

# Culture or Commerce? A Comparative Assessment of International Interactions and Developing Countries at UNESCO, WTO, and Beyond

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Does international trade in cultural products threaten cultural diversity in the developing world? This article seeks to question the implied correlation by exploring the intellectual and empirical bases of the claims. Conceptually, I argue that cultural diversity viewed from the perspective of the nation-state is problematic. Politically, of course, nation-states make this claim themselves in protecting their self-interest globally. Empirically, this paper shows that nation-states at the forefront of the movement protecting cultural diversity are, in fact, top exporters of cultural products, something that is not apparent in the mercantilist position taken by these states with respect to international trade in cultural products. The paper then explores the position of developing countries explicitly taking advantage of globalization of culture to promote both their cultural distinctiveness as well as their exports. These “cultural voices,” I conclude, are growing economically and socially and cannot be dismissed as playing second fiddle to those from the developed world.

**Keywords:** cultural diversity, developing countries, WTO, UNESCO, cultural exports, cultural networks

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Does international trade in cultural products threaten cultural diversity in the developing world? This paper seeks to question the implied correlation by exploring the intellectual and empirical bases of the claims. Conceptually, I argue that cultural diversity viewed from the perspective of the nation-state is problematic. Politically, of course, nation-states, make this claim themselves in protecting their self-interest globally (Goff 2000). Cultural diversity, measured territorially within the confines of the nation-state, then becomes a political label that, in part, masks the interactive and hybrid features of cultures. Empirically, this paper shows that nation-states at the forefront of the movement protecting cultural diversity are, in fact, top exporters of cultural products, something that is not apparent in the mercantilist position taken by these states with respect to international trade in cultural products. Furthermore, these states often make their claims on the behest of developing countries. The paper then explores the position of developing countries explicitly

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taking advantage of globalization of culture to promote both their cultural distinctiveness as well as their exports. It specifically examines the way developing country states are prioritizing their cultural industries and taking advantage of international commercial networks. These “cultural voices,” I conclude, are growing economically and socially and cannot be dismissed as playing second fiddle to those from the developed world.

### **Emergent Cultural Identities and Voices**

The idea of protecting cultural diversity implicitly assumes some kind of a territorial boundary placed around culture, most prominently that of the nation-state. The idea of territorially bound cultures is increasingly hard to sustain in the face of global networks enabling rapid flows of representations and other forms of cultural knowledge. Cultural representations and knowledge are repositories of cultural identity and memories—in other words, collective ways of life—and cultural policies are often aimed at enhancing these processes. Placing territorial protections around ways of life is hard but is nevertheless supported historically by various regulations and narratives. As shown below, the clear alternative seems to be networked cultures.

Nation-states epitomize territorial thinking about a way of life. The modern view of the nation-state privileges the state over nations, legitimizing the former’s authority. In Western Europe, the spread of the printing press favored local languages and cultural reproduction and distribution expressed in terms of these languages (Anderson 1983; Deibert 1997). However, it is the imprint of the state, which legitimized this way of thinking in the post-Westphalian world. In Ruggie’s words, territorial epistemes are viewed from a single fixed-point perspective of the nation-state (Ruggie 1993).

The idea of a nation-state was always problematic in postcolonial development; the territories of former colonies were often constructed by the colonizing powers. Although the authority of the state was contested within Europe, too, yet this contestation was marked by competition among rival organizational forms (Spruyt 1996); in the postcolonial world, nations were weakened under colonial rule, allowing the states to command authority but often without popular acceptance by the polity.<sup>1</sup> Nation-state building took on heightened significance in these societies with the state leading the way toward the promised lands. However, soon the promises came undone.

The so-called “postcolonial literature” and other narratives provide us with a glimpse into the evolving cultural identities of these societies in the context of the nation-state.<sup>2</sup> While hard to generalize, the novel often represents fragmented lives that seek a cultural voice not stifled by the existing power relations or co-opted into it. The following passage is illustrative of this in the case of colonial Rhodesia:

It would be a marvelous opportunity, she said sarcastically, to forget. To forget who you were, what you were and why you were that. The process she said, was called assimilation, and that was what was intended for the precocious few who might prove a nuisance if left to themselves, whereas the others—well really, who cared about the others? So they made a little space into which you were assimilated, and a honorary space in which you could join them and they could make

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<sup>1</sup>Postcolonial states were sovereign then in the international legal sense of recognition but not the Rousseauvian sense of embodiment of the general will. Even those states that found legitimacy in nationalist movements found that the consensus to rule that they inherited quickly dissolved into ethnic/national conflicts, leading to waves to dictatorship or populism around Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

<sup>2</sup>The term postcolonial implies here that this literature continues to be shaped by colonial history. However valid that claim may be, it ignores many other influences, especially in the current period. This paper, thus, uses the terms postcolonial and developing world literature interchangeably.

sure that you behaved yourself (Tsistsi Dungarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 1988:179).

Even in cases where the hope of finding this voice is vested in the state, the effort is ultimately futile.<sup>3</sup>

Eternal questions of our eternal debates. We all agreed that much dismantling was needed to introduce modernity within our traditions. Torn between the past and the present, we deplored the “hard sweat” that would be inevitable. We counted the possible losses. But we knew that nothing would be as before. We were full of nostalgia but were resolutely progressive (Mariama Ba, *So Long a Letter* 1980:19).

Paulo Freire’s (1970) answer to this lies in the process of consciousness-awakening.<sup>4</sup> Both Ba’s and Dungarembga’s protagonists realize this through the narrative, the process of communication. Freire offers the concept of dialogic praxis, which entails a combination of thought, action, and transformation. The oppressed of the developing world can be liberated only through this pedagogy that enables them to find their “cultural voice”: Freire (1970:49) thus offers a way out of cultural paralysis or silence. “In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of their oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation they can transform.”

