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1 Introduction

Art and work in postindustrial society

Since the beginning of the 21st century, cultural and creative industries have come to occupy an increasingly significant place in postindustrial economies around the world. As a topic of academic interest, they have become a notable feature across a range of disciplines and have attracted significant attention from policy-makers in advanced economies around the world. The crucial role given to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) by the incoming New Labour government in the UK in 1997, and the subsequent publication of the Creative Industries Mapping Documents (DCMS 1992, 2001), although not the first steps towards bringing cultural and creative industries (hereafter CCI) within the economic mainstream, nevertheless marked a crucial shift in the thinking around the economic significance of what was at the time an under-acknowledged economic sector. The New Labour government not only recognized the economic contribution of cultural and creative work but brought it into the centre of their economic thinking. In doing so, they placed cultural and creative production at the forefront of debates in understanding the character of the postindustrial societies taking shape, in various forms, across many of the advanced economies of Europe and North America. The economic and social contribution of CCI became not only an important observation about the form of postindustrial capitalism, but a political commitment to the importance of cultural and creative production to the fabric of postindustrial society.

In no small part this significance relates to the resurrection of the landscapes of cities that had suffered broad and deep decline following deindustrialization. The considerable success of works of urbanists like Richard Florida and Charles Landry – who advocated for a central role for the cultural economy in postindustrial urban recovery – in shaping subsequent urban policy is a testament to the significance of this discourse. It is, in fact, no great stretch of argument to suggest that cultural and creative production – and thus CCI – has been afforded a central significance for understanding, and indeed *defining*, the character of postindustrial society, particularly in its expression at the spatial – and especially urban – level.

For all that the significance of CCI relates especially to the emergence of postindustrial society – or rather its multiple and particular expressions in different social, spatial, and cultural contexts – it can also be seen as another articulation of a perennial discussion about the relationship between reason, culture, value, belonging, and the character of human association that goes back to the emergence of

modern industrial society, and which draws on debates and ideas that were important even in the philosophy of the ancient Greeks. That these arguments over the importance and character of art and culture and its relation to the social and economic conditions of society have a long history is not incidental. This history reminds us that these issues are not trivial, or fleeting, but connected to fundamental questions about the human condition. At the same time, the fact that they reappear time and again suggests either that satisfactory answers are unobtainable (quite possibly the case), or that at least on some level these issues are intimately connected with the specific conditions of a particular reality in time and space. What is particular about the form of this debate in regards to postindustrial society is the specific emphasis placed on CCIs. In part, of course, this is because such an industry sector (or several fields more or less united as a sector) is a peculiarly postindustrial phenomenon. As I shall argue, for as long as the two have existed together, culture and the economy have bled into one another. Nevertheless, what is peculiar now is the primacy accorded to such organizations that can be seen to unify the two elements: to be both cultural and economic – to represent what we might call a ‘culturalized’ economy.

In recent years, CCIs have received a great deal of attention, but it is a significant – and quite indicative – omission that while these organizations are afforded considerable esteem as economic contributors to postindustrial society, there is often a notable lack of commentary concerning precisely what ‘culture’ itself is, or why it is important. To an extent this can also be seen as a consequence of the success of the New Labour government’s policy programme. In moving the CCIs to the economic mainstream, they also redefined CCIs. Most significantly, this involved a move away from the established use of ‘cultural industries’ and replacing it with the now commonplace ‘creative industries’, which both cast a wider net over industries and occupations that could be considered part of the cultural (creative) economy, and simultaneously removed questions over the meaning and importance of ‘culture’ from the agenda. I will touch on this issue again in Chapter 3.

Where the matter of culture does feature in accounts of CCIs, the term ‘culture’ is generally taken to mean more generally ‘social’ factors: a social scene, consumption, lifestyle, and factors of social demographics. Richard Florida (2014) makes much of these issues and has argued that it is culture in this sense that has become indispensable in the creative economy. There is certainly much that is true in this account, but this in itself tells us very little about the significance of culture in the sense of cultural history or art, or how people relate to that culture and to its production in CCIs – especially, although by no means exclusively, those who work in them. Furthermore, despite the arguments made by Florida (2014: 288ff) that the movement of the ‘creative class’ is heavily influenced by the search for the fulfilment of lifestyles, there is relatively little commentary given over in regards to CCIs

to the importance of the meaning and value of culture for people in making sense of their relationship to postindustrial society. That is, with questions of identity.

Identity has become a significant concept in accounts of the conditions of late modern society. This is a difficult and much contested concept, which will be explored only narrowly in this book, but one which draws attention to a very significant – and in fact not at all recent – aspect of the human condition, which is the way in which the relationship between the individual, rational, valuing subject and the conditions of their social context. Whatever else may be the case, to a very large extent, this concerns culture – the cultural history of communities and places, and the ideas and artefacts of the interaction between cultural groups and their material and cultural worlds. The changes associated with the emergence of postindustrial society, and in particular the significance of CCIs within the broader cultural economy, have typically been viewed somewhat separately from these – perhaps we might say more prosaic and human – concerns, but they are nevertheless deeply interconnected.

This book is a contribution to these discussions. In what follows, I seek to make a case for understanding the significance of culture, place, and cultural work in postindustrial society by viewing them through the relationship between art and economy, which, I suggest, can be illuminated by considering the identity-practices of people working in the cultural and creative industries. To achieve this, I draw upon narrative accounts gathered from empirical fieldwork with people working in CCIs in the cities of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK and Hamburg, Germany. The narrative stories – presented in Part 2 of this book – while they are particular accounts of individual cultural and creative workers, cast light on the broader significance of the relationship between art and economy for culture, place, and identity in postindustrial society.

I will say a bit more about the research below, but first I want to introduce briefly the issue at the core of the argument of the book: the relationship between art (or more generally culture) and economy.

