Miège, Bernand. "Principal Ongoing Mutations of Cultural and Informational Industries."
The Political Economies of Media: The Transformation of the Global Media Industries. Ed.
Dwayne Winseck and Dal Yong Jin. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 51–65. *Bloomsbury
Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849664264.ch-001>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023,
00:08 UTC.

Copyright © Copyright in the collection and in any introductory and concluding materials ©
Dwayne Winseck and Dal Yong Jin 2011. Copyright in the individual chapters © the Contributors
2011. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution
to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Principal Ongoing Mutations of Cultural and Informational Industries

Bernand Miège

University Stendhal of Grenoble (France)

The “mutations of cultural, informational, and communications industries” research program

For over three decades, a group of scholars has developed the Cultural Industries School.¹ Some of the key figures, main contours, and diffusion of this school, especially in Europe, Latin America, and parts of Canada, are outlined well enough in the Introduction and in Chapter 2, so they do not need to be repeated here. Instead, this chapter provides an update on a collective research program organized by practitioners of this approach in 2004 at a seminar at MSH Paris Nord. Its participants call this research program “Mutations des CICI” or, translated into English, “Mutations of Cultural, Informational, and Communications Industries.” This research project is the next step in a trajectory of research that others and I have carried out for many years under the framework of the cultural industries approach. The goal is to grasp the contemporary mutations affecting the cultural, information, and communications industries. Sometime in the future, we also intend to examine whether it makes sense to distinguish between the now fashionable notion of the creative industries and our focus on the cultural industries. For the time being, however, it can safely be said that we are skeptical that much would be gained by a change in nomenclature at this time.

Our current approach reflects the reality that, intellectually, the conditions in the humanities and social science research remain unsettled. Furthermore, our “objects of study” are likewise in a heightened state of flux. Reflecting this unsettled state of affairs, it is necessary to indicate that the task in front of us is a daunting one and can only be partial and tentative in the conclusions that it draws. The temporality of the phenomena under study is too quick to do otherwise. In other words, things are far from complete, and to proceed otherwise would impose a false sense of surety on the insights that we do offer. Media professionals, industrialists, and decision makers in the public sphere, of course, would like faster answers, but this is simply not possible, at least

not in an honest way. Despite these demands to supply ready-made formulaic answers, what is being observed here does not take place over a short span of time. Instead, it brings together a number of tendencies that, however congruent and related to one another, do not in any way lend themselves to being identified as a unitary phenomenon. There are no neat-and-tidy answers to appease those who want to know, *exactly*, what we should conclude or do in practical terms about the contemporary condition of the cultural, information, and communications industries. To put this another way, it is as if the compositional elements of the mutations in question are following their own rhythm and are only partially self-regulating; it would be rather bold to suggest that they form something like a system. Nonetheless, we can be sure of one thing: that they are directly implicated in the changes in cultural and informational production and consumption.

Since 2004, we have focused on the question of cultural diversity² (to be discussed momentarily in greater detail). This focus has been on a coherent grouping of issues that appeared not long after the beginning of the new century (on the heels of strong protest against World Trade Organization (WTO) policy regarding cultural markets) and were felt by many to have the potential to serve as a normative offset to the ever-expanding, market-based approach to cultural and informational products, both domestically and in international trade. Certainly, cultural diversity works, in some ways, beyond any temporal frame for research. It is also easily overrun by the immediate course of events, as has been obvious since the world economic and financial crisis, with its diverse effects on the regions of the world. Yet, over the past two decades, there has been a steady fixation by the different powers-that-be on not just the creation of a world market economy but an accompanying information and communications framework for just such an entity: *convergence* (among networks, hardware, and content), the *information highway*, *information societies*, and now *creative industries* (or *creative economies*)—and this list will surely grow.