Cultures do not need protections from interventions—they need voices. Cultural identity in the developing world is represented as well as facilitated by several interventions. Colonialism and the postcolonial state are themselves broadly contextualized in the intervention of modernity upon tradition, a theme intensely and continuously portrayed in postcolonial representations. Garcia Canclini’s book *Hybrid Cultures* (1995:2) investigates the hypothesis that “the *uncertainty* about the meaning and value of modernity derives not only from what separates nations, ethnic groups, and classes, but also from the sociocultural hybrids in which the traditional and the modern are mixed.” In another essay, he notes that the cultural policy debates were dominated by the state and “analyzed whether the many groups, ethnic communities, and regions were sufficiently represented in each national heritage, excessively reduced their local specificities to politico-cultural abstractions in the interest of social control or legitimate a certain form of nationalism” (Garcia Canclini 2001:303).

As we move from modernity to the current era of globalization, the crucial link is provided by the interventions brought about by technology and information networks. In either case, the intervention is external but whereas modernity was thrust upon colonial societies, information networks specifically, or globalization in general, do provide a way for these societies to interact with the outside world.<sup>5</sup> While

<sup>3</sup>While these narratives reveal enormous complexity, they are often misunderstood in the West as “national desire” as Frederic Jameson (1986) categorizes the third-world novel. A lively debate ensued as a result of Jameson’s intervention. Aijaz Ahmed (1987) shares Jameson’s progressive ideals but accuses him of missing the complexity of these narratives, in effect creating an Orientalizing stereotype that accuses the third-world narrative of doing something the Europeans purportedly did in the nineteenth century. In other words, the third world novelist is accused here of being backward.

<sup>4</sup>Not only is the issue of cultural voice brought up in these narratives but the very medium of the written word is questioned by the authorial voice leading people like Dungarembga to write screenplays and Senegalese writer Ousmane Sembene to move to the film medium for expression. “Personally, I prefer to read because I learned from reading. But I think that cinema is culturally much more important, and for us in Africa it is an absolute necessity. There is one thing you can’t take away from the African masses and that is having seen something” (Ousmane interviewed in Perry et al. 1973:37)

<sup>5</sup>This sentence underscores autonomous evolution from below as opposed to regulated interactions from above. For example, commercial exchanges between the postcolonial and developed countries until recent times were heavily governed by the rules made by the latter. Only in recent time has the developing world begun to make these rules in its favor (Singh 2000).

the organizational forms in which this technology is introduced to developing countries, for example transnational enterprises, may be top-down the zones of autonomy provided actors on the ground to shape outcomes in their favor are broadened. Even when networks accrue regulative power to those who govern them, they may still allow for serendipitous, subversive, or autonomous outcomes ranging from formation of new epistemes in the cultural sense, discovery of markets in the economic sense, or exercises in global solidarity in the social sense. Networking being interactive, it influences the formation of both identities and interests that in turn influence collective memory and cultural representations.<sup>6</sup> Keck and Sikkink (1998:16) note that the primary function of networks is persuasion and socialization and note several instances where global social movements present collective epistemes (e.g., violence against women) as a result of networked interactions.

However, the question of preponderant power in networks cannot be ignored. Radical constructivists such as Castells (1997) show how various forms of identity are arising in different parts of the world depending on the sociohistorical context and the dominant production structure. Here, the primary function performed by networks is that of sustaining and coordinating global financial, production, and distribution flows. Labor, on the other hand, is fragmented (Castells 1996:475). Social movements here can challenge dominant structures using subordinate networks through “conscious, purposive social action” (Castells 1998:380) but this is not a fait accompli. In the end, networked capitalism, in replacing industrial capitalism, creates fragmented and multiple social identities, including feminist ones.<sup>7</sup>

As previously noted, cultural complexity arises both out of the clash of modernity and tradition as it does out of various forms of networked interaction. Between the structures of power understood in radical worldviews and the liberal notions of agency, Appadurai (1996, 2000, 2004) introduces global “scapes” embodying networked interactions that simultaneously include existing meaning and production systems around the world while allowing for various forms of imaginary capacities to arise, especially from below. Culture then becomes “a dialogue between aspirations and sedimented traditions” (Appadurai 2004:84). Global imaginaries allow for both “politics of recognition” and “capacity to aspire” in Appadurai’s terms: “As the imagination as a social force itself works across national lines to produce locality as a spatial fact and a sensibility, we see the beginnings of social forms without either the predatory mobility of unregulated capital or the predatory stability of many states” (Appadurai 2000:7).

Notice that in the immediate postcolonial world, the cultural voice (which this paper takes to be analogous to capacity to aspire) sought to find its institutional resolve in the newly founded nation-state. In the globalizing world, this voice arises through networked interactions that encompass, although may not necessarily marginalize, the state. In fact, in as much as networked interactions in the developing world may be weak, it allows the state to step in and shape cultural meanings and the rules for their production. Furthermore, even though networks may be extra-territorial, many institutionalized interactions continue to be dominated by nation-states. Into such a confluence of territoriality and extra-territoriality in which cultural memories, meanings, and identities are continually renegotiated, the search for global rules to govern cultural policies has entered a new millennium featuring both state and nonstate actors.

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<sup>6</sup>The ability of networks to reconfigure, constitute, or reconstitute identities, interests, and institutions is elsewhere conceptualized by me as metapower (Singh 2002).

<sup>7</sup>Again, postcolonial literature supports this claim. Chinua Achebe’s *When Things Fall Apart* or Jorge Amado’s *Gabriella Cloves and Cinnamon* are examples.

### **Global Rules and State-Led Cultural Policies**

Cultural policy in the developing world was mostly constituted and regulated by the nation-state in the immediate postcolonial era. This constitution reflected nation-state-building projects. It included national heritage projects such as archeology, museums, and archives; protections given to national cultural industries such as film, broadcasting, and publishing; and thwarting international cultural flows to protect “infant industries.” The regulatory instruments available to the state included various types of finance, subsidy, quota, and tax schemes aimed at the arts and entertainment. However, almost powerless ministries of cultures and sports in various countries implemented these.

