



**Digital Culture: The Changing Dynamics**

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**Edited by  
Aleksandra Uzelac and  
Biserka Cvjetičanin**

**IMO**

## CULTURELINK

Network of Networks for Research and Cooperation in Cultural Development was established by UNESCO and the Council of Europe in 1989.

Focal point of the Network is the Institute for International Relations, Zagreb, Croatia.

### Members

Networks, associations, foundations, institutions and individuals engaged in cultural development and cooperation.

### Aims of the Network

To strengthen communication among its members; to collect, process and disseminate information on culture and cultural development in the world; to encourage joint research projects and cultural cooperation.

### Philosophy

Promotion and support for dialogue, questioning and debating cultural practices and policies for cultural development.

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**DIGITAL CULTURE:  
THE CHANGING DYNAMICS**

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**FOREWORD**

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## Foreword

Digital culture is a new complex notion: today digital trends are increasingly interloping with the world of culture and arts, involving different aspects of convergence of cultures, media and information technologies, and influencing new forms of communication. The new possibilities created by ICT – global connectivity and the rise of networks – challenge our traditional ways of understanding culture, extending it to digital culture as well. So, culture today should be understood as an open and dynamic process that is based on interactive communication, and we cannot think of it as an enclosed system which makes up a ‘cultural mosaic’ with other similar or diverse cultural systems. The ICT and especially the Internet, has given these interrelations a new dimension, by changing our relation towards knowledge and knowledge society, by intensifying the flow of cultural goods and services, and by causing a new understanding of cultural creativity.

The book entitled *Digital Culture: The Changing Dynamics*, is the result of discussions among experts, members of the Culturelink Network and IMO’s researchers, in the course of the past few years on the impact of information and communication technologies on culture and the changes that in the context of the information era affect established cultural practices and concepts. The inspiration for producing this book rose from the meeting of experts at the Culturemondo conference, held in Dubrovnik, Croatia in 2006, hosted by Culturelink. Informal debates led to the proposal to unite different approaches, opinions and reflections about the phenomena transforming the world today into one book focusing on digital culture.

The papers in this book examine possible shifts in the integration of new technologies and digital culture in the processes of affirming cultural diversity and intercultural communication by presenting different case studies and trend analyses – examining the changes brought about by the new context of the interactive and participatory Internet and the responses of the cultural sector to them, and analysing how cultural policies deal with digital culture. By providing insights into these interrelated aspects, the book is trying to answer the question – can we talk about cultural diversity in the digital domain and what are the current trends? To understand

the interrelation of the local and the global, the articles in this book analyse existing practices in the digital realm. The SEE context is analysed in one part of this book, thus providing evidence-based research of digital diversity trends and informing cultural policies in the SEE region.

The *Introduction* aims to give an understanding of digital culture, viewing it from the perspective of a common resource for knowledge society and as a new social ecology that conditions experiences and opportunities of citizens today, where the digital network environment has brought on new practices, possibilities and threats. Part One, entitled *Digital Culture – The New Social Ecology*, discusses various aspects of digital culture, from its move to the real world: ambient intelligence, to its aspects related to (free) communication: analyzing the social and cultural changes which emerged with the appearance of media technologies, as well as examining how these changes influence the transformations of the mediated public sphere, and considering the social implications of the transformation of the cultural and media production and the way this reflects on issues of copyright regulation. The contributions in Part One try to sketch the development directions digital culture is taking and their impact on the social ecology that we are shaping through building new legislative and institutional structures. Part Two, *Conceptualising Policies for Digital Culture*, brings contributions that analyze how cultural policies deal with digital culture and new virtual structures such as cultural portals, and look at issues arising from the new relations between real and virtual spheres. In the Part Three, *Cultural Practices in the Digital Territory*, authors discuss the development of digital structures in the cultural sector, and try to analyze and propose a cultural portals ecology and shed light on the nature of the changes the cultural sector has to take into account when developing its services in the virtual context.

We thank all experts who participated with their contributions in the making of this book, helping raise numerous questions, offering analysis and thought-experiments, trying to imagine the future of our world. Our gratitude also goes to the UNESCO Venice office, which made possible the publication of this book and the spread of knowledge on digital culture in South East Europe and internationally. This book also benefits from the support received from the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports through the framework of the long-term research project entitled *Cultural Diversity, Intercultural Communication and Digital Culture*, within which this book has been produced.

The Editors

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## INTRODUCTION

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## **How to understand digital culture: Digital culture - a resource for a knowledge society?**

**Aleksandra Uzelac**

Today's society is marked by the fast development of communication and information resources and is thus often referred to as an information age. So in the last few decades we have branded our society with all kinds of different names – information society, knowledge society, networked society – thus emphasizing the importance that information and communication structures have in our daily lives. The extent of the changes in our present society is reflected in the claims about the information “revolution”, rather than “evolution”, that is taking place and affecting these changes. The terms “information society”, “networked society” or “knowledge society” are political terms that do not have precisely defined meanings. They can mean different things to different people.<sup>1</sup> These terms can imply more information, more communication infrastructure, more profit for the business sector or the emancipation of people in our society. They mostly reflect the deterministic view that

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1 An information society is a society in which the creation, distribution, diffusion, use, and manipulation of information is a significant economic, political and cultural activity. Kahn and Kellner define an information society as “a dynamic and complex space in which people can construct and experiment with identity, culture and social practices” (Kahn and Kellner, 2008: 23). According to Castells (1996) a network society is a society where the key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks. Broadly speaking, the term “knowledge society” refers to any society where knowledge is the primary production resource instead of capital and labour. The term “knowledge society” originates from works of Peter Drucker, Robin Mansell and Nico Stehr. UNESCO (2005) has introduced the term “knowledge societies” (plural emphasizing acceptance of diversity element) to put emphasis on the importance of knowledge as a shared resource and the importance of promoting new forms of solidarity, as well as to emphasize the difference in concept - information society being based on technological breakthroughs; knowledge societies encompassing much broader social, ethical and political dimensions.

the development of ICT infrastructure and services leads to social development. But we should ask ourselves what this society looks like and how it should look. Is it (going to be) free, democratic, pluralistic, transparent and responsible? How does it correlate with the existing cultural and communicational patterns in our society? Will cultural diversity be preserved in it?

Even if terms such as “information society” are loosely defined terms, the modern society we live in today can be more precisely defined. In political terms it is a system based on representative democracy, based on the rule of law and the division of power between three branches of the state, where the free public sphere and civil society play a significant role and where human rights principles are supported by global policy-making institutions. One definition describes it in terms of civil society as “a group of social and political institutions composed of five elements: state authorities, limited and accountable to the public; the rule of law; the public sphere grouping interested citizens; the market systems; and voluntary associations” (Perez-Diaz, 1996 quoted in Ilczuk, 2001: 17).