Culture and economy

Art is, and includes, many things. It also means many different things to different people. I do not attempt, and nor do I consider it necessary, to encapsulate all of this variety or to provide anything like a definition of ‘art’ in order to establish some sense (even if one with which others might well disagree) of what art is and why it is significant. On a general level, art is a way – one of many possible ways – of exploring the human condition; to explore those issues that present themselves to human experience at least on some level as aesthetic concerns. Art can be seen as a medium – or a series of

media – through which life can be displayed, illuminated, and questioned. To a large extent, by the deliberate creation of objects or experiences – *artefacts* of some form – that influence our emotional, or affective state: things that in some sense *move* us.

It is an important aspect of art as a practice that it is concerned with what we think of as culture. Not just culture in the sense of ‘high culture’ and the institutional study, practice, and trade in art and the economy of its appreciation, but culture in the sense of the everyday fabric of meaning that shapes and permeates the lifeworld of a community and which provides a sense of belonging that connects history, present, and future. To think of art in this sense – as the conscious and deliberate creation of *cultural* artefacts – implies also that art is the (again, conscious and deliberate) expression of the ideas (and perhaps the ideals) of a society – whether it be to celebrate or challenge, or to display or preserve in a pure, or transcendental way, or otherwise to give voice to the understanding, or the experience, of the conditions of a culture, its meanings, its values, its morals.

To say that such a project stands in some sense opposed to the rational, the instrumental, and the economic – indeed, the idea that art and economy are antithetical forces – is not at all new. It finds its origins in the rise of modern industrial society and the 18th century Romanticism that challenged many of the dominant themes and conditions of the enlightenment rationalism that infused the modern industrial world. For all the benefits brought by the technological advances enabled by the leaps made in empirical science, for many, the consequences of modern industrial society – of *modernity* as an intellectual, social, and economic mode of life – were at best a mixed blessing. For many others, they were nothing less than the destruction of the settled ways of living that had shaped and informed their lives (a revolution which parallels the one that would follow some two centuries later with deindustrialization). These upheavals took many forms, which became the defining processes of modernity: industrialization, urbanization, acceleration, secularization, and above all rationalization, but for many it was clear that at the foundation of this upheaval was a radical transformation in the way people relate to each other and to their societies. In particular, this concerned those patterns and traditions that underpinned association – the regularity of customs and the shared values that bind us together as community, give meaning and purpose to our actions, and through which we obtain an understanding of self and a sense of belonging. A significant part of which derives from the shared customs and tradition that comprise cultural history, which provides a shared reservoir of experience, meaning, and memory of the history of communities and their achievements. Not only does this cultural history provide a sense of belonging and purpose, it also gives a sense of place. The shared memories provided by cultural history are memories of a culture’s engagement with the world in a specific (or several specific) place(s). The cultural history of a social group, and indeed

its culture generally, are deeply particular: the products of shared meaning-making, and the slow process of place-making, by which people, through their association, come to achieve settlement with each other and the world through concrete practices in specific places and times. The Romantics recognized that for all the advantages and new potential brought by modernity and its revolution in culture, it was also the loss of these established ways of living and the ideas and practices that lay at the centre of the association between people, history, and place.

The Romantics sought to challenge this assault on culture through culture itself: specifically, of course, through art; and the sense of cultural loss in the face of the consequences of modernity and rationalism is equally evident across the landscapes of Turner and Constable, or the pictures of Caspar David Friedrich and Blake; the literature of Goethe, Walter Scott, and the poetry of Wordsworth, Schiller, and Byron; and the music of Beethoven, Liszt, and Wagner. That art itself, while not the only medium of romantic thought, became, in the hands of the romantics, such an effective one, was critical in making romanticism successful not only as an artistic movement, but a social, philosophical, and political one. If art was the epitome and the defender of culture, then it represented something quite categorically opposed to the instrumental and increasingly economic rationalism of modern industrial society. Every successful work of art was a blow struck against calculating rationalism and another contribution to the defence of culture.

That the romantic critique had industrialism, and the conditions of industrial economy, as a specific consequence of rationalism, as a key target is not at all surprising. Not only was the industrial revolution central to the consciousness – the value system – of modern society, but it also reshaped the world materially, spatially, economically, spiritually, and culturally. In particular, it was the division of labour – which Adam Smith made the centre of his analysis of modern society and thus established it as the founding principle of economic rationalism – and its transformation and elevation through the development of industrial and commercial society, that became a flagstone of modern political and moral philosophy and social science. The social theory that grew largely out of and in response to Smith recognized the consequences of a social order that began from the division of labour and thus saw the central dimension through which individuals related to each other and to their society as not only economic, but a largely individual, rational, and instrumental relation. Durkheim (1984) described this in terms of social solidarity, arguing that as the modern division of labour was dependent on ever-increasing variation among individuals required to carry out ever more distinct and specialized tasks, the collective conscience that bound individuals together with common meaning and values necessarily grew weaker (Durkheim, 1984: 230ff). The consequence, as Durkheim saw it, was that the

shared conscience, value system, or culture,¹ of civilization itself must necessarily become more abstract, more detached from the particularities of life, more impersonal, and more rational. Accordingly, it is not shared culture, value, and history that generates our social connection, but the instrumental function of our activities directed by the division of labour.

In particular here is the issue of spirituality. Religion and faith have always been significant features of culture, providing the inspiration for many of the greatest artistic achievements, as well as giving form and content to much of the moral life of culture as the shared value system of a community. The rationalism of modern society was at equally at odds with the spiritual side of culture. Secularization was not simply the erosion of the power of the church or the particular belief in God, but the weakening of the spiritual dimension of life, of which faith (in something beyond that which could be known through instrumental rationalism) was an essential part.

Blake of course struck at the heart of the matter when he enquired:

‘And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?’²

The comparison Blake draws in those few short lines between those ‘dark, Satanic Mills’ and ‘England’s green & pleasant land’ makes a powerful image of the romantic response to industrial rationalism, and also draws attention to its impact on landscapes and the consequences for culture, which is an important feature of the arguments in this book.