Cultural policy has come of age through globalization on several counts. Globalization, understood here as expansiveness and deepening of markets, in the cultural policy sphere entails heightened cultural flows in the form of cultural content and products over global marketplaces and other networks. The rapidity and intensity of these flows, in turn, entails that cultural identities that were always complex and hybrid now face new challenges and renegotiations, especially as cultural flows come packaged via various forms of entertainment media. Lastly, the hitherto insignificant ministries of culture, tourism, and sports in the developing world are finding their national positions enhanced both due to globalization and also due to domestic pressures to stem, encourage, or take advantage of culture flows (as the case may be) in different countries.

In this new global milieu, the need for global rules to conduct or preserve cultural policies internationally and to regulate cultural content flows continues to replace the prior international social compact. The latter restricted cultural policies, weak as they were, to the purview of the nation-state. But, rather than see cultural flows grow “without” the state, the latter is stepping in to frame the global rules. It is not entirely clear whether the developing country states are doing so of their own accord and whether they would gain anything by way of these rules. Nevertheless, the very fact that these rules are framed and that they involve developing countries speak to the idea of global networks introduced above. The twin phenomena dealing with developing country involvement and the uncertainty regarding their impact are reviewed below by way of the international cultural policies coming out of the World Trade Organization and UNESCO.

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is seen as the foremost international coordination mechanism governing commercial flows of cultural products or services.<sup>8</sup> It emerged out of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade talks (1986–94) that also gave birth to the World Trade Organization.<sup>9</sup> The developing world was initially opposed to framing an international agreement in services—it fiercely opposed the services agenda that it viewed as a high-tech item benefiting only the United States and other developed countries. However, as the Uruguay round took off, developing countries were full participants and the services negotiations were led by a developing country Ambassador, the Colombian Felipe Jaramillo. The broad rudiments of the GATS framework were in place by 1989 and rested on two elements: countries would liberalize or open their markets in selected sectors (known as positive lists) and then put in restrictions within these sectors (known as negative lists). Thus, a country could choose to open up its film sector but then use negative lists to keep subsectors (e.g., distribution services) out of its liberalization profile. Furthermore, there was no one size fits all, countries choosing to vary their levels of commitment for market access and national

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<sup>8</sup>GATS governs trade in intangible products such as telecommunications, banking, business services, and cultural products such as tourism and entertainment media.

<sup>9</sup>WTO replaced GATT or the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was the de facto multilateral trade body between 1947 and 1994 and was responsible for conducting various trade rounds that led to tariff reductions including the Uruguay Round.

treatment (which creates parity of treatment for foreign and domestic goods and services). It would be perfectly legal for a country under this framework to restrict rules for foreign ownership or keep in place certain types of taxes or quotas favoring local firms. At face value, this was a departure from goods negotiations in GATT that did not allow such discriminations. Furthermore, GATS divided into four the various ways in which countries exported their services to each other, allowing them to vary their levels of commitment by each mode.

Unlike popular misconceptions about the GATS framework, this was not a blanket liberalization foisted upon a hapless developing world; the latter were full participants and by the end of the Uruguay Round many like India, Brazil, and Mexico realized that they had much to gain from GATS.<sup>10</sup> Eight sectors were chosen for the initial exercises in liberalization including audio-visual (film, television). The audio-visual negotiations, discussed next, almost brought the Uruguay Round to a halt and pitted the United States in a fierce battle with the European Community, specifically Hollywood against the French film industry. While the developing world was involved in the framing of the GATS agreement, it mostly watched from the sidelines as the U.S. and EU audiovisual dispute simmered.

### **The Issue of Cultural Exception and Diversity**

The case analyzed here involves mostly the United States and the European Community, in particular France, during the Uruguay Round and, in recent years, the entire world in the framing of the Universal Convention on Cultural Diversity at UNESCO. From the late-1940s onwards, Western Europe successfully argued that cultural industries, especially films, needed special protections such as quotas. During the Uruguay Round of trade talks from 1986 to 1994, the language of quotas was supplemented by that of the need for a “cultural exception.” This resulted in the European Union taking the now-famous MFN exemption, which allowed it to preserve its cultural industry policies.<sup>11</sup>

The decade since the Uruguay Round ended featured a progressive hardening of the European and Canadian positions on cultural industries. Europeans still frame the issue in cultural identity terms but have shifted the focus from cultural exception to cultural diversity. Canada and France led an international coalition to switch the cultural industry issue over to UNESCO from the WTO.<sup>12</sup> France also viewed the UNESCO process as a protection against EU measures on culture in the future that might weaken its position. The Canadian and French coalition building on this issue resulted in a *Declaration on Cultural Diversity* in 2001 and a *UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* in 2005 at the 33rd General Assembly in UNESCO. The Preamble to the text starts by “affirming that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity.” Its 35 articles affirm the rights of nations to formulate cultural policies that promote cultural diversity and protect indigenous cultures. Taken collectively, these articles outline a legal rationale against liberalization. Article 20 establishes the relationship with other international treaties: “mutual supportiveness” is mentioned as the underlying principle but, in somewhat contradictory terms, the Convention cannot be subordinated to other treaties. It is unclear how mutual supportiveness and non-subordination clauses will be resolved if there was to be a conflict. Article 20 was

<sup>10</sup>17 countries had made commitments for trade liberalization in the audio-visual sector when GATS became effective in 1995. The total number is 22 now ([www.wto.org/services](http://www.wto.org/services)). By June 2005, in the current Doha Round of WTO trade talks, of the 61 initial offers in services, 26 countries made offers in audio-visual.

<sup>11</sup>MFN or most favored nation clause in international trade means that no nation is to be discriminated in application of trade measures. An MFN exemption thus allows Europeans to discriminate against any nation, in this case the United States.

