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The cultural industry *and new codes* of modernity

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Within the context of the globalization of the economy, communication and culture and the transition towards societies based on information and knowledge, the sustained development of the cultural industry stands out as a priority means for the articulation of society. For at least the last three decades, culture has been increasingly linked with the growth of the social communication media. Indeed, the cultural industry is becoming a strategic sector for competitiveness, employment, consensus-building, the style of politics and the circulation of information and knowledge. This growing weight of the cultural industry is closely linked with its own diversification. Technological innovations have given rise to great leaps forward in the cultural industry which make it necessary to redefine its limits year by year. A market for messages which forms part of the circuit of global interchange and constant acceleration in terms of time is transforming the limits of "heavy" and "light" culture, highbrow and lowbrow culture, sophisticated cultural products and those appealing to a popular audience, and national and foreign cultural manifestations. In the following pages, an analysis will be made of the changes which these developments have brought about in the image of modernity and modernization in Latin America. The coexistence of various past times in a single present and the current tension between the high levels of symbolic integration through the cultural industry and the low levels of social integration form the central concerns of this article in its efforts to set forth the potential and risks of the cultural industry in the region.

I

Preliminary considerations

The concept of culture has two very different connotations. The first of these associates culture with the past, with the fine arts and letters; it is the sphere of the "great works" of the spirit, of the highest intellectual, scientific and artistic achievements of a society, and of its architectural and archaeological heritage. The second connotation is broader, and sees culture as the way of life of a people, its systems of values, language and codes of communication, and the various forms of popular thought and creation.

In the following pages, this second connotation will be used, for two reasons. Firstly, because the close relation between the dynamics of culture and those of development becomes more evident when using a broader concept of culture, and secondly, because the assessments of the recent impacts of the cultural industry on society are of such varied scope that they make it essential to work on the basis of a global view of culture.

Likewise, the concept of the cultural industry should itself have a sufficiently broad scope to allow it to be related with the broad universe of culture. The division which José Joaquín Brunner proposes between the "light" and "heavy" cultural industries is very interesting in this respect. The first of these refers to "television, popularization, rapid reading, snapshots, dictionaries of quotations, ready-made products in general, hack writing, occasional art, therapeutic religions...", whereas the heavy cultural industry is "that of long-lasting ideologies: age-old religions, classics, formal education, taboos and a sense of guilt, authority, beauty, methodology, accumulated knowledge" (Brunner, 1988, p. 27). Although this classification may seem rather vague for defining the cultural industry, it does illustrate the leading role that industry could play both in the superficial and fortuitous exchange of messages and in the construction of ideologies and bodies of knowledge which form an underlying presence and develop by slow accumulation.

The rapid cultural de-territorialization due to the globalization of communications and the telematics revolution¹ makes it difficult to maintain

watertight views and categories in this field: "The de-localization of enterprises, the worldwide simultaneity of information, the adaptation of certain international knowledge and images to the knowledge and habits of each people (...), the de-localization of symbolic products by electronics and telematics, the use of satellites and computers in the spreading of culture, also prevent us from continuing to see the conflicts of peripheral countries as frontal combats with geographically defined nations (...). The reorganization of cultural scenarios and the constant crossing of identities mean that we must look elsewhere for the orders which systematize the material and symbolic relations between groups" (García Canclini, 1990, pp. 288-289). It is even argued that national societies are merely segments of global markets and that this is particularly true in the field of the cultural industry and the consumption of culture. The differences, it is claimed, lie in the local reception codes, within "the unceasing movement of transmission circuits which extend all the way from publicity to pedagogy" (Brunner, 1988, p. 218). If this approach is accepted, then the cultural universe opened up by the combined impact of telematics and the cultural industry may be defined as an era of decentralized culture in which cultural heterogeneity does not refer to the diversity of local and national expressions but to "segmented and differential participation in an international market for messages which 'penetrates' the local cultural framework on all sides and in the most unexpected ways" (Brunner, 1988, p. 218).

There is tension between the concentration prevailing in the classroom and the dispersive force of the multimedia of social communication. Hybridization goes beyond the ethnic level and becomes an everyday event that affects everyone: there is no identity that can remain in the pure state for more than a few hours in the face of the extremely strong stimuli received from all corners of the earth. The aesthetics of collage and pastiche which is so dear to post-modern sensibility is not a chance phenomenon but is a metaphor for this state of continual recomposition of cultural sensibilities and messages. Such

¹ Telematics is taken to mean the combined effect of new technologies in telecommunications and informatics.

terms as "hybridism", "syncretism", "intercultural tissues" or "decomposition and recomposition of signs" are increasingly common in analyses of the cultural processes of today. In this sense, there is no clear limit for the cultural industry or well-defined frontier for delimiting cultural identities. It is within this dynamic of blurring of frontiers that we must place ourselves in order to understand both cultural processes and their close links with the cultural industry complex.

