

Introduction

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The ‘cultural industries’ and the ‘creative industries’ have received considerable attention over the last years. These two compound expressions, often used as rough synonyms, refer to suppliers of a range of products that “we broadly associate with cultural, artistic, or simply entertainment value” (Caves vii). The term cultural industries was first coined to address the production and dissemination of cultural content in mass media, e.g. in books and magazines, sound recordings, films and other types of audiovisual media. Today it usually refers to suppliers of mass media content as well as producers of the traditional arts that do not lend themselves to mass-reproductions, such as live performances and the creative arts. Much of the literature also includes similar industries such as design, fashion, crafts, architecture, sports, software, or even tourism. In accounting exercises it is contentious to what extent complementary industries, e.g. producers of media technologies and entertainment electronics, should be included in assessments of the direct economic contribution of the cultural industries.

Under the Labour administration in the late 1990s, the British Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has played an important role in promoting the debate on cultural industries and the way they can be harnessed as drivers of economic development. The ambitious aim of the DCMS is to make “the UK the world’s creative hub” (DCMS website). In Germany, the responsibility for the subject is more dispersed with the federal *Länder* playing a key role. Nevertheless, the cultural industries are *en vogue* here as well. Extensive official reports on the economic

significance of cultural industries have been published by several *Länder* and debates on how best to support the sector abound (for an overview see Wiesand).

The cultural industries are a promising field of cultural, social and economic research for several reasons. First, they are a significant arena for an exchange of meanings. Their function as means of communication and their potential for manipulation continue to be keys to understanding modern societies.

Second, the cultural industries provide an exciting example for several contemporary socio-economic trends. Some cultural industries have long operated in highly integrated, even global markets and many are at the forefront of the broad changes in the markets for information goods.

Third, some cultural industries seem to have grown comparatively fast over the last two decades. Many policy-makers expect them to continue to be drivers of economic growth and employment – an appealing prospect in particular for de-industrialising urban areas that already boast thriving cultural scenes such as Berlin. Cultural industries are prone to cluster in specific locations, so that attractive regions can hope to reap disproportionately high rewards from growth in the cultural industries. What is more, the bulk of the growth has occurred in the production of mass media content. Several factors conspire to make continued change in the mass media probable in the future. These include the diffusion of advanced information and communication technology (ICT) and the familiar issues of deregulation and integration of markets, to name but a few. In this context, the chances for a redistribution of resources seem higher than ever. Newcomers can hope to make their mark. Existent centres of cultural production are faced with new competition as well as new opportunities to increase their slice of the pie.

More specifically to the research agenda at the interdisciplinary Centre for British Studies at Humboldt University, the cultural industries provide an excellent example of how societies organise the public arena and how they cope with economic and social change. Historically, the British cultural industries exhibit special features

which set them apart from their counterparts in continental Europe. They function as a magnifying glass through which scholars are able to target their studies of modern British society and economy.

In Britain, modern forms of commercial culture developed several decades before those on the continent – and in some cases even centuries before. Modern sport in Britain, for example, began to develop commercially as early as the eighteenth century. People on the continent only became aware of modern sport at the turn of the twentieth century as a result of a cultural transfer instigated by British tourists, merchants and students. And music halls that offered popular entertainment to a working class audience were thriving in the 1850s in British industrial towns and cities, whereas the era of variety entertainment began on the continent only around 1900 and reached its zenith in the 1920s. Similar, and sometimes larger, time lags can be found in the areas of the popular press and tourism.

Furthermore, the growth of what is now called the cultural industries was a ‘natural’ concomitant of the rise of the market economy and the modernisation of British society since the eighteenth century. An increasing concentration of people in the growing urban centres meant an increase in demand for cultural consumption, and entrepreneurs who dared to invest organised the supply. Although the market worked differently than in more conventional areas of commerce, cultural industries in Britain were about artistry, genius and originality as well as – unashamedly – about business and profit. The market was the stage for all those involved. By contrast the role of the court, the state and other bodies like the church and local authorities in developing cultural industries was relatively insignificant. Therefore, we can observe a considerably different tradition in the attitudes and actions of commercial and public actors in Britain and those on the continent. Other characteristic features of the British experience are that little effort was lost to separate the high arts from mass culture. It seems that the British have no fear of putting them all in the same basket.