<sup>12</sup>Such forum-shopping or venue-switching, as it is called in the negotiation literature, is itself a result of globalization that brings many types of players and institutions into global rule-making.

negotiated with the GATS framework in the background. At best, it can be noted that if there was to be a conflict between UNESCO and GATS instruments, it would have to be resolved in the spirit of mutual supportiveness without subordinating the UNESCO Convention.

The UNESCO Convention was passed on October 20, 2005, with 148 votes in favor, with two negative votes from the United State and Israel. While the two networks that pushed for the Convention (INCP and INCD)<sup>13</sup> included cultural ministries and civil society, they were financed and dominated by Canadian and French governments. Participation from the developing world was mostly limited to state actors, especially the ministries of culture, who saw their positions enhanced as a result of participation in the framing of this convention.

Two paradoxes arise here: those networks that purport to speak for the developing world's cultural diversity are dominated by state networks and seek protectionist solutions (UNESCO); those networks that would allow for the cultural voices of the developing world to be heard anywhere are commercial and market driven (GATS). As subsequent sections will show, developing countries best positioned to take advantage of globalization do so through commercial networks. This sounds tantamount to an endorsement of GATS but, in actuality, even the ones participating in commercial exchanges have not taken any commitments in audiovisual either because of fears of reprisals from the EU or because of their own domestic political constraints.

### **Cultural Trade and Its Contradictions**

The idea of “protecting” cultural diversity as enshrined in the UNESCO Convention reflects two underlying and related economic suppositions. First, vulnerable countries, especially those from the developing world, need to protect their cultures (often cultural industries) from being marginalized by international influences (often multinational conglomerates) Second, market-driven solutions may not work for the purpose of protecting cultural diversity especially at the international level and thus state provided regulations and incentives are necessary. But even a cursory look at international trade in cultural products shows two contradictory but important trends. Developed countries at the forefront of efforts to “protect” cultural diversity are at the forefront of cultural trade as well. Developing countries as a whole, band-wagoning on the protections wagon, in fear of losing out from such trade, are actually gaining increased shares, even though they remain marginal.<sup>14</sup> This section limits itself to showing growth of this trade through market-driven mechanisms, especially exports. The next section underlines practices from the developing world that reveal the cultural policy successes or weaknesses in the developing world.

Fears continue to exist regarding flows of cultural products, the foremost being that only a few countries with large multinationals benefit. Table 1 lists the top 20 exporting countries in cultural goods. Apart from China and Mexico, the list only contains developed countries. Nevertheless, trade in cultural goods has grown from \$39.3 billion in 1993 to nearly \$60 billion, an increase of 50%, in merely 10 years. Hidden within and around these statistics are a few other trends that are worth pointing out. First, Canada and France rank among the top ten countries in terms of international trade in cultural products. Second, as Table 2 shows, while the

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<sup>13</sup>INCP stand for International Network on Cultural Policy and boasts 70 ministries of culture ([www.incp-ripc.org](http://www.incp-ripc.org)). INCD is the International Network for Cultural Diversity comprising over 400 nonstate actors from 71 countries ([www.incd.net](http://www.incd.net)).

<sup>14</sup>This article does not assume that surpluses in trade will help to protect cultural diversity but in as much as the international arguments against cultural diversity are framed in terms of trade shares, the statistics cited below point to another story. Subsequent sections will show how many developing countries continue to produce culturally hybrid products that take advantage of globalization processes.

TABLE 1. Top 20 Exporters of Core Cultural Goods (\$Million)

	<i>Country</i>	<i>Total Exports of Core Cultural Goods</i>
1.	United Kingdom	8,549
2.	United States	7,648
3.	Germany	5,789
4.	China	5,275
5.	France	2,521
6.	Ireland	2,277
7.	Singapore	2,001
8.	Japan	1,805
9.	Canada	1,577
10.	Austria	1,561
11.	The Netherlands	1,546
12.	Spain	1,532
13.	Switzerland	1,384
14.	Italy	1,381
15.	Mexico	1,244
16.	Belgium	1,130
17.	Sweden	875
18.	Hungary	720
19.	Hong Kong	578
20.	Denmark	499

Source: UNESCO (2005: 57–59).

TABLE 2. Percentage Share of Total Exports of Core Cultural Products by Region, 1994–2002

	<i>1994</i>	<i>2002</i>
TOTAL EXPORTS	\$36.2 billion	\$54.7 billion
European Union (EU 15)	54.3	51.8
Other Europe	6.1	6.2
North America	25	16.9
Asia	11.8	21.2
East Asia	7.6	15.6
Latin America & Caribbean	1.9	3.0
Africa	0.2	0.4
Oceania	0.6	0.6

Source: UNESCO (2005: 63–64).

share of trade for the United States and European Union has declined, that for East Asia has doubled and it is increasing for other parts of the developing world as well. However, the total share for Latin America and Africa is still low. Third, these statistics also do not count related activities such as information technology, advertising, and architectural services. Many of these activities are now outsourced to developing countries.<sup>15</sup> Fourth, the UNESCO data are based on customs figures and do not take into account royalty and license fees for television and films. Emerging centers of film and television production in the developing world—Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, India, and China—are thus underestimated here.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Philippines has long served as a source for architectural drafting. India and Taiwan are emerging as animation powerhouses. Video games is a big export from countries such as Korea and China.

<sup>16</sup>There may also be overestimates in that the finished product may not reflect local culture. As an ISP referee pointed out, Ireland exports CDs but it is not “Irish music” being exported.



TABLE 3. International Tourism Receipts (\$Billion)

	2003	2004
World	524	623
Europe	282.9	326.7
Asia and Pacific	94.9	125.0
Americas	114.1	131.7
North America	84.3	98.1
Africa	15.5	18.3
Middle East	16.8	21.0

Source: World Tourism Organization (2005:3).

