The Theory of the Cultural Industries: A “Milieu” for Building Dynamic Knowledge

Éric George
Université du Québec à Montréal

ABSTRACT Over the past 40 years, important work has been done on cultural industries through the close collaboration of researchers in Québec and France, to the point that it has become a question of the theory of cultural industries. In this article, I first examine the institutional contexts that have supported the development of research on this theme within French and Québécoise research groups. I then focus on discussions around the very nature of “the cultural industry” as a research object, as well as its unique characteristics. Thirdly, I address another issue of debate among the protagonists of this text, the concept of a “social logic” (or “model”). Finally, I conclude with a few open-ended questions with the goal of deepening research in this domain.

KEYWORDS Cultural industry; Cultural industries theory; Social logic; Social model

Introduction

It has been a good 40 years now that academics, most notably in Québec and France, have dedicated a significant part of their energies to working on the topic of cultural industries. Other scientific work has of course touched on this theme during the same period of time, especially in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. It is, however, incontestable that from a linguistic point of view there is a unique quality to Francophone work to the extent that we can speak of a (Francophone) theory of cultural industries.

Éric George is Professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and the Director of the Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la communication, l'information et la société (CRICIS), UQAM, École des médias, P.O. Box 8888, Succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal, QC H3C 3P8. Email: george.eric@uqam.ca.
I had intended in this article to carry out a complete overview of this work. It would be interesting, too, if the initiators of this project did so themselves in a publication of their own. However, to take a slightly more modest route, I have decided to focus upon a selection of Francophone research in order to present common interests and that is likely to result in what Pierre Mœglin has referred to as “a theory both unique and well-founded” (Mœglin, 2012, n.p.).

With this in mind, the corpus of literature has been limited to work undertaken within research groups that were created by Bernard Miège and Pierre Mœglin in France, and Jean-Guy Lacroix and Gaëtan Tremblay in Québec. Obviously, this does not mean that these researchers and research groups were operationally formed as closed units. The remarkable career of Gaëtan Tremblay, which has provided the inspiration for this special issue of the Canadian Journal of Communication (CJC), is proof of this. However, while they have collaborated regularly with colleagues in non-Francophone countries, the theorists of the cultural industries have largely relied on Franco-Québécois cooperation, all the while recognizing that France is the primary location with a larger number of researchers working on this issue. In addition, not every publication by the selected authors has been read, and I have instead limited myself to a certain number of texts I consider central to the periods of these authors’ careers that have been dedicated to cultural industries. Finally, the reader should also consider that my interpretations are not necessarily identical to those of the authors referred to throughout this article. Indeed, as we will see, they debate among themselves with respect to certain issues. Consequently, I recommend that this article be read in relation to other works that address the same topic.

The context of emergence

From the analysis of the selected corpus of texts, it appears that Francophone theorists of the cultural industries generally consider the book Capitalisme et industries culturelles, published at the end of the 1970s (Huet, Ion, Lefèbvre, Miège, & Péron, 1978) to be the first research project dedicated to the cultural industries in the Francophone world. Stemming from a report commissioned by the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) on the theme of “supply and demand of cultural goods and services,” the book was the fruit of a collective effort that brought together the following five primary authors: Armel Huet, Jacques Ion, Alain Lefèbvre, Bernard Miège, and René Peron. Accordingly, their names were listed alphabetically and only the four chapters independent from the full report contain concluding notes listing, among other things, the names of other collaborators. Rare as it may be, this work appears to be that of a collective. However, one author, Bernard Miège, begins to demarcate himself with the publication of the second edition in 1984. Miège authors the afterword individually, noting that it was impossible to “rebuild” the first edition as several members of the team were working “in other domains” (Miège, 1984, p. 202). In the time between these two publications, Miège, professor at the Université de Grenoble 3 (Stendhal), founded the Groupe de recherche sur les enjeux de la communication (GRESEC) with his colleague Yves de la Haye. The GRESEC would become the central location for French research on the cultural industries. In addition to publishing a new edition of the subject’s foundational text, Miège (1986) soon would author a new book,
This time written in collaboration with Patrick Pajon and Jean-Michel Salaün, both then at the Université Stendhal, the book focuses on the audiovisual sector, an area poorly covered in the initial 1978 text.

Also in 1986, a special edition of the journal *Cahiers de recherche sociologique* appeared in Québec, published by the sociology department of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) where Jean-Guy Lacroix was based as a professor. Lacroix (1986) edited this issue, entitled *Les industries culturelles : un enjeu vital*! The provenance of authors in this issue included:

1. Armand and Michèle Mattelart whose work in France would contribute to the analysis of cultural industries, although they did not necessarily work on the theory of the cultural industries. Their intellectual trajectories went in other directions. For Armand Mattelart, it was an interest in analysis and reflection on communication theory and international geopolitics seen through the concept of the communication/world.

2. Gaëtan Tremblay, a professor in the department of communication at UQAM, who had been corresponding with Bernard Miège for several years with the cooperation of Jean-Guy Lacroix. During this period, Lacroix and Tremblay would found the GRICIS, then standing for the Groupe de recherche sur les industries culturelles et l'informatisation sociale.

3. Herbert Schiller, an American author and professor at the University of California, San Diego, was an emblematic figure in the political economy of communication and the author of two major collections: *Mass Communication and American Empire* (Schiller, 1969) and *Communication and Cultural Domination* (Schiller, 1976). Bernard Miège noted that the theory of the cultural industries “took root” within the political economy of communication (Miège, 2012, n.p.).

4. Bernard Miège, presented above.

5. Claude Martin, a Montréal colleague of Lacroix and Tremblay based at the Université de Montréal) who would dedicate his career to the study of cultural industries, but without developing a regular collaborative relationship with his colleagues at UQAM.

6. Jean-Guy Lacroix and Benoit Lévesque, colleagues in the same department who had worked together until then.

The two research groups—GRESEC and GRICIS—would continue to play a guiding role in the development of research in this field. They would be joined by a third group, the LabSIC (laboratoire en sciences de l'information et de la communication) founded by Pierre Mœglin, professor at the Université de Paris 13 (Villetaneuse). Mœglin had completed a state-doctorate thesis (the last granted in France) under the direction of Bernard Miège and counted Gaëtan Tremblay among his jury members.

French and Québécois colleagues would collaborate systematically over the course of the 1990s. Their research was financed by grants obtained from each side of the Atlantic, but also through cooperation programs put in place by French and Québécois government ministries. It is therefore important to note that the level to which other ministries and state and parastate institutions were able to play an important role in
the development of specific types of research. While the question of Canadian identity in the context of the international influence of American cultural industries was a definite federal interest, in Québec the question of the French language was prioritized more often. It is not surprising then that Québec has favoured cooperation with France, the aforementioned funding opportunities providing one example. In effect, Franco-Québécois collaborative research was made possible and sustainable through public policy. For over a decade, this cooperative work focused on the notion of convergence in the context of the developing “information highway.” To report on the first stage of this work, an international symposium on La convergence des techniques de communication was held in Montréal in 1994 and two major books were published: De la télématique aux autoroutes électroniques: Le grand projet reconduit appeared in 1994, and Les autoroutes de l'information: Un produit de la convergence appeared the following year and summarized the cooperative labour of the two research groups. With substantial ministerial financial support, this work continued and a special issue of the journal Sciences de la société was published in 1997, dedicated to the theme of “cultural industries and ‘the information society.’” It was edited by Jean-Guy Lacroix, Alain Lefebvre, Bernard Miège, Pierre Mœglin, and Gaëtan Tremblay.

