

The Arts and Culture in the Knowledge Era

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Abstract. What is the role for the culture and the arts in the knowledge society and knowledge-based economy? On one hand, there is a criticism of the techno-economic orientation of current knowledge economy, which is seen as an impediment for the humanities and creative arts (Bullen et al., 2004). On the other hand, Kelemen et al. (2007) point out the unprecedented intersections between culture & the arts, the science & research and information technologies in the knowledge economy resulting into a new space – so called cyberspace. Yet, the evolution of new technologies and the emergence of cyberspace have a huge impact on the field of the arts and culture. In particular, two areas should be highlighted: the way how the arts are created and the way how the arts are delivered to their audiences. In the first case the new technologies enabled the creation of the completely new forms of arts especially with the use of digital technologies. In the second case the wide spread of internet, evolution of new personal devices (iPhone, iPod, iPad, Kindle etc.) and social media emergence caused radical changes in distributions channels of cultural products based on their digitalization and dematerialization. The aim of this paper is to analyze revolutionary changes in the field of the arts and culture enabled by the evolution of cyberspace in the knowledge era.

1 Introduction

In the last years the knowledge has been increasingly recognized as the core factor of a new socio-economic model called the “knowledge-based economy” or simply “knowledge economy”. Within this paradigm the knowledge is considered to be the source of the economic development of a nowadays society. Its implementation into socio-economic processes generates innovation, which enhances the creation of new socio-economic values and further development. Of course, the use of knowledge has been connected with a human kind thorough its history. However, its economic importance significantly increased only with the emergence of new information and communication technologies, which facilitated and accelerated the exchange of knowledge among people.

Besley (2010) argues that knowledge is now the dominant feature of the social transformations associated with globalization as the world-wide integration of economic activity. According to Andersson et al. (2010) the flow of knowledge is the hallmark of technology transfer and the primary factor determining the standard of living. However, the authors claim that the knowledge revolution has contributed to the rise of economy which has proven to be unsustainable. They see the greatest challenge in connecting meaningfully with knowledge innovation agents to enhance their capacity to handle innovation as the process of putting knowledge into action (Andersson et al., 2010).

Since there is a strong primary focus on technologies within the knowledge society we may question the role of humanities in general, and the role of culture and the arts in particular, in the knowledge era. On one hand, there is a criticism of the techno-economic orientation of current knowledge economy (Bullen et al., 2004, p. 4). The authors argue that since the

formation of knowledge economy policy has been informed by the knowledge economy paradigm it works to preclude many humanities and creative art disciplines (Bullen et al., 2004). On the other hand, Kelemen et al. (2007) point out the unprecedented intersections between culture & the arts, the science & research and information technologies in the knowledge economy resulting into a new space – so called cyberculture, which is being created and disseminated within the cyberworld. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the position of the arts and culture in the framework of knowledge society and analyze changes in the arts sector brought by the paradigm of knowledge economy.

2 The position of the arts and culture within knowledge economy

The knowledge economy can be defined as production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technological and scientific advance as well as equally rapid obsolescence. The key components of the knowledge economy include a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources (Powell and Snellman, 2004). Kelemen et al. (2010, p. 34) point out that in the process of knowledge production and transfer communication technologies play a major role. The knowledge is associated with inventions enabling easier, quicker and more powerful communication including devices from the printing press, telephone, television, personal computer to communication platform as internet, sms, twitter, etc.

The level of creation and transfer of knowledge can be considered as a determinant of the development of knowledge economies. In order to evaluate the degree of knowledge economy development in individual countries the system of knowledge indicators was established using KI (Knowledge Index) and KEI (Knowledge Economy Index). *The Knowledge Index*, which reflects the ability of a country to generate, implement and spread knowledge, indicates the country's general development potential. It consists of three pillars: education and human resources; innovations; and information and communication technologies. *The Knowledge Economy Index* assesses the economic and institutional environment of a country in view of its ability to enhance knowledge development and its use for the economic development of the country. Moreover, Eurostat (2009) provides a more detailed classification of knowledge related activities within the economic system with respect to their knowledge intensity. There are also quite a lot of categories related to artistic and cultural productions. Namely, within the (1) *Knowledge-intensive services*: publishing activities; film, video and TV programs creation; audio recordings, radio and TV broadcasting. The same description is listed also within the (2) *High-tech knowledge-intensive services*. Finally, the category (3) *Other knowledge-intensive services* encompasses creative, artistic and entertaining activities, activities of libraries, archives, museums and other cultural establishments.

