

# Be Cool, Be Responsible, Buy Responsibly: Bihor Couture VS Christian Dior, a Case Study

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## Abstract

In the article, referring to the Bihor vs. Dior case study, we criticize the phenomenon of illegitimate borrowing of the achievements of a given culture by corporations which we consider an act of cultural appropriation, in terms of both aesthetics and business ethics. We also describe the potential for a positive solution to the problems of cultural borrowing. The first part of our analysis is based on Roman Ingarden's phenomenological theory of art, concerning artistic and aesthetic qualities and artistic and aesthetic values. Our analysis consists of the juxtaposition of two works, i.e., traditional clothing from the region of Bihor and clothing referring to this original, presented in the Dior collection, along with an indication and comparison of the associated qualities and values. In the second part of the article, we analyze the Bihor vs. Dior case from the point of view of the contemporary concepts of CSR (corporate social responsibility) and CSV (creating shared values). We indicate that the case under discussion is an example of bad corporate practices and irresponsible borrowing of the achievements of a given culture. At the same time, we state why, from an ethical point of view, it is worth returning to the use of local suppliers and small local craft businesses.

**Keywords:** Bihor Couture; Cultural Appropriation; Phenomenological Theory of Art; Corporate Social Responsibility; Creating Shared Values.

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## Introduction

Bihor is a poor region in the northwestern part of Romania of which very few people were aware until recently. Bihor attracted international attention in 2018 when its inhabitants, supported by Romanian designers, accused the Christian Dior fashion house of copying traditional costumes from this area.<sup>1</sup> In its Pre-Fall 2017 collection, Dior made use of nearly unchanged elements of folk costumes from the Bihor region, such as vests and coats, selling individual items for thirty thousand Euros.<sup>2</sup> Romanian society responded in a particularly ingenious manner, i.e., through the creation of its own brand, Bihor Couture, preparation of a modern website, and launch of a professional advertising and promotional campaign.<sup>3</sup> The Bihor Couture brand, in bringing together local artists with the objective of protecting authentic Romanian design, cultivating tradition, and supporting the local community, gained publicity and popularity within a short time. This also translated into tangible profits and results, such as the construction of a well-equipped craft school in the region, or the presence of representatives of Bihor Couture at Paris Fashion Week.<sup>4</sup>

Drawing inspiration from the achievements of local cultures is nothing surprising or new in the fashion industry. Indeed, no art is created in a vacuum. In recent years, however, interest in folklore has grown among fashion designers, becoming a kind of global trend. The problem with this kind of interest emerges when the artist-designer is not guided in the creation process by recognition of and respect for the accomplishments of the culture in question, but by the desire to appropriate its creations in order to achieve a quick and easy result for his or her own artistic work. In such cases, we are faced not with a desirable act of appreciation, but rather with the problem of cultural appropriation.<sup>5</sup>

Innumerable examples of borrowings similar to those involving Bihor have been furnished by, *inter alia*, the Louis Vuitton fashion house, which, in its 2017 fashion trends for men, made use of the design of blankets from Lesotho, South Africa, known as Basotho blankets<sup>6</sup>; the Valentino fashion house and Valentino's "Wild Africa" show, during which a collection based on African tribal patterns was pre-

1. See, *inter alia*, *Euronews*, "Romanian designers accuse Dior of 'plagiarising' traditional vest" (August 29, 2019), <https://www.euronews.com/2018/07/05/romanian-designers-accuse-dior-of-plagiarising-traditional-vest>; *Nationalclothing*, "Romanian people sued Dior for copying their folk clothing in his collection" (August 29, 2019), <http://nationalclothing.org/europe/96-romania/342-romanian-people-sued-dior-for-copying-their-folk-clothing-in-his-collection.html>; *Metro News*, "Dior copied traditional Romanian clothing so Romanians are getting their own back" (August 29, 2019), <https://metro.co.uk/2018/07/05/dior-copied-traditional-romanian-clothing-romanians-getting-back-7686135/>.
2. See *Vogue*, "Pre-Fall 2017 Christian Dior" (August 29, 2019), <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/pre-fall-2017/christian-dior#coverage>.
3. For more information about this Romanian society brand, see: *Bihor Couture*, "Discover Bihor Couture" (August 29, 2019), <http://www.bihorcouture.com/about.php>.
4. See YouTube, "Bihor Couture Interviews – Ep 4 Paris Fashion Week" (August 29, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NM34y6VdMQ>.
5. For more information about cultural appropriation in general and its definition, see, *inter alia*, James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Erich Hatala Matthes, "Cultural Appropriation Without Cultural Essentialism?", *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 42, n. 2, Special Issue: *Dominating Speech* (April 2016): 343-66. For more information about cultural appropriation as something morally wrong that can cause profound offense to the members of a culture, see, James O. Young, "Profound Offense and Cultural Appropriation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 63, n. 2 (Spring, 2005): 135-46; Janice Hladki, "Problematising The Issue of Cultural Appropriation," *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, vol. 11 (1994): 95-119; and Matthes, "Cultural Appropriation Without Cultural Essentialism?": 343-66.
6. For more information on the Louis Vuitton collection and the history of the Basotho blankets, see BBC News, "When does cultural borrowing turn into cultural appropriation?" (August 29, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41430748>; *Sunday Times*, "Fab or cultural faux pas? Louis Vuitton's Basotho blanket-inspired collection" (August 29, 2019), <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/fashion-and-beauty/2017-07-13-the-evolution-of-the-basotho-blanket/>; *The Blanket Wrap*, "Louis Vuitton's latest Basotho Blanket Inspired Range" (August 29, 2019), <https://lesotho-blanketwrap.com/2017/lesotho-clothing-and-fashion/louis-vuittons-latest-basotho-blanket-inspired-range/>; *The Blanket Wrap*, "The History of the Basotho traditional blanket" (August 29, 2019), <https://lesotho-blanketwrap.com/2010/lesotho-stories/the-history-of-the-basotho-traditional-blanket/>.

