

**CULTURAL INDUSTRIES
– BETWEEN “PANEM ET CIRCENSES”
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract. *Theodor Adorno’s concerns regarding Cultural industries are a warning signal which must be considered. He provides a much-objectionable radical view regarding the political economy of culture and the entire role of culture in contemporary society, including the issue of “access to culture”. In the case of Cultural industries, like any other in “in demand product” or service, a sudden increase in demand often does not convert into “cultural quality” and “cultural authenticity”. Without proper information, education, fiscal incentives and proper legislation (including its proper implementation) the marketization of culture often degenerates in a regrettable vulgarization, alteration and sometimes destruction of authentic heritage (both material and immaterial). For instance, Cultural Industries can provide incentives to enhance, restore and maintain the local culture but they can also destroy (if done improperly) what is left of local authenticity. Nevertheless, in a society suddenly and massively exposed to external Western influences (like the societies in Central and Eastern Europe) probable the biggest threat to the authenticity and preservation of heritage is poverty as such. The entire issue about harmonizing the logic and interests of culture/history/cultural heritage with the logic of economics and profit driven activities remains an open one and a variable of: information, education, legal infrastructure and state intervention (including subsidies and incentives or penalties for “wrong doings”).*

Keywords: *Cultural industries, cultural tourism, cultural security, development studies, international relations*

The aim of this paper is to provide a brief outline of the cultural industries, their concepts and major debates. Although the concept nominated “Cultural Industries” was developed by Theodor W. Adorno and the Frankfurt School only a few decades ago, industries or economic activities with a cultural content

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exists since immemorial times. Specific gastronomy was always a reason to travel, as well as the desire to see spectacles, festivals, fashionable pottery or clothes. What may have changed and justified Adorno's use of the term "Industry" was what he encountered in the United States as a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany (Welty, 1984). As a European, he was shocked by the consumerism approach applied to various forms of culture, the size, the mass producing – industrial level of the entire endeavour designated to reach the masses, in search for pecuniary profit (*Ibidem*). The increased access to various forms of Culture facilitated by cinema, radio and then television, or the "democratization of culture" raised, for Adorno, the spectrum of ideological manipulation of the masses (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). The Nazis wanted a radio in every German house, state paid holidays for the workers, compulsory visits to museums and commemoration places. For Adorno the ideological power of the totalitarian Nazi state he witnessed in Germany was replaced in the case of US by the ideological and seductive power of consumerism driven by giant capitalist corporations. For Adorno, "Cultural Industries" involve a new kind of "cultural totalitarianism" by commodification, repetition, depersonalization and marketization (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947). For instance, it can be said that between the *delirium* of the cheering crowd assisting Goebbels discourses and the cheering crowd at a Music Hall Show on Broadway, Adorno sees no much difference. The brutal mass control using direct repression in the case of the Nazis can be replaced by the soft and seductive manipulation of personal desires and weaknesses by the "cultural industries" as witnessed by him in US (Thompson, 2013).

For Theodor Adorno "cultural expression" must be spontaneous, not "in demand" or market driven. For instance, "Cultural industries" being for profit and "market driven" are an attempt towards freedom and free cultural expression (*Ibidem*). He provides a much-objected radical view regarding the political economy of culture and the entire role of culture in contemporary society, including the issue of "access to culture". For instance, the increased access to high culture of the ordinary people is seen by Adorno not as a "democratization of culture" or "desirable access to culture" but as a "manipulative threat". The same elitism may be motivated by the profound antipathy Adorno seems to have towards the "commodification" of culture and its metamorphosis into often cheap and vulgar entertainment (O'Connor, 2007, p. 9). Like other theorists, Adorno notices a problem (the manipulative power of culture and its various uses for economic or politic gain) but offers no solutions and is blind to the issue of choice (although certainly relative) that citizens in a democracy have versus those living in a totalitarian society (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 47).

But is it something new compared with the old Latin dictum "to give the crowd" *panem et circenses*/ "Bread and Circus" as a policy performed by Roman emperors, an expression attributed to the Roman poet Juvenal 1700 year before the concept of "Cultural industries" would be patented by Adorno? For the Latin poet *panem et circenses* was a wise but also condemnable policy as it gave the people what their weaknesses desire taking in depriving them in exchange by the power of taught. Adorno's ideas remain however a useful lecture, as

commodification of culture presents undeniably several risks policy makers and practitioners should be aware of as mass producing may degrade the cultural act *per se*.