Fifth, as Table 3, shows international trade in tourism services is enormous at \$623 billion and 763 million international tourist arrivals in 2004. Tables 4 and 5 show the top ten tourist destinations and receipts. Only China, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Turkey make it to any of these lists from the developing world. But, here again, France is among the top three recipients. However, it is important to point out that while developed countries dominate international tourism, it is one of the biggest foreign exchange earners for a host of big and small developing countries. Apart from big countries such as Argentina, Brazil, China, or India, the list includes places as diverse as Belize, Fiji, Morocco, and Mauritius.

While these statistics are at a macro level, they do indicate that there may not be enough evidence to make the claim that international markets are marginalizing the cultural products of the developing world. The corollary claim that developing countries are being marginalized because only American cultural products dominate the world is also not borne out by looking at the line-up of the top 10 cultural exporters. In order to understand how exactly the developing world fares in the international political economy of culture, I now turn to the policy context for the cultural products from the developing world.

### Cultural Policies in the Developing World

In the immediate postcolonial era, the developing world's cultural expressions and policies were molded by the quest for modernization. The state assumed a paternalistic role but a combination of its domination over society and its lack of resources to encourage cultural expressions effectively may have even resulted in cultural stagnation. This section examines these past changes in contrast to the current changes underway as a result of globalization. Three major themes are

TABLE 4. Top 10 International Tourist Arrivals (Millions)

1.	France	75.1
2.	Spain	53.6
3.	United States of America	46.1
4.	China	41.8
5.	Italy	37.1
6.	United Kingdom	27.8
7.	Hong Kong (China)	21.8
8.	Mexico	20.6
9.	Germany	20.1
10.	Austria	19.4
	Total Top 10	363.4
	Total World	763

Source: World Tourism Organization (2005:5).

TABLE 5. Top 10 International Tourism Receipts (U.S. \$ Billions)

1.	United States of America	74.5
2.	Spain	45.2
3.	France	40.8
4.	Italy	35.7
5.	Germany	27.7
6.	United Kingdom	27.3
7.	China	25.7
8.	Turkey	15.9
9.	Austria	15.4
10.	Australia	13.0
	Total Top 10	321
	Total World	623

Source: World Tourism Organization (2005:10).

examined here dealing with the changing role of the state, deepening of international networks, and the emerging confidence of cultural voices.

*State: Dominance to Prioritization*

The postcolonial state lacked the legitimacy, resources, and imagination to play an effective role in cultural policy making. The policy and elite consensus around economic development emphasized agricultural and industrial development, often associated with import substitution industrialization policies, and cultural policy had little role to play in these efforts that became known as modernization policies. If anything, while the colonial era movements often evoked cultural history and heritage for solidarity, the postcolonial state viewed culture more or less as traditional. It was no wonder that ministries or departments in charge of culture also often dealt with the science and technology portfolios; the latter would provide a future, more “modern,” direction for culture.

The postcolonial state inherited the legitimacy attached to being at the fore front of modernization efforts in the developing world but its primary resources were directed toward agriculture and industry.<sup>17</sup> As such, the consensus among cultural policy specialists is that culture received “a comparatively low priority, when pitted against the needs of a developing economy, a backward industry” (Vatsayan 1972). In states such as China and Cuba, headed in the communist direction, a focus on culture was also seen as decadent and bourgeois.

However, there was one aspect that analysts seem to have missed. This was development communication, which prioritized communication media for economic development. In its early formulations, development communication models posited radio, television, and newspapers as freeing the mind-set of traditional societies and peoples (Lerner 1958).<sup>18</sup> As such, the implicit cultural policy in terms of identity was to make people “modern” and shed their traditional ways of thinking. This was consistent with most writings of the period that viewed the state as delivering the developing world out of traditional cultures, which were perceived as backward.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the state sought to use these communication technologies for its own propagandistic purposes and controlled the flow of content.

<sup>17</sup>The idea of development as modernization is now heavily critiqued as the imposition of Eurocentric experiences upon a developing world in which countless elite scholars and development policy makers and organizations participated. Escobar (1995) calls it “a monologue from the heights of power.”

<sup>18</sup>For an excellent introduction to development communication, see Mody (2003).

<sup>19</sup>A different position was taken by the Negritude movement in Africa that celebrated the continent’s Blackness in opposition to racism. However, Negritude itself is now critiqued as not distinctive in African culture but a binary that responded to racism felt by Africa’s elite, such as Leopold Senghor, when they studied in places like Paris. Galvan (2004) writes that in Senegal, Negritude was understood in and confined to Dakar.

With respect to cultural organizations, government agencies were ill equipped to deal with cultural heritage, promotion, or exchanges. Very few developing countries singled out cultural industries for prioritization, with the exception of a few state-sponsored programs here and there and impetus given to cultural tourism in a few places. Rudolph's (1983:12) summary of cultural policies in India could be taken to apply to many other parts of the developing world: "Government's reluctance to respect the autonomy of cultural organizations created to promote the values and interests of the arts (and history) is in part a reflection of its paternalism." The state used its pulpit to speak about modernization and the value of the nation-state but, being resource constrained, it was not instrumental in putting any heft behind implementing policies to help the existing cultural sectors.

Several factors are now converging to change the role of the state in cultural policy making, whereby states are beginning to prioritize cultural sectors. The impetus came from societal and international pressures. In terms of societal acceptance, the developing world state, except for a few exceptions such as East Asia, was discredited for not delivering on the economic growth or modernization goals it promised. These goals themselves were considerably questioned. Societal unrest and dissatisfaction resulted in populism and dictatorship in many parts of the developing world in the 1970s. The domestic consensus around state-led identity compact began to break down just as the state began to move away from playing a dirigiste role in the economy. Meanwhile, at the international level, cultural industry issues were already receiving international attention at the GATT/WTO and cultural identity had always been part of UNESCO's agenda, which got a boost in the mid-1990s from efforts to frame a Declaration and subsequently a Convention on Cultural Diversity.