Moreover, if we look at the nature of activities performed within the arts sector by individual artists, we can consider an artist to be a knowledge worker. According to Kelemen et al. (2010, p. 141) knowledge workers represent more than half of the employees in advanced economies. The concept of “knowledge workers” was for the first time presented by Peter Drucker (1954), who described them as people who, when working, use their brain more than their muscles. In the knowledge economy a knowledge-based work plays an increasingly important role in economic life (Davenport, 2008). The works of an artist comprises highly specialized activities gained after the period of an extensive training and cultivated by personal experiences over the time. Moreover, a personal predisposition – the talent – is needed in order to successfully perform an artistic profession. Reboul (2006 in Kelemen et al., 2010) classifies knowledge workers according to two criteria: the value added by tacit knowledge to the performance and “goldenskills required by position. He describes talent

oriented positions as a combination of a high level of golden skills and a minor value added by tacit knowledge to the performance. As an example the author suggests arts professions, creative professions in marketing and public relations.

3 Changes in the cultural sector in the knowledge era

Already in 1994 Pierre Lévy published a work entitled *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. The author pointed out the arrival of cyberspace in our everyday life, which will influence all kinds of human activities (including the arts) and challenge the ways we humans see ourselves in a philosophical sense. Lévy describes the intellectual development of humanity in terms of four great “anthropological” spaces: earth, territory, commodity and knowledge. The fourth space – the knowledge space – relates to collective imagination, the production of knowledge, and the construction of intelligent communities with the help of computers (Lévy, 1994). According to Poore (2011, p. 20-21) it is the knowledge space, that concerns us in the digital age, which is opening up as a result of humanity's emergence into the cyberworld.

The cyberspace opens a wide spectrum of possibilities also for different kinds of artistic creations. In particular, the digital technologies and new media enabled the emergence of totally new forms of arts, what evidences a significant impact of the knowledge era the arts and culture. Moreover, in the work by Jozef Kelemen et al. entitled *Invitation to the Knowledge Society* (2007) the whole chapter (2, p. 20 – 38) is dedicated to the roots of knowledge society within culture and the arts. The authors provide numerous examples on how modern technologies have been influencing and inspiring new artistic expressions. The authors point out that the new devices and media catch the attention of artists from two perspectives: as tools for creation enabling to explore the living reality or as communication tools connecting an artist and the public (Kelemen et al., 2007).

3.1 Dematerialization and digitalization of culture

The technology of digitalization developed in the last decades enabled dematerialization of a lot of originally tangible cultural products (CD, DVD, printed books, etc.). The consequent evolution of sophisticated personal devices like (iPhone, iPod, iPad, Kindle, etc.) made it possible to transfer these digital cultural contents from their producers directly towards their consumers in a dematerialized form. These technological advances caused a real revolution on cultural markets. Moreover, Cowen (2008, p. 261) points out that the new communication technologies have significantly changed the field of cultural economic more than in any comparably short period in human existence.

In this place especially two companies have to be mentioned: Apple which opened iTunes store in 2003 and Amazon launching an e-book reader Kindle a few years later. These two companies – clear market leaders in online music sector (Apple) and e-books sector (Amazon) – marked a new path in cultural products delivery. The clues to success among consumers were in both cases the simplicity of use and the price of the product. The iTunes lowered and unified the price of music so any song independently of its author or interpreter costs 99 cents. By offering such a low price it became more comfortable for consumers to buy the music instead of pirating it. Similarly, Amazon offers an e-book several times cheaper than the printed one. The Kindle is easy to use and the product is purchased, paid and delivered within a few seconds. From marketing point of view, both of these systems are built on two consumer advantages constituting modern variable of 4C marketing mix – Convenience to buy (originally Place/Distribution) and Cost to satisfy consumers wants and needs (originally Price).

3.2 Culture and the consumer generated media

However, let's look at the other advances in cultural products delivery in the nowadays cyberworld – the social media. Since the raise of Internet in the early 1990s, the world's networked population has grown from the low millions to the low billions (Shirky, 2011). With the emergence of social media in the mid 2000s the net space has been undergoing a new revolution. Scott (2010) defines social media as an on-line space where people can share ideas, content, thoughts and relationships. He points out that social media differ from so-called “mainstream media” in a way that anyone can create, comment and add to social media. Social media can take the form of text (blogs and wikis), audio (podcasts), video (YouTube), images (Flickr), and communities (Twitter, Facebook and more).

Maurya (2011) advocates the term “consumer generated media”. He describes it as a result of the transformation of technology and media, which gives users a personalized and efficient presentation of opinion over these platforms. Consumer Generated Media became popular for many different reasons. They are limitless (online space has no geographic, age-related or socioeconomic barriers or borders), quick, anonymous, expressive and powerful, effective, targeted, inclusive and trusted.

