

Nom del diàleg: Comunicació audiovisual global, diversitat cultural i regulació

Data: 29 Maig

Sessió: La indústria audiovisual en els països en desenvolupament

Ponent: Dima Dabbous



ABSTRACT

In this presentation, I will argue that Arab cultural policy dealing with diversity is largely nonexistent, and that supranational cultural regulation and initiatives have been the main source of funding and promoting diverse Arab voices. Some of the factors accounting for the absence of any policy promoting cultural diversity are the lack of a public service broadcasting ethos on the one hand, and the still pervasive state-control of the media that are mostly concerned with either suppressing criticism of government or with promoting the government's agenda (or both), on the other hand. Moreover, the wave of de-regulation that started in the 80s proved incapable of breaking the Arab governments monopoly over terrestrial media. Even the exceptional case of Lebanon, the first Arab country to introduce legislation on private media, and still the only one to allow private terrestrial broadcasters to operate, failed to protect and promote national culture and diversity in its 1994 Broadcasting Act. Finally, the satellite revolution that swept the Arab world in the 90s - spearheaded by al Jazeera satellite channel -with its promise of loosening government control and promoting dissent and pluralism – seems less than able to promote diversity. Despite the proliferation of Arab satellite channels, some voices continue to be privileged over others, either through ownership strongly tied to governments or through the predominance of Egyptian, mostly commercial cultural products. Given the above, Arab artists seeking to express largely non-mainstream, non-commercial ideas, have had to rely mostly on European funding (e.g. from ARTE, Channel Four, etc.), justified either by European cultural regulation that establishes production quotas for the audio-visual sector or by international initiatives such as the Euro-Med agreement seeking to develop closer ties between Europe and non-EU countries bordering the Mediterranean. Finally, I

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would argue, though the above-mentioned are important sources of funding and should continue to exist (by upholding the rationale for cultural regulation in order to protect diversity), they are not sufficient in and of themselves to promote cultural diversity. Other measures should be invested in equally, namely the establishment and funding of distribution channels (e.g. alternative movie theatres, ties with educational institutions, etc.) in order to ensure visibility for non-mainstream, non-commercial cultural products on the one hand, and to develop a taste for diversity in cultures (and sub-cultures) in the Arab world, on the other.