Two things resulted from the weakening of the state in general and pressures upon it to pay attention to cultural identity issues. First, cultural issues began to be prioritized at the state level in myriad ways, not all of which were about nation-state-building efforts. Second, this prioritization began in the context of market-driven measures to which the developing world was turning as a result of the failure of past economic strategies and pressures from multiple quarters in the developed world. The market-driven mechanisms will be discussed in the next section, but I turn to prioritization here, which ranges from explicit policy and regulatory instruments to recognition and construction of subnational and transnational identities by the state.

States are now moving toward either prioritizing cultural industries as a whole at the forefront of their development efforts or singling out priority sectors. The following examples are instructive, even if not encompassing of all the measures:

- China's Tenth Five Year Plan (2001–06) made creative cultural industries a salient feature of the export driven economy and the Eleventh Plan pushes this further. Each major city has developed blue-prints for giving incentives to cultural sectors. Shenzhen, supported by the ministry of culture and other government departments, recently organized the second China National Cultural Industry Fair in May 2006, which showcased the spectrum of china's cultural industries many of which work with foreign collaboration. Cultural policies cover both traditional and nontraditional sectors. Videogames and animation are booming and China's leading game developer, Shanda, was recently listed on Nasdaq. Priorities for traditional projects include plans for 1,000 new museums by 2015. Beijing Olympics in 2008, preparations for which began a decade ago, are being viewed as providing the global context for China's sure footedness in cultural policy. Said one cultural policy official in Beijing: "Now China considers cultural industries as highest in the chain of industries even more than autos" (Interview: May 15, 2006). In order to push these measures, the state realizes that academics and industry must work

together and is setting up various institutes around the country to assist cultural industries.

- The Indian government has now boosted the hapless department of culture and sports in the ministry of education. Culture now has its own ministry. Mission Culture was launched in 2005 to develop India's cultural policies and preserve India's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Rs. 500 million are earmarked for the next five years. The sum is paltry and India's democratic system being what it is, state incentives are often haphazardly designed and implemented and lack the kind of streamlining that a more centralized system like China is able to effect. But the Indian government is cognizant of the "soft power" of its cultural exports and is working toward promoting it through international cultural networks and tourism (Johnson 2006).<sup>20</sup> Like China, cultural industries are also being prioritized, with the central government finally recognizing India's film sector as an "industry" and providing it tax exemption from exports. Indian business chambers in general and the software industry in particular see several opportunities in global cultural industries including animation and videogames.
- A number of countries have provided a combination of tax, quota, and subsidies to revive their film industries that almost went extinct for political or competitive reasons. These include the vibrant film industries in Argentina, Mexico, and Korea. Meanwhile, South Africa is emerging as a major site for film production in Africa, displacing Dakar, with 2005's *Tsotsi* winning the Oscar for best foreign film and 2004's *Yesterday* nominated for it. Many of the film collaborations are with Hollywood.
- Cash-strapped developing country governments are realizing, in varying degrees, the enormous potential of tourism. These range from big cruise ship tourism in Belize to high-end tourism in Mauritius. Travel services now account for nearly 10% of global trade (World Trade Organization 2005) and as noted above a number of small economies now count on tourism as a major source of export revenues.

While the measures noted above are a form of explicit prioritization, a less formal prioritization is coming from policy statements and measures given cultural identity issues in general. Indigenous groups all over Latin America are "calling for the multiethnic, pluricultural, and multilingual nature of Latin American societies" (Davis 2003:328). Not only are these states responding but also many indigenous leaders are now becoming prominent in Latin American politics. On the other hand, long used to being seen as divided, Africa is coming together in myriad ways. Nelson Mandela's and Thabo Mbeki's calls for an African Renaissance in speaking of an incipient cultural identity must be understood in this context. They are referring to other historical trends in which Africa was coming together culturally. For example, while African filmmakers had made their mark, African cinema did not get perceived as a genre until recently (Willemsen 1992).

The Chinese state is beginning to re-explore its cultural identity cautiously after burying it under the banner of Cultural Revolution and communism in the past. While official transcripts still decry bourgeois values and culture, the state is also eager to project a multicultural and international identity. Words inscribed at the Capital Museum in Beijing, opened to the public in May 2006, following an architectural collaboration between the French and the Chinese, are apt: "Today Beijing aims to develop into an international metropolis with a harmonic integration

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<sup>20</sup>Soft power is the power to attract or to persuade others with the use of a country's political values and cultural exports. Joseph Nye, who coined the term "soft power," recently wrote an article in the weekly newsmagazine *India Today* arguing that India has an advantage in such soft power processes over China because of India's relatively open society. Nye (2006) concludes: "Despite its problems, it is a safe bet that India's hard and soft powers are likely to rise in the coming times. If India can combine the two successfully, it will be a 'smart power.'"

between traditional and modern cultures” (copied from inscription by author, May 12, 2006).

*International Networks: Top-Down to Interactive*

State’s role in cultural policy is being redefined and organized just as international networks grow in importance. International networks existed before and featured all three types of actors mentioned here: states, market players, and civil society organizations. However, the relative influences of these actors is now changed and also the way they interact with each other. On the one hand, the rules framed at the WTO and UNESCO feature state actors. On the other, international cultural flows seem to continue with little cognizance or benefit derived from these rules.

The framing of the GATS agreement involved developing countries as full-fledged actors but a quick analysis reveals its weaknesses as a state-driven agreement. Many of the provisions in the agreement reflected joint problem solving by developing countries and by the time the agreement was signed in 1994, they viewed it positively in terms of their international trade (Singh 2006). Nevertheless, while the developing countries’ share of global trade in cultural products continues to rise, they have not seriously considered using features of the GATS agreement in their favor. There are several reasons for this chiefly dealing with state centrality in the agreement. At the international level, the highly publicized dispute between the EU and the U.S. has worked against the developing world’s interests. While the U.S. position receives lukewarm support from India, China, and Mexico at the WTO, most developing countries, fearing repercussions from EU, are either shy of making commitments (Brazil) or are threatened by EU not to do so or they would get their bilateral aid cut for cultural industries (rumors abound in Geneva that Francophone Africa often hears such remonstrations).