It must also be remembered that during the last five years the world has undergone dizzying political changes and a considerable proportion of the world's population have witnessed the recomposition of the international political scene from their own homes. The Gulf War, the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rise of the new democracies, with all their airs of renewal and their more sinister aspects, have been witnessed in detail and without a moment's delay in all latitudes of the world. Not only is instantaneous and exhaustive in-

formation now available, but there is also a growing diversity of readings in this planetary-scale diffusion of events. The incorporation of telematics into the cultural industry has meant that the whole world is now affected by the rest of the world. Muslim fundamentalism, Serbian nationalism or the violent acts of groups of young neo-Nazis in Germany serve as a mirror or appeal to the conscience of other cultures or groups in other parts of the world which are under the stress of this new modernity open to the world at large.

In this context of rapid change and intensive dissemination, culture tends to become a kind of ongoing dialogue among the citizens of the world. The cultural industry may be defined, partly as a metaphor and partly literally, as a play of mirrors which makes it possible at every moment to recompose our identities through dynamic relations with all the other identities which we see in action through the mass media, information networks, comments heard in the street and at work, and telephone consultations.

II

Cross-temporal cultural consumption

The school, the city and the television are the pillars on which, over the last four decades, a mass culture has been built which is in many respects a mixture of heterogeneous cultures and times. This diachrony has been particularly marked in the case of the leap forward in education: access of the middle class to higher education was promoted when half the population over 15 in the region was still illiterate.² Through rapid urbanization and the modernization of employment, the masses are now rapidly forced to participate in a type of social life which demands that they be able to handle codes which were previously

totally unknown to them: bureaucratic rationality, technical rationality and abstract mental processes. With regard to the impact of the mass media, it has often been said that this phenomenon causes cosmopolitanism to exist side by side with localism, especially in view of the speed and extent to which the various components of the conventional cultural industry have spread in Latin America and the Caribbean.³ In terms of access to information, this means that the local spaces, including those which previously suffered from chronic isolation, now have a window through which they can see what is going on in the world.

² Only four decades ago, around 1950, Latin America was a totally different continent in terms of its cultural makeup: 61% of the population lived in rural areas, the illiteracy rate among those over 15 was nearly 50%, and gross enrolment at the secondary level was barely 7%. Today, however, gross enrolment rates are 100% in primary education and over 50% at the secondary level. In a number of countries, the proportion of the population over 25 with a post-secondary level of education is between 5% and 7%, which is comparable to the levels in Austria, Hungary and Italy (Brunner, 1990, pp. 11 and 31).

³ In this region, "the number of radio receivers increased to nearly 140 million by 1987: that is to say, 332 per 1 000 inhabitants – a proportion more than double that of the average for all developing countries. Likewise, the number of television transmitters, which was only 250 in 1965, rose to 1 590 by 1987, while the number of television receivers, which was only 8 million in 1965, amounted to 60 million by 1987, representing an increase from 32 to 147 per 1 000 inhabitants, compared with 1987 figures of 49 per 1 000 in Asia and 14 per 1 000 in Africa" (Brunner, 1990, p. 32).

The effect may be even more profound, however, in the case of symbolic consumption, where a whole range of new codes, sensibilities, dramas of human passion, human conflicts and scales of values are set forth in television films or soap operas and now reach publics which lived for centuries on the basis of reciprocal relationships, immemorial forms of religious syncretism, rituals connected with the agricultural cycles and precarious forms of survival. Not only do different time-scales exist in the contrast between the messages and the cultural environment in which they are decoded, but the programming of the media itself contains at one and the same time forms of logic and sensibility which belong to different cultural "moments": a Mexican soap opera and a Flash Gordon serial follow each other without a break in the weekday afternoon programmes shown in La Paz or Guatemala.

In point of fact, modernity in the region is a new time which contains many other times. This means that it is difficult to project to our region the assumption of the linearity of historical time, based on the idea of the "relief" of one culture by another culture which succeeds it, which forms part of the classical idea of modernity in the countries of the North. In Latin America and the Caribbean, cultures reflect this syndrome of tardy modernity which consists of rapid incorporation into exogenous symbolic markets and which inevitably results in some degree of cultural hybridism.