Finally, in the course of the twentieth century, there was relatively little political instrumentalisation of mass culture in Britain either by the state, or by political parties

and movements. At the turn of the twentieth century the Labour Party, for example, failed to establish an ideologically organised cultural movement along the lines of social-democratic movements in either Germany or Austria at the time. And in the 1930s the failure of the British fascist right can be ascribed to similar reasons. It is therefore worth discussing whether the extent to which commercial cultural industries managed to absorb the time and money devoted to leisure activities helps to explain that on the cultural level, British society has remained essentially individualistic.

In the context of today's reinvigorated interest in the cultural industries, studying the special case of Britain and comparing it with developments in other major economies might still provide valuable insights. Pivotal questions that connect the historical perspective with today's structures are: Do commercial cultural industries in Britain still enjoy a lead over those in other European countries or have continental Europeans caught up in the meantime, perhaps as a result of the decline of the influence of parties and political movements, and even private societies and associations? Can we explain the relative success (or the relative decline) of British cultural industries and can the British experience provide general insights?

However, before tackling questions like these it is necessary to agree about some basic conventions in this promising field of research. We continue to struggle with definition and measurement issues that bedevil the academic debates and the wider public discourse on the cultural industries. We need to discuss the significance and use of the available statistics. This is particularly important where we seek to compare the evidence across areas with different accounting practices. We also need to understand for what purpose these statistics have been assembled in the first place. In the face of these challenges, there is ample scope for an institutionalised exchange of information among researchers on the cultural industries both across academic disciplines as well as across geographical borders.

The workshop "The Cultural Industries – The British Experience in International Perspective" promoted such an exchange. Organised by the Centre for British Studies of Humboldt University in February 2006, it attracted a number of German and British

academics as well as practitioners and policy makers, including the coordinators of the Berlin Senate's Creative Industries Initiative. This publication contains revised versions of the papers that have been presented and discussed during the event.

The papers are grouped into four themes. In a first section, entitled "Defining the Cultural Industries: Terms, Data, Methods", three papers discuss the general problems of defining and using the terminology: Simon Roodhouse examines and criticises current definitions and quantitative methods of data collection applied in Britain. Susan Galloway and Stewart Dunlop analyse the different meanings of the terms 'creative' and 'cultural' industries and discuss the policy implications of the, as they claim, ill-conceived creative industries definition. Roy Boyne contributes a sociological perspective by analysing the discussion about the social impact of the cultural field.

The second section aims at "Extending the Analysis: Neglected Key Dimensions?" Christian Handke deals with the problem of copyright in a review of the economic literature. Rita Gerlach proposes a pragmatic framework for the comparison of British and German theatre quality.

Additional dimensions of research in the different fields feature prominently in the third section, entitled "Embedding the Cultural Industries: Time and Space". Lawrence Black discusses the change of attitudes of British governments towards the Creative Industries and Cultural Politics and Bastian Lange presents qualitative case studies of "culturepreneurs" and their role in urban modernization.

The last section, "Embedding the Cultural Industries: Fields of Work", holds exemplary papers that document the disciplinary and thematic width of current research projects: Gesa Stedman deals with the commercialisation of the literary field in the UK and literary or cultural merit. Annika Wingbermhühle presents a study of marketing strategies for Scottish goods and services that take account of socio-cultural differences. Finally, Anna Dempster adds a business management perspective with her

analysis of theatre as a risky business in a case study of the musical Jerry Springer the Opera.

Overall, the workshop demonstrated how stimulating interdisciplinary approaches to the analysis of the cultural industries can be. From the perspective of the organizers at the Centre for British studies, the exchange with our British and German colleagues in the course of this project has proven to be inspiring and encouraging. We could not have asked for more and we are looking forward to further fruitful cooperation.

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