More than just treading on the toes of culture, tradition, and the particularities of life, however, it was clear that the abstract and instrumental rationality of industrial society (and industrial work in particular) was in opposition to the claims of (and for) culture, and particularly the idea of culture as cultural history, values, and aesthetics. In response, attention turned to how these social arrangements impacted upon the experience of association between people. One of the most important contributions was made by Max Weber, who made explicit the role of rationality itself. Modern society, according to Weber, was marked by the rise of instrumental-rational (*zweckrational*) action: the kind of calculative – decidedly economic – decision-making that focused on the means to achieve ends. As Weber (1970a: 155) saw it, the rationality that had, through an advanced division of

¹ Durkheim does not use the term culture, but it fits his meaning.

² William Blake, Preface to *Milton: A Poem in Two Books* (1804-1808), in J. Bronowski (ed.) (1958) *William Blake*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

labour, become an increasing part of social life, had become its defining characteristic: 'the fate of our times'. Instrumental rationality was the symptom of the world. Moreover, the emphasis on the calculative, instrumental, and economically rational became not only the character of society, but of our ability to understand society. People became empty calculators: instrumentally-driven and abstracted from a world that had lost its meaning, its value, its culture. While Weber saw this rationalization – and accompanying secularization – as a general trend of modernity, he recognized the importance of the system of capitalist economy, which, as it grew ever more rational and impersonal, left no room for the realms of value, of culture, or 'the religious ethics of brotherliness'. In the narrow economic realm of capitalism, 'no personal bonds of any sort exist' (Weber, 1970b: 331).

So significant was this rationalization of life, that modern society, for Weber (evoking Schiller's formulation) had become *disenchanted*: devoid of the things which gave meaning, and purpose beyond the merely instrumental. Nietzsche, whose thought exerted a great influence on Weber, saw the faith placed in rationality as an abandonment of the essence of human life – the world of the senses, of change and contingency – by 'conceptual idolaters' seeking to retreat to the rational realm of empty, abstract concepts (Nietzsche, 2003: 45). The purpose for art, then, was precisely to embrace the particular, the actual, and the world of the senses. Nietzsche found this (for a time, at least) in the aesthetic vision of Wagner and his *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Wagner's vision for *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a *total* work of art) – that united the musical, the poetic, the visual, and the philosophical into a performance that was both aesthetically transcendent and profoundly rooted to the experiences of cultural history – is significant, not only because it is a grand expression of the romantic ideal, but because it also elevated the work of art to something which was – at least in principle – capable of unifying, *as a work of art*, the cultural history, the values, ambitions, and memories of a people as both the expression of a particular community, and as transcendental truths about the human condition. For Wagner of course the ideal form of art was opera, as it united music, singing, drama, staging, and the ability to bring it all together in the telling of epic stories to speak through art to the essence of the human experience. That the virtues and frailties of humanity can be given profound and beautiful expression in a retelling of German folklore in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, for instance, is not just an artistic achievement; it is a challenge mounted through this grand cultural artefact – this *work of art* – to that which was devoid of meaning – which was *disenchanted* – in modern society. The goal of art, then, became no less than the achievement of a distinctly *aesthetic* worldview to rival that of the instrumental rationalism of modern industrial society. Culture, in this sense then, is not only the artefacts of cultural history – the works of art, the monuments of human endeavour, the traces of human life as it has interacted with its environment –

but a worldview, a consciousness, an aesthetic way of seeing, that is distinctly different to – and indeed in conflict with – that of instrumental rationalism particularly encapsulated in the impersonal and dehistoricized sphere of the capitalist economy.

These points – and I have only indicated in brief a handful raised in what is a very long conversation – paint a grand, and fairly familiar, picture of art and culture as locked in intractable struggle with the economy and instrumental rationality. The claim that there is a deep and abiding antipathy between these perspectives and the logics of their attendant approaches to understanding and engaging with the world that is tied to the conditions of modernity is, to my understanding at least, rather unassailable. However, to see them as mutually exclusive, without common ground in the messy business of lived reality, is quite simply false. Culture has always benefitted from economic relations, before and after the industrial revolution. Firstly, through the system of patronage: how different would the history of English culture, for instance, be without its Earl of Southampton, John Ruskin, or the support of Royal patronage. Many of the greatest works of art were commissions: Michelangelo's depiction of *The Last Judgement* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, for instance, and St. Paul's Cathedral. We would also do well to remember that the instrumental logic of science has also played an important role in furthering cultural causes (St Paul's, of course, was only possible because Sir Christopher Wren was at first a physicist). But also, because technology – the soulless machinery of industry – provided vast benefit for art and culture. Perhaps no clearer example of this can be found than the fact that it was the mass publication of the Bible, a cornerstone of western culture, both religious and literary, in 1455 that was the earliest achievement of Gutenberg printing press. More recently, where would music be without the electric guitar, or the technology of the modern recording studio? Or the advantages of technological advance to, for instance, photography? Whatever one may think of its general state, technology has introduced entirely new art forms: films the obvious example. On top of which, the economy and the consequences of industrialism and commercial society have certainly provided ample content for great works of art.³ Where would Turner, Alexander Stanhope Forbes, or Arthur Miller, for instance, be, without the inspiration of industrial and commercial society?

On the other side, the fact that art *is* an economic entity has caused no great rupture in the workings of industrial (or for that matter postindustrial) capitalism. Indeed, Hayek (2006: 110-114) made the argument for the importance of artistic expression, and the demand for highly exclusive artworks, propped up by wealthy benefactors, for the healthy development of economies. On a more prosaic level, a significant amount of artistic work has become familiar because of its use in advertising. That

³ Many of the romantics themselves would, of course, be in trouble if modern industrial society were for some reason deemed an unsuitable subject for artwork.

Dvorak's 9th Symphony, Op. 95, *From the New World* is, to many people, still known as the music from the Hovis bread advert is illustration enough.

The relationship between culture and economy, then, is one of antipathy and tension, but not *exclusively* all-out conflict. It is a dynamic relationship, which evolves and changes as the conditions of history, and the ideas and values through which it they are understood, change around it. I choose, and I believe with good reason, to use the concept of *dialectic* to describe this relationship.