At the same time, there is no scale which allows the recipients of the messages from the media to be grouped according to their degree of modernity of cultural consumption. What criterion can we use to determine whether a person watching the CNN television news is more modern than one watching a Brazilian soap opera, or whether the reader of a political journal is more modern than someone reading a sports magazine? In the light of experience, in hyper-communicational modernity the modern aspects are increasingly connected with the logic of the mass media. The degree of modernity is no longer defined by an order of categories, but by the incorporation of technology and intellectual added value in the production of messages. Thus, a light entertainment programme on the television is more modern than a cultural report if it is capable of simultaneously integrating with presenters and programmes of other countries. On the other hand, a cultural report may be more modern than a soap opera if it is capable of

introducing greater contrasts, a greater variety of levels of discourse, better definition of views or greater dynamism in dealing with a subject.

With the most recent effects of the globalization of communication and technological diversification on the cultural industry complexes, the idea of modern culture is shifting from a scale of contents to a scale of fertility of communication. This phenomenon, further heightened by the tremendous increase in the supply of products of the cultural industry (videos, cable television, video games and computing, telematics and fax networks, satellite antennas), is redefining the conventional contrast between traditional and modern culture.

The new scenario into which new and flexible branches of the cultural industry are being incorporated is not just a more highly developed version of the heterogeneity of times and cultural patterns already referred to. As far back as a couple of decades ago, the spread of television led to the oft-quoted assertion that "the medium is the message". In more recent years, however, the change has gone even deeper. Because of the greater competition and internationalization of television and the proliferation of new production and consumption options in the field of the cultural industry, a substantial change is taking place in the concept of what is modern in the area of cultural production and consumption.⁴

In the cultural market, the level of modernity is increasingly defined by the form of production rather than the content, by the technological packaging rather than by the message, by the rate of innovation rather than the "class" of the product. This change is bringing new signs into the cultural imagination. While on the one hand it undermines the conventional categories of values of culture, it also undermines cultural identities. It destabilizes views of the world and heightens cultural hybridism to undreamed-of degrees: hybridism is no longer just a syncretism or crossing of two cultural codes, but a creative game or new invention for the cultural market – a totally new combination which makes it possible to continue innovating in the field of recreation.

⁴ For example, in the field of cultural consumption a new-generation Nintendo game about monsters is more modern than a conventional television series set in New York. A laser digital recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is more modern than Ravel's Bolero recorded on a conventional cassette. No matter how boringly domestic its subject may be, a home video film is more modern than a 1960s superproduction.

The same flexibility of images, codes, languages and rules which forms part of the technology of video games, computer games or virtual reality gives rise to a state of continual metamorphosis of images, symbols and traditions. The different combinations are limitless. The world can be recreated for ever in a diskette or video tape. There is not even any shortage of space for this, because the spaces can be reduced almost infinitely in the microchips where so many worlds circulate. Instead of needing a football field (or the street, to go out and play with the neighbours), there are thousands of games right there inside the monitor. A Nintendo is an infinite version of the whole universe of games: it takes up hardly any space, never gets tired, is always new, and yet at the same time unceasingly neutralizes the whole intensity of that novelty.

Culture is passing from a hybrid state to one marked by the unbridled repetition of the act of "hybridization": every day, as part of the race engaged in by the image industry itself, a new version is produced of the encounter between Hernán Cortés and Malinche. It is not clear what impact these new cultural technologies are having on the view of the world held by children who are just beginning to tune in to the new waves of the cultural industry. What happens to the view of the world held by a second-generation literacy student who still maintains certain

vernacular traditions and values in his order of symbols when he enters the vortex of the constant entry into and exit from new worlds every time he sits down in front of a video screen or a computer? What influence is exerted on the selective capacity, the image of the world and of the specific place each person occupies in that world, and the storage of information in the mind by the relatively recent habit of coming home in the evening and beginning to jump from one to another of twenty or more possible television channels coming from ten or more different countries?

It is not our intention to draw an apocalyptic picture suggesting that the globalized impact of the cultural industry will wipe out all the social links, customs and values which have been built up in the course of centuries of conflictive history in Latin America and the Caribbean. The new forms of the cultural industry are not necessarily negative: it is not so much the negative or positive nature as the extent of the impacts of the cultural industry in recent years that need to be taken into account. It is no longer possible to speak solely of the incorporation of the masses into modern forms of language, modern ideas and modern occupations: what is now involved is their incorporation into the ongoing changes in forms of language, images, ideas and occupations.

III

Active and passive participation in the area of the cultural industry

The new branches of the cultural industry make possible a fuller mutual relation between the producers and consumers of culture. The operational flexibility and smaller size of the components and the cost of the equipment have made it possible for some years now to expand the field of the producers and establish more horizontal links among the actors in the cultural market.