At the same time, Lacroix and Tremblay published the text that most completely presents the theory of the cultural industries. Under the title of The “Information Society” and the Cultural Industries Theory, it was published in English as a special issue of the journal Current Sociology, but it has unfortunately never been translated into French. In 2003, a second decade of work would be celebrated with the publication of five collections in French and English: Panam: Cultural Industries and Dialogue Between Civilizations in the Americas and 2001 Bugs: Globalism and Pluralism. The second was made up of four volumes and followed two additional international conferences that were organized in Montréal.

Collaboration between these groups of French and Québécois researchers continued throughout the following decade, but on a slightly different basis. Within a couple years of one another, two separate processes of institutionalization were undertaken and would have an influence on the locations where research on cultural industries continued to develop. In France, the beginning of the 21st century was marked by the creation of a new structure directed by Pierre Mœglin, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH) de Paris Nord. Here was an opportunity to bring together research on certain themes, among them the “socioeconomics of culture and communication,” within which they proposed “to question the description and modelling of industrial channels, especially considering multimedia convergence and the new geopolitics of information and culture” (MSH de Paris Nord, 2013, n.p.). This research area was headed up by Philippe Bouquillon, professor at the Université de Paris 8 (Vincennes à Saint-Denis), then at the Université de Paris 13. Bouquillon had completed his doctoral studies under the direction of Bernard Miège and Yolande Combès, who had worked for several years with Pierre Mœglin on the subject of educational industries, and as a professor at the Université de Paris 13. Over the years, researchers from the Université de Paris 8 and Université de Paris 13, as well as the Université de Grenoble 3 (Stendhal), rubbed shoulders at the MSH and the heart of cultural industries research.
gradually moved from the Alps to the French capital. This process culminated in a 2006 international conference—“Mutations des industries de la culture, de l'information et de la communication”—financed by the Maisons des Sciences de l'Homme network. During this time, cultural industries work was also funded by numerous research grants, which included Philippe Bouquillion's work on cultural diversity, also supported by the Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR).²

From an institutional perspective, during the past five years the priority in Québec has been given to the transformation of the GRICIS, turning it into an institutionally recognized research centre. At my behest, this was made possible by the long-term work of Jean-Guy Lacroix and Gaëtan Tremblay. During the first half of the 2000s, the GRICIS underwent a name change rendering it more inclusive: the Groupe de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la communication, l'information et la société. In 2011, after obtaining a major research group grant from the Fonds de recherche du Quebec sur la societe et la culture (FQRSC) on the theme of “governance of communication systems,” and numerous other individual grants, GRICIS was recognized by UQAM as a research centre. On a personal note, I benefited, along with Gaetan Tremblay (my doctoral supervisor), from two grants, allowing us to examine the links between media ownership concentration and information diversity. Around the same time, the GRICIS organized an international conference in Montréal in 2012 called “Looking for the Critical in Communication?” This helped the new research centre identify itself as a place for critical communications research within the province and internationally.

The development of the new CRICIS (Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la communication, l'information et la société), led to the formation of four areas of research. The first—political economy of the media and culture—is dedicated to “the study of changes in culture and media industries and institutions in the context of technological innovation, new financing and market delivery models, trends towards concentration and financialization in media ownership, digital network convergence, and alternative organizational propositions” (GRICIS, 2013, n.p.). It also aims to analyze “transformations of cultural public policies and regulations in relation to the respective role of components of the State, corporations and civil society as well as new forms of media and culture governance” (n.p.).

While there may have been different institutional dynamics on both sides of the Atlantic, collaboration continued, focusing on subjects such as cultural diversity, pluralism of information, and cultural industries in a context characterized by continued economic liberalization at an increasing geographic scale, a reinforcement in the concentration of corporate ownership, the development of the financialization of the sector, the eventual reality of digitization, the culmination of convergence, as well as transformations to the Internet—especially Web 2.0 (Bouquillion & Combès, 2007; Bouquillion, 2008; Bouquillion & Matthews, 2010). Research interests have diversified among the old guard, as has a wave of newer academics. That said, research interests established during the previous decade were also maintained, such as the concentration of corporate ownership, even though a well-worn topic in the political economy of communication. Indeed, long ago the “founders” of the long-term Franco-Québécois relationship noted the noted the success of small organizational structures, especially
upon creation and their production processes that, even though financially risky, are less prone to relying on capital investment (Huet et al., 1978). In summary, research collaborations continued whenever possible and these collaborations were able to respond to various, locally focused institutional requirements.

In the 1990s, as previously noted, Franco-Québécois funding-supported cooperation helped startup comparative research on the notion of convergence. It was Gaétan Tremblay and Jean-Guy Lacroix who expressed an interest in continuing this kind of research because it helped the researcher maintain a “distance with regard to the social context to which they belong and within which they evolve” (Tremblay & Lacroix &., 1994, p. 233). Comparative research also allowed for the exploration of more concrete possibilities. Faced with various challenges, societies adopt different solutions, according to institutional constraints and cultural characteristics. “The goal of comparative analysis is not to evaluate what system is best, but instead to understand each system in its complexity, revealing commonalities as well as differences in order to assess both general and specific structural conditions” (Tremblay & Lacroix, 1994, p. 233, author’s translation). This type of methodology appears to be self-promoting. Unfortunately, even though Franco-Québécois collaborations remained very active, comparative work in cultural industries declined, and there has been a profusion of studies on more specific objects of cultural industries.

The cultural industries: An unresolved research question

As mentioned earlier, serious questioning concerning the nature of cultural industries has been undertaken since these industries first became a subject of interest. The use of this expression in the plural in Capitalisme et industries culturelles (1978) demonstrates a significant change from “the culture industry” so heartily criticized by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (Adorno, 1964; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944, 1974). Adorno, writing in 1964, noted that:

In all of its sectors, we make, more or less according to plan, products that are studied for mass consumption and they themselves determine, to a large degree, this consumption. The various sectors resemble one another in their structure, less so in their packaging. They leave almost no gaps in the constitution of a system. This is due to current technical means as well as economic and administrative concentration (Adorno, 1964, p. 12).

Electing to use the plural means asserting the importance of distinguishing industries from one another. Hence, Bernard Miège and his colleagues have stated that the “culture industries” effectively compose “a group of very different components” (Huet et al., 1978, p. 155).

In order to examine modes of capital investment, they choose to distinguish three sorts of cultural products according to their level of reproducibility and the level to which artistic workers are involved:

1. Reproducible products not requiring the involvement of artistic workers are essentially created by machines. Monopolies or oligopolies are dominant, as in many other sectors.
2. Products that are poorly reproduced, such as the prints upon which a chapter is based. Small amounts of capital are usually present as production runs are often modest and the means of production are often artisanal. However, banking capital may become interested in this sector at any given moment.