By using the term dialectic, I am emphasizing both the tension between culture and economy as perspectives or spheres and their interdependence, and doing so I am also drawing attention to what I see as a central issue in much 21st century thinking about CCI: the idea, explicit in much writing, implicit in more, that the culturalized economy of postindustrial society, and in the CCIs particularly, represent a qualitatively new condition in which the two hitherto warring perspectives have been integrated; their oppositions resolved. I do not accept this argument. While it is unquestionably true that the postindustrial economy is different in many ways to its industrial predecessor, postindustrial society inherited the shape and momentum of the conditions that conceived it, and the challenges and contradictions of modernity – of which the antipathy between economic rationality and culture is arguably the most fundamental – although in places evolved and reshaped, have not been resolved. Nevertheless, the relationship between culture and economy – what I refer to in this book as the dialectic of art and economy⁴ – has undergone a significant change as a result of the changes to society, work, and the role of culture accompanying the rise of postindustrial society.

In making sense of the idea of dialectic, and a dialectic of art and economy in particular, I draw here on the work of Theodor Adorno. I will elaborate on Adorno's ideas concerning CCIs in Chapter 3, but in anticipation of this, I would like here to expound a little bit on Adorno's wider philosophical concerns as they underpin both his arguments about CCIs and the thinking behind the research upon this the arguments in this book are based.

Adorno, negative dialectics, and constellations

Adorno's work has a peculiar place in contemporary discussions of CCIs, in that he is rarely discussed, often assumed to have been successfully answered, or, as a writer from the first half of the 20th century, perhaps no longer relevant. Adorno's arguments, however, retain a powerful resonance, and

⁴ At times, depending on context, I use the term culture here instead of art as a reminder that art is itself a part of culture, albeit an especially indicative part,

hover, like a shadow in the background, as a reminder (and perhaps warning), over much contemporary consideration of CCI, culture, and cultural work. As I hope to make clear, Adorno's work still has a great deal to offer. Its neglect in recent times is due, I believe, to three general factors. Firstly, the fortunes of history. Adorno's ideas were overshadowed as they began to reach their most developed and significant as a result of the political debacle of May 1968 (in which Adorno himself fell from grace in the eyes of many of those swept up in the revolutionary political consciousness of the times) and the subsequent rise of postmodernist theories as the intellectual *soupe du jour*. Secondly, political and intellectual inconvenience. Adorno's ideas paint a very negative picture of the current attitudes towards CCI (possibly rather too negative, it is true) and are in many ways out-of-step with the political and intellectual orthodoxy. Adorno was aesthetically and philosophically a modernist (albeit one highly critical of *modernity*), and his work, and its insistence on particularity, the importance of cultural criticism, and important place for 'high art', is at times uncomfortable reading for many who have absorbed rather too much of postmodern thought. Thirdly, and I think perhaps most importantly, Adorno's legacy as a commentator on culture and CCI has been almost entirely removed from its context in his wider philosophical concern, with the inevitable consequence that he has been in part misunderstood – or, perhaps more charitably – misrepresented.

This book is not about Adorno, and I will make no attempt here to address the first two points. The third I will address simply by trying to remedy the problem by providing a (very brief) account of Adorno's broader philosophical concerns as a context for his arguments concerning the CCI and the dialectic of culture and economy.⁵

In the social sciences Adorno is best known as a leading figure of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt (colloquially, the Frankfurt School), and for the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997), his collaboration with his Institute colleague Max Horkheimer. This book, which contains the infamous essay 'The Culture Industry, or Enlightenment as Mass Deception', from which the concept of 'culture industry' comes, is a gloves-off engagement with the Enlightenment project and its consequences; in particular, with the failure of science and rationality to have addressed the issues of the human condition and, instead, to have betrayed the ideals of Enlightenment, and humanity, by leading them into barbarism. The book was written in the early 1940s during Adorno and Horkheimer's migration to New York to escape Hitler's fascism in Germany, and the sense of anger and despair over the barbarism of fascism, and the instrumental rationality that they saw stoking the engines of the Nazi war machine throbs in the pages.

⁵ I have also made an effort to explain this relationship, in a little more depth, elsewhere (see Durey, 2021).

For all that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a deeply sociological work, its arguments are built on a core of philosophical (and in particular epistemological) ideas that are evident across the breadth of Adorno's work, and which grow to culmination in his *Negative Dialectics* (1973), originally published in German in 1966, three years before his death. In the *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno sets out the core terrain of the philosophical approach that underpins his critique of instrumental rationality and the conditions of modernity, upon his arguments against the (rationalized) mass-production of cultural objects in the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and his other writings on the culture industry (Adorno, 2001) are based. The issues with which Adorno grapples in the *Negative Dialectics* are inherited from Kant and the tradition of German Idealism, which above all else concerned the capacity of reason, and the role of the reasoning human subject in knowledge of the world and his or her relationship to it; for the potential of rational and moral action.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant had argued that knowledge required both impressions from sense data derived from empirical experience of the world, which are necessarily contingent, and the active capacity of reason or understanding in 'making sense' of these impressions (2003: 44ff). This 'making sense' of impressions is achieved through the application of concepts, which give form and structure to disparate and contingent experiences and make them knowable. These concepts are the products of reason, not of the objects of experience themselves; but without those sensations which result from experience, concepts would have nothing to be applied to, no content, and would be meaningless and empty. The process of knowledge, therefore, is dialectical: between reason and experience which is general and conceptual – and experience – which is particular and contingent: of subjective categories and objective impressions. Kant saw an intrinsic relationship between the structure of subjective reason and that of the objective world that made experience possible; nevertheless, he saw a gulf between the subjective ideas and categories by which we, as thinking beings, make sense of the world around us and the world of objects determined in their own right beyond our consciousness. Because the only knowledge our reason can produce about the world is a product of our reasoning about the world and not merely the world itself, true knowledge of the world unencumbered by the artifices of our subjective ideas is impossible: the *thing-in-itself* is unknowable. Although our reason could reach out across the gulf in an effort to *know* its object, there could never be a true meeting through which the subjective representation of the object and the object itself were at one with each other; they could never have *identity*. It was Adorno's argument in *Negative Dialectics* that philosophy (and political and moral practice) had lost sight of this irreconcilability between subject and object.