In economic practice it is an advanced capitalistic system, based on neoliberal industrial logic that is shaped in the processes of globalization where the market has a very important position and supports the free flow of goods and capital. Today, globalization (i.e. integration of commerce, investments and financial markets) defines the model of development in modern societies that are becoming increasingly interdependent and where multinational corporations have a significant influence over choices being made. It has been based on the industrial economy, where an economy centred on information and cultural production<sup>2</sup> became very prominent in the 19th and 20th centuries, and on communication systems (telephone and telegraph, large-circulation press, radio and TV, etc.) that allowed for communication and information distribution on a scale transcending the immediate local community. From industrial, it shifted to a postindustrial form of society where the dominant form of labour shifted from industrial labour to more immaterial forms of work. So far, the economic globalization processes have not resulted in the just and equal development of countries and regions and fast technological development did not result in any reduction of social differences or of the divide between rich and poor regions. Global income inequalities are increasing and these also affect the opportunities that citizens of different countries have.<sup>3</sup> Globalized capitalism is marked both by consumption

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2 In this industrial information economy we can, for example, place science, software, financial services, accounting, media and film and music industries (Benkler, 2006).

3 According to Boyd-Barret (2004) in 1997 the richest 20% of the world population living in the highest income countries enjoyed 86% of the world's GDP, 82% of exports of goods and services, 68% of foreign direct investment, 74% of world telephone lines, and 91% of Internet users. The bottom 20% had 1% of the world GDP, 1% of export markets, 1% of foreign direct investment 1.5% of telephone lines and less than 1% of Internet users. A decade later we do not see any major change in this trend.

and citizenship, the economy and politics, the global and the local, public and private spheres of activity (Fenton, 2006).

The discussion about what kind of society we are creating is ongoing – democratic and inclusive “knowledge societies”, or commodified and commercialized “information society”? The main difference between the two is marked by the position of information and knowledge in them – information and knowledge as a common web of resources that we have jointly created, so we should also jointly share, or information and knowledge as a commodity that should be privately owned and controlled. In other words, will we be putting emphasis on information for consumption or information for action (Fenton, 2006)?

### **Culture as information and communication**

Discussion about the information society is often centred on issues related to information and communication technologies (ICT) and Internet potentials, rather than on the broader changes to our cultural (and media) ecology that are happening in the new context that new technologies have brought to the fore. Culture and communication are two closely related concepts. The Webster Dictionary gives different definitions of culture. Don Foresta puts emphasis on two definitions offered in Webster (Foresta, Mergier, Serexhe, 1995: 10).

1. Culture as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour that depends upon man’s capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.
2. Culture as the customary beliefs, social norms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group.

Foresta points out that the difference in concept between the two definitions is that the first one is concerned with knowledge and how the knowledge is transmitted and the second one is concerned with values and agreed rules in a community that govern people’s behaviour and relationships. The first definition encompasses arts and sciences as forms of communication. The arts and sciences can affect the behaviour of a group as knowledge can influence customary beliefs and the extent of that influence depends on “the systems of communication available and in use and the content of those forms of communication” (Foresta, Mergier, Serexhe, 1995: 10).

The centrality of information for culture is visible in the characteristics of information that Benkler describes as a non-rival good, meaning “its consumption by one person does not make it any less available for consumption by another” and the fact that it is both input and output in its own production process. These characteristics lead us to an understanding of culture and information as public goods (Benkler, 2006: 36). According to Pasquali “the words communication or

information always, and necessarily, refer to the essence of community and human relations” (Pasquali, 2003: 198). For Hamelink “information contents are cultural products. Information is a part of a society’s cultural fabric. Among the important issues of this dimension are the sharing of knowledge and the protection of cultural identity” (Hamelink, 2003: 124). Thus he claims that the ways in which societies deal with the provision and processing of information is determined by cultural perspectives. His understanding of the concept of communication is wider than just the transfer of messages and he states that to communicate “refers to a process of sharing, making common or creating a community” (Hamelink, 2003: 155). Cultural expressions, like language, are systems of signs for communication, and through common cultural codes people construct their understanding of their environment and create shared (thus common) meanings. James Carey also differentiates between two views of communication: the first one he calls “the transmission view of communication” whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for the control of distance and people; the other is “the ritual view of communication” i.e. representation of shared beliefs within a community. The transmission view is commonly defined by terms such as sending, transmitting or giving information to others, while the ritual view is directed not towards the extension of messages in space but towards the maintenance of society in time through the representation of shared beliefs (Carey, 1992). Communication as transmission represents the building blocks upon which communication as a ritual is based.

So, when we talk about culture, communication is implicit. As Foresta tells us, “each society constantly recreates itself through communication by constantly redefining its collective reality, its culture” and “culture is a memory, collective memory, dependent on communication for its creation, extension, evolution and preservation” (Foresta, Mergier, Serexhe, 1995: 19). Knowledge has always been communicated and embedded (thus preserved) through our cultural communication structures and available technologies have always been an important element that enabled and facilitated these processes of creating, sharing and preserving our cultural memory.

### **Digital culture - new social ecology**

The claim that technology impacts different aspects of our culture is over-simplified and too deterministic, but it is not completely wrong. We are aware of the changes that happened in present-day societies that are related to introducing ICT into our lives in the same way as electricity in the past. We could say that all technologies intervene in the human environment and modify it to a certain extent, thus changing the conditions of existence of different cultures (in a more or less radical way). They make certain practices obsolete while some previously difficult and impractical

things become possible and easier to accomplish. The change does not happen due to some inner technological logic but it depends on how society accepts it, to which uses it puts it and how it regulates it, so it can be said that technology affects and reflects particular societal shifts. When the technology in question is a communication technology then its influence is even more significant, for the way it is used can affect changes in the essence of our communicational and cultural patterns. Thus, technologies related to information and communication cannot be viewed as passive instruments, but rather as interactive systems that radically modify our cognitive capacities (Dascal, 2006). Technology does not just linearly cause certain effects, but in combination with many other elements it creates conditions of possibility “that suggest possible futures rather than determine them” (Hawk and Rieder, 2008: xvii). The complex technologies that we are using nowadays cannot be viewed simply as tools that help us to overcome particular limitations (these would be techniques), they should rather be viewed as environments. The emphasis should be put, not on the effects of specific technologies, but rather on the shifting effects of ecologies<sup>4</sup> they enable.