sented<sup>7</sup>; and Victoria's Secret, in one of whose shows the models wore, in addition to underwear, Native American headdresses.<sup>8</sup>

The great number of negative examples borrowings, theft, and plagiarism of elements of the traditions of other cultures observed in the fashion world in recent years testifies to a problem that concerns not only individual artist-designers, but the whole environment in which they function. Indeed, the specific design practices of individuals and the creation of collections are shaped in relation to a set of specific values acknowledged as valid for the whole group. This problem is usually considered first and foremost in an ethical and sociological context. In our opinion, however, it reveals itself clearly on artistic and aesthetic levels.

In this paper, we undertake a theoretical attempt to analyze the selected example of cultural appropriation while indicating suggestions for good practice associated with it. We carry out the analysis in two basic stages related to two research areas: the first concerns the aesthetic and axiological, the second the ethical and social dimensions. In the first part of the paper we conduct a phenomenological analysis of the chosen example of so-called cultural borrowing, in order to demonstrate that in this case (which we treat as characteristic of a larger group) a significant and, in our opinion, negative change is in progress in the sphere of the artistic and aesthetic qualities and values attributed to a given work. Then we argue that the highest aesthetic values can be achieved for products such as those of Bihor Couture. This part of our analysis is based on the phenomenological theory of art of one of the twentieth century's most notable Polish philosophers, Roman Ingarden, and on the chosen philosophical categories he introduced in relation to the structure of an artwork: artistic and aesthetic qualities and artistic and aesthetic values. In the second part of the paper we consider the case of Bihor vs. Dior in the context of the concepts of corporate social responsibility, creating shared values and (economic) ecosystems, in order to indicate what is actually negative (from the point of view of business ethics) in this type of unauthorized borrowing of patterns related to the identity and values of a local community. Subsequently we indicate good practices that can be applied and which constitute a just response to this type of unauthorized borrowing, but which can also be considered, from the point of view of business ethics, a business model which accounts for the values of local communities.

In our opinion, conducting a parallel analysis on the two indicated planes is justified, as it significantly broadens our research perspective and results in the fullest possible picture of the problem. The research perspectives we have chosen, i.e., aesthetic-axiological and ethical-social, are not usually combined, since they require different research methods, and thus the possession of various academic competencies. In our research, we accept two basic hypotheses, which we then verify in the stages described above. First, we assume that the action of the Christian Dior fashion house involving the unauthorized borrowing of Romanian traditional designs is aesthetically poor and ethically reprehensible. Second, we recognize that it is possible to replace these types of bad practices with good ones, as exemplified by the operations of Bihor Couture.

We believe that the multi-stage analysis of the selected case we have proposed here is original and leads to conclusions which may be of interest not only to artistic circles, but also to theoreticians of the concept of corporate social responsibility, as well as to small manufacturers and craftsmen.

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7. See Dr. Enrica Picarelli, "Afrosartorialism. A research project on fashion and street-style sartorialism from Africa" by "Cornrows, bone jewelry, and metal masks: 'Wild Africa' in Maison Valentino Spring-Summer 2016 Collection," (August 29, 2019), <https://afrosartorialism.wordpress.com/2015/10/07/cornrows-bone-jewelry-and-metal-masks-wild-africa-in-maison-valentino-spring-summer-2016-collection/>.

8. See *Harper's Bazaar*, "Victoria's Secret is being accused of cultural appropriation yet again," (August 29, 2019), <https://www.harperbazaar.com/uk/fashion/fashion-news/a13880726/victorias-secret-cultural-appropriation-native-american/>.

## First Stage: Theoretical Analysis of the Case of Bihor vs. Dior From an Aesthetic and Axiological Perspective

The Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden developed his phenomenological theory concerning artistic and aesthetic quality and values during the stage of his academic maturity, i.e., in the years after the Second World War, immediately following the publication of his most important works, such as *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* [The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature],<sup>9</sup> *Spór o istnienie świata* [Controversy over the Existence of the World],<sup>10</sup> and *Przeżycie - dzieło - wartość* [Experience/Work of Art/Value].<sup>11</sup> The topic was presented most fully in the 1965 study 'Czego nie wiemy o wartościach' [What we don't know about values], published in Volume III of *Studiów z estetyki* [Studies in Aesthetics]. This theory is distinguished by precise and detailed elaboration of the topic, thanks to which it can be used as a research tool to analyze cases of specific works of art. It is worth pointing out that interest in these reflections has not flagged despite the passage of time, which speaks for their timeliness and research potential. At the same time, our basic assumption enabling the application of this theory to the analysis of Bihor vs. Dior asserts that the clothing selected from both collections constitutes examples of works of art.