To appreciate Adorno's position, we need to be clear about Adorno's understanding of the relationship between concepts and particular objects, and about the significance of this relationship for his view of culture and society. At its heart, this concerns the issue of conceptualization. Concepts, as Adorno explains, being of the realm of subjectivity, the products of our reasoning about the world (and not the world itself), no matter how well they can describe, or correspond with the objects to which they relate, never achieve identity with those objects. Because they necessarily abstract from the particular reality of objects and their contexts, concepts inevitably lose the contingency and reality that objects possess by virtue of being particular. Thus, all concepts inevitably include more than what is true of any particular object to which they correspond. For the concept of 'tree', or 'car', to be effective, for instance, it must include more than is true for any particular existing tree or car. At the same time, because of its generality, its abstraction from empirical reality, no concept can contain all that is true of any particular object. Objects, as Adorno (1973: 5) describes, 'do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder'. Objects – the things-in-themselves – and the world of objective reality and relations, are always more than can be captured by the concepts of our minds as we seek to order our experiences and make them intelligible; there is always something that is empirically true of particular objects that exists outside of its concept – that is particular and *nonconceptual*. To treat concepts as if they are *identical* to their objects, then, is always to rob the objects of something that makes them what they are: to deny a part of their particularity, their value as a certain nonidentical object, in order to make them amenable to the abstract categories of rationality. To believe, or to act in accordance with the belief, that knowledge of concepts – that is, human reason – has, or can, have identity with its objects, is to deny the nonconceptual (or *nonidentical*) nature of reality, and to replace the reality of objects in the dialectic with a *constitutive subjectivity*, in which concepts, or the naïve belief in the total power of rationality, come to be treated as if they are identical with reality. In Adorno's view, dialectical philosophy has gone off course because it has failed to maintain the antinomy of subject and object; collapsing the contradiction which is central to the dialectical approach. The belief in the power of reason to know its object – to achieve identity – has come to overpower the independent reality of objects; treating the concepts as if they are the objects to which they correspond, and reducing the inherent complex particularity of given reality to the purely logical exercises of human consciousness; and accepting the illusion 'that the power of thought is sufficient to grasp the totality of the real' (Adorno, 1977: 120).

For Adorno, this error, which he describes as *identity-thinking*, was at the root of the contradictions in modernity and the tendency towards instrumental rationalism. This goes beyond a simple criticism of conceptual systems, however. The process by which meaning is abstracted from particular objects and reified in concepts is, in the end, a denial of the independent reality of particular objects. At the

heart of this is the need for objects to be exchangeable. In the abstract realm of rational concepts, where the particularities of individual objects are lost or discounted, *things* become *identical*, equivalent, and therefore exchangeable in a way which is not possible when those things are understood in their particularity, with context, contingency, and meaning – as *nonidentical*. Adorno's project, then, was for a dialectics that takes as its starting point the impossibility of *totality*, of unity, or resolution, of *identity* between subject and object, and which therefore rejects these as dialectical goals. A dialectics, 'not of identity, but of *non-identity*' (Adorno, 2008: 6).

In arguing for a negative dialectics, Adorno is advocating for an approach to knowledge that places emphasis on the particular reality of objects and the particular contexts and contingencies of material life, and which defends them against the abstraction that transforms the qualitative value of particular things into the rational, quantitative value of exchangeable, or interchangeable equivalences. Here Adorno's negative dialectics cross with the issue of art and economy. For works of art, which dependent on their particularity for their uniqueness and their significance and their value, must, like any other commodity within capitalism, cease to be a use-value and become an exchange-value. The qualitative must become quantitative. The particular and actual must become general and abstract. It is a common misconception to complain of Adorno's critique of the culture industry as merely an elitist defence of high art. It is a defence of high art, that much is true. But, viewed from the position of Adorno's negative dialectics, it becomes clear that this defence comes from the desire to recognize the importance of the particularity of objects and to resist the loss of the value of particularity inherent in nonidentical objects through their abstraction by means through conceptual and particularly instrumental, exchange-driven, rationality.

The message driving Adorno's concern with rescuing the nonidentical from constitutive subjectivity is not just a philosophical problem: it is a figurative methodological gauntlet. If concepts are not only inadequate, but can be seen to eclipse the objects which they are deployed to render knowable, how is philosophy, and science in particular, to proceed?

Adorno is clear that his negative dialectics do not constitute a method of philosophical – let alone scientific – investigation (after all, to suggest such a system or approach could be known *a priori*, without reference to the particular objects it seeks to understand would itself be an exercise of abstract rationality). Rather, because the purpose of negative dialectics is to demonstrate the inherent contradiction in identity-thinking by illuminating the nonidentical nature of reality, his approach is intended to facilitating seeing reality in a different way: and particular, seeing the relationship between concepts and objects in different ways. Therefore, while he provides no method as such, Adorno does demonstrate what it might mean to see through the problem of conceptuality.

‘Necessity,’ according to Adorno (1973: 11), ‘compels philosophy to operate with concepts’, and consequently, we must go beyond the concept by means of the concept; and ‘use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity’ (*ibid.*: xx). Drawing on Benjamin’s (1998: 34) arguments in his *Trauerspiel* study regarding ‘the salvation of phenomena by means of ideas’, Adorno argues that the experience of particular objects or phenomena can be rescued from conceptual abstraction through the construction of a ‘constellation’ of interrelated elements to produce a ‘dialectical image’ of a particular phenomenon. Nonconceptual objects can never be known in their entirety, but, viewed through a prism (Adorno, 1997) of partial pictures based on the creative arrangement of clusters of concepts, the concepts and the phenomena to which they relate can be seen in such a way that the contradictions and ambivalences of the nonidentical objects can be made visible – ‘so that the relationships between them became visible to the intellect, so that they [form] an “idea” which could be mentally perceived’ (Buck-Morss, 1979: 92). Any particular concept, or perspective, will be limited and limiting, but by arranging several together in ways which cast light on their limitations and contradictions, a more nuanced image can be glimpsed that does not deny the nonidentical nature of phenomena and the limits of rational concepts.