All of these projects, to different degrees, concern the future of cultural and informational industries (though not only this) as well as their place in contemporary capitalism. All, as well, position the cultural and informational industries vis-à-vis (or, more aptly, against) powerful network and computer hardware industries. At the same time, however, the truly significant features of these developments have been given a reflective gloss by slogans and performative injunctions that, primarily, serve as vehicles for ideological discourse. Such slogans and ideological discourses should be named as such.

These syntagms (though differently in each case, as a result of which analysis must be performed repeatedly) are so important because they are at the heart of beliefs that are being translated into action, strategies, and policy; they are mobilizers and, importantly, act across cultures and borders. Pulling apart their exaggerations and simplifications, their tropisms and omissions,

their stereotypes and superficialities is indispensable work in all cases. This, however, is not enough because these “programs” are taken up by “decision makers,” although not only by them. There is no shortage of, for example, boosterism around quasi-amateur independent production and the importance of social networks for musicians and their publics.

Sorting out the effects of beliefs from real effects is an intellectual undertaking that existing research methodologies cannot ever totally guarantee. Research can, however, show that the social actions that take place in the name of these syntagms, and which are translated into programs of action, have a distinct social logic. This, in turn, underpins the trajectories of development as well as the mutations that characterize the communication, informational, and cultural industries (CICIs). We need simultaneously a comprehensive and global analyses of this sector just as much as we need analyses of the particular industries within it, always going about this work with a certain anxiety about (prudence toward?) the incompleteness of the results and a full awareness that whatever results we do have are provisional. This, then, crystallizes the essential focus of the Mutations des CICI research program: That is, beyond the successive recycling of a relatively coherent set of beliefs and ideologies (syntagm) under somewhat different labels, what social logics are giving rise to durable mutations in the media content industries? Beyond superficial and short-lived effects, how does the expression of these social logics permit a glimpse at long-term changes that are taking place, here understood as mutations?

With regard to *cultural diversity* (and to be clear, all of what is behind this notion), it is useful to insist on the expression’s multiple meanings. In play here, and mostly unchecked, are scholarly meanings (as used by liberal cultural economists and anthropologists alike in the area of cultural trade and exchange), trivial meanings (reiterated by cultural movers or artists), and recently constructed politico-strategic meanings (reiterated to a large degree in UNESCO’s 2005 “cultural diversity” declaration or built into the “cultural industry” clauses of numerous bilateral conventions). Undoubtedly more so than with other analogous expressions, when we speak of cultural diversity, confusion is common, and slippage between meanings is permanent. The many distortions surrounding the notion of cultural diversity in official and academic discourse are made all the worse by the relatively short history of this syntagm’s uptake in “official bodies.” Now, even previous scholarly usages of the term seem to have disappeared in a way almost totally unnoticed. It is incumbent on us to question whether cultural diversity will continue to draw interest in the realm of international trade.

Guessing at the answer to such a question would be dangerous. The recent financial and economic crisis represents a certain set of limits on the attempts to build a world economy and will put the brakes on this kind of trend. One can also reason the opposite too, however, as soon as we remember that the

increase in trade in areas related to cultural diversity is quite large and runs parallel to the growth seen in trade in the area of digital products, where values have also greatly increased. We know, too, that similar trends have seen long ebbs (and have even been totally eclipsed) before flowing anew: This was the case with the idea of information societies. Cultural goods, in other words, can simultaneously constitute objective limits to economic expansion, while also serving as a vast new frontier of capital accumulation.

Five major trends and trajectories in the development in the CICIs

What can the discussion of cultural diversity tell us about CICIs? What is revealed by the strategies deployed by the various actors that operate under its aegis? Still further, in what way can we see cultural diversity as a darkroom in which we can develop a picture of these industries? On what elements do authorities inside the relevant international organizations and those working in particular professional milieus place the greatest emphasis?

There seem to be five main elements at the forefront of these discussions, all of which translate into an equal number of deep mutations that are currently taking place and congealing within the CICIs (e.g. through public policy, and probably more so through regulatory changes, but equally through the rationalization of distribution, intensification of promotion, etc., processes that can easily be described in relation to the specific industries targeted by the research program: film and audiovisual, book publishing, music production, general information and newspapers, video games). Each of these will be taken up successively, with a focus on their principal aspects.