Today Cultural industries refers usually to: visual arts (museums, art galleries, art auctions, design and interior design, art photography and digital forms of creativity); performing art (theatre, performing shows, concerts, re-enactment performances etc.), film industry, music-recording industry (in its various forms) radio, various forms of publications, the new media (internet), cultural and creative tourism, architecture and design, fashion, advertising, restoring, promoting and valorising historic heritage (material and immaterial) in various industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp. 9-22). We note that the term “Cultural industry” was translated in other languages (including Romanian) as such, directly from English, even if it may often sound strange in the neo-Latin languages. In English the concept has lost its direct connection with the world of factories and was never restricted to it. Also, in English, any occupation becomes an “industry” when it attempts to organize, regulate, ask for recognition or demand something from the official government (O’Connor, 2013. p. 3). Under the “umbrella” of “Cultural industries” are gathered those activities, industries or services whose final “products” are goods whose meaning or end main value is derived from their cultural, artistic or symbolic content (*Ibidem*). Things are even more complicated because it often is difficult to trace or quantify “the main aim or value” of a certain product or service, as many manufacturing goods contain a cultural and symbolic content in terms of design and use (perfumes, furniture, fashion clothing, interior design products, even cars or electronics). The legal case of the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi against the United States whose custom authorities taxed, in 1927, 40% of the perceived value of his art work “Bird in Space” as “Kitchen and hospital accessories” remained notorious in this respect. The entire largely mediatized trial evolves around the issue of whether “Bird in Space” is an original sculpture or work of art (without practical use) exempted from custom taxes or a “metal object” with “practical use” (Tudor, 2013). It seems that this notion of “practical use” is the threshold distinguishing “pure art” from other objects incorporating cultural or art value but with “practical use” (cars, furniture, fashion, electronics etc.). In *Brancusi against US* trial from a legal point of view (tax exemption) an art object had to be at the time “imitation of an object existing in nature...without practical use and not serial reproduced in order to make profit” the *Avangarde* art movement and many of its forms of abstract expression being not recognized as “Art” (*Ibidem*).¹

Cultural and creative tourism as a Cultural industry

Cultural and creative tourism capitalize on the valorisation of historic heritage and other cultural resources as comparative advantage and main reason

¹ The outcome of this trial, in favor of Brancusi, had paramount importance for the modern art expression, defining the way artistic expression must be understood and perceived from a legal point of view (Tudor, 2013).

to promote and visit a destination (OECD, 2009, pp. 19-25). Cultural heritage was always important for any destination. Today, in a crowded global market place, culture is needed to create that comparative advantage involved by an increased competition (*Ibidem*, p. 9). Adorno's warnings regarding the commodification of culture need to be considered when dealing with the issue of "cultural quality" (as opposed to "commercial quality" or "economic quality") in a cultural representation or policy intervention involving any form or act of culture, in this case cultural historic heritage (Alla-Fossi, 2005, p. 215). This is a serious challenge because the *business world* (in this case, tourism businesses) and the *world of culture* often have different incentives and "speak" different "languages" (OECD, 2009, p. 33). The extent to which the business sector is ready to sacrifice profit and commercial interest in search for quality and authenticity seems to be directly proportional with the will of the state to provide fiscal incentives in parallel with a stricter and well implemented legal regulatory framework. Here the challenge is to identify (effective and adapted to the local conditions) realistic and implementable policy interventions to enhance the relationship between quality and economically motivated tourism and *quality culture* (OECD, 2009, pp. 13, 34) here came the issue of "quality" in both cases...a difficult to define one).

"Cultural industries" and "Cultural security"

"Cultural security" remains one of the issues of high concern for many states and is influenced by Cultural industries in their various forms. Within globalization the notion of *Cultural security* becomes more complex and an issue more difficult to handle by governments. It can also be noticed that within Globalization the individual's identity becomes more complex, and at a certain level one may consider a certain foreign "cultural product" important for his life style, but without identifying himself with the culture this product originates from. Across the World many "cultural products" (or at least their initial concept) came from Western countries. In this case, the balance between imported and exported "cultural products" is assessed in order to identify an eventual "deficit" and to assess it in "cultural security" terms (if that country has any "cultural security" concerns).