3. Reproducible products relying on the labour of artistic workers. Here, the situation appears to be “very complex, if not confusing” (Huet et al., 1978, p. 161). This category is related to the music industry, book publishing, cinema, and the audiovisual sector. Monopoly capital is not omnipresent but tends to occupy increasing space. Ultimately, “artistic workers and small capital investors, far from disappearing, maintain and reinforce their positions in several sectors (music production and recording, audiovisual production)” (Huet et al., 1978, p. 28), thus calling into question the idea of the fairly rapid and systematic disappearance of small cultural producers to the advantage of monopolistic structures. Why then do they disappear? According to the authors, “these supposedly ‘archaic’ structures simply occupy a particular place in a system of cultural production articulated and controlled by monopoly capital. They invest uneasily in areas suitable for the organization of a ‘banal’ production process in which profitability is not assured” (Huet et al., 1978, p. 28). It is clear from this analysis that distinctions must be made depending on whether products are easily reproduced, or according to the place of artistic work in the production process. The conditions of capital valorization thus appear relatively different from one another and result in the establishment of somewhat different strategies distinguished by corporate sectors.

These lessons would be taken up again and developed in several other publications, beginning with the second edition of Capitalisme et industries culturelles, which appeared seven years later. This collection included an afterword by Bernard Miège (1984) that returned to the distinction between the three categories of cultural commodities noted above, emphasizing the fact that products that are reproducible, thanks to the labour of workers, “manifestly form the ‘heart’ of the cultural commodity” (p. 204). Miège also addresses the “uncertain character” of manufactured use values, “an element unique to cultural industries” (p. 206), which explains the disappearance of certain marketed products such as the pulping of books and the rapid obsolescence of products (one hit song after another). Miège makes an important qualification that serves to orient cultural industries research: “It would be a terrible mistake to separate the cultural industries from the ensemble of other industrial branches and to make it a sector apart, preserved in some way; but it would be just as terrible not to note that the valorization of capital functions under unique conditions here” (p. 206). Indeed, the cultural industries present unique characteristics in terms of valorization, industrialization, and commodification. This does not make them any less a part of the capitalist system.

Within the Québécois context, and in the special issue of the journal Cahiers de recherche sociologique on the cultural industries, Jean-Guy Lacroix (Lacroix & Lévesque, 1986) writes that the difficulty in defining the cultural industries partially explains why “there does not yet exist a unified and global theory concerning this subject” (p. 7).
After which, mimicking Miège, he proceeds to dispute the idea that cultural industries are characterized by their use of industrial techniques for the reproduction and transmission of works. Above all, he aims to bring attention to the fact that labour in the cultural sector “organizes itself more or less according to the industrial capitalist mode of production. Principally, a separation exists between cultural workers and their products at the moment they are marketed, from the work of and execution of marketing. Design occurs increasingly under the auspices of economic management” (p. 7). However, he continues, the situation is complex. On one hand, there is a justifiable need to “distinguish between machines and programs, as production by machines should be excluded from the domain of cultural industries because it is the symbolic that increasingly serves to characterize cultural industries in their maturity and is the bedrock of the circulation of content” (p. 8). On the other hand, one must also take into account the fact that “the separation between hardware/software has become more fluid. The limits of the field of cultural industries expand with machine programming processes” (p. 8). This observation appears to be more of a premonition given the increasing closeness of cultural and communication industries that can be observed today.

Lacroix and Lévesque (1986) further added that “every activity of the production, distribution and diffusion of cultural and symbolic products (thus integrating cultural labour) should be considered as a cultural industry, organized according to the principles that separate producer and product, design and execution and the technical division of labour (parcelling of tasks)” (p. 9). However, in adding a list of sectors likely to be included in such a circumscription, he appears unable to complete this task. Without a doubt, their list of sectors is the longest of any encountered among the bodies of work examined in these pages. Among them, they mention: “television, cable distribution, radio, new telematics news services, telecommunications, book publishing, radio, printing, newspapers and magazines, arts and culture (dance, music, theatre, cabaret …), sports (mainly professional), expositions, cinema, video, micro-computing (especially the software side), art galleries and artisan boutiques, advertising, photography, etc.” Thus the list is long, while making no claim to exhaustiveness:

This list, while it may be incomplete, sheds light on the breadth of this first study. It also shows that it should not be a closed universe. To the contrary, it seems to be in full expansion according to the progress of the double processes of separation and division of labour, and privatization. Finally, this list illustrates the difficult nature of precisely delimiting a field of study while formulating a generally accepted definition of cultural industries and the unity of this subject of study. (p. 9)

So should we just stop here? Lacroix notes that while these factors give the impression of a total absence of a unifying subject, these concrete objects, as a group, are traversed by a process of industrialization and the commodification of culture. However, developing a global and unified theory of cultural industries cannot avoid articulating a generalized conceptualization with the use of concrete objects of study.

Four years later, in Les industries de la culture et de la communication au Québec et au Canada, Tremblay (Tremblay, 1990) attempts to specify the commonly understood
notion of cultural industry, which he too qualifies as “vague,” and demonstrates the challenge of creating a definition.

Unanimity is found neither in the criteria of the definition nor in its extension to the set of activities which it covers. Where can we or should we begin to talk about cultural industries instead of artistic creation or cultural expression? Are these different qualifications mutually exclusive?” (p. 37)

Elaborating, he focuses on four types of criteria stemming from his literature review:
1) the importance of the means necessary for the production and diffusion of products; 2) the use of technologies by the cultural industries; 3) the role played by the market in production and distribution; and 4) the introduction of capitalist production processes in the domain of cultural activities. (p. 38)

Tremblay notes that Lacroix, in the text cited above, as well as Miège, in L’industrialisation de l’audiovisuel (1986), emphasize the organization of labour. He goes on to propose this definition:

Cultural industries may thus be defined as the constantly evolving set of cultural production and exchange activities regulated by commodification, where industrial production techniques are somewhat developed but where labour is increasingly organized according to a capitalist practice separating the producer from his/her product, and the tasks of design from those of execution. (Tremblay, 1990, p. 44)

The author then proceeds to note that the cultural industries present a certain number of unique characteristics. First, the demand for cultural products is difficult to predict. Put otherwise, success is rare and numerous products reach the public at a discount (p. 51). Secondly, the costs of product vary greatly from one industry (cinema, for example) to another (such as book digitizing), while economies of scale are difficult to attain because increases in productivity are difficult, if not impossible, to produce in the design stage.

The only way to increase the profitability of certain productions is to increase the number of consumers to the extent that the supplementary costs accompanying these new consumers remains less than the financial benefit. Here we can see the growing importance of marketing. (p. 52)

Thirdly, the cultural industries are also characterized by the variety of modes of worker remuneration (salaries, different sorts of contracts, copyright, and fees) and by considerable gaps in revenue. As is the case in previous books on the subject, an emphasis is placed not only on the unique characteristics of the cultural industries but also on the differences between sectors.