If we take a closer look at the digital environment we live in today we can see that it is enveloping us – digital technologies are present in all aspects of our lives. Today we use digital technologies without noticing them – they are present in all business segments, underpinning our financial transactions from cash-tellers to stock market trading. Traffic control systems, medical and other equipment, elevators, etc., are today controlled or enabled through digital systems. “Most forms of mass media, television, recorded music, film, are produced and, increasingly distributed digitally. These media are beginning to converge with digital forms, such as Internet, the World Wide Web, and video games, to produce a seamless digital landscape” (Gere, 2002: 9). Charlie Gere proposes that the extent of the presence of digital technologies in our lives points to the existence of a digital culture. He states that “digitality can be thought of as a marker of culture because it encompasses both the artefacts and the systems of signification and communication that most clearly demarcate our contemporary way of life from others” (Gere, 2002: 12).

A few decades ago we had just started using computers in our work and back then computers maybe could have been looked on as tools. But when communication and multimedial dimensions joined in, networked us, and when convergence processes started being more visible and affecting the changes not only in a technical sphere but also in our social institutions it became obvious that the changes taking place were

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4 The word ecology implies the study of environments: their structure, content and impact on people. Media ecology looks into the matter of how the media of communication affect human perception, understanding, feeling and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival (Neil Postman).  
[http://www.media-ecology.org/media\\_ecology/](http://www.media-ecology.org/media_ecology/) (accessed 25 May 2008).

happening on the level of the social eco-system. The overall context started to change, so it was difficult for a particular instance in the system not to be affected (at least not in the long run). A new dimension/space/sphere has been created – virtual space – that introduced new concepts and shifted some firm boundaries and we had to learn how to approach it. We learned what new media<sup>5</sup> are and what being virtual<sup>6</sup> means.

Computer culture, virtual culture, cyberculture, e-culture, Internet culture, new media, convergence culture, digital culture are all relatively new terms that are today widely used in scientific and popular literature. Scholars from various disciplines have examined the impact of this new media on various social aspects of virtual space and its impact on the real sphere and they have changed their views on digital culture many times over a relatively short period of time. When stand-alone PCs were in focus the emphasis was on interface; when communication possibilities were added emphasis had to be put on interaction, and ICTs were no longer seen as tools but we started to think of their context as a space. Although interlinked, as they both frame our experience, the virtual and real spheres were clearly delimited. As ICT further progresses in its development towards miniaturization, the boundaries are no longer clear. There is another shift taking place “from the virtual foreground to the material background”, as pervasive computing focuses on embedding specific ICT-based

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- 5 Lev Manovich identified some main differences between old and new media (Manovich, 2001). There are five main characteristics of the new media, according to Manovich: 1) the numerical representation of the object, i.e. its digital code that enables algorithmic manipulation of the digital object - media becomes programmable; 2) modularity of the object - media elements (images, sounds...) are represented as collections of discrete samples. These elements are assembled into larger-scale objects but they continue to maintain their separate identity. These two, more material characteristics, enable 3) automatization of many operations with new media, as well as 4) the possibility that many different versions of the same “media object” exist, i.e. its variability, that have more deep characteristics with far-reaching consequences. 5) Transcoding is the last characteristic that Manovich describes - to transcode is to translate something into another format. Thus new media becomes unrelated to a particular hardware and it also means that the computer layer and its logic and cultural/content layer influence each other creating a new media logic that cultural sectors must take into account. The described characteristics of the media and cultural objects change our understanding of them.
  - 6 For Pierre Lévy the concept “virtual” has at least three meanings: a technical meaning associated with IT, a contemporary meaning and a philosophical meaning. In its philosophical sense, the virtual is that which exists potentially rather than actually. As it is currently employed, i.e. in its contemporary meaning, the word virtual often signifies unreality - reality implying a tangible presence (as in virtual reality). In its technical meaning, related with ICT, virtual means the possibility of generating information based on existing digital data and users instructions. As Lévy says “within digital networks, information is obviously physically present somewhere, on a given medium, but it is also virtually present at each point of the network where it is requested” (Lévy, 2002: 29-32).

elements into the ambient background of local physical spaces.<sup>7</sup> Thus, rather than not real, virtuality starts to mean “a tacit aspect of material reality” (Hawk and Rieder, 2008). This means that reality has also been transformed into information space where material objects are becoming media objects as they potentially become information flowing through global networks. Ambient intelligence, ubiquitous computing and the “Internet of Things” are new terms that were recently introduced into discussions about digital culture. This indicates that culture and digital culture evolve and are becoming more interlinked as they frame our experience – more closely, one and the same.

### **Social context of digital culture, convergence and the networked public sphere**

ICTs in combination with the distributed network infrastructure of the Internet have enabled extensive changes in all aspects of our life and work. Today, networked PCs (a basic physical capital necessary for communication and creation of meaning) are good enough tools that have much bigger capacities than the big mainframe computers in the past. Most citizens in the developed countries can afford to have access to them. Users, by using ICT, can produce, store, copy, modify, send and receive digital artefacts and information. As average PC and network connections are not very expensive, this led to the lowering of production and distribution costs and the availability of new communication and delivery channels. The rapid growth of the Internet, in number of its users<sup>8</sup> and available information<sup>9</sup> and services that can be

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7 GPS, RFID and mobile phones are some examples of this shift where the information layer is embedded into our material world.

8 According to the [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com) data (data from 31 March 2008) there are almost a billion and a half (1 407 724 920) Internet users in the world today which makes for 21.1% of the entire world population. The digital divide is visible when data on Internet usage is viewed regionally. The highest penetration rates are in North America (73.1%), followed by Australia and Oceania (57%), Europe (47.7%), the Middle East (21.3%), Asia (14%) and Africa (5.3%).

9 How many web pages there are on the Internet is a tricky question. Nobody is sure. The Netcraft Web Server Survey reported that in the May 2008 survey they received responses from 168 408 112 sites ([news.netcraft.com](http://news.netcraft.com)). There should be many more web pages. Search engines do not regularly publish the number of pages they index. Boutell.Com Consulting Services estimated that in 2007 the number was about 30 billion. It was worked out by comparing statistics of Netcraft (for servers) with Yahoo published statistics (for indexed web pages) for the same month in 2005. This allowed them to make an estimate that there are on average 273 web pages per server. So presuming the accuracy of this estimate one can multiply this estimated number of web pages per website by Netcraft’s monthly count of websites for an estimated figure of how many web pages there are at a given moment ([www.boutell.com/newfaq/misc/sizeofweb.html](http://www.boutell.com/newfaq/misc/sizeofweb.html)).

accessed through it, indicate the importance of activities taking place in the virtual domain. In the process of virtualization the world has changed scale – information has been dematerialized, virtual space has changed the importance of the time and space categories, an immense wealth of information became relatively easily available to users. In the virtual sphere, to which Lévy (2002) ascribes potentiality as its main characteristic, new opportunities and threats presented themselves for users and for established models of organizing one's business.