The "Cold War" was lost by the "Warsaw Pact" long time before 1989 under the influence of desirable "cultural products" like: music (Jazz, Disco and Rock), fashion (Blue jeans etc.), Western Cinema, Western design, Western "life style". In this case, in terms of "Power" projection, "cultural products" and "cultural influence" can be more "lethal" than the latest generation of lethal weapons. Today, the generalization of Cable and Satellite TV dominated by English speaking US productions and in the last two decades the Internet is perceived like a "cultural security threat" by some European national cultures, some of them with a global reach (in particular French but also Spanish, Italian or German). The gradual elimination of trade barriers may enhance trade; however, there were concerns that a country can gradually lose its cultural identity in a "free trade market" of cultural goods in relation to other, larger countries with a different identity (language,

culture, customs etc.) which dominate the new means of communication. The Darwinian theory of evolution seems to apply also here. The European Union *Audio-Visual policy* was shaped mostly under French influence during the 90's as part of a visible, although undeclared EU "Cultural Security" policy (with significant economic impact). According with existing regulations across the EU, TV programs must contain a minimum of 50% "European content", in fact European Union (European Commission, 2016). The so called "video on demand services" have to provide at least 20% EU member states content (ex VoD, iTunes, Netflix etc.). There are already proposals to implement the same policies for the "video-sharing platforms" which are slowly draining the audience of traditional TV broadcasters, mostly YouTube (*Ibidem*).

In terms of "Cultural Security" as mentioned before, some countries were more affected than others by the new evolutions and technologies, and by the *de facto* generalization of English language as the *lingua franca* of the Internet (and implicitly US and Anglo-Saxon culture), of working language in international affairs and trade, and also a *de facto* working language within the European Union structures. No other country was more affected in this respect than France. The cultural international presence and influence of France today is far behind what it used to be only a few decades ago, in the '60, 70's and even 80's (ex, the France of TGV, Concorde, Alain Delon and Jean-Paul Belmondo) or the *lingua franca* of diplomacy. Various French governments reacted to this evolution partly with a significant increase in funds designed for the cultural presence of French culture abroad (extending its network and programs of French Cultural Institutes, *Alliance Francaise* etc.); and on the "home front" by regulating cultural industries (books, media industry, cinematography etc.) in terms of compulsory quotas for "EU" (in fact mostly French productions) and several financial incentives for the domestic cultural productions. The French government has good reasons to treat French culture as a matter of national security, considering that "culture" as such is the main comparative advantage this country has in a globalized economy and one of its main assets of political influence in the International System. Same restrictions as in France (and perhaps inspired by it) are applied in Canada, with the aim to protect cultural identity against the free trade, with a particular concern for the US cultural industries. Similar restrictions are applying in South Korea regarding the import of CD's from Japan (Benchekroun & Van Long, 2004, p. 5). As careful with their culture and cultural industries are some newly independent nations, whose culture was perceived as suppressed under the previous regimes and needs protection under the new circumstances. In recent years the most quoted case in Europe is that of the Ukraine whose governments in the last decade adopted several measures (including a restrictive legislative regulation regarding TV channels broadcast in Russian) to enhance Ukrainian language, culture and implicitly cultural industries in a country which (at least in some parts) is *de facto* dominated by Russian language and media (perceived by the new Ukrainian Governments, implicitly, as instruments of Russian influence).

Tourism as a Cultural Industry

To a certain extent, all forms tourism might be considered “cultural tourism” (OECD, 2009, p. 26) because it enhances personal experience with foreign unknown places and cultures (gastronomy, customs, architecture, life style, various forms of art). What we need here is a definition able to emphasize the forms of culture suitable to distinguish “leisure centered tourism” from “cultural – educational related tourism”. This mission is even more complicated, as the number of consumers of elevated forms of culture increased and culture consumption became a natural part of daily life and leisure. The very definition of “Culture” has significantly changed in this context from a “product – based” definition to a “process – based” definition in which “culture” becomes a “way of life” and an intrinsic value of any living standard in the post-industrial “knowledge economy”. Indeed, tourists increasingly visit destinations to experience not only sun/sea/sand or only museums and galleries, but also the lifestyles and everyday culture and customs of the people they visit; in sum, “the atmosphere” of a certain place. The conceptual terminology is even more complicated considering that “cultural services” are not the same with “cultural projects”, in the first case “culture” being just another (often marginal) ingredient in a leisure package. Pure “cultural tourism” products as integrated packages are very few available on the market (often they are very expensive and their clientele – very elitist). However, the so called “study tours” for school and university students or the pilgrimages organized usually be church parishes (most of their clients being pensioners) are very affordable and with a rich cultural content.