In 2004, in Éléments pour une économie des industries culturelles, Marc Ménard (2004) took a shot at the elusive goal of defining cultural industries. He begins by recounting that culture may be defined from an anthropological or sociological point of view, as “the set of activities, beliefs, values, and practices that are held in common or shared by a group which itself may be defined in political, geographic, religious, and
ethnic terms” (p. 57). Ménard continues, noting that a cultural activity itself is based on the following four criteria: “incorporating a form of creativity in its production; producing and communicating symbolic goods; incorporating a certain form of intellectual property; being an end in and of itself” (p. 58). The author ultimately adopts the definition of cultural industries proposed by Tremblay 14 years earlier, signalling that Tremblay’s definition “gracefully includes the evolutionary aspect of the field while differentiating between commodification and industrialization. It also emphasizes the fact that the processes of commodification and industrialization of culture do not overlap and undergo constant transformation” (p. 61).

Continuing in the same vein, Ménard turns to the criteria for identifying these industries while noting that his ideas are inspired by the following texts: Huet et al., 1984; Lacroix and Tremblay, 1997; Miège, 2000; Rouet, 1989; and Tremblay, 1990. An industrialized cultural good costs a lot to produce but much less to reproduce. The reproducibility that is the product of the separation between content and delivery mechanism thus takes certain forms. Fixed costs are high while marginal costs may be very low, as in the case of digital distribution. The 2000s were a decade of intense development of Internet-related applications and researchers have increasingly taken this into account. Ménard notes that “the profitability of a company increases at the same time as its scale of production” (Ménard, 2004, p. 67). Secondly, each cultural good is a unique production that relies on the participation of two types of cultural worker: those who design original works, be they artists, authors, singers, or artisans; and those who are the specialized technical labour in the cultural field. Here, one can observe a vast supply of labour and many forms of remuneration. Thirdly, supply is continually being renewed and thus culture is marked by a permanent state of redefinition. There is the simultaneous rapid obsolescence of products and abundant supply. Fourthly, regardless of advertising campaigns and marketing, public taste remains unpredictable. Consumers largely find themselves in an uncertain position with regard to the supply. Ménard (2004) explains that “[success] remains financially unpredictable because it can rarely be explained even after the fact in a way that satisfies some preexisting need (p. 76). Fifthly, we can assume that every cultural good is a prototype because it is founded, at least partially, upon creative work. There is thus a certain non-substitutability, although there will always be attempts to create similar products based on a recipe that one could qualify as a “lucky strike.” Ménard gives the example of reality television programs.

Gaëtan Tremblay (1997) earlier on envisioned a broadening of this subject of study:

... while the theory of cultural industries is, up until now, mainly attached (although not exclusively), to the study of the production, distribution, and consumption of products such as musical recordings, books, film, and television and radio programs, it should more broadly integrate information and communication (both mass and individual) into its analytical framework. The development of communication networks and the integrated supply that they enable poses a new challenge to the theory of cultural industries. This theory, I believe, must broaden its subject of study to the entirety of symbolic exchanges occurring within the processes of commodification and industrialization. (p. 15)
The following decade, in fact, would be marked by an increased use of “alternative” symbolic expressions, so much so that a 2006 conference in France was dedicated to the transformations of “culture, information, and communication industries.” In the introductory chapter to their 2007 collaboration, Philippe Bouquillion and Yalonde Combès take up this expression, explaining their choice by specifying that the changes taking place in these industries can be observed mainly in

the blurring of frontiers between industrial channels that were previously distinct. A melding takes place between what we refer to as the culture and media industries (CMI) and communication industries, mainly internet, telecommunications, and equipment manufacturing industries. Synergies are created and revolve around the emergence of a grouping that we will refer to as culture, information and communication industries (CIC). (p. 12)

In a book published the following year, Les industries de la culture et de la communication : Les stratégies du capitalisme, Bouquillion (2008) demonstrates the importance of simultaneously problematizing the cultural industries, “which include essentially the industrial channels of cinema, audio-visual, recorded music, books, the press and news” (p. 5), and the communication industries “formed by telecommunications and network activities, software and web companies, consumer-grade technology industries, entertainment and communication” (p. 5). Here we uncover Jean-Guy Lacroix’s fixation of 20 years prior, the differentiation between machines and programs. It is worth noting that Bouquillion’s list is much more restrictive in terms of content than that proposed by Lacroix in 1986. In addition, the examples Bouquillion proposes may at times be ambiguous in their possible “intersections.” For instance, what is the difference between the industrial channels of the press and the news? Taking this line of thought further, Pierre Mœglin (2012), in a recent text on the birth and development of the theory of the cultural industries, proposed the terminology “cultural and information industries” (n.p.). As far as I know, “information industry” is a term that has never been used before. Bernard Miège, writing in the same publication in which Mœglin’s proposition appears—the inaugural issue of the journal published by the Société française des sciences de l’information et de la communication (SFSIC) : La Revue française des sciences de l’information et de la communication, on the theme of “the theory of cultural (and information) industries, foundations of information and communication sciences)”—notes that cultural industries “also include information industries,” later qualifying that this is especially so in France as “elsewhere they are basically the same thing” (Miège, 2012, n.p.). He does not, however, elaborate.

The successful delimitation of the object of study thus does not appear to be any closer today than a couple of decades ago. The problem, if we side with Tremblay (1997), is that “the industrialization of culture and communication (is) still an unrealized process and in constant evolution” (p. 13). Consequently, “theoretical formulations cannot be considered to be definitive and should be regularly submitted for review in order to incorporate the most recent advances in the process of commodification and industrialization” (p. 13). The situation is somewhat less stalled than other interrogations that would develop during the second half of the 2000s concerning the
introduction of the new expression “creative industries.” In “Industries culturelles, économie créative et société de l’information” Tremblay (2008) notes that this expression was first mobilized within a political context by the British government at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Its introduction seems to be successful for the following reasons:

the inclusion of cultural industries and other industries, such as software and design, in the same universe presents a double advantage. It allows all concerned activities to benefit from the prestige that accompanies the work of artists. It also demonstrates an exceptional volume of business and growth with regard to software and video games. In this way, prestigious creativity can be said to be the primary motor of the economy. The agglomeration of various cultural industrial activities is advantageous in another way: it permits all the concerned activities the same expectations as cultural industries in terms of recognition of intellectual property and regulatory state intervention. (p. 76)

This does not mean, however, that Tremblay (2008) considers the phrase “creative industries” to be conceptually solid. He prefers instead to speak of “cultural industries,” even if publishing, television, music, cinema, and theatre only make up one third of the entirety of “creative industries.”