Paradoxically, the new cultural industry complex combines greater professionalization with a more mass-oriented focus among the issuers of messages. The professionalization of the cultural field increases as competition among television stations becomes

more intense and more internationalized. Operators and transmitters become more highly technified, while two different fronts made up of producers and consumers are maintained. Nevertheless, the progressive diversification of the supply of television programmes forces viewers to develop greater selectivity and to play a more important role as consumers. We are in the presence of "the creative work of millions of viewer/consumers who, individually and sometimes collectively, process, interpret, appropriate and experience in their own way this mass of signs which are produced and transmitted" (Brunner, 1990, p. 36). The apocalyptic view which was taken

a few years ago, warning of the growing passivity of consumers with regard to what the media put before them, has been replaced by the idea of an active, decodifying, selective consumer who processes the information supplied to him. The welter of options and the competition reigning among the media providing them force the consumer to develop into a productive consumer.

In the new products which the cultural industry is disseminating among our societies, at great speed and at ever-lower prices, the division between producers and consumers is becoming more tenuous. Neither heavy resources nor much technical knowledge are required in order to make home videos, operate video games or computer games, play an active part in the circulation of messages through telematics networks or teleconferencing, or –what is most novel and surprising– to change one's life and persona for five minutes by putting a few coins in the slot in order to enter the limitless world of virtual reality.⁵

The capacity to take an active part in the new technologies may be facilitated by learning the rudiments of computing in primary school. The shift from professionalism to everyday use by the masses is evident when we see how, in the industrialized countries, millions of children are operating computers with a mastery and ease which only seemed to be within the reach of engineers and advanced technicians just a few years ago. This familiarity with computers and integrated information/communication systems is indeed a new form of literacy. It is most impressive that many children are already capable of reprogramming a game on the computer and that nowadays they show greater aptitude than many adults for the assumption of interactive roles in new branches of the cultural industry.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, however, these "computer-literate" children are a minority. Whether because they go to elite schools or because they come from families where the computer is part of family life, they have a considerable advantage over the many schoolchildren who are lucky if they have one computer monitor for a whole classroom. In a new and disturbing manner, this redefines the dividing line between those who are "in" and those who are "out". We are, of course, still very far from a

situation where every Latin American home has a computer, but the new strength gained by the cultural industry with the incorporation of this new range of goods brings into social interaction the image of a computer within the reach of everyone. In the case of these new "literate" the relation with work, study and leisure necessarily involves radical changes in the uses of communication and information.

In our region, this new spurt in the cultural industry also brings the risk of further increasing the gap between those who are integrated in the new system and those who are not. "Integrate or die" would be a crude but very apt image of this new pattern. The danger that this gap may be consolidated from the earliest years of schooling means that in the future there may be a substantial majority of people who are computer illiterates and do not know how to cope with the logic of computer languages. In Brazil, which is the leading country in the region in terms of the television and informatics industries, the promises of individual development could extend, with luck, to a third of the total population, who are moving ahead with giant steps. In the case of the other two-thirds, the low income levels and scanty access to the benefits of modernity represent an insurmountable barrier to their expectations of personal development.⁶

⁵ It is no longer a question, as in Gabriel García Márquez's famous novel *Cien años de soledad*, of an experience like that of Colonel Aureliano Buendía, when his father took him as a child to a gipsy's tent to get to know ice: virtual reality now allows us to enter ice, move about inside it, look out of it from the inside, and so forth.

⁶ The following contrasts in Brazil give food for thought: whereas that country has the fourth biggest television network in the world (O Globo), in 1990 the members of 43% of the country's households had an average of between 0 and 3 years' schooling. Likewise, in 1990 the country had 213 television sets per 1,000 inhabitants, which suggests that most Brazilian households had a window on the world through this medium, yet at the same time the national illiteracy rate was close to 20%, the incidence of child malnutrition was around 13%, and 55% of the economically active population were classed as "poor" (World Bank, 1993; UNESCO, 1992).

IV

Blurring of limits in the cultural industry

The distinction between the "heavy" and "light" cultural industry is increasingly difficult to maintain as the systemic integration of the means of information and communication advances. Can we really assert, nowadays, that a religious upbringing makes a deeper impression on a child's mind than his contact through television with the war in Iraq or the last world football championship, or that the subjects he had to study for a history examination are etched more deeply in a child's memory than a cultural report that he watched on television for half an hour or so while browsing through the various channels? Who can really swear that an adolescent develops a greater capacity for logical thinking through a course of syntax or mathematics at his secondary school than through the games he plays on his computer when he gets home in the afternoon?

The field of cultural consumption is becoming so diverse that it is now very difficult to draw the line where the cultural industry ends. The logic of computer software moves from the monitor screen to the street and becomes a new form of processing of culture. Cultural consumption takes on a new form which serves as a kind of packaging for very varied contents: a form like that of software, which each user starts, stops and interchanges according to the relevant preferences, situations and objectives. The software model as it applies to culture also enters into training activities, through workshops with audiovisual support, weekend retreats and videos or computer programmes on new forms of management.