Mutation 1: the current globalization of, and expansion in, market consumption (of culture and information)

Two things help us to explain the emergence of cultural diversity within international trade and its significance as a trade-related regulatory concept, especially during the early 2000s. First, there has been a very strong incentive and push to open new markets for informational and cultural industry (ICI) products. Second, there has been an emphasis on marketizing cultural and informational products.

However, there is a paradox in both of these processes, which I have proposed should be considered as social logics of communication precisely because they are, along with a few others, at the heart of what organizes information and communication over the long term. In reality, however, these processes have not actually taken such a long time to be realized between more and less

developed countries. Those checks that might seem to oppose them present very little in the way of insurmountable obstacles. Some see the CICIs, and the content industries in particular, as being of an inherently political and cultural nature, whose unique status as such should not be surpassed or simply flattened by the advance of the market. Others, however, rely on the remaining relics of a dated brand of cultural protectionism. For the former, culture and information are not and should not become goods. The proponents of the former view cling to a nonnegotiable stance despite decades of evidence to the contrary. The latter conservatively cling to the idea that cultural identity and heritage are crucial and should not be trammled by the rush to include culture as just another element of trade regimes. In other words, in the public discussions that accompanied and followed the protests over the policies that the WTO sought to impose, those opposed to such moves considered the socio-symbolic components of “cultural goods” as being of foremost concern, and decisive, either because they constituted a “public domain” that ought to stay outside the market or because they wanted to protect and preserve heritage trophies.

Does this mean there are no significant economic stakes at issue, nor particularly, any strong boost sought to world commerce of cultural and informational products? Clearly, such an end is indeed sought, but it does not hold the same significance for every region of the world. For developed countries and the firms that depend on and remain dominant in them, the opening of new markets in developing countries and those of the southern hemisphere is of paramount importance. Such efforts have become all the more trying in light of the emergence and maturation of Indian, Brazilian, Mexican, and even Egyptian competitors, all of which seek to win such opportunities for themselves. The clear hope is for new areas of expansion, but whether this can actually be achieved is far from certain. Marketizing culture and information has always been difficult, and this continues to be the case despite the development of informational and communications technologies (ICTs) better able to regulate access to content and to measure and value information and culture goods. The seriousness of these difficulties has only been compounded by the fact that growth margins for informational and cultural content industries have shrunk, especially since 2009.

Beyond this set of questions, what matters here is not just the place of cultural industries in the development of contemporary economies but actually the position of formerly industrialized countries in the face of polarization occurring in many directions in these same economies. In other words, it is not only a question of knowing whether the industrial and capitalist valuing of culture and information is as strategic as has been claimed by some experts but also whether this is a means by which long-standing groups and firms in industrialized countries can maintain dominance in a time when their status is being contested in many segments of the industries that they pioneered.

Mutation 2: the increasing dominance of communications industries over content industries

This search for expansion while confronting objective limits is not new. But it has accelerated. Recently, we can observe a particular rise in the position of hardware manufacturers, telecom firms, access providers, web players, software industries, and so on. The disproportion in terms of capitalist valuing and economic activity between some of these sectors and others no longer surprises anyone; it is flagrant and rarely analyzed as such. This has begun to give rise to structural effects, to the point that the future of some of the constitutive elements of the cultural and informational industries have come into question.

The increasing industrialization of culture and information leads to a paradoxical observation: The social value of these domains continues to depend on one another, and it is also true that the distinctive conditions of production for specific types of media and cultural goods remain intact. However, the *dissemination* of informational and cultural products is being drawn ever closer together. Previously, different media forms were easy to distinguish from one another by their socio-symbolic functions, consumption patterns, ownership, and regulation. These distinctions are becoming less and less obvious as media and cultural practices themselves become more individualized, especially on account of the proliferating number of ICT devices used in the circulation and consumption of such goods. Moreover, the cultural goods on offer increasingly come from the same multimedia industry groups, although even their operations must cut across the boundaries of the fundamental models that have defined different segments of the cultural industries (i.e. the publishing model, flow model, etc.) for a long time. Finally, the cultural and information industries are distinct from the communications industries, even if they have close relationships with them and are sometimes under their sway by way of ownership, strategic agreements, and so forth. Communications industries are extensions of the telecommunications industries, consisting of the technological networks that enable individuals or groups to remotely communicate with one another.