The theory of values presented by Ingarden addresses an extremely broad issue, concerning which there is unfortunately not enough room in this paper for an exhaustive discussion. I am going to recall, in brief and simplified form, a selection of several basic assumptions and principles of this theory, which are necessary for conducting the planned analysis.

We distinguish, after Ingarden, artistic as well as aesthetic qualities and values.<sup>12</sup> What is artistic is related to the work of art itself. What is aesthetic pertains to the so-called aesthetic object, i.e., the work which is revealed to the viewer in the aesthetic experience.<sup>13</sup> Artistic values serve to constitute aesthetic values. The same dependence, on a lower level, applies to artistic qualities, which facilitate the emergence of artistic values and aesthetic qualities. In one of his essays, Ingarden wrote:

[A]rtistic values are clearly service-oriented, with a particular type of serviceability with regard to aesthetic values; they are shaped in such a way that their presence in a work of art entails their constitution in a work of art of quality.<sup>14</sup>

The general dependence is as follows: artistic quality, artistic values, aesthetic qualities, aesthetic values. Starting from the simplest elements, artistic qualities concern: 1) proficiency related to artistic technique, meaning the manifestation of perfection and mastery in execution, or 2) another kind of proficiency, ensuring work that acts aesthetically upon the viewer. Artistic qualities are directly related to the shaping of the physical bases of the existence of a work and are combined with such artistic values as the clarity or complexity of the message, the pedantic arrangement or compositional chaos of the work, or the choice of colors. The detection of specific artistic qualities behind specific artistic values is not a simple task and usually requires additional cognitive and formal analysis. For this reason too, and due to the sketchiness of our analyses, in our discussion of specific examples of works of art we are going to indicate only those artistic values and aesthetic qualities which are directly visible to us, and then proceed to aesthetic evaluation of these works. Aesthetic qualities manifest themselves clearly to

9. Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie. Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1931) (first edition).

10. Roman Ingarden, *Spór o istnienie świata*, vols. 1-2 (Kraków: PAU, 1947, 1948) (first edition).

11. Roman Ingarden, *Przeżycie, dzieło, wartość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1966) (first edition).

12. For one of the papers in which Ingarden distinguishes between artistic and aesthetic values and qualities, and moreover between a work of art and an aesthetic object, see Roman Ingarden, "Wartości artystyczne i wartości estetyczne," in *Studia z estetyki*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: PIW, 1970), 266-87. Text in the translation of H. Osborne: Roman Ingarden "Artistic and Aesthetic Values," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 4, n. 3 (1964): 198-213.

13. See Ingarden, "Wartości artystyczne i wartości estetyczne," 274-75.

14. Ingarden, "Wartości artystyczne i wartości estetyczne," 286.

viewers in the aesthetic experience. In works of art, these qualities never occur one by one but in combination. Among aesthetic qualities, we can distinguish, e.g., material and coloristic qualities, such as brightness, saturation, and fadedness. The formal qualities of a work (i.e., the qualities of its structure) include compactness, cohesion, symmetry, transparency, regularity, disorder, and chaos. Such qualities form the “framework” of the work, whereas additional (secondary) qualities superimposed thereon, such as gentleness, subtlety, sharpness, expressiveness, novelty, originality, freshness, stereotypicality, and mediocrity, characterize the work as a whole. Higher still in this system are aesthetic values, such as beauty, prettiness, grace, sublimity, maturity, excellence, tragedy, comedy, ugliness, commonness, and horror. These constitute a phenomenon that demands observation and the expression of admiration or delight or of disgust or condemnation. Making their appearance on the substrate of a work of art, they are determined by the choice of artistic qualities, artistic values, and aesthetic qualities present in the work. As such, they are derived from the work, and depend as well on the perception of the viewer. Aesthetic values are experienced directly by the viewer in the course of contact with the work within the framework of his intellectual-emotional response to what he has viewed.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless (it should be stressed) they are not relative. Ingarden was inclined to accept the thesis of the objective nature of aesthetic values,<sup>16</sup> writing that they constitute

a phenomenon whose valuable material must be seen and recognized in an act of admiration or delight, or rejected in an act of condemnation or disgust. One might say that [...] the human-perceptor constitutes a certain kind of tool or a means to discover them and to render them justice through an act of recognition or rejection.<sup>17</sup>

The above introductory outline to Ingarden’s theory concerning artistic and aesthetic quality and values leads us to the juxtaposition of two projects that we consider works of art (Figs. 1, 2). The first is the “Beius Authentic Jacket,” a traditional outfit created by local craftsmen affiliated with Bihor Couture. The second is “Christian Dior Jacket, Look 41, Pre-Fall 2017,” an outfit reminiscent of this prototype presented by the famous Christian Dior Fashion House.



Figure 1: Beius Authentic Jacket. © Bihor Couture website  
<http://www.bihorcouture.com/product.php?product=the-jacket>

Juxtaposition of these two works and their analysis in terms of their artistic values and aesthetic quality and value serves to indicate that the design of the Dior Fashion House is aesthetically poorer (less valuable) than the design from the Bihor Couture collection. In Table 1, below, we list specific qualities and values that we believe are associated with each of these works.<sup>18</sup>

Behind these analyses stands the bold assumption that there are qualities and values that constitute

15. In accordance with Ingarden’s terminology, aesthetic values appear at the final stage of the process of concretisation of the work of art. For more about the concretization of a work of art according to Ingarden, see Roman Ingarden, *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego* (Warsaw: PWN, 1970); Andrzej Nowak, Leszek Sosnowski (eds.), *Słownik pojęć filozoficznych Romana Ingardena* (Kraków: Universitas 2001), 138-42.