Rigorous analysis quickly shows the fragility of its ideological construction. Theoretically, the notion of creative industries contributes absolutely nothing to work on the cultural industries. We already knew well of the important role played by artistic creation. While there may be an opportunity to attribute the same importance to other activities, such as design, fashion or computing services, models built to account for the specific nature of cultural production and diffusion have not been established in a convincing manner. This needs to be demonstrated before creative industries can expect the same measures of protection and promotion by public authorities. (p. 82)

Phилие Buоnquillон (2013), the French researcher in charge of “creative industries” research in France, details a manifestly different point of view in this issue of the CJC. Here he considers, among other things, that academic work on creative industries invites us to ask what common points exist not only between cultural industry productions but also between these productions and fashion, design, and handicraft. This grouping may be considered to be industries of symbolic good. Beyond these two points of view, proof that there is a diversity of opinions on the pertinence of the phrase “creative industries” can perhaps be gleaned from the conference proceedings organized in Paris in May, 2013, entitled: “Creative Industries: A Turning Point?” Thus, debate continues to swirl around the definition and the delimitation of the subject at hand. The following is another example: Lucien Perticoz (2011a) recently developed an argument seeking to “demonstrate the interest and the pertinence of considering video games as cultural industry sectors” (n.p.), while this sector has not traditionally been included among them. In supporting his example, Perticoz relies on the following proposal from Tremblay (2008):
researchers ... generally agree to recognize cultural industries as presenting characteristics that, taken separately, may be found in other industrial sectors, but which, when taken in their entirety can only be found within this sector where they arrange themselves in a particular fashion. (p. 70)

The lesson Perticoz draws from this is a set of specific characteristics that must be analyzed in order to determine if a particular sector belongs to the cultural and media industries (CMI). The artistic dimension in video games is just as important as in cinema, publishing, or recorded music. The video game industry is a prototype where the use value of the good put on the market is uncertain. In order to make up for market unpredictability, the industry, like other cultural industries, regularly renews its product line. Perticoz maps out the industrial organization of the video game industry, concluding that it should be incorporated into the publishing model.

The debate continued, moving on to the specific characteristics of cultural industries and, until the 2000s, there had been no consensus on the subject among the researchers mentioned here. The debates were interesting and fairly coherent. Nonetheless, since 1984 Bernard Miège had foreseen divergences in these analyses, for example in the proposition that cultural productions have unpredictable use value. Miège remarked that “some authors believe that market, impact and audience studies should have early on reduced the current level of unpredictability” (p. 206). While vaguely formulated, the targets of Miège’s criticism were not among the authors considered in the current article. In 2005, five years after stating that the cultural industries functioned largely according to the dialectic of the hit and the backlist—in particular the hits-based profit model (Miège, 2000)—the profits brought in by “hits” were indeed compensating for the inevitable losses that occur when net use value is impossible to ensure. On the subject of publishing, Claire Morisset and Miège (2005) note that we are perhaps experiencing major changes that modify the traditional rules of the game within cultural industries, especially with regard to the dialectic of the hit and the backlist. From now on, “profit will be increasingly sought after from individual works rather than from the production of an entire catalogue of works” (p. 162). A little more fodder to keep the battles raging.

For the past 40 years, debate has also been ongoing concerning a concept central to the notion of cultural industries—social logics, also referred to as models. This issue will be addressed in the following section. It seems even more relevant given that the concept has been developed by a number of Francophone researchers rather than their Anglophone counterparts. Even if certain Anglophone researchers (Mosco, 1996) allude to “logics” that have been developed (especially in the work of Miège), the conceptual work is manifestly Francophone. Nowhere else in the world can we find debates on the relevance of five models presented below.

The debate on social logics, the conceptual foundation of the organization of cultural industries

In Patrice Flichy’s Les industries de l’imaginaire : pour une analyse économique des médias (1980), the author proposes a differentiation between two types of cultural industries:

Cultural industries have emerged, goods that have radically different sources of financing: sales on the marketplace, advertising ... and public
funding or eventual private patronage. I believe we must then distinguish between two types of product: cultural merchandise—products that are sold on the marketplace (published products or cinema)—and streaming culture—products in this domain may be characterized by the continuity and amplitude of their diffusion in that each day new products render old ones obsolete. (p. 38)

However, the concept of social logic that is developed in an earlier text, _L'industrialisation de l'audiovisuel_ (Miège, Pajon, & Salaün, 1986)—lies at the heart of the notion of cultural industries. These logics or models essentially concern the production process and the labour process resulting in a supply of cultural or informational ‘goods.’ The characteristics of these ‘goods’ appear to have a direct relationship with the processes (as much as with the very conditions of production and the funding methods that professional practices imply). (p. 61)

Note how the definition contained in this phrase limits itself to the production/organization of labour. The three authors add that the central issue at hand in thinking about social logics is to not limit oneself to an empirical approach relying on data drawn from social actors or groups of social actors. The project “to the contrary, consists of identifying movements that are the most profound and most inclusive” (p. 60). They make reference here to Pierre Bourdieu and his structuring/structured combination, “the practices joining with the social logics with which they interact” (p. 60). They proceed to denote and describe the five following logics:

1) the logic of cultural merchandise publishing; 2) the logic of production “streaming”; 3) the logic of written news; 4) the logic of computer program production; and 5) the logic of live performance retransmission [including sports]. (p. 64)

Many of the logics interact and affect the development of the audiovisual industries that comprise the central theme of their book. That said, Miège, Pajon, and Salaün (1986) make a number of distinctions between the logics at work. The first two among them are said to play “more of a determining role” (p. 79). These are precisely the same two logics presented shortly thereafter by Flichy.

In Book One of _La société conquise par la communication_, Bernard Miège (1989) first speaks of models rather than logics. However, the two definitions are equivalent. Models correspond to “production and labour processes resulting in the supply of cultural commodity products” (p. 171). Three years later, though, he estimated that there were three primary models: the publication of cultural commodities; radio-television production in streaming format; and the production of written news. With regards to the last, he specifies: “the press, especially the mainstream press, borrows from both of the models above” (p. 180), adding:

the three models underwent a fairly long genesis. Presently, they are of sufficient consistency to impose their operating rules upon different categories of social actors aiming to industrially produce cultural and informational goods. However, they do not impose these rules in a mechanical
and rigid manner, and the different protagonists are led to compose and play with the rules corresponding to three models: for example, in situating their products between two of these models in order to profit from certain advantages (p. 180).

Serious reflection on the subject of logics shifted to Québec the following year, summarized in a collection edited by Gaétan Tremblay (1990), *Les industries de la culture et de la communication au Québec et au Canada*. The first logic is that of publishing as “it refers to the central role played by the publisher in the music, cinema, and book industries” (p. 56). Here we have commodities that are bought or rented. The consumer pays for one purchase or rental (considering that one movie ticket corresponds to one rental). Thus, we see the dialectic of the hits-based profit model at play as the publisher tries to compensate for the occasional loss by the publication or production of a majority of cultural goods produced through profits assured by a small number of stars, cinema actors, singers, and successful book authors. Streaming culture, though, relies on the rapid replacement of content by other content. Later, the function of programming would become central and the primary role maintained by the programmer. Tried and true entertainment recipes are largely financed by advertising, thereby leading, for example, to a maximization of the physical space for sale within proximity of television announcers (p. 57). Tremblay concludes by mentioning that cable infrastructure was still (at that time) underdeveloped in France, an important contextual element.