Communications industries are themselves diverse, and it is dangerous to generalize. However, one fact intrudes on our assumptions: The scenario many once envisioned has not held. This scenario foresaw, first, that communications industries would position themselves, as it were, behind content industries, using these as a cover to justify the distribution of their tools and network access and, second, that the financial control of these same industries via multimedia conglomerates would emerge as sure as day follows night, given the synergies presumed to exist between the two industries. Of course, a few prudent groupings having gained a footing after some sensational failures at the very beginning of the 2000s, but the “realists scenario” so easily assumed in the past is no longer certain today. And so, what is?

First, take Apple, the commercial success of which in some ways established the new reality, where makers bind content and services to technical tools that it provides. In this scenario, Apple, and others in the hardware and telecoms industries like it, is very much involved in music and other areas of information industries but without actively participating in content making. Next, certain telecom companies (e.g. Telefonica and Vivendi) have entered into audiovisual and film production, which, in the relatively short term, upsets how financing and production of film and series is done. Finally, following the example of the dominant purveyor of information on the web (namely, Google), there is distribution and redistribution of content, without concern for what links it to its creation and, despite some lesser agreements reached between producers and copyright holders, there is a stated desire for control of all information. In each of these situations, different as they are (with more or less respect paid to the ways things have been done before and to regulation), there is nonetheless a similarity in that these communications industries have instigated a power struggle headed in their favor. Since the different ICT markets have matured, there is no longer much talk of negotiating with content providers.

Mutation 3: the power of ICTs (digital) over cultural and informational practices

For consumer users, interactions with and uses of ICTs are multiple: access and consultation, archival work, amateur practices, DIY production, social uses, participation in public activities—and the forms of interaction evolve constantly. They are modeled quite closely on—we might even say conform to—the tendencies inherent in these very practices, that is, reinforcement of the logic of individual action; maintenance of social and cultural distinctions; increasingly systematic generational differentiation; enmeshing of public, private, and even professional spheres; as well as increasing marketization, even as the latter, normally highly attuned to information consumption, hurts (for now) the consumption of not-for-profit informational and cultural products. Even awaiting statistical confirmation, we can likely safely add that the present phase is in all likelihood a moment of development for usages that are difficult to evaluate because they are so dispersed and varied in character, occasional, erratic, and therefore still unstable. For most classes of consumer users, this is a time of trial and error.

As such, it would not do to declare the supremacy of ICTs over content. We are not only talking about digital consumption of culture and information, meaning only consumption supported by digital technologies. What has arisen in most branches of this sector is more coexistence than competition: Movie ticket sales are still selling briskly, and neither e-books nor video-on-demand have yet taken a firm hold; newspapers owe their difficulties more to their own past shortcomings and to free venues for information than to the emergence of

new digital modes of access and searches for the information that they provide. The latter's efforts to break into new "digital domains" are unstable and of uncertain interest to younger people. Current development in usages and the trial-and-error character of this period thus encourage coexistence between emerging and well-established patterns of media consumption. Paradoxically, the (brutal) domination of the communications industries, or at least of some of these, weakens their capacity to adapt to change in any seriously anticipatory fashion. In many instances, they have become lumbering giants. Conversely, it is true that the major players in the recording industry, despite being the most severely affected by the drop in consumption of CDs since 2003, are, without saying so, in the process of a very real and successful transition to digital platforms.