16. See: Roman Ingarden, “Czego nie wiemy o wartościach,” in *Studia z estetyki*, 220-57. See also: Roman Ingarden, “Wartość



Figure 2: Christian Dior Jacket, Look 41, Pre-Fall 2017. © Vogue website  
<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/pre-fall-2017/christian-dior/slideshow/collection#41>

	<b>Beius Authentic Jacket</b>	<b>Christian Dior Jacket, Look 41, Pre-Fall 2017</b>
<b>Artistic qualities</b>	////////////////////////////////////	////////////////////////////////////
<b>Artistic values</b>	mastery and craftsmanship—diligence, precision, accuracy, and meticulousness of execution; symmetry; richness of means of expression in terms of forms and materials; tonal variation of colors	absence of mastery and craftsmanship—accuracy; mechanical nature of execution; symmetry; moderate degree of means of expression in terms of forms and materials; limited number of colors
<b>Aesthetic qualities</b>	saturation—saturated colors; transparency, compactness, cohesion; expressiveness; originality—outfit is not counterfeited; authenticity; nobility	faded quality—pale colors; transparency, symmetry; artificiality; novelty/stereotypicality
<b>Aesthetic values</b>	beauty; maturity; excellence	prettiness; commonness

Table 1: Artistic and aesthetic qualities and values



sufficient or necessary conditions for a certain aesthetic value such as beauty or excellence.<sup>19</sup> Of course, we are not asserting that there is a single specific and finite set or group of such qualities and values. A single value can be, and usually is, conditioned by various combinations of artistic values and aesthetic qualities. We accept, however, that there are artistic values and aesthetic qualities that are necessary for the existence of certain aesthetic values, and, what is more, that there are also qualities and values that preclude the appearance of certain aesthetic values. Here we accept Ingarden's position, which he clearly stated in the article "Czego nie wiemy o wartościach" [What we don't know about values]:

One must [...] seek a necessary and, at the same time, sufficient allocation of a certain selection of the properties of a potential carrier of values of a given quality. Whoever does not believe that significant allocation of this kind between qualities [...] exists and can be detected with sufficient certainty determines in advance that the qualities of values appear in objects at random, so to speak and that therefore there is not and there cannot be any effective "grounding" of value (defined specifically or generally) in the object on whose basis the value appears.<sup>20</sup>

This means, in our opinion, that when we find a work lacking in such values and qualities as diligence, precision, or meticulousness of execution, or originality of form, texture, or structure, or, on the contrary, when poor craftsmanship, artificiality, or stereotypicality are visible, we will not find the highest aesthetic values, i.e. beauty, sublimity, excellence, or maturity, in the aesthetic experience. At the same time, we assume that a significant influence on the appearance or absence of the highest aesthetic values, such as beauty or sublimity, is exerted by the so-called authenticity of the work of art, which is connected with the problem of cultural appropriation. In this connection, we realise how difficult it is to unequivocally define the concept of authenticity in relation to various types of works of art.<sup>21</sup> In Ingarden's theory, this term refers to the level of aesthetic quality, and in the analyses carried out here as we have already pointed out we rely on the subjective assessment of the work carried out by the viewer.

The introductory conclusion that we formulate in this article is that in the analyzed case, which we consider an act of cultural appropriation, the absence of specific artistic values and aesthetic qualities results in the absence of the highest aesthetic values. Works such as the Dior project in question may be aesthetically correct, and even described as pretty, and yet prove to be poorer on the level of aesthetic value.<sup>22</sup> Of course, precise determination or detection of the dependencies of which we are speaking here is unusually difficult, if possible at all. It is also possible to have reasonable doubts concerning the universality and objectivity of the results achieved here. The analysis concerns one selected case and is based on the subjective assessments of viewers of the work. In this context, it is of course reasonable to ask how this juxtaposition itself influences the assessment in other words, to what extent knowledge of what we call the prototype affects perception of the Dior project, and vice versa. Such reservations can be multiplied. Certainly empirical research in the form of, e.g., surveys among a diverse audience and

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estetyczna i zagadnienie jej obiektywnego ugruntowania," in *Studia z estetyki*, 258-65.

17. Ingarden, "Wartości artystyczne i wartości estetyczne," 286.

18. For more about the list of aesthetic qualities and artistic and aesthetic values, see Maria Gołaszewska, "Wartość estetyczna," in *Zarys estetyki* (Warsaw: PWN, 1983), 337-87.

19. Nor was this assumption ruled out by Roman Ingarden. In pondering the possibilities of conceptual definition of value, in the article "Czego nie wiemy o wartościach" he wrote: "it is possible to distinguish, in the quality of the endowment itself (in the material), at least in some cases, simpler moments of quality. It is also possible to apprehend that some of them play the role of moments of genres or types, whereas others are moments differentiating the lowest varieties or even certain strictly individual values" (Ingarden, "Czego nie wiemy o wartościach," 226). For more about the problem of the autonomy/non-autonomy of values and discussions on this topic in philosophy over the years, see Ingarden, "Czego nie wiemy o wartościach," 250-52.