Different trends can be observed taking place in today's society that relies heavily on information and communication resources. On the one side, ICT and digital networks are a necessary infrastructure that supports globalization processes and they are used to support global markets and production processes, enabling central control and coordination over dispersed production units. On the other side, the Internet is a communication tool that is intensely used by citizens, activists and NGOs, as it facilitates efficient and far-reaching communication. On the Internet, as in the real world, not everyone is equal, as possibilities depend on resources available. Digital culture seems to be a product of bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously. While the Internet has been used by users/citizens as an ultimate communication and cooperation tool and an alternative to the mass media public sphere, businesses have tried to make sure that its development does not have a disruptive technology<sup>10</sup> effect on their established ways of working. Industrially organized businesses are trying to ensure that while the physical/technological realities change the social arrangements remain static.

Virtual space has fewer boundaries and different characteristics than the real one. Digitization has enabled the process of media convergence to take place. When previously separated industries (media, telecommunications and computers) could, by using the same digital technology, do things that previously needed different analogue tools, the limitations they faced in running their real world businesses changed. This means that convergence is more than simply a technological shift and it affects changes that shape relations in a society. As Jenkins tells us "convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, market, genres and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment" (Jenkins, 2006: 17). It is a process in the making and its final shape will be influenced by economic factors, legal battles, new (cultural) practices, etc., that are all in the process of transition.

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10 Disruptive technology is a term coined by Harvard Business School professor Clayton M. Christensen to describe a new technology that unexpectedly displaces an established technology.

According to Jenkins, “how those various transitions unfold will determine the balance of power in the next media era” (Jenkins, 2006: 17).

With physical limits among the various media removed in the digital environment, media industries could ensure an easy flow of content among different platforms, so economically it made sense for them to merge. The trend towards concentration of media ownership in today’s society is continually increasing. It is a problem as it stifles competition among the various media, lowers diversity and raises barriers to participation for other players. These large concentrated media industries are pursuing profit as their main goal and users are not able to influence them easily. On the other hand, cultural and media industries have a powerful hold over multiple public spheres, thus shaping popular reality but, as Deuze comments, “with a deliberate focus to sell audiences as target demographics to advertisers” (Deuze, 2007). This situation impacts on the quality of the public sphere in modern societies that the media should be enabling. It is not simple to find an answer to the question of how to preserve the media’s democratic potential and ensure media pluralism in an increasingly commercialized context.<sup>11</sup>

The other side of the coin that the digital networked environment enabled is wide participation of users in the virtual sphere. It seems that “the same communication technologies that enable interactivity and participation are wielded to foster the entrenchment and growth of a global corporate media system that can be said to be anything but transparent, interactive or participatory” (Deuze, 2007: 247). This situation can also be read in reverse and it could be said that digital networks provide various alternative platforms for communication and this changes the position of the traditional mass media and moderates its power. Among the immense amount of information available on the Internet an interested user can find a diversity of perspectives on any googled issue. This information comes from a diversity of sources – traditional media, the profit sector, NGOs, the research community, individuals, the educational sector – name them and you will find them. This diversity of information and perspectives is a product of what Benkler calls the networked information economy in which peer production and sharing have a significant role. According to Benkler the most important aspect of this economy is the possibility it opens up for reversing the control focus of the industrial information economy and reversing trends of concentration and commercialization (Benkler, 2006: 32).

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<sup>11</sup> The commercial mass media have been widely criticized for their failures as a platform for public discourse. The main issues being the imbalance of influence of citizens which is a consequence of media owners’ excessive power to influence what issues will be given space in the media, as well as big influence of advertisers, and the limited intake pool of issues and views presented - journalists being the main contributors.

Benkler proposes that one of the major implications of the networked information economy is the shift from a mass-mediated public sphere to a networked public sphere, in which many more individuals can communicate their viewpoints and observations to many others “in a way that cannot be controlled by media owners and is not as easily corruptible by money as were the mass media” (Benkler, 2006: 11). This results from the fact that the practical capacities of individuals have been improved in the digital network environment. People can either contribute their criticisms and concerns to ongoing debates, produce and publish information they produced themselves on their blogs and websites or they can contribute to large-scale peer production projects, and to a large extent all this happens outside of the market sphere.

Over a period of less than two decades in which the Internet has been used, many expectations as to what it should bring us were raised – widespread global communication and more democracy were two of them. Criticism followed as initial claims were not fulfilled. Expectations that everyone would be able to broadcast and be heard were contrasted with the problem of information overload and attention scarcity that we are facing in the online environment. Expectations of widespread communication were contrasted with a reality in which the digital divide cannot be overlooked. When physicists studying network theory mapped the Internet and how it is linked, it became visible that its structure is not equally distributed. Again a few sites capture the major part of users’ attention and the majority of sites, and the information and content available on them, are much less noticed<sup>12</sup> (Barabási, 2003). Evidently the virtual domain reflects the problems, differences and inequalities of the real world. In spite of all this, it is still true that the Internet complements existing communication channels for circulating public and private information and enables many more individuals to communicate their viewpoints freely and to cooperate in peer productions than any other media.

When physicists studying network theory recognized that the Internet has a specific structure, they indicated the way users use it (its macro social structure). Having a wealth of information on it does not make this information easily reachable. Not all sites are highly visible ones, but as sites on the Internet are connected by

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12 Studies of different real world networks showed that the connectivity (the number of links) of particular nodes differs in scale as it often follows power law that leads sometimes to the so-called *scale-free networks* (many communication and social networks have power-law link distributions, containing a few nodes that have a very high degree and many with a low degree of connectivity). An example of power law, i.e. a scale-free network, was recorded in citation networks, the WWW, the Internet, metabolic networks, telephone call graphs, human sexual contacts, collaboration networks, etc.

multiple links there are multiple ways to get to them. The Internet seems to exhibit a small-world effect<sup>13</sup> where people manage to find information they are looking for in a relatively small number of steps. As people and information they produced are clustered according to their interests and established connections, searches are also not done in a random fashion. Specific information can be considered interesting in a specific cluster (interest group) and through group-based filtering significant observations can be spotted within larger related clusters. As the process continues it eventually gets picked up by highly visible general information sites and the mass media. So Benkler claims that Internet network seems to be forming an attention backbone and that “attention in the networked environment is more dependent on being interesting to an engaged group of people than it is in the mass-media environment, where moderate interest to large numbers of weakly engaged viewers is preferable” (Benkler, 2006: 13). This is a significant difference that may change how we perceive the world around us and how we engage with it – as mere observers or as active citizens.