Mutation 4: maintenance of content industries but emergence of common interindustry characteristics

We will do well to insist on this point, one that will yield surprising results that run contrary to many predictions. How is it that these different industries (music, film and audiovisual, book publishing, news, and even the new video game industry) have been able to maintain or even reinforce the core strength they have held for decades: namely, the existence of a tight industrial oligopoly at the center of each of these industries while being surrounded by a dispersed multitude of players of all kinds of sizes and forms at the fringes?

To this question, we can sketch several complementary answers but still without fully doing justice to the diverse elements in play. Unquestionably, there is the fact that the digital world has not (not yet?) introduced a new product or form to trump those that have emerged over the history of communication and expression. Multimedia is no more than a composite, and at that not a very compelling one, of known forms: Creativity and innovation have not been invited to that party. To be sure, such media open many new possibilities for images, sound, data, and graphics to coexist, while promoting hypertext pathways and allowing interactive access. These developments, of course, underpin much of the hope for innovation, and even revolution, in the methods of creating cultural goods and information products. Despite some meaningful and interesting advances in this direction, most notably in the field of gaming, such potentials have fallen short of our expectations. Most often, websites are not the place of a real renewal of cultural forms but merely texts now displayed on an expanded array of screens and poorly integrated with other modes of expression. But should we be surprised? Film took a considerable amount of time to differentiate itself from theater and photography from which it borrowed.

Meanwhile, as determined as the dominant communications and software firms may be to gain a footing for their own technological systems in the

emerging media ecology, they generally ignore content, either directly or even indirectly (through the biases built into agreements with the providers of this content). In other words, these increasingly powerful players lack a strategic stance on content, which they tend to poorly understand and fail to distinguish meaningful differences between distinctive cultural forms. Cultural goods, from this standpoint, tend to be perceived as archaic curiosities steeped in their own history and professional culture. This strategic vision seems particularly lacking when we consider that the commercial interests at stake are considerable and of global proportions. This is why we can expect, in the end, to see agreements develop between these firms and content firms as well as with public agencies.

At the same time, common features between branches of the ICI sector³ are increasing, characterized by concentration of investment in the production of key content products, rationalization based on methods emerging from distribution broadcast, creation of portals (an area that, in the long run, could be important for exploiting cultural and informational products), and so on.

Mutation 5: difficulties and growing pressures faced by social agents, producers, and in particular, artists and intellectuals within the various branches of the cultural and informational industries

This pressure on creation and production flows from what has just been discussed: the constraints imposed by network and software industries, the ease of multiple disseminations, the rationalization of promotion and distribution, the possibility of direct trade that bypasses retail—these are new factors that upset standard practice in all these branches of industry more or less systematically (for the moment, the music industry has been the site of the greatest number of changes, less so in film and audiovisual). But other perhaps subtler mutations are beginning.

For a start, if the possibility of producing works or editing them is unquestionably greater, and the diversity of what is on offer, as we can see in all these industries, has measurably increased, conditions for production have worsened, and this mutation is far from done: More must be produced (with the same means) faster and with less assured outlets due to the advent of new competitors who pay perhaps less respect to professional considerations. Increased productivity in artistic or intellectual work, precariousness of employment, and the relative devaluing of works thus characterize what is falsely deemed the “digital” era. Those areas where revenues were relatively stable before (e.g. among the majors of the music industry, who, during past moments of technological change, could set prices in which a favorable margin for producers was built in) are less impacted than within more fragile industries, such as book publishing and newspapers, where retail prices might also now be adjusted—downwards. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, however, this

does not necessarily benefit consumers, because the new diversity of products is poorly distributed, and new logics whose value is ambivalent are coming into play (cf. what we can call the “blockbuster/niche” logic).