20. Ingarden, "Czego nie wiemy o wartościach," 256.

21. See, *inter alia*, William E. Kennick, "Art and Inauthenticity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 44, n. 1 (Autumn, 1985): 3-12; Elizabeth Burns Coleman, "Aboriginal Painting: Identity and Authenticity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 59, n. 4 (Autumn, 2001): 385-402.

22. Cf. James O. Young, "Art, Authenticity and Appropriation," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, vol. 1, n. 3 (September, 2006): 455-76.

with reference to a greater number of examples would provide more reliable and conclusive arguments concerning this issue. Nor do we rule out the possibility of an opposing indication with respect to the example of an act of cultural appropriation analyzed in this article, i.e., a work created with clear ties to another, already-existing one, yet characterized by the highest artistic and aesthetic values. The present analysis is only a preliminary sketch for further research. However, we believe that this research perspective is fruitful and interesting.

## Second Stage: Theoretical Analysis of the Case of Bihor vs. Dior From the Perspective of Basic Concepts of Business Ethics

Now let us move on to a quick consideration of the case of Bihor vs. Dior in the context of the concept of corporate social responsibility. This concept appears to have a special resonance with regard to Bihor's craft activity, above all given its successful nature. Indeed, this activity is a significant and fundamental counteraction against a clothing market dominated by international corporations. At this stage, the case can be considered a model example of a situation in which not only material goods but also values (in this case, aesthetic and cultural) were taken from a given local community.

In accordance with the contemporary concepts of CSR (corporate social responsibility) and CSV (creating shared values) and concepts of (economic) ecosystems, not only corporations but the entire global economic system are obliged to comply with certain ethical rules regarding the manufacturing process, such as care for the natural environment or the protection and maintenance of community values. Initially, as part of the CSR concept, it was acknowledged that corporations were obliged to use a portion of their revenues on behalf of the local community in which they operate. The beginnings of reflections on corporate social responsibility date back to the 1950s, when Howard R. Bowen's *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* appeared in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Of course, activities of commercial companies and companies focused on helping local communities had already appeared previously, in different parts of the world. However, as indicated by Archie Carroll, Bowen (1953) set forth an initial definition of the social responsibility of businessmen: "[i]t refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society."<sup>24</sup> This publication initiated a discussion, in which Eells (1956),<sup>25</sup> Selekman (1959),<sup>26</sup> and Heald (1970)<sup>27</sup> were among the primary participants. However, it was the reasoning presented by Keith Davis that marked the turning point in the development of the concept of CSR.

As Carroll indicates:

Davis (1960) argued that social responsibility is a nebulous idea but should be seen in a managerial context. Furthermore, he asserted that some socially responsible business decisions can be justified by a long, complicated process of reasoning as having a good chance of bringing long-run economic gain to the firm, thus paying it back for its socially responsible outlook.<sup>28</sup>

Thanks to its usefulness in marketing operations, this understanding of the concept of CSR reigned

23. Howard R. Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2013).

24. Archie B. Carroll, "Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct," *Business & Society*, vol. 38, n. 3 (September 1999), 268-95.

25. Richard Eells, *Corporate Giving in a Free Society* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956).

26. Benjamin Selekman, *A Moral Philosophy for Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

27. Morrell Heald, *The Social Responsibilities of Business: Company and Community, 1900-1960* (Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970).

28. Keith Davis, "Can Business Afford to Ignore Social Responsibilities?" *California Management Review*, vol. 2, (1960, Spring): 70-6 [in Carroll, "Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution," 273].



throughout the 1980s. Joseph W. McGuire, in his *Business and Society* (1963),<sup>29</sup> explained that, in addition to the legal and economic obligations of corporations, there are also social responsibilities, which need not be defined legally in order to be applicable. The beginning of the development of the CSR concept was also marked by the appearance of equally innovative approaches referring to the concept, subsequently defined, of “stakeholders.” Such an approach was found in Harold Johnson’s paper “Business in Contemporary Society.” Also deserving of mention is the widely disseminated opinion of Milton Friedman<sup>30</sup> in this field, according to which the social responsibility of a corporation is, first and foremost, to increase profits. Friedman also argued that “few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible.”<sup>31</sup> In contrast to these considerations was the position of Edward Freeman, who, in *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*,<sup>32</sup> referred directly to Johnson’s considerations, in part of which the aspect of valuespecifically value as recognised by the community was emphasized rather than mere profit. This is evident, if only in a 1971 publication of the Committee for Economic Development. As Archie Carroll pointed out:

A landmark contribution to the concept of CSR came from the Committee for Economic Development (CED) in its 1971 publication *Social Responsibilities of Business Corporations*. The CED got into this topic by observing that “business functions by public consent and its basic purpose is to serve constructively the needs of society to the satisfaction of society” (p. 11). The CED noted that the social contract between business and society was changing in substantial and important ways: Business is being asked to assume broader responsibilities to society than ever before and to serve a wider range of human values.<sup>33</sup>

