viable in external markets, such policies will prove to be economically disadvantageous. The goal of protectionist measures is to safeguard the production of cultural artefacts that are not commercially viable. The assumption is that by restricting the availability of alternatives, consumers will consume more of the local cultural artefacts. This is probably true only to an extent, in that the level of economic consumption of cultural goods is not fixed.

The impact of protectionist measures upon human development is more complex. To the extent that protectionist measures increase consumer spending on otherwise commercially unviable cultural goods, this can also facilitate the (talent) development of the artists producing these goods. However, insofar as protectionist policies limit artists' ability to interact and be exposed to other cultural ideas, they will inhibit the personal development that could potentially be derived from intra- or inter-regional cooperation or integration.

Here again the EU proves an interesting case study:

On one hand, at the internal level, audiovisuals are a major example of the imperfect state of EU integration in [the] services market (Langhammer, 2005), and the Commission strives to remove trade barriers, arousing the opposition of countries and interest groups that see EU integration as a threat to their cultural identity. On the other hand, at the international level, the search for European identity leads the EU to protect the audiovisual sector, at the cost of disputes with other countries interested in trade liberalization (Formentini and Iapadre, 2006, p. 5).

While internally, by promoting trade liberalization among its member states, the EU attempts to capitalize on the benefits of trade in cultural goods for economic and human development and regional (social) integration, its external policy is defensive, attempting to avoid the risks associated with liberalization. Canada holds a similar protectionist stance under the NAFTA, which includes a specific exemption for cultural industries in free trade in goods and services between the US and Canada. However, between the US and Mexico, trade in cultural services has been liberalized under the NAFTA, whereby Mexico maintains only a few of its GATS exceptions to complete liberalization of cultural industries (Formentini and Iapadre, 2006, pp. 5 – 6). In contrast to the EU and Canadian *external* stance, the US claims that liberalization of cultural products is 'the best way to promote cultural diversity' (WTO, 2005, in Formentini and Iapadre, 2006, p. 6).

Other measures are not 'protectionist' but aim to foment the proliferation of new cultural artefacts (such as subsidies for theatre or film production) or enforce the prevalence of existing cultural artefacts (such as directives requiring a percentage of radio programming to be in a specified language). Subsidies buttress diversity by

giving more artists the opportunity to produce. Directives on programming can promote cultural diversity if their stipulations require variety, rather than forcing the dominance of a particular culture.

III. Analysis: Relevance for ACP States

The ACP Group, on numerous occasions, has expressed its desire to promote human security, and in particular to prevent conflict by addressing its root causes. Mere contact between people of different cultures does not necessarily facilitate peaceful relations and can generate conflict. Nevertheless, culture is an ideal medium through which to address the root causes of conflict. Culture is constituted by discursive resources – language, symbols and signs, which are also the tools with which peace or conflict can be fomented. Furthermore, these cultural tools can be used to deepen understanding between different cultures, or to alienate them. ACP regions and countries have directly experienced the human devastation that can result when discourse is used to foment hatred and violence, such as the genocide incited by the radio programmes of RTL in Rwanda. However, such horrors can be prevented by raising public awareness of these discursive mechanisms and supporting cultural media that facilitate peace, social harmony and an appreciation for diversity. Broad educational programmes are required to successfully raise public awareness and train producers of (cultural) media. Given their intrinsic cultural diversity, regional organisations are ideal institutions to promote and coordinate such training and programmes, but it is necessary to build their capacity to do so.

The ACP Group has also declared its will to support regional cooperation and integration. Intra-ACP cooperation in the area of culture offers the ACP Group an ideal opportunity to increase its internal cohesion. It has been argued that some external policies of the ACP Group's main partner, the EU, have effectively pushed to divide the Group, for example, the process of the EPAs negotiations and the EU's separate strategies for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (see Slocum-Bradley, In Press). Policies that encourage robust cooperation in culture can counter these forces by promoting social cohesion. However, inherent to regional cooperation in culture is migration, and the same issues relevant to inter-regional migration apply to intra-ACP migration. While there are no guarantees, in order to help ensure that intra-ACP cooperation in the area of culture buttresses intra-ACP cohesion, exchanges should not be limited to the mere trading of cultural artefacts, but rather encompass methods that help deepen people's understanding of other cultures. Finally, culture is inherently dynamic, and healthy cultures adapt to and initiate change. Thus, change resulting from interactions should not be feared or restrained but encouraged.