Tremblay (1990) estimates that with cable television and the video cassette recorder, there is an “intermixing of the publishing logic and streaming logic. The relationships between the functions of production, programming and distribution redefine themselves, the latter assuming an increasingly central position” (p. 60). A new logic, then, is on the cusp of emergence—the club. The following year it sees daylight in the book *Télévision : deuxième dynastie* (1991), finding Tremblay and Lacroix working in collaboration with Marc Ménard and Marie-Josée Régnier. The authors demonstrate that now it is distributors in the audiovisual sector, starting with cable television distributors, who play a hegemonic role. Consumers are invited to subscribe to television channels that are required to be part of the distributors’ offerings. Introduced in 1991, this logic is more systematically presented in Tremblay’s (1997) future work. For instance:

This new logic clashes directly with two preexisting ones. It considerably reduces the working space of streaming logic by integrating it, and it competes with the logic of publishing by substituting material production and distribution networks with sales outlets. It restructures the relationships between creation, production, distribution and consumption. It revitalizes the role of the programmer. By marrying hegemony and distribution, it emphasizes the role of the human or electronic server. According to this logic, the server occupies the primary function: it negotiates diffusion or distribution rights, designs marketing strategies, and, rather than subscriptions, offers a set of services (including navigation) and products for use during a given period of time. (p. 20)

Finally, “club logic appears for now to be an advanced institutional form of the commodification of culture, information and communication that is particularly
adapted to the convergence of radio and television broadcasting, telecommunications and computing” (Tremblay, 1997, p. 21). While the conceptual work around this logic appeared to relate well to the Québécois and Canadian contexts, researchers in France remained wary. Could this be due to the fact that both cable and satellite television distribution were vastly less developed there?

Bernard Miège (1997) returned to the concept in Book Two of *La société conquise par la communication*, entitled *La communication entre l’industrie et l’espace public*. Here he writes that models organize

the processes of production and labour, diffusion and distribution of products, and ultimately their modes of use … . The ensuing conceptual role of these processes would appear to be greater as it is no longer simply a question of production and labour but also of diffusion/distribution and thus of consumer uses. (pp. 56–57)

Miège then alludes to Lacroix and Tremblay’s conceptual model, noting that it permits for imagining that “in the context of competition between streaming and publishing, new forms detach themselves progressively while maintaining certain traits of their former manifestation,” allowing one to think about the need for certain cultural industries to “have a place in the media other than advertising” (p. 59).

Marc Ménard, in 2004, returns to logics, which he, too, qualifies as models: publishing logic, streaming logic, and private club logic. Citing Miège (2000), he then notes that for certain authors:

[W]e can’t have the generic logics of publishing logic and streaming logic on one side and private club logic on the other. Private club logic transforms spectators into paying consumers, increasing their number through a diversification of payment possibilities. This transformation, however, is a logical step towards pay-per-view and the transition will be a long one. This is why Miège qualifies this logic as an intermediary model (Ménard, 2004, p. 99).

That said, Ménard (2004) then adds that for Tremblay and Lacroix (2002), private club logic (what they later call “club logic”) finds itself in competition with the other two. “It reduces the functional space of streaming logic while integrating it, and puts itself forward as a competitor to publishing logic substituting material reproduction and distribution networks with sales outlets” (Ménard, 2004, p. 99). Here, he adopts the same perspective as Tremblay. Ménard adds that for him, there is definitely competition between these models but absolutely no substitution. Streaming logic will endure, carried forward by the advertising industry. Publishing logic benefits from the regular introduction of new technologies, the DVD for example. Club logic “is well adapted to the convergence of radio broadcasting, telecommunications and computing” and favours “the extension of capitalist logic to all domains of culture, information and communication” (p. 99). Concluding, he states that this notion maintains that, because cultural industrial sectors traverse all the domains of culture, information and communication, an economic organizational framework of these cultural industrial sectors necessarily shapes
them, transforming them according to technological, regulatory and competitive market evolutions as well as consumer uses. (pp. 99–100)

Following a 2006 conference organized in France, Pierre Mœglin published a text on the concept of the “model” in a collection edited by Philippe Bouquillion and Yolande Combès (2007). In the chapter entitled “Des modèles socio-économiques en mutation,” Mœglin (2007) gives himself the goal of “jointly understanding theoretical and socioeconomic transformations, theoretical transformations under the effect of socioeconomic transformations, and socioeconomic transformations in light of theoretical transformations” (p. 151). Mœglin’s interest in models—he cites two historic models, the publishing model and the streaming model—aims “to clarify the conditions of the regulation of the upstream-downstream functions of conceptualization, production, distribution, diffusion and consumption according to the type of assurance against unpredictability that is adopted by the industrial channel upon which each product depends” (p. 154). He then proposes to distinguish between two methods for creating a model. First, a model may emerge from “rules of the game.” In this case, the model is close to the Weberian ideal type, the question aiming “to know if, how and to what extent each type of media situates itself in relation to existing models in function of the traits it borrows (from these models)” (p. 155). The model may also correspond to a mode of operation, in which case “the models change according to changes carried out by the actors” (p. 155). However, Mœglin favours the first proposition and defends it through the example of the operating mode of the written press. If we consider a model from a Durkheimian perspective, the written press is a model. According to Mœglin, every form of media corresponds to one. However, if we consider a model from the “ideal type” perspective of Weber, the written press corresponds to both the publishing and streaming models, consequently confirming their generic character.

Having put his weight behind the first definition, Mœglin (2007) finally admits the existence of a third veritable model, the club, and announces the emergence of a fourth—the meter model. “This economy characterizes, in fact, every application where, according to the principle of the underlying machine, accounting is carried out according to connection time and volume of consulted data: downloading images or music, high-volume virtual publishing and any other mechanism whereby usage rights are proportional to billing” (p. 156). For Mœglin, the meter model favours a specific type of organization where regulation and valorization are guaranteed by the meter and control all the other functions. However, he adds that the specifics of this model are still open for debate. He then ruminates on the eventual creation of a fifth model—informational brokering—which is found mostly in connection with the Internet. Brokering relies on an acquired relationship with consumers, an operation undertaken through intermediation. The intermediary develops a personalized relationship, collects user preferences, creates lines of communication, and develops applications that may add value to her activity and justify her remuneration. “Financing takes place through a contract: payment by commission, payment for referrals and the sale of keywords to advertisers, through the commercialization of information acquired during the transaction, etc.” (p. 158). In the future, we could very well find ourselves with five
models. Miège (2000), however, apparently does not share this view, as he considers there to be two classes: one for “generic models” (publishing and streaming) and the other for “intermediary stable models (written news and the club)” (p. 59).

Lucien Perticoz (2012) has recently developed this reflection in more depth. He sees a commonality between the elements of each model, corresponding to the four following levels of analysis:

1. The mode of payment for produced content and to the actors who have provided funding: Who are the consumers? Who are the advertising agencies involved? Is public funding involved?
2. The second level aims to “identify who facilitates the interface between the various actors involved in the conceptualization and promotion of content and the viewers” (n.p.). Think publishers/producers involved in cinema, recorded music, and book publishing, or programmers involved in traditional radio and television.
3. The specific characteristics of the consumed product: Are copies appropriated? Is one unit of content quickly replaced by another?
4. Finally, he aims to specify different modes of remuneration for actors involved in creative labour: salary, copyright, or royalty.