As well, pressures are increasing on artists and intellectuals at the level of creativity (artistic conception). Not only have most seen their working conditions worsen and their pay become yet more abysmal (made even worse by the resurgence of wage-claw-back mechanisms such as temp work), but the dividing line (as well as social and cultural distinctions) between professionalism and amateurism have shifted to such an extent that they are hard to spot and virtually incomprehensible. The simplification of the creative process results in productions that are deemed “independent” (or “alternative”), being carried out by individuals who in the past would very likely have been required to work much longer to demonstrate their creative talent and abilities. It is true that for more than a century, cultural and informational industries have depended on pools of artists for hire. Indeed, such large pools of precariously employed cultural workers have long been essential to these industries, guaranteeing creative innovation or at least renewal in forms and genres. However, we must wonder if even these pools will continue to be sustainable if there is no longer any guarantee of entry to a professional life for even a portion of the hopefuls?

Three decisive questions and one new orientation in perspective

What lessons and conclusions can be legitimately drawn from these observations for the study of cultural industries? Which recurring themes,⁴ originally having taken shape in the eighteenth century but developed throughout the twentieth, are in play in the mutations described above? Sticking to the basics, we can identify three such themes and point to a fourth, only now beginning, but which is poised to take on greater and greater importance.

Theme 1 ICTs should neither be considered technological supports nor strictly content vehicles. Our focus should be on the (somewhat systematic) relationships between production practices, technical means (supports), and content. True, these relationships⁵ have been the object of attention (from researchers, specialists, and practitioners) for some time, but no one has yet elucidated all the consequences that arise from them. The result has generally been a mixed set of parallel but uncoordinated approaches separated by a series of distinctions: between practice and technology (networks or tools), between content (on offer) and technologies, between content (on offer) and practice. Our theoretical and practical ignorance in comparison to the strategies and production modes used by actors in each of these areas is no longer acceptable,

but nonetheless it persists in spite of blatant asymmetries and shows of dominance.

In the end, neither comparisons between the economic importance of network and software industries relative to the cultural and informational industries nor an evaluation of the relative primacy of ICTs in shaping the practices of the latter (cf. above) can fully explain communicative developments in the present conjuncture. A number of examples of what is really happening abound: Direct trade practices in music are not independent of strategic realignments going on in the music industry and their reorientation toward a diversity of means for accessing their products; end users, be they hackers, activists, or demanding consumers, beyond the free spaces or initiatives they occupy, still interact with and exhibit a kind of dependency toward the strategic orientations of the principal firms in question; with regard to practice, which are increasingly individualized and strongly reflective of specific cultural identities, these relate not only to technological advancements (e.g. the more collaborative Web 2.0 or 3.0) but also to the contents offered and distributed by these means. Triangulation between all of these disparate trends, mutations, and trajectories of developments must thus be a centrally important concern.

Theme 2 The shift from a flow-and-catalog dialectic to a “blockbuster/niche” logic is also a defining feature of our times. The expression “flow-and-catalog dialectic” was coined in 1978 by the authors of *Capitalisme et Industries Culturelles* (Capitalism and the Culture Industries) to name a long-standing practice in book publishing, the record industry, and in film by which successes (small in number but spectacular) are used to compensate for failures (in the strict commercial sense) and losses. Editors and producers realized that they had to, first, offer a range of products in a kind of catalog that far exceeded market demand, second, to calculate their basic operating income, and finally, to determine commercial gains not title by title but by the whole catalog of titles held by any given entity. Because successes were hard to predict (despite marketing), they spread their risk and hopes for it across the entire range of titles. Obviously, the ideal did not always hold in practice, and most producers had a tendency, especially in lean times, to narrow the gap between their field of offerings and market demand, that is, to diminish the importance of the catalog’s capacity to pay over time. Over the course of the twentieth century, nonetheless, the dialectic did prove itself as a practice, in part, because to abandon it was extremely costly: For example, for a book editor, to get no prize nominations in a given year was perilous, and it was smarter to maximize their chances through larger production, a choice that also let them test out new talent.