The same applies when we are considering culture related policies as an integral part of state policies related to: social cohesion, innovation and creativity, a higher living standard in general (*Ibidem*, p. 10). Culture driven policies, through integrated interventions, significantly decrease social problems such as: criminality, violence and drug and alcohol abuse among the young (*Ibidem*, p. 18). For instance, “culture” is seen in the last decade as an indispensable asset for the wellbeing of citizens and as a tool to promote economic development, the entire issue of “economic development”, “cultural economy” and the “economy of culture” being an integral part of it (O’Connor and Mark Gibson, 2018, p. 8). Also, relevantly, the UNDP Human Development index not only includes today “access to culture” as an indispensable asset (apart from and corroborated with the GDP of a certain nation) but also more subtle indicators within the concept of “culture” as such, like: means to access “cultural expression”, creativity, personal thought which are possible only in an open society (*Ibidem*, p. 33).

Culture and the industries derived from it have become powerful in a post-industrial society. In the same period, the 70’s, music record industry in Great Britain exceeded in terms of net economic input some British traditional, century old, heavy and labour-intensive industries – a clear sign that creative industries must be encouraged with the proper financial and regulatory incentives (O’Connor and Mark Gibson, 2018, p. 12). The same UNDP Human Development index rightly underlines the crucial connection between the development of any kind

of cultural industry and a favourable and fertile socio-cultural environment (*Ibidem*, p. 8). In other words, no one can expect miracles by simply injecting money to develop “cultural industries” in a particular location. To become “fertile” ground for Cultural industries development, a particular place must have the necessary local cultural and creative effervescence (universities, artists and intellectuals etc.). Sometimes, that “cultural and creative effervescence” can be imported or exported in a certain location (the case of thematic festivals) but again, the “location” must meet the expectations and be “culturally and environmentally friendly”.

The infrastructure of Cultural Tourism – Authenticity and Modernization as a “Cultural Security” concern

Even the more archaic communities are not immune nowadays to various types of influences and models, often with unfortunate results (kitsch in architecture, folklore, fashion, decoration, gastronomy etc.). The destruction of authentic heritage by uneducated, uninformed, unaware local populations who often associate the term “modernization” with the destruction of heritage and its replacement with what they consider modern and comfortable (although most often, in my view, these are neither modern nor comfortable) may be considered a “Cultural Security” concern and treated as such.

The viable, functional international marketing strategy and knowledge is often missing in local authorities who are (above many other administrative things) in charge of the cultural heritage. In countries like Romania there are no training programs for local administrators with regard to relevant issues such as: how to create a suitable online presence, how to engage the potential clientele, how to train the local people about what is cultural authentic value and what is not (especially when it comes to guest services and investments into new buildings, or modernizing the old ones). The same rationality applies to the issue of truly authentic food, clothing, artefacts and folklore, which are often overwhelmed by *kitsch*.

“Cultural Quality” cannot be ensured without the proper information, education and awareness of the local community about issues such as “real authenticity”, “real quality”, etc. In many cases the full cultural tourism potential is not acknowledged by the local people and authorities. For instance, some places are overrated while others are neglected. Ironically, often the availability of money and misunderstood “modernization” prove to be more destructive for the authentic cultural heritage than neglect and poverty.

Complementarity (training, information, legal and financial incentives), partnerships (public, private business minded and professional in various cultural fields) and integrated projects (combining, efficient branding and logistics with information and education of the locals) may be viable solutions. Culture is meant to preserve and create authenticity and distinctiveness in the global tourism market, especially considering that in many places local distinctiveness was replaced by a landscape dominated by transnational restaurant chains or their local derivatives.

Vulgar, painted concrete “fairy tale castles” are replacing traditional discrete wood or lime stone architecture. Once more the information and education of the local people is essential as they participate directly in the cultural tourism experience. Convince them to respect and creatively use the local traditions in terms of architecture, interior design, gastronomy and clothing and eventually how to adapt the local traditions to a modern and stylish contemporary fashion experience. Convince them not to replace green grass with grey asphalt, and to use traditional building materials instead of concrete, extruded polystyrene, plastic or shiny galvanized sheets (and everything combined in grotesque masquerades of three storey “villas”). “Brochure type” “information” and “education” applied to people born and raised in a *la longue durée d’histoire* time and society who suddenly found themselves in a post-modern/post-industrial world may be illusory and need to be combined with real models of good practices, free, properly and professionally designed architectural projects and interior design projects combined with financial incentives for respecting local traditions in terms of design and materials used, landscaping etc.