Importantly, the purpose of a constellation is to escape from the constitutive subjectivity and provide a glimpse – albeit imperfect – of the object independent of any *specific* perspective. Benjamin had argued for the reading of history, of social conditions and the contingency in the mundane and the everyday. This is a development of his scepticism, shared with Adorno, of abstraction. The trouble with analysing social life from the point of view of the abstract and the general is that it is disconnected from actually existing conditions. Like Adorno made clear, it is to deny the essential character of real things, and make them merely the expression of subjective notions. For Benjamin, then, an understanding of social life, of history, had to start from the object that did, in fact, exist. But it is not simply to know those particular instances, but to move from that contingent world of mere material to an understanding of what truly lies behind them, not, then, as abstraction, whereby concepts are separated from their instances, but to see in, as inherently part of, those real contingent instances, those underlying and perhaps even universal truths that are true even when they are not instantiated. It is in the particularities that that which is truly general finds actuality.

The experience of objects or phenomena can be rescued from the descent into conceptual abstraction if, rather than seeking identity between concepts and object, and abstracting from particular objects to concepts, the concepts are held in proximity to particular objects, and so never allowed to abstract away, but also without ever settling. Concepts are therefore held in nonidentical relation – in *negative dialectic* – with their objects. Rather than apply concepts directly, in a way that would inevitably reach

out towards identity, concepts are to be arranged as a constellation of interrelated concepts; as antinomies that, by each revealing aspects of the object, reveal it while at the same time placing it in an indeterminate position. Not fixed by a concept, but held in between a range of concepts; thereby viewing the object as through a prism, revealing it only indirectly, and displaying its fractured and multifaceted nature; capturing the object only in such a way that maintains its nonidentical nature. It is, therefore, through 'their mediating role [that] concepts enable phenomena to participate in the existence of ideas' (Benjamin, 1998: 34): by unravelling the phenomena, a more complete image of the object, which is attentive to the 'remainders' and 'everything that has slipped through the conventional conceptual net' (Adorno, 1997: 239), can be developed.

This is the intention underpinning the approach taken in this book. What follows is an attempt to establish a constellation through which to view the dialectic of art and economy and its relationship to postindustrial identity. The following three chapters aim to explore the conditions of the dialectic of art and economy as it manifests in three core issues in postindustrial society: identity, cultural work, and cities. These ideas are then put into concrete empirical context in Chapters 5 and 6, which contain illustrative vignettes, based on empirical research carried out in the cities of Newcastle, UK and Hamburg, Germany. In taking inspiration from Adorno's negative dialectics and the idea of a constellations, the aim of this study is not to attempt to define or to typologize identities but, by using identity as a vantage point around which to construct a constellation through which to view the dialectic of art and economy, to provide a different idea or image of postindustrial identities that embraces their dialectical nature, casts light on the exceptions, the contradictions, and the remainders that exist within the dialectic of art and economy and reveal their fundamentally contradictory and nonidentical character.

Before we commence with establishing the field for this constellation, it is necessary to say something about that research that gave rise to the arguments which will follow.

The research: exploring identity, culture, and place

The data which comprise the illustrative vignettes, and upon which the arguments in this book are based, are the results of empirical research carried out between January 2016 and December 2017. The research did not start out as an examination of the character of art or culture, or an investigation into or application of the idea of dialectic, but as an exploration of postindustrial identity in the cultural and creative industries, with an emphasis on examining the significance of place for cultural and creative work. Questions over the value of culture, of cultural history and its relationship to place, and

the relationship between culture and economy, emerged from the fieldwork, and it became clear that these issues were not *part of* the significance of place for people working in CCI, but intrinsic and fundamental to it. The decision to characterize the relationship between them as dialectical is not the natural consequence of a pre-existing *a priori* attachment to a theoretical position, but a result of trying to make sense of the research. It comes from the accounts provided by the cultural and creative workers who shared their stories, allowed me access to their experiences, their worlds, and their identities, and my reflections on these stories and on my own experiences exploring cultural work and the cultural landscapes of Newcastle and Hamburg.

The research itself consisted of ethnographic research and narrative interviews with people working in CCI, as well as interviews with key informants working in local government and non-governmental organizations involved in CCI in Newcastle and Hamburg. I use the term 'light' ethnography to describe this research as it was inspired by the traditional ethnographic concerns with situated, context-rich, experience of a cultural group (or groups) in an attempt to understand their cultural world in an 'holistic' fashion – in which actions, values, place, culture, and indeed identity are understood to be interconnected and must be observed and understood as such – but which fell far short of ethnography in the full sense of the term, which would have required a much greater degree of immersion. This 'light' ethnography consisted of time spent in and around cultural and creative neighbourhoods, site visits to places of work, venues such as galleries, and attending exhibitions, music gigs, and other cultural and creative events, observing – at times participating – and socializing with cultural and creative workers.

In addition, and again providing a different perspective, was the practice I developed, following the example set by Walter Benjamin, of walking attentively around the cities. In the *Passagenwerk*, his kaleidoscopic account of the Paris Arcades, Walter Benjamin creates an impressionistic critique of modern urban life in a series of fragments detailing the often-mundane features of his experiences of walking the streets of Paris. Benjamin's fragments are disconnected, vertiginous, often focused on the ordinary and uninspiring features of the landscapes and the discarded artefacts and debris of the metropolises of modern society. For Benjamin, this walking around the city (or *Stadtherumgehen*), is not an unhurried way of getting about, or merely killing time, but a genuine attempt to experience urban landscapes differently. Taking inspiration from Benjamin, I spent a considerable amount of time during the fieldwork trying to 'get lost' in the cities by walking without direction; taking paths because they appeared interesting or different, or guided by interesting sights, sounds, smells, or the unusual feel of the streets underfoot. This practice of *Stadtherumgehen* became a regular practice when I travelled about the city without specific destination, or after meeting participants or attending events