This commitment is due in part to the fact that corporations in their operations use various resources which are common goods (water, land, local road networks). Their operation is also based on certain unwritten principles, acknowledged as self-evident, concerning the functioning of communities, such as observance of the principles of honesty, loyalty, etc. However, Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer<sup>34</sup> have observed that the concepts of CSR are used by corporations to build a positive image of enterprises, whereas their real impact on improving the life of the corresponding communities is negligible. What is more, activities undertaken within the framework of CSR have often been not only underfinanced, but also unconnected with the real human needs and problems that local authorities and other entities operating in the public sphere have attempted to cope with. Underfunding of activities carried out within the framework of CSR and their lack of influence on the true and essential problems of communities led to the formulation of the concept of CSV: creating shared value. We may ask how shared value differs from corporate social responsibility. As Porter and Kramer responded, “CSR programs focus mostly on reputation and have only a limited connection to the business; CSV is integral to a company’s profitability and competitive position. In both cases, compliance with laws and ethical standards and reducing harm from corporate activities are assumed.”<sup>35</sup> The CSV concept assumes, first and foremost, collective impact, that is, a co-operative effort to make progress in solving the most important social problems, such as adequate healthcare, elimination of homelessness, creation of jobs, or getting out of poverty. This involves initiatives by several entities. Such operations require proper coordination of work. As Pfitzer and Kramer point out, in order for a goal to be achieved on the assumed scale,

29. Joseph McGuire, *Business and Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 144.

30. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

31. Friedman, 133.

32. R. Edward Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (Boston: Pitman, 1984).

33. Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution,” 274.

34. Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, “Strategy and Society: The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility,” *Harvard Business Review*, 84/12 (December 2006): 78-92; Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, “Creating Shared Value,” *Harvard Business Review*, 89/1-2 (January/February 2011): 62-77.

35. Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, “The Big Idea: Creating Shared Value. Rethinking Capitalism,” *Harvard Business Review*, (January-February 2011), <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/53co/606a0d6f7do1434039bf7039f8e48f95fdo6.pdf>.

it is necessary to formulate “a common agenda, a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, constant communication, and dedicated backbone support from one or more independent organizations.”<sup>36</sup> This activity consists of defining the real needs of a given community, and, in the next step, attempting to satisfy them in a way that is economically viable and advantageous for the community. “The creation of common value requires a social mission to be permanently embedded in the organizational culture of the enterprise, along with the targeting of resources towards the development of innovative projects,”<sup>37</sup> write Marc Pfitzer, Valerie Bockstette, and Mike Stamp. In their previously mentioned paper, Porter and Kramer transform CSV by bringing it closer to the theory of ecosystems. Whence did such a need arise?

Sometimes, however, even a model of this kind is insufficient. This was the conclusion reached by Robert S. Kaplan, George Serafeim, and Eduardo Tugendhat after interviewing 30 chief sustainability officers (CSOs). What were their conclusions? “The main problem was not in the execution of shared value projects; it was in the limited scale of projects’ ambitions. CSOs were not thinking big enough.” Hence the problem of integrating activities into a single ecosystem. The theory of building business ecosystems has itself been gaining in importance since 2006. What is an ecosystem? As Michael G. Jacobides, Carmelo Cennamo, and Annabelle Gawer write: “Behavior in an ecosystem, and, ultimately, its success, is affected by the rules of engagement and the nature of standards and interfaces open versus closed; imposed versus emergent.”<sup>38</sup> Thus it is a system of integrated activities along the following line: corporations local authorities NGOs. These activities concern a common goal, with each entity taking responsibility for a different stage of the project: one is supposed to research the market, another to train the unemployed, another to build infrastructure, still another to improve distribution. As indicated by Kaplan, Serafeim, and Tugendhat, this division of responsibility removes excessive burdens from entities from one sector; additionally, thanks to integrated activities, it is possible to carry out a much more ambitious project within the framework of CSV than corporations implement by themselves. Initially, given the ambitious and prosocial nature of these projects, NGOs are the most involved, but over time (as the system proves economically viable), they are joined by more and more private enterprises.

How does the Dior fashion house appear in this light? Although it is impossible to assess the operations of this fashion house as a whole, it is worth recalling the shameful situation in which the firm was involved. In plagiarizing or directly modeling its outfits on the traditional clothing of the village of Bihor, the company demonstrated its lack of concern for sustainable development, as no profits from the sale of clothing reached the village of Bihor. This can even be acknowledged as *corporate social irresponsibility*. This disgraceful characterization should be made, first and foremost, as a result of the explicit and intentional unlawful use of traditional patterns of clothing. Additionally, by lowering the quality of workmanship, Dior created a situation whereby extremely costly and, at the same time inferior (in terms of quality) copies of original designs appeared on the market. If we consider the case from the point of view of the CSV (creating shared value) concept, it can be assumed that these designs are part of the identity not only of the Bihor community, but of the whole of Romania. The borrowing hit an extremely tender spot through making its products a caricature of one of the important elements of Bihor’s identity. An additional outrage for the society of Bihor was the price of the Dior products, which (along with a reduction in the quality of fabrics and designs) was many times that of the original products. The practice as a whole was even labeled appropriation of culture. On the other hand, defenders of the Dior fashion house may claim that this borrowing of clothing patterns may (and in fact in this case did) constitute an international advertisement for Bihor. However, this type of activity cannot be justified by an alleged marketing benefit, because Dior did nothing to ensure that some of the proceeds from sales would find their way to the local village community.

How, with reference to the theories of CSR, CSV, or ecosystems, is it possible to overcome the domina-

36. Marc Pfitzer and Mark Kramer, “The Ecosystem of Shared Value,” *Harvard Business Review* (October 2016): 6.

37. Robert S. Kaplan, George Serafeim and Eduardo Tugendhat, “Inclusive Growth: Profitable Strategies for Tackling Poverty and Inequality,” *Harvard Business Review* (January-February 2018): 126-33.