Some variables in Cultural Industries/Cultural tourism are rather “intangible”, subtle and difficult such as Atmosphere” – the “Vibe” of a certain location or cultural event. Often locations (cities, museums, art galleries) although well organized, well maintained, with a good logistic, fail to attract visitors because they “lack atmosphere” ... or the people find those places “too aseptic”, “tasteless” and “boring”. Usually, visitors quantify the “Atmosphere” factor with things like: “the youth”, “the frenzy of the streets”, the “lifestyle”, the “music”, the “relaxed attitude”, *multiculturalism*, the “people who behave naturally”, the “authenticity” of architecture including furniture and interior design, the openness of the people, the easiness to interact socially or to make new friends, the romanticism of the streets and weather (autumn colours, fog, light), etc. Good quality festivals (arts, music, cinema etc.) can attract the right people, for the “atmosphere” factor and its additional “vibe”. Too “zealous” renovations may degenerate in *asepticism* and affect the atmosphere factor. The decaying buildings are a part of the “atmosphere” in Havana just like the 50’s cars, Bossa Nova, Rum and Tabaco.

Related with the “Atmosphere” or the “Vibe” factor we have to consider that several cities had to deal with new issues such as *gentrification* (the accelerated ageing of population), improper use of cultural heritage buildings, the improper conversion of certain buildings into “creative spaces”; and also, with the sensitive issue of opening closed or empty property buildings for uses suitable with the “economics of culture” (O’Connor and Mark Gibson, 2018, p. 42). The last issue was a particularly sensitive one as far as habitable space in the central area of many iconic cities (the old city of Venice for example) were sold, by the mid 80’s, to affluent foreign citizens who used them as holiday apartments, those spaces being otherwise closed most of the year. Those areas became “urban dead areas” affecting the “atmosphere” and the possibility of creative industries development. In those cases, new regulations are needed to harmonise property rights with the specific needs of city development.

Quality cultural tourism may offer solutions for the *seasonality problem*, as most tourism locations suffer from the seasonality of tourist influx. Culturally-motivated visitors tend to depend less on sun/sea/sand and they tend to visit new, less commercial destination in search of authentic experiences. Last but not least, professionally organised cultural tourism can increase the level of cultural awareness among the local people who may be encouraged to return to their authentic traditions and identities. This “cultural and local identity awareness” seems to be the key ingredient in the revitalization of a certain region.

The issue of “Comparative advantage” in Cultural and Creative industries

Many common goods (clothes, food, consumables) are given added value by a certain cultural content. Industrial companies add cultural content to their products in order to differentiate from competition. The cultural input allows business ideas and their products to be converted into cultural goods, or at least products with a cultural content. Famous clothing or technology companies collaborate with artists in order to understand or anticipate present or future cultural and societal trends and their proper conversion into design and suitable concepts (Dell’era, 2010). Sometimes entire cultural trends are manufactured by big corporations in order to boost their sales. When buying a pair of blue jeans people are not buying only a pair of strong and practical trousers but rather a piece of Pop Culture and lifestyle. The same applies to many other products and services. The one who buys an Alpha Romeo does not buy it because it would be technologically better than a Renault, Citroen or VW – but rather because of its design, style and cultural message. The Italian *Benetton*, *Diesel* or *Illy-caffè*, the US *Apple* (with *IStyle*), the Danish *Bang & Olufsen* or the Swedish *Ikea* are also cultural producers and cultural trend setters in fashion, design and lifestyle, sourcing their comparative advantage in a highly competitive domain from the cultural content of their products.

Conclusions

Cultural industries are relevant not only as leisure-related industries. For example, the access to a quality concert, a Cultural Tourism program or a decent library (and, within it, a quality exhibition) has become part of the daily life in a post-industrial world, highly related to the perceived living standard in a country or a particular city. The increased emphasis on education and personal development also creates a fertile ground for cultural industries and their related products including the development of a new brand of Cultural tourism, namely “Creative Tourism”. This form of tourism implies the active involvement and blending of the visitor into the daily life of a certain location, usually under the form of “learning experiences” for what is special and unique for a particular location (learning to produce lavender perfume or soap in Marseille or painting in Anvers or pottery in Horezu – Romania, Tango in Buenos Aires, or Sicilian cooking in Catania).

The increased financial potency of once poor places (China, India, Brazil, former Eastern Europe) corroborated with easier access to information and the increased availability of low-cost international travel explain the unprecedented rise in the demand for culture related industries.

Some socio-demographic trends facilitate the increased demand for Cultural Industries. Among them the most nominated are population ageing and early retirement in the wealthy countries, corroborated with the increase of university populations with enough time, income and interest for “living with style” or culture related travel and/or leisure.

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