As with Miège, Perticoz (2012) favours the existence of two generic models, publishing and streaming. It seems, however, that the primary interest of his text lies elsewhere. Thus, he adds that “generic models rarely exist in a pure state, a single industrial channel may alternate between each.” He relates an example from the film industry:

The film industry has historically been the concern of the publishing model, even though the purchase of a ticket at a theatre by the final consumer translates uniquely into the viewing of the film. This industrial channel has progressively seen a part of its funding be insured by TV stations (who themselves subscribe to the streaming model), which pre-purchase broadcast rights to a future program. This observation should not lead us to believe that the film industry has been dominated by the streaming model as the primary traits of it as an industrial channel remain attached to the publishing model. On the other hand, it has seen its funding sources gradually diversify in accordance to the movie-viewing practices of individuals, which have themselves evolved (downloading films from the internet, diversification of viewing techniques and technical supports, etc.). (n.p.)

He continues, considering that “the recent transformations [the cultural industries] have undergone these past year have demonstrated that none of them corresponds uniquely to one sole generic model and that hybridization is on its way to become the general rule” (n.p.). Adopting the same position as Mœglin on the ideal type perspective of the model, Perticoz (2012) believes that by “adapting the four characteristics of mode of payment, identification of the figure coordinating the group, type of consumed content, and mode of remuneration of actors, it becomes possible
to discern some sort of evolution that circles back to the characteristics of one of the
generic models” (n.p.). So, ultimately, he questions his own line of reasoning. Curiously,
he mentions the private club and meter models, but without making any reference to
the authors who coined these terms: “Before the internet became a tool of the masses,
certain authors had already posited that the publishing and streaming models were
not sufficient to account for the transformations at work within the cultural industries”
(n.p.). He then concludes that “I believe that the brokering, private club and meter
models should be considered as derivatives of the publishing and streaming models
as they continue to have a greater heuristic potential” (n.p.). Thus, he maintains that
ultimately there exist but two generic models. However, if we take the four character-
istics that identify each of the two ideal type models, our possibilities are not exhausted.
For instance, in terms of financing, where do we slot a subscription allowing access to
a set of content based on payment for specific content (in the case of the publishing
model) or for advertising (in the case of the streaming model)? How do we consider
the role of an actor like Google, which the author mentions as one of the central figures,
as publisher/producer (for the publishing model) and programmer (for the streaming
model)? Are these two models really generic? While the conclusion may be muddled,
at the very least he poses the question.

Research and reflection would long continue around the subject of models. Beyond the basic question of relevance and following the lines of their abstract invention, Gaëtan Tremblay has, since 1997, focused upon a challenge facing the theory of
the cultural industries. The theory of the cultural industries, he writes, is satisfied with
too often postulating and describing a dichotomy of social logics and actor
strategies. It lacks an explicative model capable of creating a connection
between the two, accounting for the evolution of actor strategies as trans-
formations of social logics that structure the field of commodified sym-

demic exchanges. (p. 21)

It seems that this challenge is still at hand today.

Perticoz was correct to emphasize the importance of integrating long-term analy-
sis, as also shown by Tremblay and several times by Miège. Does it make sense, for ex-
ample, to attempt a conceptualization based on the role of Google in cultural industries
while the ongoing changes are still numerous? The question begs asking. The editorial
and streaming models, in fact, have the advantage of relying upon the existence of in-
dustries that have been around for several decades (in the case of radio and television)
and several centuries (in the case of literary publishing). This does not, however, in-
validate more recent reflections upon other models.

Thus the debate continues to rage around the subject of models and I have per-
sonally borne witness to the collaboration around it that continues on both sides of
the Atlantic. Pierre Mœglin (2007) adds a little spice, hypothesizing that models cor-
respond not only to socioeconomic logics but also to diverse conceptualizations of
public space and thus constitute the end of the line in terms of absolute social facts:

Different cultural behaviours manifest themselves in each of the five mod-
els. For instance, the humanist bourgeois universe of the personal library,
clearly of the publishing model, has nothing to do with the adjacent mass
culture of the streaming model, nor an inkling of brotherhood with a community or cooperative subscribing to the club model, nor the individualism of pay-per-view facilitated by the meter model, not with the ideal of personalized assistance at the heart of the brokering model. There are five competing “cultures” that are today superimposed from which analysis, from an anthropological perspective, leads to considering the socio-economic model as an absolute social fact. (p. 159)

That said, not all work in this area has been developed in France. Several researchers have worked on the cultural, informational, and communication industries in Québec over the past decade, for instance Oumar Kane, Marc Ménard, and myself, while Jean-Guy Lacroix and Gaëtan Tremblay have turned their attentions to other issues.

And now?
In conclusion, I would like to draw your attention to two questions that seem particularly important. First, I will return to the place of consumer/users in the theory of the cultural industries. I will then interrogate the current state of development of the theory.

In 1997, Tremblay stated that the theory of the cultural industries needed to solidify the question of social uses of devices that facilitate access to content:

(T)he question of social uses is not left neglected by researchers who want a theory of cultural industries. It is often placed in relation to the strategies of industrial actors. Yet it is hardly integrated, with respect to financing nor with the definition of social logics. In sum, theoretical efforts must be made in order to develop a theoretical framework that articulates the coherent entirety of strategies, logics and social uses (p. 21).

No single text seems to have demonstrated the extent to which uses and the cultural practices within which they insert themselves have been able to be connected to the models addressed here. In this vein, Thierry Vedel (1994) proposed the development of a sociopolitics of use in the edited collection Médias et nouvelles technologies : Pour une socio-politique des usages. Here they aim to describe supply and demand, but without the case studies that would have helped complete this theoretical proposition (George, 2012).

I previously drew attention to this blind spot in a 2004 article entitled “La dimension sociologique de l’approche de l’économie politique de la communication et de la théorie des industries culturelles” (George, 2004). Here, I proposed that the analysis of use from the perspective of the norm of consumption was somewhat reductive and that appropriation was perhaps emptied of its content. In doing so, I adopted Pierre Chambat’s (1995) conclusion that “appropriation behaves differently than consumption of a positive dimension of creation and through the constitution of uses, rebounds back onto the object” (p. 82). It appears that without adopting a dialogue-based paradigm that proposes balanced bilateral exchanges between supply and demand, users tend to be prone to a certain role in the social dynamic of production-consumption. I continue by specifying three modalities of user/consumer “presence”:

First, they may collectively express their needs and expectations and thus consider the process of production-distribution. Then, they are present
through the representation of supply professionals. Finally, they exist as receivers and users, and the related modalities have an influence on the capitalist dynamic of production-consumption (George, 2004).

Indeed, it seems today the context is characterized by the exponential growth of technical devices—from laptops to tablets through to mobile phones—that are prone to circulate content. This occurs through the traditional opening of the Internet and thanks to a greater amount of attention paid by consumer-oriented industries that tend to have a certain “weight” in the evolution of models and outside the dynamics of labour. They remain just as dominant within the processes of industrialization and commodification.