38. Michael G. Jacobides, Carmelo Cennamo and Annabelle Gawer, “Towards a Theory of Ecosystems,” *Strategic Management Journal* (June 2018), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/smj.2904>.

tion of large corporations and their unauthorized appropriation of cultural property? Some critics of the CSV version of the concept of corporate social responsibility indicate their aspirational and, from the point of view of free market principles, unrealistic nature, emphasizing as do Andrew Crane, Guido Palazzo, Laura J. Spence, and Dirk Matten<sup>39</sup> fundamental problems that appear upon attempts to apply them to business operations, such as ignoring the pressure associated with responsible business or perceiving cooperation with competing firms in a naive manner. On the other hand, it is worth looking at the responses of the small craftsmen of the village of Bihor, which constitute a positive example of ways to overcome the difficulties described by critics of corporate social responsibility. The Romanian magazine *Beau Monde* applied a brilliant method to restore aesthetic and cultural values to their legitimate owners, conducting an informational campaign in which all interested parties could themselves compare the prices and quality of products offered by the small producers of Bihor and the Dior fashion house. All of this was presented in an attractive form via social media. What is more, a brilliant advertising campaign was designed under the name Bihor Couture, invoking not only regional values but also consumers' sense of decency, in which advertising spots were additionally accompanied by music from the region, performed by local musicians. These activities were not limited to the advertising campaign; an entire ecosystem was built around local producers, to support their activities at every stage from the production and advertising to the distribution of original products. Within this ecosystem, goods are sold in a way that does not violate the cultural values of the region in question. As part of the campaign, the values of the society are promoted; products are advertised by inhabitants of the village (not professional models), while profits from the activity flow directly to manufacturers and designers. Industrial designs have also been registered, thanks to which the creations of Bihor are protected by law. But is this a profitable business model? After the first month of the campaign, orders were received sufficient to ensure work for the next 4½ years. The income generated thanks to the campaign was used to open the only school of traditional crafts in the region. Thanks to this, the regional tradition, which had been heading slowly towards extinction, has gained new momentum, and values important to the community have been restored. The activities of individuals concentrated around Bihor Couture are aimed at the widest possible support for the region and the community inhabiting it. As Cătălin Dobre, Chief Creative Officer at McCann Worldgroup Romania, indicated in an interview with branding.news:

Bihor Couture isn't just a brand that sells authentic clothes from Bihor. It also serves as a business model developed to give money back to the local communities so that future generations can enjoy these wonderful traditions. This business model can serve as a source of inspiration for other countries and cultures that face the same problem as Romania.<sup>40</sup>

One might ask why the example of the village of Bihor, whose artisans have strongly opposed the unlawful and ethically dubious activities of large clothing corporations, should be considered a more important model of good practice within the concept of ecosystems. After all, there are numerous sources indicating other ecosystems designed with the participation of various social and business entities, which, moreover, solve, one might say, more momentous social problems, such as hunger or the lack of access to medical resources. Jacobides, Cennamo, and Gawer acknowledge that various theories of ecosystems share the assumption “that ecosystems require providers of complementary innovations, products, or services, who might belong to different industries and need not be bound by contractual arrangements—but have significant interdependence nonetheless.”<sup>41</sup> The ecosystem-based value system differs, according to these authors, from the hierarchy-based value system in terms of the existence, at the level of the Focal Firm Product, of additional complementors who co-operate with the Focal Firm Product and have the opportunity to conduct final transactions with customers.

An ecosystem built with the aim of correcting the living conditions of farmers in Uganda, created primarily due to the involvement of large business entities such as SABMiller and daughter companies of

39. Andrew Crane, Guido Palazzo, Laura J. Spence and Dirk Matten, “Contesting the Value of ‘Creating Shared Value’,” *California Management Review*, 56/2 (2014): 130-53. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2014.56.2.130>.

40. “Romania Knocks out Dior’s Copycat Clothes with Authentic Coat,” May 29, 2018, <https://www.branding.news/2018/05/29/romania-knocks-out-diors-copycat-clothes-with-authentic-coat/>.