### **Participatory aspects of digital culture and future cultural development**

With tools ready to be used in their hands, users started to use them in various ways and new practices emerged. Digital culture is described as a participatory culture where users do not only consume information but also contribute in a variety of ways. This shift is particularly visible in a recent period when so called Web 2.0 or social software became prominent phenomena. Blogs, wikis, social networking sites, video and photo sharing sites and different peer-to-peer services are examples of such a trend that are hugely popular, and different participation platforms have been studied extensively (Benkler, 2006; Tapscott and Williams, 2006; Sunstein, 2006). Although content produced by users can sometimes be described as trivial, these new platforms also enable new, efficient ways of social and political engagement and quick, ad-hoc reactions to important current issues that are neglected or sporadically covered by the mainstream media. Such participatory platforms present powerful networked spaces for the (progressive) reconstruction of social life in which social, political and

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13 A small-world effect has been discovered in a famous experiment done in the 1960s by Stanley Milgram in which letters passed from person to person were able to reach the designated target individual in only a small number of steps (six steps). This was a groundbreaking study of social interconnectivity, intriguing because it suggests that despite our society’s enormous size it can be easily navigated by following social links from one person to another (Barabási, 2003). This effect has been observed in a large number of different networks including the Internet. The small-world effect has implications for the dynamic processes taking place in real world networks, e.g. the speed of spreading information across the network, etc. It is the shortest path through the network.

cultural (i.e. non-market) motivations prevail over market-based ones. Benkler proposes that in the network information economy non-market ways of commons-based peer production have a more significant role than in the industrial information economy as conditions for production of information are widespread and new modalities of organizing production are possible: “radically decentralised, collaborative and non-proprietary; based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who cooperate with each other without relying on either market signals or managerial commands” (Benkler, 2006: 60).

Such social production presents new sources of competition for cultural and media industries producing information goods. It is important for the cultural sector to understand the new context in which the users are at the same time their competitors and co-creators of cultural information. Understanding the opportunities that social production presents would contribute to developing mutually reinforcing relationships with institutions in the cultural sector, as social production is creating new sources of inputs, new expectations, habits and tastes as well as opportunities for outputs. As Benkler remarks, “consumers are changing into users – more active and productive than the consumers of the industrial information economy” (Benkler, 2006: 126). Within such a context, in which cultural professionals are put in a situation in which they are more or less sharing control with users, it is interesting to observe how the roles of the consumer and producer are constantly shifting.

Users are more and more becoming producers in the network environment and they also claim the right to use and re-use existing information and cultural expressions that are available in the digital environment and that form part of our cultural memory and identities. This situation creates a tension, as in today’s capitalistic system mass cultural production and consequently our means of expression have been subsumed according to the interests of multinational profit-making conglomerates. We should ask ourselves whether culture is part of the market or the market part of culture. Cultural industries are treating cultural products and information as property. Communication technologies are enabling the wide participation of users, but in the situation where information is treated as property the question arises as to how users can use it. Thus, issues about using information for consumption or information for action never stop being in focus.

The fact that information is both input and output in the process of knowledge production and a non-rival good should be re-emphasized. Throughout history, the richness of public content has inspired creativity and creators have used pre-existing materials in developing new works. This shows that cultural heritage and open access to its resources are important in the creative process that keeps our culture alive. Copyright laws are strong tools that big businesses and media conglomerates are

using to protect their business and maximize profit from their products, thus restricting an intake pool for further creation and knowledge production. But “without an enriched and expanding public domain the new knowledge will not lead to more new knowledge, thus restricting social participation in the production and distribution of ideas and inexorably slowing the pace of innovation throughout the economy” (Venturelli, 2000).

New practices are emerging from new possibilities offered by the networked environment, but the legislative system and policies regulating these practices still seem to favour an industrial market-based institutional ecology. Whether in the future they will be less oriented towards control and more around facilitating action remains an unresolved issue that will steer the direction of future development – either towards democratic and inclusive “knowledge societies”, or a commodified and commercialized “information society”. This will depend on the institutional ecology that is being formed and decisions as to whether resources for information production and exchange will be governed as commons (free for all to use) or as proprietary resources. We have to think about new ways to imagine our social institutions, including the market that will be able to balance public, democratic control and the potentials for individual and group creativity in a new way. As Lovink and Spehr argue, “[s]ocial power lies not only in the fact that we are allowed to do this or that, or that we can do it. ... Much more important is that social power lies in the fact that we can prevent others from doing this or that, and that we can make others do this or that. That’s really power. In society, this power is gained by solidarity, but institutions are an operationalization of this solidarity. Institutions guarantee to me a certain access to our collective powers” (Lovink and Spehr, 2006: 84).

Digital culture is marked by the constantly changing dynamics in which institutional ecology is still not firmly set. In order to make sure that it is a resource for the knowledge societies, it is necessary to script different forms of solidarity into the mainstream system and not into sporadic alternative pockets. Digital culture today frames our experience of the world around us and provides us with a complex set of digital tools for organizing novel relations of information and global-local cultural interaction. To which ends it will be used – towards facilitating intercultural communication and building knowledge resources that everyone can contribute to and share or towards market-based and profit-led activities and reinforcing control over knowledge and information – will determine future cultural development.

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**PART ONE**

**DIGITAL CULTURE – THE NEW SOCIAL ECOLOGY**

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## **New realities, new policies?**

**Rob van Kranenburg**

*Don't act. Don't do anything but make room for things to happen. What is done by no one in particular, none can stop, nor control, nor capture (Çtalker).<sup>1</sup>*



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<sup>1</sup> Conversation on bricolab list, <http://bricolabs.net/>

The disappearing computer – launched by Future and Emerging Technologies, the European Commission’s Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme<sup>2</sup> – is a vision of the future: “in which our everyday world of objects and places become ‘infused’ and ‘augmented’ with information processing. In this vision, computing, information processing, and computers disappear into the background, and take on the role more similar to that of electricity today – an invisible, pervasive medium distributed on our real world”.<sup>3</sup> “Disappearing computer”, “ambient intelligence”, “sense and simplicity”, “things that think”, “pervasive computing”, “ubiquitous computing”, “calm technology” – all terms generated from a single text by Xerox guru Mark Weiser, “The Computer for the 21st Century”, in which he states: “There is more information available at our fingertips during a walk in the woods than in any computer system, yet people find a walk among trees relaxing and computers frustrating. Machines that fit the human environment, instead of forcing humans to enter theirs, will make using a computer as refreshing as taking a walk in the woods.” The fundamental problem he foresees is privacy: “hundreds of computers in every room, all capable of sensing people near them and linked by high-speed networks, have the potential to make totalitarianism up to now seem like sheerest anarchy. Just as a workstation on a local-area network can be programmed to intercept messages meant for others, a single rogue tab in a room could potentially record everything that happened there”.<sup>4</sup>

The technology that is now, only sixteen years later, driving Mark Weiser’s vision of ubiquitous connectivity is not, however, hundreds of computers locally spread thin, but another technology, rather old: RFID, radio frequency identification. Privacy, however, is manifestly indeed the key factor in the forces that fuel the drive to broadly adopt it as enabling technology (as opposed to disruptive technology<sup>5</sup>). RFID is an old technology based on radar, detested by system engineers for its insecurity, unreliability and plain technological simplicity, whose time has come as it fills a need on all levels of successfully introducing new technologies.