as I travelled home. By taking unusual routes, or allowing myself to be led out of the familiar, I achieved several things. Firstly, I learned far more about the landscapes of, and around, where cultural and creative work is produced and consumed than if my journeys had followed direct paths. I got to see parts of the cities which, although often very close to those parts that feature on urban marketing, paint a very different picture of the cities, their postindustrial transformations, and the consequences of the cultural economy. I got to see the unfamiliar in landscapes which were, or became, familiar to me. Being led by senses, and actually paying attention to what can be seen and heard on the streets, rather than the typical experience of merely seeking to get to one's destination as quickly as possible, means looking at urban landscapes differently. The way, perhaps, one would in the countryside, or when walking somewhere with a magnificent view of nature. Viewing the urban landscape with a similar sense of curiosity and wonderment has the effect of making familiar sights unfamiliar, and being able to see the landscape, its material construction, and its atmosphere, differently. Much like really listening to a piece of even well-known music can make a listener more attuned to the distinctive melodies of the instruments and their complementary (or conflicting) harmonies and rhythms. This is, in effect, to approach urban encounter with what might be called an aesthetic gaze. Treating the urban landscape truly as a cultural object, and therefore the encounter with the urban as an embodied aesthetic experience that is immersed in the material and the spatial.

I make no claim to have arrived at any greater truth about the cities through these wanderings, but the experience of the objective world of the cities through this aesthetic encounter, like being able to contextualize participants' accounts in the world of experience through ethnographic observations, did mean that I was not dependent entirely upon the subjective accounts of those activities, experiences, and landscapes for insight. I had other means by which to understand the objective elements of my participants' environments, to view the same thing differently (to employ a useful but now rarely-used notion – to triangulate) and thereby aim to achieve a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the subject-object dialectic of identity practices. A crucial thing to strive for in order to avoid the trap of identity-thinking.

This background ethnographic work and *Stadtherumgehen* provided the contacts for the narrative interviews (which were, for the most part, not isolated encounters, but part of broader research relationships spanning various periods across the timeline of the fieldwork) and the necessary context needed to make sense of the narrative stories. In Chapter 2 I discuss the significance of a narrative approach to understanding identity, and the use of narrative interviews to explore cultural and creative workers' identities is a logical development of this understanding.

The interviews (24 in total: 14 in Newcastle and 10 in Hamburg) were semi-structured explorations of participants' experiences working in CClIs, or what Burgess (1984: 102) described as 'conversations with a purpose'. They were guided by a schedule of themes but not restricted to them or to following a prescribed order. Instead, I opened the interview with a simple invitation to tell their story: 'Can you tell me what you do and how you came to be doing it here?' The interviews followed the participants' narratives and topics were allowed to emerge naturally in the context of their stories, thereby allowing the participants as much control over the content as possible. As I discuss in Chapter 2, identities are processes of drawing meaning from experiences, and so giving participants the freedom to narrate their stories and to explain their work and their experiences of place and the cultural economy in relation to themselves and their understandings opened up a space for identity to be related.

While it is the participants' own stories derived from the narrative interviews that comprise the core data of the research, invaluable was the insight from the background explorations of the cultural landscapes of the cities, and the supporting information that came from the timely observations, the fleeting encounters, and the passing conversations with other cultural and creative workers, and other visitors and attendees at various events, that helped to direct and organize my thoughts and experiences about the places, the work, and the cultural environments and their atmospheres that are crucial elements of the lives – and the identities – of the cultural and creative workers themselves.

All the participants included in this study were either self-employed or part of small or micro-organizations, and worked in the fields of fashion, film, furniture-making, jewellery-making, metalworking, music, theatre and performance arts, woodworking, and visual arts. Although many of them would reject some or perhaps all of these labels, they were all artists, artisans, designers, makers, craft or cultural/creative producers, or cultural entrepreneurs involved in some way in the production of cultural or creative commodities, whether goods, services, or experiences.

Despite the variety of cultural and creative work they were involved in, the participants were in many other ways strikingly homogenous as a social group. They were overwhelmingly white, European, and educated (nearly all reported having studied at a university at some point). Only one respondent was of a non-white ethnic background. There was, however, a relatively even divide between female and male participants. Because of the nature of the research, it was not always possible to gather information on age or sexuality, so this is not reported, although there was a slight tendency overall towards younger workers, and only four interview participants were aged over 40. Characteristics such as age, ethnicity, and sexuality – as well as host of others – can obviously be important aspects of identity, and the absence of data to speak to their impact here is a limitation to the research and the findings resulting therefrom. These limitations notwithstanding, while these data cannot speak to many issues

that may indeed be important, this does not detract from the significance of the data for the issues to which they can speak, and to which they are addressed.

The characteristics of the participants whose stories and identities make up the data are important, but so are the characteristics of the cities in which these stories took place. As the research was a study of cultural and creative workers and postindustrial identity, I make little comment here on the cities themselves. However, some important and illustrative points are raised in Chapters 5 and 6 to provide context for the vignettes. In addition, however, there are a few general points worth raising at the outset about the choice of cities.

At first appearance, the cities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Hamburg are unusual choices for comparison of postindustrial identities and CCIs. With a population of a little over 1.85 million (Destatis, 2021) and area of 755km² compared with Newcastle's 300,200 (ONS, 2021) and 113.4km², Hamburg is comfortably seven times the size of Newcastle.⁶ Hamburg is Germany's second city: an important hub of national and international trade and transport, and a wealthy, cosmopolitan centre of politics and commerce. As a major European city, the 'Gateway to the World' is of a qualitatively different type to Newcastle – a relatively small and peripheral city in the northeast of England. These differences are important and should be taken into consideration in the discussions that follow. Nevertheless, while they are not similar cities, they are cities with important similarities.