In this software-type cultural consumption, too, the cultural industry is blurring the frontiers between producers and consumers. When learning processes become light and varied, little training is needed in order to progress from student to teacher or from consumer to producer. Training to become a professor of meditation in a Himalayan monastery is a very different thing from receiving training in a personal development module in a business firm; being a literature professor in a university is very different from being a literature teacher in a neighbourhood group. As cultural consumption takes on the form of software, it also becomes a simpler matter to enter the

cultural industry as a supplier of goods or services. Protagonism exists side by side with "provisionalism" in the new cultures integrated into the recent waves of modernity.

In our region, this combination of protagonism and provisionalism in integrated culture becomes exclusion and precariousness in the case of the poor. Here, the lightness is connected more with the precariousness of survival than with flexibility in the consumption of cultural goods. The uncertainty about the future is due more to fear than to the wealth of options available for shaping one's life; more to insecurity than to dynamism. The lightness becomes deprivation; diversification becomes fragmentation. The software metaphor also penetrates here, but it is mingled with the survival-oriented culture of the big cities, where the activities for each new day are re-programmed in the light of the need to generate a minimum income: the software is a strategy based on the culture of precariousness, not "provisionalism".

In the Latin American setting, the integrated and the excluded are on the one hand united by television culture, and on the other hand re-stratified in the new cultural markets. In the case of television, as the definition of the supply of all types of programmes improves, the limits between highbrow and lowbrow culture become increasingly blurred. But although cultures may intersect in television, the socio-cultural gap reappears in new forms in other fields of the cultural industry. As we already noted, society is divided up into those who are integrated into the rapid circulation of information and new languages and those who are excluded from this.

It is true that rapid obsolescence and growing competition quickly reduce the cost of computers, video cameras and recorders, cable television services and other new cultural goods, which means that the middle strata can join the ranks of those who are integrated into the new ways, albeit with some delay in the rate of renewal. A very large section of the population, made up of the low and lower-middle income strata, however, remain on the sidelines of these new patterns of cultural consumption and symbolic integration. The result of this is that forms of

general symbolic integration (through the television, generalized basic education, opening up of channels of political participation thanks to democracy) coexist with forms of segmentation as regards the consumption of the vast range of goods that now make up the cultural industry.

In short, the blurring of limits in the cultural field is a development which is both strongly marked and recent. The frontiers between light and heavy in the channels of internalization of culture are disappearing; the personal "menu" as regards the use of goods and services connected with the cultural industry is becoming much more diversified; the patterns of integration and discrimination in the field of symbolic consumption are being reshaped as a result of the rapid changes in the cultural industry, and the limits are also disappearing between producers and consumers or between active and passive participants in the field of the supply and consumption of culture.

This blurring or disappearance of limits due to the changes in the cultural industry must not be taken lightly. It tends to have such a profound impact on the culture of our societies that it even alters the perception of everyday life in various senses. Firstly, it is no longer so easy to associate everyday matters with continuity. Whether through provisionalism or precariousness, everyday matters are becoming more random and dispersed. Secondly, the reiterative dimension of everyday matters is becoming less marked, through employment insecurity, the speeding up of technical change, the growing volatility of traditional roles, or the sensation of a "time tunnel" experienced as a result of the explosive increase in the offerings of the information and communications industry. Finally, the short-term horizon is tending to take the place of any long-term project in daily life, through the effect of precariousness in some cases, through provisionalism in others, and through the much faster rate of change in all areas of everyday activities.

V

The need for new efforts to promote cultural integration in societies with low levels of social integration

In societies with low levels of social integration, like a large proportion of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, the potential contribution of the cultural industry to development may be under-utilized. In our region, the segmented access to the new goods in the fields of information and communication means that a large part of society is kept in a situation of relative backwardness, with the risk that the gaps in terms of levels of productivity, access to new markets and development of intellectual faculties may be further widened. On the one hand, the lowering of the cost of the new goods offered by the cultural industry and their greater ability to penetrate to different socio-cultural sectors holds out the promise of greater integration, but on the other hand, the new forms of illiteracy represent a new threat for the great masses of the region's population who have no access to any form of information-based progress.

The tensions between cultural identity and modernity, which could be resolved with synergic effects through the new potential of the cultural industry, may also take on more conflictive features due to the high levels of social disintegration. Uncertainty about the future is generated by the impact of globalization on endogenous cultures and on their relation with the universalist culture which prevails in global exchanges. It is hard to know, in our region, whether this globalization of communications will make it possible to reduce the levels of social disintegration, offset economic and social disintegration with higher levels of cultural and political integration, or else set off a kind of societal schizophrenia, with a great deal of integration in cultural consumption but profound heterogeneity in levels of productivity and material well-being.