This practice, specific to the publishing and film parts of the culture industries (it does not work the same way for other media), has not been abandoned. However, it is being supplanted/augmented, at different rates depending on

the specific branch of informational and cultural production, by a more or less observable kind of double movement: On the one hand, there is a concentration of means (as much financial as artistic, technical, and promotional, not to mention over distribution channels) on a small number of titles through the organization and predetermination of distribution (through advance sales, etc.); on the other hand, clearly there are more specialized niches being created (through limited editions and with carefully targeted potential audiences) with low profit margins (and concurrent recourse to other compensating revenue streams, including requests for public funding, sponsorships, minimal sales guarantees by sellers, etc.). This “double movement” has begun but is still far from complete.

This kind of production suits the conditions created by the digital world (this is already the case with, among others, independently produced music groups). In the end, cultural or informational production is not actually restricted by this double movement; quite the opposite, in book publishing, music, and even film production, the annual number of titles is growing (as well as reaching a now-global audience), but there is no longer any compensation between one movement and the other, with predictable economic consequences but also with new modes of cultural and social discrimination.

Theme 3 The online portals: A conception–production–consumption logic for cultural and informational products is increasingly becoming a model. The question of the evolution of future models is part of a larger analysis of the cultural industries and their place in contemporary capitalism. Either we see these industries as being at the heart of capitalist development, and consequently assume a stance that is typically loathe to admit to any specificities or uniqueness among cultural commodities, or we see them as dated relics of the past rapidly on the way to extinction. Or yet again, we can see such commodities, and especially when they are linked to ICTs (platforms, particularly communications tools and devices), as so many differentiated modes of exploitation and “management” procedures that constitute little more than what the professionals call “business models.”

But here we must insist on the fact that the models for production—consumption defined by several writers (among them, yours truly) in the past, including editorial, flow, club, online portals, and brokerage models—are ideals and are not limited to the dimensions of financing the production of cultural merchandise. In very real ways, these models also grease the entire chain of conception–production–consumption, while also leaving their mark on user/consumer practices. Certainly, the conditions of cultural production (among them, financing) are far from indifferent to the making and consumption of merchandise. However, it would be too constricting to limit ourselves to this dimension only or to foreground it by isolating strategies used by different types of producers in their search for viability and *a fortiori* the profitability of

new products. This is why, for my part, I do not label these as socioeconomic models (which would be much too reductive). I see the editorial and flow models as being generic models that have stood the test of time, while the club, online portals, brokerage, and print-bound form of the press represent for me a logic (because stable over the long term) that do not quite fit the designation of being unique “models.”

The present situation is difficult to interpret because it is moving toward diverse disruptive or emerging phenomena, several of which have been mentioned above. These phenomena consist of, first, the increase or, rather, the enlargement in the range of industrialized cultural and informational products on offer by the different industrial branches of the CICI and in the development of an entirely new industry and online video games; second, the expansion of media and new media; third, bitter competition between artists, intellectual creators, producers, and distributors for those resources that consumers of these products allocate, which are necessarily limited (particularly as public funds are frozen or in decline); fourth, the difficulty of raising or even maintaining prices (which were too high before and included a quasi-rent, as in the case of CDs, etc.); and fifth, diversification in the means of accessing products, which considerably extends the breadth of possible access points, from a single user acquiring a good through a technical support (e.g. a book) to online use of online content (watching a talk show on a commercial network), and a whole slew of different means in between, the most significant of which is pay per view—an exemplary case of the new “metered economy” and based in a reworking of the urban service economy; and finally, sixth, demand, especially by the youngest consumers and those in developing settings, for free access to content, which is assisted by both the technical possibilities of the tools at their disposal and the ways intellectual production is remunerated. This is a defining feature of the computer industry, which thereby becomes a significant new player in the culture and information industries as a result.