ACP Ministers of Culture have declared their intention to support economic and human development and buttress cultural diversity – goals which are often portrayed as mutually exclusive, or at least necessitating trade-offs (Formentini and Iapadre, 2006). According to the above analysis, human development and diversity are best supported through increased intra- and inter-regional cooperation. Trade liberalization can enhance economic development for producers of commercially viable cultural goods and services. While liberalization will not enhance the development of less marketable cultural artefacts, it is also not clear that it would harm them, so the effect

of trade liberalization upon cultural diversity is ambiguous. However, cultural diversity is more likely to be enhanced through other measures, such as subsidies for artists and cultural events and directives that encourage variation in programming.

IV. Recommendations for the ACP Group

The following policy recommendations are deduced from the above analysis and are for the consideration of the policymakers of the ACP Group.

- A. Support, politically and financially, the development and execution of training programmes designed to raise public awareness and train producers of (cultural) media on how cultural media can be used to foment peace, rather than conflict. Such trainings would be useful at all-ACP, regional and national levels and could be integrated into the programming of the 10th EDF.
- B. Support the provision of funding to build the capacity of regional organisations to coordinate such trainings.
- C. Commission a study to compile best-practices for promoting acceptance of immigrants when borders are opened.
- D. Encourage policies and the development of cultural programmes that illuminate the dynamic nature of culture and that support adaptive changes rather than inciting fear of change.
- E. Commit funds to buttress ACP artists and cultural industries. Funding for such activities can also be attained from the private sector.
- F. Develop directives that encourage variation in cultural programming.
- G. Develop intra-ACP cooperation, as well as cooperation with other regions, in the area of culture. One possibility is to create exchanges among schools and universities. Another is to implement a programme of exchange among regional organisations.

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Abbreviations

ACP Group: African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
EDF: European Development Fund
EU: European Union
GATS: General Agreement on Trade in Services
NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement
WTO: World Trade Organization

Annex I

Excerpts from official ACP documents that make reference to the relationship between culture and regional cooperation/integration.

A) Excerpts from the Draft Dakar Declaration on the Promotion of ACP Cultures and Cultural Industries:

‘Noting that globalization constitutes both an opportunity and a challenge to the preservation of cultural diversity and the promotion of culture;’ ...

‘[The ACP Ministers of Culture] Hereby declare as follows to:

... ‘Encourage ACP States and their regional integration organizations, in consultation with Non-State Actors, to develop and implement, where they do not exist, national and regional cultural policies and legislations designed to, inter alia, promote the cultures of ACP States, enforce international conventions on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, to stimulate creativity, production, and the exchange of cultural goods and services;’ ...

‘Adopt and implement adequate measures to support cooperation aimed at promoting and developing regional integration through culture...’

‘Support the establishment and development of regional and international institutions for the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue;’

Annex II

Excerpts from official ACP documents that make reference to the relationship between culture and human security and/or development:

A) Excerpts from the Draft Dakar Declaration on the Promotion of ACP Cultures and Cultural Industries:

‘Recognizing further, the importance played historically by culture in the survival continued existence of our societies, because of the role of culture in identity formation, social cohesion and stability;’ ...

‘Promoting the importance of culture as a preferred tool for reinforcing the principles of development, unity and solidarity governing the ACP Group;
Noting that culture is one of the most effective tools of sustainable development and contributes to the maintenance of peace and security;’ ...

‘Emphasizing that the diversity and richness of contemporary and traditional ACP cultures must be preserved by the promotion of dialogue, shared universal values, mutual understanding and awareness to reinforce peace, unity, and solidarity among the ACP States’ ...

‘[The ACP Ministers of Culture] Hereby declare as follows to:

... ‘Urge ACP States to develop and implement policies based on the prevention of conflicts and a culture of peace;’ ...

‘Promote the development and establishment of cultural cooperation, tolerance, dialogue, and partnership with existing and new partners through the setting-up of sub-regional and regional programmes...’

B) Excerpt from the Maputo Declaration of the 4th Summit of the ACP Heads of State and Government (Maputo, Mozambique)

D. CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

39. We underline our conviction that our individual and collective sense of cultural identity is a powerful factor in achieving peace and development. We believe that national policies which foster such sense of identity can improve our economic wellbeing and strengthen social cohesion.