In order to reconcile the special socio-cultural features of our societies with the universalist impulse that modernity is now channelling through its new cultural industry complexes, an order of modern citizens is required. Modern citizenship means the existence of social actors who have the capacity to decide for themselves, to represent their interests and demands, and to exercise their legally recognized individual and collective rights. As long as this modern citizenship is only the privilege of minority sectors of society, the symbolic integration made possible by the cultural industry complex will have the dual effect already referred to: integration in some fields, but greater discrimination in others.

The impact of the cultural industry complex on societies with low levels of social integration is thus rather ambiguous. As an inertial trend, it may be expected that new relations of exclusion will be formed. Thus, for example, the division between formal and informal-sector workers in the field of labour may shift to a gap between those who have

access to information-based progress and those who have not; the segmentation between the modern and the traditional may shift in the cultural field to a new division between active and passive participants, and the gap between literates and illiterates will give rise to a division between achievements of high quality and those of low quality.

Finally, the cross-temporal aspects which have given culture in the region its hybrid identity will be bound to intersect even more as the cultural industry expands, without however dissolving the ways of life and views of the world maintained by Andean or Caribbean communities, jungle tribes and Afro-Brazilians. This exacerbation of different times within a broader single time need not necessarily have a negative effect: they can also be a reflection of a cultural fabric of great complexity, richness and beauty. They may even be seen as an asset for the future, in view of the increasingly heterogeneous nature of symbolic exchanges in the new versions of the cultural industry complex.

VI

The cultural industry as a new vehicle for social integration and participative culture

The link between culture and endogenous development depends to a large extent on the adaptation of the potential offered by the cultural industry. Objectively, its structure of growing versatility and diminishing costs is a feature of the new cultural industry complex which can be used to promote greater social integration and cultural development. The possibilities for action and for playing important roles opened up to ethnic groups and socio-cultural actors who have been deprived of access to the benefits and codes of modernity can be considerably increased if the resources of the cultural industry are properly mobilized. This synergic mobilization of information, communication and interaction resources can do a great deal to reverse the attitudes of resignation, pessimism and fatalism which spread over Latin America and the Caribbean during the 1970s and 1980s with regard to the viability of endogenous development and of the full deployment of national cultures.

In the field of the cultural industry, costs are going down and there are increasingly flexible technical possibilities for incorporating socio-cultural actors so far little integrated into the public exchange of messages. This should make possible intensive use of the niches of the cultural industry complex to carry out small-scale actions designed to promote and defend autochthonous cultures which have only precarious access to the benefits of modernization. "Over the last four decades, the real cost of "hardware" has been going down steadily by an average of 20% per year. The most sophisticated technologies of the recent past are increasingly accessible (if not for all, at least for many more people every year). One metre of fibre optic cable, which cost US\$3.50 in 1977, now costs 25 US cents, and this decline in cost has been accompanied by a marked improvement in quality" (Annis, 1991, p. 94). And in the words of ECLAC: "The dissemination of telematics (a combination of

telecommunications and information technologies) opens up a good many possibilities (...). Increasing affordability, miniaturization and user-friendliness and the ease with which these technologies can be put to many different uses make them ideal for purposes of coordination among very diverse or dispersed agents" (ECLAC, 1992a, p. 243).

As the price of components goes down, communications can be more and more horizontally linked. Integrated systems—telephones which link up with telexes, computers, databases, fax machines—have so many entry points that their access can also benefit low-income socio-cultural actors.⁷ At the same time, increasingly light and portable components mean that information is physically more accessible to remote areas, which are precisely where autochthonous cultural identities are most often preserved, albeit in isolation.

The region needs to consolidate a second generation in the development of the communications industry and to ensure progress towards a third generation which will strengthen endogenous development and socio-cultural protagonism (Annis, 1991). The first generation oriented the use of television and radio towards the sale of commercial products. The second generation, which is currently beginning to show positive effects, adapts publicity techniques to "social marketing", which includes educational campaigns on the environment, the prevention of epidemics, political information and other matters which help to build modern citizenship. A culture of citizen concern and action promoted by the communications media helps to break down social barriers and to involve society at large in common problems. The third generation, which is still very incipient, moves from the phase of active reception to that of horizontal interchanges among the communication agents. Systems of teleconferences, informatics networks and integrated connections (telephone-fax machine-computer-photocopier) can

serve to give voice to those who have not previously had the possibility of making their views known in public spaces. These new systems, when also integrated with the mass media, offer a very valuable potential for expanding public communication spaces. By this means, a wide range of social demands coming from dispersed or subordinated actors could begin to find their place in the public circulation of messages.