Newcastle and Hamburg are both European port cities that grew in prominence during the 19th century as key industrial centres – and this alone means they share a significant amount of history. The trajectories into their postindustrial forms from the second half of the 20th century, however, have taken very different paths. Neither are capital cities nor typically renowned as cultural or creative cities (in the manner of cities such as Edinburgh, Munich, or Paris). Yet in recent years both cities have made efforts to (re)brand themselves as cultural and/or creative cities (or at least cities with a strong cultural and creative presence and identity), and have undergone significant material and spatial transformation as a result. Both cities have a significant regional presence, and a strong local identity. At the high point of maritime trade, there was significant traffic of people and goods between the cities, and Hamburg is notable amongst German cities for its similarity with UK cities in both architecture and culture. As centres of commerce whose success and wealth were intimately connected with their port industry and identity, they have, at least in part, a similar industrial-cultural

⁶ At the time the research took place, these figures were approximately 1.79 million for Hamburg (SAfHSH, 2018) and 295,800 for Newcastle (ONS, 2017).

heritage based on their interconnected roles as sites of maritime trade and as regional commercial and transportation hubs.

Both cities have flourishing CCIs, which they promote, but both cities struggle to establish an identity as a ‘*cultural*’ or ‘*creative*’ city. In part because of the prominence of their existing identities connected to their industrial histories and trajectories. The ‘Geordies’ of Newcastle derive in part from the shipbuilding tradition of the city and North East, while the city’s reputation as a party city is strongly connected to its inhabitants’ reputation as being both friendly and enthusiastic about their drinking culture. In parallel, Hamburg’s identity as a commercial maritime city is inseparable from its history as a free-trade city and a member of the Hanseatic League.⁷ They also both have reputations, albeit rather different, for their nightlife: Newcastle is frequently cited as one of the UK’s top destinations for nightlife, and Hamburg is famous for its nightclub and red-light district - the *Reeperbahn*. Both cities have a national and international reputation for their music scenes and boast a number of prominent music venues regularly attracting national and international headline acts, as well as leading theatres and opera houses, and numerous alternative and independent venues. Both cities have nationally-renowned museums and galleries and a vibrant restaurant culture. They also both share an internationally-recognized cultural attachment to their football teams.⁸

While they have related histories and points of cultural crossover, the two cities have experienced markedly different trajectories into the postindustrial. Hamburg is both a city and one of the sixteen German *Bundesländer*: like Berlin, it is a city-state, with significant political and economic autonomy from the national capital. Newcastle, on the other hand, is geographically, socially, economically, and culturally distant from London, but has no meaningful devolved power; even though it is often of marginal concern in London, it remains subject to control by Westminster. Both cities have experienced a certain amount of deindustrialization, although whereas Newcastle experienced extremely fast and radical deindustrialization from the 1970s and especially the 1980s as a result of political decisions at the national level, Hamburg’s relative independence meant that it has, so far, been able to maintain and continue to support (and develop) its industrial port (which is the third largest in Europe) and establish a large aviation sector alongside the relative increase in the service, and cultural/creative sectors.

⁷ This identity is signified in the city’s full name - *Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg* (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg).

⁸ For Newcastle this is their Premier League team Newcastle United FC, whereas in Hamburg, it is their Second Division team FC St. Pauli, with its iconic skull and crossbones flag and radical left-alternative political culture rather than their more competitively successful – and culturally mainstream – Hamburger SV.

The two cities then have enough in common to be complementary as sites for the exploration of postindustrial identities in CCI. They are different enough to include enough variety for a broad and indicative insight over range of experiences in cultural work, and for the importance of spatial differences to come to the fore, while also being similar enough for the stories from each city to resonate with those from the other.

Outline of the book

This book is a contribution to discussions about cultural and creative work, cities, postindustrial identities and the significance of culture in postindustrial society as they come together in the dialectic of art and economy. Following this Introduction, this book is organized into two parts. Part I, containing chapters 2 – 4, is concerned with developing the three elements (identity, cultural work, and cities), the intersection of which defines the scope of the arguments in this book, by considering them as fields in which the dialectic of art and economy is expressed.

Chapter 2 is concerned with identities, and focuses on establishing an understanding of how this very contentious and problematic term is being used here. I argue for a dialectical view of identity as a process (of *identification*), which is analogous to the subject-object dialectic with which Adorno is concerned in his negative dialectics. After that, it considers the significant role for the idea of identity in postindustrial society, and particularly on what are taken here to be the most significant elements of how identity is expressed in postindustrial society by looking at the role of culture, place, and memory in understandings of deindustrialization.

Chapter 3 explores the dialectic of art and economy as it is expressed in the conditions of work in the postindustrial cultural economy. The chapter traces a brief history of the ways in which CCIs have been conceived, starting with Adorno, before considering the character of work in the cultural economy. It is argued that not only is culture in general (and cultural objects in particular) a key feature and commercial focus of postindustrial society, but that they are interlinked with ideas of identity, subjectivity, and creativity, which are increasingly associated with work – and especially with the conditions of work in the cultural economy, of which CCIs are seen as archetypes.

In Chapter 4 the discussion moves into the key landscapes in which cultural and creative industries are typically situated – cities. This chapter explores the urban spatial consequences of the new cultural economy and the significance of urban landscapes for questions of artistic identity. In this chapter the dialectic of art and economy appears in the contradictions of urban living, especially the role of culture

– and cultural regeneration – in urban transformation, and the ambivalent place of artists in these cultural urban landscapes.

Part II of the book applies the discussions in Part I to empirical data collected during fieldwork in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne in the northeast of England, UK, and the city of Hamburg in the north of Germany. Chapters 5 and 6 deal respectively with Newcastle and Hamburg and each present three character-vignettes derived from interviews with cultural workers and ethnographic work in the cities. These vignettes capture some of the complexities, challenges, and contradictions involved in working in the cultural and creative economies of these cities, and the impact of these environments, as well as the broader issues bound up with the social conditions of the postindustrial cultural economy for cultural workers' identity practices.

In Chapter 7, the themes and issues emerging from the accounts in Chapters 5 and 6 are explored in terms of the dialectic of art and economy and the relationship between the dialectic of art and economy and 'artistic identities.' The idea of a dialectic of art and economy is explored through a constellation of interrelated conceptual devices (culture and industry, autonomy and interdependence, industrial and postindustrial, vernacular and universal, and resistance and compromise).

The final chapter draws the arguments in the book together by considering some of the implications of viewing CCIs, artistic identities, and the postindustrial cultural economy through the negative dialectical prism of the dialectic of art and economy.

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