At the domestic level, most developing countries have not carried out any kind of domestic consultations with cultural industry organizations, even where there are obvious benefits. A case to the point is tourism, which serves as the dominant source of foreign exchange earnings for many small economies. Most of them profess ignorance of GATS mechanisms but the truth may be that consultations with the highly varied tourism industry entail significant transaction costs. Furthermore, many of the developing countries are beholden to traditional agriculture and manufacturing interests, leaving little political space for new service providers to lobby for their interests (Singh 2005). I found this to be the case with Belize and Costa Rica. Both economies boast significant revenues from tourism, but whereas Costa Rica has moved toward making limited commitments in tourism (hotels, travel services), Belize remains blissfully ignorant of such measures. Belize’s trade policy in particular is more or less beholden to its inefficient banana producers, who remain fearful of the end to preferential treatment from the EU. All this while trade in tourism products in Belize remains quite open, showing that Belize would have nothing to lose by making commitments at the WTO.

While trade in cultural products continues to grow, the Convention at UNESCO is counterintuitive at best and completely off the mark at worst. Cultural diversity is left for states to define, but it is not clear which states, apart from the main drivers of the agreement, France and Canada, face overwhelming pressures from their cultural industries to protect them from international trade, or the way the state will balance its export versus import interests. In fact, GATS allows these countries to make commitments that leave regulatory provisions in place that protect their cultural industries. Second, the Convention glosses over international trade features on which even countries like Canada and United States are united. These pertain to their thriving exports in cultural products (see tables above) and support for intellectual property enforcement via means of the WTO. No mention is made of the thriving tourism industries in these countries. If design, advertising, fashion, and

other creative industries are included, the export advantage of these countries becomes greater.

International civil society networks do exist but are fragmented or find that to be effective they must either work through member state-driven international organizations or through cultural industry networks. The International Network for Cultural Diversity, set up since 1998, is a case in point. Consisting of cultural activists, it is “dedicated to countering the homogenizing effects of globalization on culture” ([www.incd.net/about](http://www.incd.net/about)). It boasts 500 members from 70 countries but was set up with Canadian government funding to frame a Declaration and Convention in Cultural Diversity at UNESCO and to put a civil society face on it. This is not unusual: politics are often about someone paying transaction costs of collective action. The problem here is that INCD’s dominant episteme and sense of purpose were already dictated before it was set up. Acheson and Maule (2004:246) note: “The official side has kept a tight rein on the ‘grass-root’ input through funding its liaison office and various research initiatives, holding the INCD meetings concurrently with its own, and providing consultants or staff that develop themes, suggest speakers, write background papers and summary reports and proselytize.”

Another example may be taken from the networks of artists in Africa. FEPACI (the Pan African Federation of Cineastes), founded in 1967, has been quite instrumental in furthering the cause of African cinema and giving it a concrete identity but as a network it is partly a grouping of cultural industry professionals and often relies on funding from government bodies as at the April 2006 Africa Film Summit in Johannesburg. One of FEPACI’s purposes has been to cut the umbilical cord of funding from Europe, again something related to the objectives of being a full-fledged cultural industry.

If the grassroots cultural products from the developing world are coming of age, they lie in the success of commercial networks. Here are a few examples:

- TV Programs: Latin American telenovelas are now watched by 2 billion people in the world and the cultural establishments backing them have now challenged Hollywood’s dominance. Other countries are mimicking the telenovela model. India and Brazil might collaborate in the future. U.S. network Univision paid \$105 million in 2004 for telenovela imports (Martinez 2005). Korean soaps are popular in East Asia.
- Films: Chinese, Indian, Korean, Argentinean, Brazilian, South African films are now seen as success stories, not despite but because of global commercial networks. Many of them feature several types of collaborations among artists and also may be financed internationally. Hollywood connections have also boosted South Africa’s film industry, replacing Senegal with ties to Paris, as the center of film production in Africa. The Cannes film festival is also beginning to feature financiers for international cinema productions along with its traditional function of bringing together film distributors (Paillard 2006). Bollywood now considers South Asian diasporic markets as a major source of revenue. Mukherjee (2005:240) cites an estimate from the Electronic Software Exports Promotion Council, which noted that India exported \$74 million in television content in 2001. The growing popularity of Indian cinema among diasporic audiences and now beyond is another important feature. *Financial Times* recently noted that Germany now plays Bollywood films during prime time and some of the DVD releases sell more than 100,000 copies (Yuk 2006). UNESCO (2005:46) estimates that exports accounted for nearly 25% of the \$900 million in revenues for the Indian film industry. All these figures are modest, India accounting for less than 1% of global film industry revenues, but the Indian film industry is expected to grow from \$1.25 billion in 2005 to over \$10 billion by 2010 according to one industry study cited by *Financial Times* in Yuk (2006).

- Music: The entire world music movement, pushed by commercial networks, has introduced works of artists to global markets. Lebanon and Egypt are emerging as major centers of Arab female vocal singers (Mellor 2005) and Bamako, Mali, is replacing South Africa as the center of music production in Sub-Saharan Africa. This last fact is especially instructive: South Africa cannot be seen as the new regional hegemon in cultural industries; what it gains in films, it loses in music.
- Crafts: Zimbabwe emerges as one of the biggest exporters of cultural products from Africa with total exports of \$27 million in 2002 (UNESCO 2005:59). Heritage goods include arts and crafts.
- Tourism: Many examples of tourism were mentioned above and a perusal of data from World Tourism Organization (2005) reveals the importance of this activity for the developing world.

*Cultural Voices: Distinctiveness and Confidence*

A cultural voice, for Freire, is developed only when there is dialogic communication and both the oppressors and the oppressed apprehend the reality of oppression, epitomized by his calls for consciousness-awakening (Freire 2000). Both the redefinition of the state and the proliferation of the international commercial networks are leading to a distinctiveness and confidence in cultural voices heard from the developing world.<sup>21</sup> This marks the third phase of cultural voices from the developing world following the quest for modernization and subsequent calls for cultural diversity.