Thus, the strategies for the development of the cultural industry in the region are faced with an enormous challenge. The assertion of an endogenous form of development requires a participative culture, a body of citizens with the will to play a leading role, and socio-cultural actors who are incorporated into modernity in the horizontal interchange of symbols and messages. For this purpose, the consolidation of the second and third generations of the communications and information markets can become a vital element.

The tendency to decentralize the issue of messages in the cultural industry can contribute to the democratization of the region's societies. As we have already attained political democracy in the great majority of our countries, the further heightening of democracy on the basis of more prominent roles for a broad range of social actors could be boosted by the spread of the new forms of the cultural industry in the area of communication. There are now interesting cases in various countries of the region where the use of new goods produced by this industry has made possible horizontal links among various groups which previously suffered from socio-cultural segregation. These cases could serve to promote new initiatives in this field, such as the establishment of systems for the incorporation of the demands of dispersed sectors, greater links among the indigenous ethnic groups of the countries of the region, the production of programmes for the spread of autochthonous cultures, organized by the indigenous sectors themselves, etc.⁸

⁷ The following is a good example of what the telephone holds out for the future: "Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, the Japanese communications giant which employs 3,000 scientists on technological research and design, hopes to develop and spread throughout the world a portable telephone device, the size of a calculator or digital clock, which will be very cheap to buy and use and will serve to communicate with anywhere in the world and also see the person receiving the call, in what it calls "intelligent visual personal communication services". Moreover, the calls will be free from interference and can make use of simultaneous interpretation services if language is a problem in communication" (*El Mercurio*, 1993).

⁸ Thus, for example, in Guatemala indigenous peasants fax messages about human rights violations to international non-governmental organizations, even though they do not know how to use a typewriter. In Amazonia, in Brazil, illiterate Indians exchange video cassettes in order to spread their native customs. Mexican neighbourhood organizations increase their pressure in public spaces with the aid of computers, their own data bases, and inter-neighbourhood information networks. In Chiapas, associations of small coffee producers communicate with similar groups in Central America and the Caribbean in order to share information on transport, markets, international prices, production techniques and international negotiations (Annis, 1991).

Because of their decreasing costs and flexible capacity for systemic combination and linkages, the possibilities opened up by the new cultural industry complex present society with a challenge in terms of creativeness and intelligence. It is necessary to develop a capacity for inventiveness and adaptation, both in State cultural policy and among the various economic actors in the cultural industry, in order to take advantage of the potential for social and cultural integration offered by the new cultural industry com-

plex. The virtuous circles which can be sparked off in connection with this complex through the innumerable possible combinations of uses and linkages of the available components also depend on the flexibility and intelligence in terms of such combinations developed by governments for this purpose. This also means flexibility and intelligence of combination in terms of the ways in which State policies link up with the private economic agents working in the field of the cultural industry.

VII

The cultural industry and the spread of codes of modernity

In order to link up education, knowledge and productive development in the region it is necessary that there should be universal access to the codes of modernity (ECLAC/OREALC, 1992, pp. 157-169). Thus: "the entire population should be trained to handle the basic cultural codes of modern society or, in other words, should possess the knowledge and skills required in order to participate in public life and play a productive role in modern society" (ECLAC/OREALC, 1992, p. 149). It is also specified, in the same text, that these capabilities include those required for the execution of basic arithmetical calculations; reading and understanding a written text; communication in writing; the observation, description and critical analysis of the surrounding world; the reception and interpretation of the messages of modern communication media, and participation in the design and execution of group tasks.

Universal access to the codes of modernity, as defined in the preceding paragraph, calls for an intensive effort by the countries of the region to achieve universal coverage of basic education, to improve its quality, and to modernize it, as well as the strengthening and adaptation of programmes of education and training for adults. Education must not only transmit useful items of knowledge but must also, as suggested above, teach students how to obtain and analyse information. This requirement would appear to be of prime importance if the aim is to give the new generations better opportunities to gain access to the benefits of an information-based society and respond more effectively to its challenges.