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2 <http://cordis.europa.eu/ist/>

3 Personal transcription from the talk of I3 Project Officer Jakub Wejchert at <http://www.i3net.org/ac2000/content/programme/quovadis.html>

4 Weiser, Mark: “The Computer for the 21st Century” <http://www.ubiq.com/hypertext/weiser/SciAmDraft3.html>

5 A disruptive technology or disruptive innovation is a technological innovation, product, or service that eventually overturns the existing dominant technology or status quo product in the market. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disruptive\\_technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disruptive_technology)

RFID [aka smart card, M2M (Machine 2Machine) or NFC (Nearfield Communication)] is *pull* technology (as opposed to push technology<sup>6</sup>). The RFID reader emits energy so that the passive tag gives its unique number (says “Hello, here I am”). An EPC Global network<sup>7</sup> layout makes it possible to track a bottle in your room (provided there is a reader in your door, floor, building) through a simple web query by typing the unique ID number (available through retail channels) as the ID of the bottle is logged into the local database (your home computer, work server, office building network) which is hooked up to the EPC Global network. In this database through an RFID scripting language called Savant the item’s log is sent to an “object name service” (ONS) where it can be accessed via the Web, for example from Tokyo.

CASPIAN (Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering)<sup>8</sup> downloaded confidential documents (by simply typing confidential into the internal search engine) from the home page of the MIT Auto-ID Center, the organization entrusted until 2003 with developing a global Internet infrastructure. Among the “confidential” documents available on the website are slide shows discussing the need to “pacify” citizens who might question the wisdom of the centre’s stated goal to tag and track every item on the planet, along with findings that 78% of surveyed consumers feel RFID is negative for privacy and 61% fear its health consequences. PR firm Fleischman-Hillard’s confidential “Managing External Communications” suggests a variety of strategies to help the Auto-ID Center “drive adoption” and “neutralize opposition”, including the possibility of renaming the tracking devices “green tags”. In May 2004, the UK National Consumer Council stated that one of the main reasons for bringing all the stakeholders to the table was that it “seemed clear to us, that this technology is being developed and implemented without the knowledge or participation of consumers more widely”. From a research perspective too the US National Academy of Sciences noted that: “more than one company has had to change or rethink its plans for RFID technology because of the concerns of consumers and privacy advocates about how the technology would be used”. RFID technology is at a crucial point, in terms of standards and policies, regulations and deployment and services. As technology becomes ever more deeply embedded in everyday life and the experienced economies, it can no longer see design as a front end tool, or social and cultural issues as a sphere that has to mould itself around new technologies. On the contrary, as we see so clearly with RFID, one has to hardcode

6 Push technology on the Internet refers to a style of communication protocol where the request for a given transaction originates with the publisher, or central server. It is contrasted with pull technology, where the request for the transmission of information originates with the receiver, or client. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Push\\_technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Push_technology)

7 <http://www.epcglobalinc.org/home>

8 <http://www.nocards.org/>

these issues into the systems architecture and see them not as problems, not as drawbacks but as challenges to overcome at all levels of a successful introduction of new technologies. “One story is about RFID being used by employers to impose a watchful ‘eye’ over employees, while another illustrates the technology’s ability to prevent a life-shattering nightmare. As with any technology, RFID is intrinsically neither good nor evil; it is only what people do with it that ultimately determines its impact.”<sup>9</sup>

As a remarkably consistent argument, this intrinsic technological neutrality is in the vicinity of (relatively) new technologies whose change rate from disruptive to enabling is now under five years. According to the 2007 IDTechEx RFID Europe conference in Cambridge, RFID is “an enabling technology that provides safety, security, cost reduction, increased sales, reduced crime and much more”. During my stay as coach at Industrial Design/Technical University Eindhoven (2006-07), specifically tailored for designing embedded intelligence products and services, there were no critical design-focused assignments. During a 2006 lecture at Amsterdam Polytechnic a group of students related how they were engaged in a pilot with the Dutch Mail, building RFID readers into mailboxes. I then realized how easy it is and how inevitable for new technologies that build on the conceptual frameworks of their predecessors (within the range of the “ordinary”) to present themselves as successors to previously tried and successful solutions as the barcode in educational settings. The project managers of the early adopters offer intriguing projects to the project and internship bureaus of academies and technical universities who accept them immediately without question. The teachers guiding the project from the schools just keep an eye on the process and project management, as they have no experience content wise and no overview of these new technologies. The students implement whatever needs to be implemented. The Flemish headline TV news on 6 August 2007 carried an item on contactless bracelets for children – Ionkids<sup>10</sup> – “for freedom and safety” – that will give parents notice when they stray too far. RFID is not mentioned but thus introduced in a mental framework of security, peace of mind and user control.

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9 <http://www.rfidupdate.com/articles/index.php?id=914>

10 <http://www.ion-kids.com/>



### **ambient intelligence**

The European Commission will not “curb the growth of the tiny radio transmitter tags that transportation companies, retailers and manufacturers use to track goods and purchases”, saying it was confident that the RFID tags could be designed to protect consumer privacy. “I know that most of you are wondering what new regulation I am going to propose today”, said Viviane Reding, the European Commissioner responsible for Internet and communications, at a news conference at the Cebit technology convention in Hanover. “Well, today I am here to tell you that on RFIDs, there is not going to be a regulation”, she said, referring to radio frequency identification tags.<sup>11</sup>

Susanne Ackers describes how McLuhan saw satellite communication systems both as an extension of the human nervous system and as a point of no return. The satellite infrastructure creates connectivity from above. The RFID infrastructure creates connectivity from below. Once you could say: “And we are in the middle”.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://feeds.feedburner.com/~r/SmartMobs/~3/102050429/>