41. Michael G. Jacobides, Carmelo Cennamo and Annabelle Gawer, “Towards a Theory of Ecosystems.”

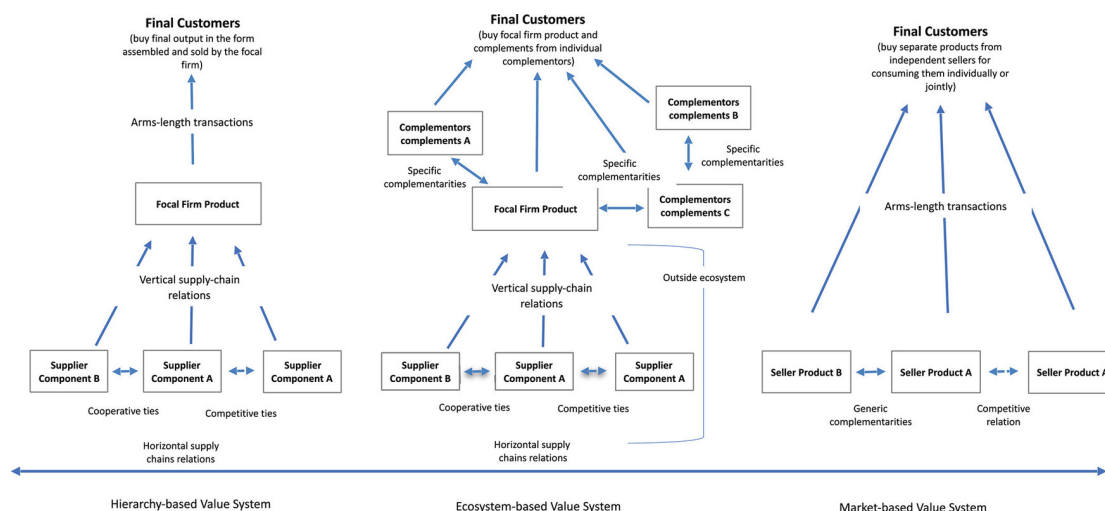


Figure 3: Different types of value systems. See: Michael G. Jacobides, Carmelo Cennamo, Annabelle Gawer, "Towards a Theory of Ecosystems," *Strategic Management Journal* (June 2018), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/smj.2904>

Nile Breweries and, above all, the involvement in the process of a global consulting company, Carana, was presented in this way. "It involved multiple investments in new assets and capabilities for the traders and farmers, including the creation of maize demonstration plots to showcase good agricultural practices and proper postharvest handling techniques."<sup>42</sup> It is clear that in the case of Bihor the problem was not the technology according to which the garments were made. Indeed, this technology constituted an advantage over the products copied by the Dior fashion house. It is also worth pointing out another fundamental difference from the ecosystem indicated by the authors. The creators of Bihor Couture's success organized the entire process of manufacturing, production, and distribution without the involvement of large companies or corporations. The only external entities (outside the region) involved in the promotion of products were the magazine *Beau Monde* and McCann Worldgroup Romania. In other words, Bihor Couture appears to have created a new variant of the ecosystem, one in which large concerns and international corporations need not be involved. Its superiority depends on the fact that, despite its slight influence at first, a marketing campaign was created, thanks to the awareness of the value of artifacts offered by local producers, on an international scale. Thus Bihor retained the income that would have otherwise been claimed by the global partner and invested a significant part of it in the development of the region and local crafts. Bihor deserves attention primarily due to its courage in the fight to acknowledge the value of the original artifacts and to act on an international scale, remaining true to the initial assumptions of supporting original producers, i.e., artisans. This is a noteworthy example of the global thinking of small businesses which do not depend on the support of international corporations and at the same time have the courage to compete with them.

## Conclusions

One of the slogans of the campaign was "Support authenticity!" The topic of the conference, however, concerns the question: what, in our times, does it mean to "be cool"? In our opinion, the case of Bihor Couture indicates the direct path that should be followed. In other words, a conscious citizen of the world is aware of the problems arising from excessive consumption and the relationship between the predatory capitalist system on one hand and social inequalities and the problem of global justice on the other. In this situation, to "be cool," it is not enough to follow transient trends in the search for tem-

42. Robert S. Kaplan, George Serafeim and Eduardo Tugendhat, "Inclusive Growth: Profitable Strategies for Tackling Poverty and Inequality," 126-33.

porary popularity (which must be fought for constantly). Nowadays, to “be cool” signifies conscious participation in the protection and production of cultural, aesthetic, and ethical values.

Interestingly, the analyses, conducted on two levels, aesthetic and ethical, led to complementary conclusions, because, according to current theories of corporate social responsibility (creating shared values and ecosystems), this should be considered a case of unauthorised use of original Bihor clothing designs as a decidedly negative. In the course of the analysis, it became clear that Bihor Couture is proposing a new ecosystem model, one which might be called a micro-ecosystempractice on the part of a well-known clothing brandfirst of all, due to the lack of consent (one might say) of the owners of the designs (the local community of Bihor) as well as the failure to take this community into account in the distribution of profits from the sale of clothing modeled on Bihor. On the other hand, in the present article, we have tried to show the advantages of the manner in which local producers reacted to the unauthorized borrowing of folk designs. Their activities should be considered good practice in the field of corporate social responsibility, since its establishment and functioning is not dependent on the support of large clothing corporations, and the product itself is distributed and sold without intermediaries, directly from the manufacturers. As a result of the analysis from the aesthetic point of view, it was indicated that clothing resulting from unauthorized borrowing is characterized by decidedly lower aesthetic value than the original. The absence of the highest aesthetic values in relation to the analysed designs of the “Christian Dior Look 41, Pre-Fall 2017” is associated, in our opinion, with, *inter alia*, a lack of mastery and craftsmanship and with the inauthenticity of the work. Hence, in our opinion, it follows that Bihor Couture clothes are undeniably characterized by much higher aesthetic and craft value than the Dior collection which results from unauthorised borrowing.

It might be said, if somewhat grandiloquently, that the runaway machine of commerce can be exploited through the deployment of methods corresponding to contemporary reality, such as an appropriate social media campaign, internet memes, the involvement of fashion bloggers, influential personalities, and intriguing music, towards the realization of the Platonic triad of values: beauty-good-truth. Thanks to this, a Bihor coat can be worn with pride. What is more, in our paper we wish to draw attention not only to Bihor design, but above all to a business model that can be applied in practical fashion throughout Europe, one which is already known as a “model of how to fight cultural appropriation.”

In an advertising spot, a Bihor designer says: “Bihor belongs on the international scene. But we haven’t been discovered yet!” It is worth thinking these words through within a broader context; therefore we would like to encourage you to look around you and see whether we, too, might have something to discover.



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