Miège (2012) equally subscribes to this point of view and believes that we must move beyond the simple juxtaposition of industrial strategies, trends in cultural practices, uses of technical tools, and content reception activities. In light of what has been presented here, that task appears immense. Miège writes:

How does one effectively embrace both varying types of industry—those of producers and publishers according to the relationships with “creators” as well as diffusers, transformations of cultural practices, the formation of communication tool uses, and the reactions of content users who are the proposed final destination for this content? (n.p.)

Faced with a challenge equal to the amplitude of his expectation, Miège continues:

A research strategy is made through successive choices; one must know how to rely on previous results and thus to avoid one orientation or another in order to focus upon that (or those) that seems (or seem) decisive in relation to the program with which one is engaged without needing to return every time to the evolution of cultural and informational practices, or to the relations between producers and creators. Instead, one focuses on the strategies of communication industries with regard to creators and producers as well as the formation of uses of new tools, et cetera. (n.p.)

However, is it not possible to conduct a research project, bringing together the five dimensions noted by Miège, based on a heterogeneous set of academic works and relying upon the fieldwork and literature reviews undertaken in the work of others (and thus based on methodologies whose parameters we cannot control)? While Miège’s line of questioning is indeed relevant, it appears to have been made in haste.

Pushing things further, Miège invites the reader to consider Lucien Perticoz’ (2011b) doctoral thesis, undertaken at Grenoble, on musical practices. Entitled *Les processus techniques et les mutations de l’industrie musicale : L’auditeur au quotidien, une dynamique de changement*, it is undoubtedly interesting and craftily brings together cultural practices in the music sector, information and communication (ICT) uses, and music industry strategies. In addition, the author seeks to integrate “the dimension of everyday practices in different attempts at creating models, while understanding that this will be one of the primary blind spots of these generic models” (2011b, p. 16). It appears that his work facilitates a gathering of user/consumer practices and models (or social logics) and thus responds to the research gap identified by Tremblay in 1997.
However, while Perticoz chooses the locations for his fieldwork according to the five dimensions determined by Miège, some of these dimensions are not addressed in earnest. Miège (2012) has recognized this, stating:

Building on the achievements of previous work (his own) and making choices based on current issues, the priorities of which focus on data collection and reflection, the researcher emphasizes strategic questions in a theoretical and practical manner with regard to new communication tools, music consumption practices, and industrial actor strategies rather than limiting himself to the musical industrial channel. (n.p.)

In addressing my second concern—the current state of development of the theory of the cultural industries—I turn to a recent text by Pierre Mœglin (2012) to which I have already alluded, “Une théorie pour penser les industries culturelles et informationnelles?” (n.p.). Here Mœglin aims to demonstrate that what we have here is indeed a unique and well-founded theory. However, having reviewed the text and the documentary research conducted in relation to it, I believe Mœglin has failed to show how this theory is unique, well-founded, or successfully developed. It appears that his text aims to do something much more specific; he instead attempts to call into question the apparent gap between the two approaches used to analyze the industrialization of culture (“Kulturindustrie”).

Here, the totalitarian logics of surrender (Marcuse, 1968) appear to impose their iron-fisted law on creation, and even further, on the human condition and onto nature (Lacroix & Mascotto, 2000), at the risk of bringing about their pure and simple destruction. The cultural and informational industries that will in the future join with the three branches of communication industries—network provision, manufacturing, and software (Miège, 2000; Tremblay, 1990)—seem to oppose the logical ability to regularly renew their strategies and products (n.p.).

The highlighting of this opposition by Mœglin (2012) leads one to wonder if these two undercurrents—the place of consumer-users and the current state of theoretical development—are in fact opposed to one another.

In reality, supporting the thesis of programmed auto-dissolution does not impede recognizing that, threatening as it may be, maturity is none the worse after an endless delay. Conversely, agreeing to the vitality of cultural and informational industries does not mean hiding ones eyes from the fact that their trajectories are neither linear nor guaranteed. (n.p.)

He continues:

We are far from what initially seemed an impassable gap between the two theses at hand. Real as it may be, their separation in fact translates into the duality of a phenomenon that is subject to two different yet complementary points of clarification. In addition, rather than stick to the dialectic of culture at the negative stage of triumphant instrumental rationality, as Horkheimer and Adorno have done, one should consider the tension which continually feeds the industrial dynamic of culture and communication. In it, we find explanations for both conflicting points of view and
Without a doubt, my position is more measured than Mœglin’s. I do, of course, share an interest in considering that these two perspectives on the culture industry or the cultural industries are worth examining in terms of the permanent tension that feeds the dynamics at work in the industrialization and commodification of culture, rather than accept them as terms that are “simply” opposed. However, I am doubtful of the possibility of deducing the existence of a unified and unifying theory here. As Gaëtan Tremblay (1997) noted some time ago,

there is, effectively, a continual focus to the critical dimension of the two perspectives, that originating in reflections upon the culture industry primarily from a philosophical-ethical position, while the perspective linked to the cultural industries comes from a socioeconomic approach. (p. 12)

The epistemological unity needed to distinguish a free-standing theory is not evident. Beyond the obvious interest of researchers in one specific industry or another—the work of Christian Robin (2003a, 2003b) and Bertrand Legendre (2007), in the case of publishing, are often cited with this regard—we might ask if that which has been gained through academic work on the cultural industries in terms of precise analytical terms has not been lost though emphasizing the ever-growing space occupied by the value of capital in the culture, information, and communication sector. This is still a dominant trend—even if it is met by counter-trends as seen in social practices of resistance, which are rarely, if ever, considered in work on the cultural industries (and this is really a shame)—that should be situated in the more global shifts in capitalism. Here, we encounter the idea that the cultural industries is a system, a subsystem at the heart of the vast capitalist whole. Thus, it is crucial that we situate the work on cultural industries—because right now they can at best be considered part of a mid-range theory—within a theory that is much broader. As far as I know, this is something that has not been done before, except perhaps when Lacroix and Tremblay briefly entertained the existence of the links between the theory of cultural industries and the theory of regulation regarding the role of crises in capitalism and its transformations as well as the endless search to integrate capital valorization—in a text that has never been translated into French. And so the work continues …

Notes
1. On a related note, I would like to thank both the evaluators of this text and the colleagues who read an initial version and provided comments: Philippe Bouquillion, Jean-Guy Lacroix, Oumar Kane, and Gaëtan Tremblay. I’ve taken their comments into account. That said, any errors in this text remain my sole responsibility. Many thanks also to Evan Light for the translation (including quotes) into English.

2. In a future text, it would be interesting to consider the role of public policy with relation to the development of work on cultural industries. French researchers have continued, to a certain extent, to have their work funded by the Minister of Culture. This is no longer the case in Québec, where academic funding must be obtained from certain funding agencies.


4. Note the use of terminology, the joining of “culture” and “media,” qualified as separate things. I believe, however, that the first encapsulates the second. Is not every media industry also cultural?
I was only able to access to the second edition, which was published 11 years after the original.

References