Currently, however, there is no more we as in we human beings, the “we” is an information space like any other. It is very difficult for humans to not take an anthropomorphic perspective, to get used to and take as a new default that in fact there is no more “human” position when algorithms decide how to act, seeing what to see through cameras, with only information spaces left. At a particular moment from a database point of view, you will have more in common with your car than with your neighbour. For some idiot savants a green toothbrush is terribly different from a red toothbrush, a very different thing altogether.... Yet, it will take a long time, however strange this may seem in the age of network politics and new journalism and blogs for a European population that is so satisfied to see beyond the arguments born out of straight analogue human thinking. “I’m not doing anything wrong!” “I’m a decent guy and like all decent guys you may know all there is to know about me”. Yet, there is no forgetting, no memory loss in “Digital Territory”: a world where a layer of digital connectivity has been programmed on all things analogue. Consequently, you should not say: “I’m not doing anything wrong, so why should I worry about smart cameras with 3D coordinates reading my face, or this RFID/M2M/NFC infrastructure?” No, you should worry about who will deem what *is* wrong in three, four, five years from now, as from the moment of going live all movement will, irrespective of man, machine or animal, be logged, stored and data mined. The data-mining algorithms are not open source, transparency is limited and there is no talking back feature. Who knows, you may even get in trouble for reading this publication. In the analogue days we could get away with claiming: “Hmm, I’m not sure where I’ve picked that up...”. In Digital Territory this is no longer possible. As there is no more public, only audience – it is very difficult to raise awareness about disruptive technologies. It requires either staging a scandal as in Boycott Benetton<sup>12</sup> or targeting very specific audiences which requires skilled expertise and specialized knowledge.

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12 <http://www.boycottbenetton.com/>



### **satisfaction**

*“At least those residing in the UK can breathe a momentary sigh of relief, as it’s not the only locale where the amount of surveillance drones is quickly approaching the number of citizens. Reportedly, French interior minister Michèle Alliot-Marie recently announced that the government is planning to “triple” the existing CCTV surveillance capacities across the country, “with a view to curb the risks of terrorism and acts of violence”. Beyond just bumping the amount of eyes scanning for troublemakers, she also suggested that the network of systems be more tightly connected in order to effectively “protect the French people and enable them to move freely without fearing for their lives or property”.*

We are in the process of facing a position that Antonio Gramsci has given much thought about and became entangled in himself (in being reread and appropriated by extreme right wing politicians) – Caesarism. Caesarism can be said to express a situation in which the forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner. But Caesarism “does not in all cases have the same historical significance. There can

be both progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism; the exact significance of each form can, in the last analysis, be reconstructed only through concrete history, and not by means of any sociological rule of thumb. Caesarism is progressive when its intervention helps the progressive force to triumph, albeit with its victory tempered by certain compromise and limitations. It is reactionary when its intervention helps the reactionary force to triumph, in this case too with certain compromises and limitations, which have, however, a different value, extent and significance than in the former”.<sup>13</sup>

We know what is at stake. The crossroads – this Caesarism – has not only been described very clearly in disentangling the structural violence of the gaze on the body (Foucault), the impotence of discursive practices to reach beyond the limits of their being-in-text-yet-being-written (Derrida), the impotence of power as such as it entails inevitably its own impossibility to act powerful (Lacan), the level of insanity of capital and money to the extent that desire itself invested as the organization of power in the economic nourishes repression (Deleuze), the observation that psychoanalysts listen to someone who is delirious, not however to delirium (Guattari). Let’s read this backwards. What do we find? We find a deep distrust operating on all levels of individual human agency. No longer can we trust our minds and bodies, we can also not heal ourselves through articulating our pain and worry in text – thus severing the very link to communicating action and leadership – as the very will that drives us somewhere – anywhere – is no more recognizable to us as desire, for we have given up wanting itself, realizing that any form of organization is by the very act not making us free, but enslaving us. We might as well be dead, and in a way – as in a way, we are.

Yet, eight out of ten citizens in the EU are satisfied to very satisfied with their lives – 21% very satisfied, 60% relatively to quite satisfied, 15 percent not satisfied (Eurobar, 2006).<sup>14</sup> This group seems to fit with the 16% of EU citizens at poverty risk (Eurostat, 2005)<sup>15</sup>. There is a consistent 4% of people that is not satisfied at all, consistently throughout various polls – 19 762 000, say twenty million individuals.<sup>16</sup> Four out of five workers in France are satisfied to very satisfied with their working

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13 Van Kranenburg, Rob. “Whose Gramsci?” *International Gramsci Society Newsletter* Number 9 (March, 1999): 14-18

14 [http://europa.eu/abc/keyfigures/livingtogether/sharedconcerns/index\\_nl.htm#chart40](http://europa.eu/abc/keyfigures/livingtogether/sharedconcerns/index_nl.htm#chart40)

15 [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1334,49092079,1334\\_49092702&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1334,49092079,1334_49092702&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

16 Eric Marlier; Tony Atkinson; Bea Cantillon and Brian Nolan: *The EU and social inclusion: Facing the challenges*. Bristol, Policy Press 2006

[https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product\\_info.php?cPath=10043&products\\_id=1236](https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=10043&products_id=1236)

conditions (27 July 2007, EFLW)<sup>17</sup>. French workers also report “high satisfaction levels with their ‘work-life balance’”, articulating that they have working hours that fit with family and social commitments (80.9% against the EU27 average of 79.4%). Indeed, more workers in France are content with their work-life balance than in Spain (75.4%) but fewer than in Belgium (83.1%) or Germany (85.5%).<sup>18</sup> Although the majority is satisfied, it does worry. Worries are over unemployment, the economic situation in general, criminality, inflation, terrorism, health, immigration, pensions, taxes, and education, in that order. The latest figures for Flanders show that same trend, a very happy population that grows more pessimistic about the future. Still, the EU has a very successful rate in terms of making and keeping its citizens happy, at least, according to these polls and figures. Who then has any need for change? Who – in Europe – is asking for a regime change, a fundamentally different way of organizing human activities, desires and hopes? Not only do the Europeans not seem to worry, or are not affected by the ontological and philosophical repercussions of the loss of agency, the disappearance of will, impossibility to express an “I”, they are also remarkably disinterested and at ease with the grounded manifestations of these trends: an ever growing society of control. Three hundred CCTV<sup>19</sup> appearances a day, over 5 million cameras does not defer – in fact encourages – three out of four UK citizens to exchange civil liberties for better security against terrorist attacks. The BBC 2005 Happiness Formula poll found that 92% of people described themselves as either fairly happy or very happy, with only 8% claiming to be fairly unhappy or very unhappy. Professor Ed Diener, a leading psychologist based at the University of Illinois, said: “The idea that modern society is a sink of unhappiness seems wrong”.<sup>20</sup> Although there is some occasional outcry, no broad dissent against this visual grid is voiced.