The postcolonial state marked out modernization as the right tone to set for the cultural aspirations of the developing world guided by the paternalism of the state. It was historically specific only in terms of implicitly accepting that its own history was irrelevant but it was legitimized by both the elite and policy understandings in the developing and developed worlds. The calls for diversity from UNESCO seek to reclaim the histories that were lost in the struggle to modernize. In this, these attempts are sincere. But as shown above, they are equally paternalistic in terms of the developed world patrons who are pushing for their particular frameworks of diversity.

The cultural voices coming through on the international commercial networks rely less on some primeval notion on authentic diversity than on hybridity and innovation (Garcia Canclini, 1995). They serve to illustrate not just the complexity of cultures (Hannerz 1992) and their transnational linkages (Hannerz 1996) but, more importantly, a distinctiveness that is confident of borrowing from genres around the world and more or less unafraid of commercial processes.

Again, few examples here might be illustrative, which speak to the listing of the commercial networks above:

- The Bollywood film, problematic and commercial as that label might be, now reveals a change in content to reflect diasporic interests. While the musical melodrama is distinctive, it initially developed in response to Indian and Western traditions of storytelling. It continues to be influenced by several forces that include changing storylines to reflect diasporic audiences and explicit collaborations with screenwriting academies abroad for production purposes.
- Telenovelas were themselves fashioned on U.S.-style soap operas with a beginning, middle, and end but over time they became “distinct from the soap operas of the United States” in emphasizing the struggles of “poverty, class

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<sup>21</sup>I am well aware of Freire’s misgivings against capitalism but I assert that there’s no a priori epistemological reason that a cultural voice cannot be developed through commercial exchanges.

conflict, and institutional instability, something U.S. soaps ignore” (Martinez 2005).

- Music is perhaps the most hybrid and syncretic but even then distinctions are not hard to make. South Africa’s Kwaito (featured recently in the film *Tsotsi*) combines African rhythms with hip-hop and house music. Most music stars from Mali and Senegal (Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Yossou N’dour, Salif Keita) now collaborate with artists abroad, especially from the West. Beyond this lies the confidence of these voices in destabilizing existing power relations. Salif Keita, an albino, has explicitly challenged Malian cultural notions that viewed albinos as bearers of evil (Trofimov 2006). Even as religious conservatives decry the rise of the sexy female singer in the Arab world, these singers are widely viewed as destabilizing and liberating women from their traditional roles (Mellor 2005).

The new cultural voices in and from the developing world are aware of the power structures that they confront but are craftily using their global imaginaries to both borrow from as well as add to the distinctiveness of their cultural products. At times, this is done with a certain chutzpah, as in manufacturing “authenticity” to sell to tourists, or with sincerity in the syncretic voices of the world’s music genres. The new cultural voices at times work with the state and at other times at cross-purposes with it. Either way, the distinctiveness and confidence of these cultural voices come through. This distinctiveness and the political purposes it serves helps to connect the past of the cultural voices with the present and the many oppressions that it has faced.

### Conclusion

A cultural voice from the developing world is emancipatory when it can both communicate as well rise above the power structures and posit its distinctiveness. Cultural policies that were state driven and paternalistic and international rules, such as those at the WTO and UNESCO, do not let the developing world escape the cultural identity being imposed on it. Strangely enough, the grassroots expressions from the developing world have not shied away from using commercial networks and processes in exercising their imaginaries.<sup>22</sup> For example, a recent volume on South African identities notes that commercial processes influence but do not dominate identity formation (Nuttall and Michael, 2000).<sup>23</sup> It is, therefore, important to make this argument in the context of global anthropologies that locate agency, imagination, and voice in the complex networking mechanisms that surround sites of cultural production.<sup>24</sup>

The critique of market-driven processes from critical theorists and cultural studies scholars is that markets commodify culture in which cultural products deepen and expand capitalistic processes through consumption.<sup>25</sup> Marxists, on the other hand, view commodification as part of the new international division of cultural

<sup>22</sup>This argument finds its support in the new philosophies of aesthetics that move beyond the binary posed by the traditional view of art as beauty and the progressive view of art as being nothing but a political artifact. Drucker (2005) notes in the context of fine art that “artists work with the awareness of the critical ambiguities of their situation” (p. 14). Earlier she notes: “Slickly produced works with high-production values and prepackaged imagery recycled from the realms of cultural industry, made up if material objects bought in malls and outlet stores or put on display using modes copied from the highest end showroom environments all show up as regularly as do the ‘unconstructed’ works that flaunt their disregard for conventional art-making techniques” (Drucker 2005:13). Her word for such fine art-cultural industry collaborations: complicity.

<sup>23</sup>See also Barber (2001).

<sup>24</sup>Cowen (1998, 2000) reaches a similar conclusion from an economic point of view.

<sup>25</sup>As such, the argument can be traced back to Rosa Luxemburg (2003/1951), who located the sources of imperialism in underconsumption in imperial countries and the search for the markets for products abroad. She was soundly critiqued by Marxists for ignoring the mode of production.



labor (Miller and Yudice 2002). It is beyond this essay to resolve the consumption versus production debate but both both put forward varying degrees of oppression. The evidence provided in this essay shows that oppression can happen regardless of consumption and production processes and liberation can take place through all kinds of networked exchanges, including commercial ones.

This essay is merely a start in thinking of cultural policies and cultural voices in the developing world. It provides a few guidelines but its scope is such that it generalizes across contexts. Further work is needed to deepen our understanding of cultural agency in particular contexts. The essay has also veered in the direction of “success stories.” International networks and deliberative activities thereof are a starting point for thinking of cultural voices. They do not end the stifling of voices. There are plenty of global commercial rules and processes that bind the developing world: the intellectual property agreements from the WTO or the ever-increasing theft of cultural heritage and properties are examples.

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