In the same proposal presented by ECLAC and UNESCO to the governments of the region, emphasis is placed on the need for a systemic approach, involving the mobilization of the various different agents and instruments, in order to secure the equitable dissemination of knowledge on how to gain access to the items needed in order to meet the new demands of the modern world in the fields of production and communication. The following lengthy quotation may serve as an illustration: "In modern society, there are many different sources of knowledge (libraries, data banks, manuals, newspapers and magazines, the mass media, experts, etc.), and an individual can gain access to that knowledge only if he or she has learned to make use of those sources. Education should plot out "access routes" to knowledge by incorporating all these sources as different types of reference materials (...) The use of modern communications media such as radio, television and, increasingly, computers is especially important; indeed, the use of such media in the region has spread so rapidly –and continues to do so– that their inclusion in any future educational strategy is clearly called for" (ECLAC/OREALC, 1992, p. 155).⁹

⁹ In ECLAC (1992b) emphasis is laid on the seriousness of the pattern of exclusion in the field of telecommunications, because of the multiplier effect this can have on well-being and social cohesion. This document notes that in the countries of the region which have a low density of telephone service, the installation of public and rural telephones, with preferential charges for distant areas, becomes a part of social equity policy. This can be equally or even more decisive in the light of the integration into the telephone system of other "communications goods" such as fax services, the radio, and various information services.

Efforts to spread the capacity to gain access to the new cultural codes of modernity, which facilitate improved performance in the fields of both production and communications in a knowledge-based society, must necessarily encompass two elements (ECLAC/OREALC, 1992, p. 162):

i) The use of the communications media to develop more or less formal channels for distance learning by children and adults which will give access to the cultural codes of modern society to dispersed population groups with few resources and little training.

ii) The utilization of the content and techniques of modern communications media to put out educational programmes, by means of their integration into learning processes and their use as a means of opening up the schools to the community. This also requires complementary action by the schools to teach television viewers to receive and interpret the messages sent out over the mass media in a critical and selective manner.¹⁰

The cultural industry complex is both the agent and the product of the new dynamics of dissemination and use of the cultural codes of modernity. On the one hand, it is an agent because the policy-makers, entrepreneurs and operators of the cultural industry must make use of a wide range of options, which can be combined in a very flexible manner, in order to jointly optimize access to those codes. On the other hand, it is a product because cultural codes of modernity are also required in order to optimize the use of the cultural industry, not only in consumption but also in its management and in the exchange of messages in that field.

This brings us to a new paradox. On the one hand, the cultural industry favours the dissemination of codes of modernity to society as a whole and thus has a favourable impact on social integration. On the other hand, however, insofar as cultural codes of

modernity are needed in order for its products to be consumed in a productive manner, it generates greater segregation among possible users. Those who have more training in the handling and selection of information, in language skills and mathematics, and in flexible systems of management and organization will always be in a better position to take advantage of the products of the cultural industry complex.

Consequently, an integrated strategy in the field of the cultural industry must deal with both sides of this question: mobilizing the cultural industry to democratize the knowledge required by modern life, and at the same time employing it to teach how to use the new cultural goods, especially on the threshold of the third generation referred to earlier, which opens up the possibility of creating more horizontal and interactive links in such use. To this end, the region must not only take advantage of the successful experience built up over the last decade in the various countries but must also take into account the experience in the field of the dissemination of the codes of modernity which has given good results outside the region.

Finally, the capacity for discernment and production of symbols is not only functional to the performance of individuals in a modern habitat, but also has an important ethical and political dimension, since in knowledge-based societies the exercise of citizenship and the development of persons requires this capacity for discernment. "Thus, increasing the capacity to obtain and prepare cultural information (...) means that there cannot be a single or total solution for any of the great dilemmas of human existence (...) and therefore socially establishes the right to trial and error" (Bravo, 1991, p. 16).

Today, cultural democracy necessarily involves democracy of communications, i.e., "the possibility that the various social and cultural agents of the country can express their presence in the collective imagination: in the way we conceive and represent ourselves" (Subercaseaux, 1992, p. 27). The region must advance in the areas of cultural pluralism and the democratization of culture. Both the processes of political democratization experienced in the 1980s and the progressive impact of the opening-up of the communications and information markets and the consequent increase in cultural exchanges are having far-reaching effects in our region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, they impart special importance to the links between innovations

¹⁰ Some isolated experiments have been made in the region in this respect, such as the "Telesecundaria" programme organized in Mexico in the late 1970s to provide educational services in isolated and thinly-populated areas where the cost of setting up and maintaining traditional-type schools was prohibitive. Various initiatives have also been taken in Chile in the last ten years, such as the television series "Sentencia", where a dramatic format was used to show legal problems affecting the low-income urban population; "Teleduc", which is a pilot system of television classes, and the mass communication campaign undertaken in support of the educational effort on breast-feeding carried out by the National Food and Nutrition Council.

in the cultural industry complex, on the one hand, and the democratization of our societies and of access to culture in them, on the other. The promotion within society of initiatives that will make it possible to take advantage of this "ecstasy of communication" for the benefit of more horizontal cultural exchanges

is still only at an incipient stage, but such horizontality—whether in terms of the mutual penetration of points of view or the dance of symbols—can become a renewed version of the utopia of hybridism in Latin America and the Caribbean.

(Original: Spanish)

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