In view of the dissemination of cultural products, in particular, two types of consumer generated media should be highlighted: Facebook and YouTube. *Facebook* was established as a Harvard-only social networking site in early 2004. By September 2006, the network was extended beyond educational institutions to anyone with a registered e-mail address. The site remains free to join, and makes a profit through advertising revenue (Phillips, 2007). A typical *Facebook* profile consists of a number of different sections, including Information, Status, Friends on Facebook, Friends in Other Networks, Photos, Notes, Groups, and The Wall. Nowadays, *Facebook* achieved more than 916 million active users worldwide (CheckFacebook.com, 2012). The system enables to spread various types of audio-visual contents (music, videos, pictures etc.) to other user through the network. This so called “word-of-mouse” may have an important impact on the consumption of cultural products within a selected group of consumers. Another Facebook feature “like” plays a role of a personal recommendation of a product or event and influence the consumer behaviour.

YouTube created in 2005 represents an audio-visual kind of social media. Nowadays, *YouTube* is the world's market leader for online video. It allows users to upload and share videos and other consumer generated content through Internet, via websites, mobile devices, blogs or e-mails. Anyone with Internet access is able to store and view videos on *YouTube* free of charge. *YouTube* has reached several agreements on content with communication companies such as CBS, BBC and the music divisions of Universal, Sony and Warner (Artero, 2010). The consumer preferences and opinions can be expressed by rating the videos and by adding written comments to videos visible to the whole community.

While Facebook and Youtube work mostly as means of the dissemination and recommendation of cultural contents among peers, the Blogosphere (text based on-line social space), encompasses a big part of experts and professional communications. In general, blogosphere, which started around 2001, is a corporate or personal online journal system with reflections, expressions, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writers. Blog (short for weblog) displays in a chronological order the postings by individuals and typically has links to comments on specific postings (Maurya, 2010). The best known microblogs-based social medium *Twitter* was launched in 2006. It can be described as an instant messaging system that lets a person send brief text messages up to 140 characters in length to a list of followers. According to Edison Research (Webster, 2010 in Greer & Ferguson, 2011) *Twitter* is primarily used as a one way information tool. Other research showed that people use

Twitter for sharing information (Java et al., 2007 in Greer & Ferguson, 2011). *Twitter's* benefits include simplicity (Grossman, 2009 in Greer & Ferguson, 2011), more frequent postings (Java et al., 2007 in Greer & Ferguson, 2011), and linking to more detailed information on other sites (Johnson, 2009 in Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Given its potential of influencing the opinions of consumers by experts and opinion leaders the Blogosphere represents an important reviewing system for cultural products and events. Moreover, the reviewer process is far more time-flexible than in traditional mainstream media. While for instance in newspaper it takes several days or sometimes weeks to place a book or performance review, the blog can be placed immediately after having consumed the product. Moreover, the audience can comment the blogger's review what makes it even more credible for the rest of the online community.

To conclude, due to the increased use of sophisticated information and communication technologies and the emergence of consumer generated media the cultural delivery has been significantly transformed within the knowledge era. The digitalization and dematerialization of cultural products facilitated the implementation of direct one-to-one distribution channels in product delivery (iTunes, e-books). In parallel, the spread of social generated media enabled a kind of multilevel marketing on social networks, which can be labelled as the word-of-mouse. Nevertheless, both of these phenomena indicate a gradual move of the constantly increasing portion of cultural delivery into the cyberspace and suggest a transformation of traditional distribution formats within the cultural industry.

4 Conclusions

We live in the era of knowledge society which is based on the implementation of knowledge for further development. However, the current state of knowledge economy – based primarily on the extensive implementation of information and communication technologies enabling the effective use, storage and dissemination of knowledge – is criticized as “an impediment for the humanities and creative arts” (Bullen et al., 2004). The authors claim that by adopting a techno-economic paradigm and by positioning technology as the catalyst of revolutionary change, the drivers of the knowledge economy are located outside of society and culture (Bullen et al., 2004). However, based on the analysis presented in our paper we cannot agree with this postulate. Accordingly, Powell and Snellman (2004) point out the recognition of the importance of knowledge and intangible capital in fostering economic growth and social change.

Yet, the knowledge era brought significant changes into the world of the arts and culture. First, the new technologies inspired the creation of new forms of art, especially within the digital cultural. Further, the evolving digitalization enabled the dematerialization of tangible cultural production and facilitated their accessibility to broader publics. As a result, the cultural products which were previously offered to the market in tangible forms (CD, DVD, book) have been increasingly supplied in their dematerialized versions (mp3 file, e-book, etc.) for more accessible prices. Moreover, the development of new communication technologies, in particular the sophisticated personal devices (iPod, iPad, e-book readers, etc.) and the emergence of consumer generated media (YouTube, Facebook, etc.) revolutionized the way how the arts and culture are delivered to their audiences. In view of the above mentioned facts there is no doubt that the evolving knowledge era has been changing the face of the arts and culture. Despite certain constraints connected with a natural reluctance towards changes in usual economic, market and social models we cannot really say whether these changes will be positive or negative in a long run. However, the progress cannot be avoided. So, we should

rather see the technological revolution of knowledge economy paradigm as a challenge and an opportunity to explore new ways and forms of artistic expression.

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