All of this constitutes a complex situation indeed, one that will be transitory for some time. This is to be expected due to the multiple and divergent interests at stake, including those of major players (cf. see *Mutations 2 and 5*). Nonetheless, we can still identify and label the principal logics in play. For the generic models, the publishing and flow models maintain a strong position; coming between them is a neo-club model, highly diversified, arising as much from the televisual club as from new platforms (more or less in relation to provision of internet access). But it is useful to add that the publishing model, as well as flow and club, is now taking on the form of adapted hybrids, with the evermore insistent presence of advertising (not strictly related to media) and sponsorship deals. This change leaves (for now?) very little room for brokering. As for the online portals model, it is on the ascendant, but only recently, and in experimental forms; thus, we can hypothesize that it is on its way to becoming a generic model, equal to publishing and flow models,

provided it is not limited to the distribution of products and that it leaves its mark on production, including at the conception stage.

Theme 4 Finally, there is an increasing tension in intellectual property rights that is pitting author's rights against the general form of copyright. This question merits immediate attention, since it could eventually disrupt one of the major functions of the cultural and informational industries. The intensifying tensions in intellectual property rights are arising from many sides: It is emerging from the computer industry's increasing interventions in the cultural and informational spheres. The WTO's efforts to remake cultural and informational products into goods like any other and to transnationalize them are also behind the process. The emphasis of big companies specializing in blockbusters is yielding similar results. In emerging economies that have no settled custom of integrating the particularities and demands of author's rights, firms that still largely function on an in-house basis (such as Indian film companies) are also bringing tensions within intellectual property rights into sharp relief. More recently, the emergence of the "creative industries" project and, more fundamentally, the push to foster the so-called "creative economy," first in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and now in many parts of the world, have propelled the extension of intellectual property rights into an extremely wide array of activities and territories now covered under the rubric of the new creative industries. All these forces are disrupting the conventions that have ruled industrialized cultural and informational production for two and half centuries. New settlements will surely emerge over time, but in whose favor and with what consequences for cultural and informational production remain an open question.

Conclusion

Throughout the twentieth century, cultural and information industries have been changing constantly and have undergone some significant innovations. Of the three themes and the issue of intellectual property rights just discussed, it is extremely difficult to envisage the ultimate destiny of the developments now under way. Already, and especially in the past one to two decades, they have led to significant changes in the organization of the CICI and to new alignments between the participants and players in these industries. New modes of consumption are proliferating, and the dissemination of cultural and information products is converging around a small number of networks. Still, abiding distinctions between the production of cultural forms still persist and are not easily erased by a single "master logic" such as digitization, convergence, commodification, and globalization. One common observation,

however, is that all aspects of the CICIs are now at the forefront of attention in not only the developed capitalist world economy but also emerging countries and even the poorest countries alike.

Notes

- 1 This chapter builds on previous work published as “Nouvelles considérations et propositions méthodologiques sur les mutations en cours dans les industries culturelles et informationnelles” [New Considerations and Methodological Concerns Regarding Current Mutations in the Cultural and Informational Industries] in Miège (2007b). It will appear, in a slightly altered form, as “Les mutations en cours des industries culturelles et informationnelles (Suite)” [Current Mutations in the Cultural and Informational Industries] in Miège (2011b). We would like to especially thank the editors, who have agreed for this chapter to appear in translation.
- 2 At the turn of the new century, cultural diversity (and its preservation) became at once a paradigm for international trade of cultural products and a normative tool (as written into UNESCO’s 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and attendant conventions) aimed at guaranteeing multiculturalism. In reality, this idea has been interpreted in numerous and even contradictory ways, and following Armand Mattelart, it can be seen at once as a support to criticisms of translational cultural industries and as *une caution du nouveau mode de gestion du marché global* (a prop for a new style of managing global markets).
- 3 For a complete and detailed picture of recent developments of different branches within the ICI sector, see the assessment made of these (in French) at <http://www.observatoire-omic.org/fr>.
- 4 If, to explore this point, we turn only to my own work, we can consider the following two publications (each with a usefully full bibliography): *Les industries du contenu face à l’ordre informationnel* [Content Industries in the Information Order] (Miège 2000; particularly, pp. 15–34) and “The Cultural Industry Theory: Reconsiderations, Persistent Specificities and Adapting Modalities to Contemporary Issues” (Miège, 2011a).
- 5 Miège (2007a).