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17 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions  
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2006/78/en/1/ef0678en.pdf>

18 <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/press/releases/2007/070627.htm>

19 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is the use of video cameras to transmit signals to a specific, limited set of monitors. It differs from broadcast television in that the signal is not openly transmitted, though it may employ point-to-point wireless links. CCTV is often used for surveillance in areas which need monitoring, such as banks, casinos, airports, military installations and convenience stores. Increasing use of CCTV in public places has caused debate over public surveillance versus privacy.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Closed-circuit\\_television](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Closed-circuit_television)

20 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/happiness\\_formula/4771908.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/happiness_formula/4771908.stm)



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### **convenience**

Suppose I would say that I believe that this move into an ambient world, not a lab – the world, our streets – will fundamentally alter our experience of being human? “I’ve seen the Matrix too, my friend” – is what most people would say. All technology fundamentally alters the way in which humans can articulate themselves through and with it, thus always creating new links and new experiences. So what would make this move into this digital territory so special? On an economic level cheap data storage fosters the acquisition of huge amounts of data that were hardly perceived as data in an analogue environment (try mapping the trajectory of one can of water through a store with pencil and paper or “seeing” one crate of Heineken disappearing from a pallet in Hong Kong quietly at your Rotterdam desk without wiring up the harbour with weight sensors) giving companies insights into all parts of the life cycle of their products, thus feeding a database that generates likely scenarios for future behaviour. In a world where meaning and experience has been pushed firmly to the users end – making most cleaning products spend more on their packaging than the contents – the

need to compete on the level of logistics and actual contents – ingredients – disappears. No wonder that opposition to the first generation passive (not two-way communication or data storage on chip) enabler – RFID – is viewed with suspicion, debate in mainstream media is virtually nonexistent, the RFID industry goes out of its way to play down the privacy and security issues, light scenarios featuring innovation and profit scenarios (building applications and services on e-bricks and mortar) outnumber the dark scenarios, even to the extent that there are virtually none as these scenarios immediately go into “doom-scenarios”. Frame the discourse and you frame the debate. Any position looking critically at these ambient innovations is thus considered by this very fact to be non-innovative, conservative and regressing to the Luddite position of smashing the machines in favour of manual labour. Still, what makes this move so special, what would – against all seemingly sensible odds – be able to build a strong, broad, popular opposition? Privacy? Naive ideas of sharing are corrupting notions of privacy, transparency and informational architecture symmetry:

*“Showing off your drinking triumphs to your friends? What if prospective employers are watching? As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so too does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved. Parents can see what their children really get up to at Uni’. Teachers can see what their pupils really think. Potential employers can profile applicants based on their online braggings and other shenanigans. While much of the content might be taken humorously amongst friends, other parties might not see it that way” (Kerrison, 2006).<sup>21</sup>*

According to Professor Nigel Smart (Computer Science, Bristol) there is a “deep societal problem emerging of people giving up their privacy without realizing it. There’s little point in worrying about ID cards, RFID tags and spyware when more and more people are throwing away their privacy anyway. And the potential consequences are dire”. In September 2005, Hewlett Packard (HP) released the iPAQ hx2000 series Pocket PCs equipped with Windows Mobile 5.0 OS. The HP hx2790 – part of the hx2000 series – offers a biometric fingerprint sensor. In March 2005, OMRON Corporation announced “OKAO Vision Face Recognition Sensor”, a face recognition technology which can be implemented in PDAs, mobile phones or other mobile devices with a camera function. Lenovo, China’s biggest PC manufacturer which bought Thinkpad in 2004, sold its one millionth biometric laptop in December 2005. Casio Computer Corp. has developed a fingerprint sensor layered on top of a 1.2-inch LCD screen, “providing a convenient way for phone makers to incorporate biometric security into their handsets”. Two major reasons for the growing success of

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.hexus.net/content/item.php?item=7499>

biometric interfaces cluster around endpoint security: password management and convenience in financial transactions.

*Password management:* According to Will Sturgeon, “a growing number of large end-user organizations are making the switch to biometrics-based solutions to overcome the perennial problems users continue to have with passwords”. Mitsubishi Securities uses biometrics on their trading floor. “People across the organization have about 12 passwords to remember so a single sign-on biometric keyboard has proven very popular”, according to Graham Yellowley, IT director. A survey among 1 700 enterprise end users in the US found that more than a 25% of respondents manage more than 13 passwords at work, and 88% are frustrated with password management. This results in employees writing down passwords “or saving them locally on a spreadsheet or document”.<sup>22</sup>

*Financial comfort:* Pay By Touch enables shoppers to pay through fingerprint verification, no cash, no swiping, and claims: “This is one of the rare times where you can deliver identity theft prevention for the shopper, better security in terms of fraud for the retailer and increased convenience.”<sup>23</sup> In November 2006, a Harris Interactive Survey announced that, in a survey of 2006, 72% stated that fingerprint-scanning ATMs would give them “a positive or very positive feeling toward their bank”.<sup>24</sup> Over 30 000 biometric fingerprinting accessible ATMs are planned in Japan for 2007. For these banks the profit works two ways: they counter the rising cost of card misuse, which is estimated at 6%, and they offer their customers convenience and security. The banks have reported “low false rejection rates, which may reflect the market’s admission that fingerprint technology has improved since banks last considered this application nearly ten years ago”.

On 28 June 2009, all EU members are required to store fingerprints of their citizens (and children up to 12 years), with face recognition as the primary biometric identifier on the second generation of EU passports, the ePass. The EU IST project SecurePhone (research and commercial application based) employs face and fingerprints to enable the user to digitally sign audio, text or image files, providing proof of their origin and authenticity:

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22 Biometrics curing password headaches. And boy do we hate PA55w0RD5... by Will Sturgeon. Published: Wednesday 28 September 2005 Story URL: <http://software.silicon.com/security/0,39024655,39152802,00.htm>

23 “Pay By Touch’s patented biometric services enable shoppers to quickly access personal accounts using a finger scan to identify themselves, make purchases and earn rewards. The use of pay-by-touch fingerprint systems coincides with the use of other biometrics in financial transactions.” NSIDE FINANCIAL SERVICES Investors feel good about Pay By Touch, Becky Yerak, published 29 December 2006, [byerak@tribune.com](mailto:byerak@tribune.com)

24 <http://www.storefrontbacktalk.com/securityfraud/good-news-for-fingerprint-fans-maybe/>

*“As far as we know there is no other biometrically-enabled digital signature application available for mobile devices that can guarantee security by storing and processing all sensitive information on the device’s SIM card, explains SecurePhone technical coordinator Roberto Ricci at Informa in Italy. Because biometric data never leaves the device’s SIM card and cannot be accessed, except by the verification module which also runs on the SIM card, the user’s biometric profile is completely safe. This is important to meet the highest privacy requirements. Although existing communications infrastructure based on the GSM, GPRS and UMTS mobile systems provides a secure means of communication, it lacks any robust method of user identification. Text, audio and image files can be sent by anyone to anyone with no authentication and there are no guarantees the person you are talking to in a phone conversation, if you’ve never met them before, is really who they claim to be.”*<sup>25</sup>

The net result of this convergence comfortingly acquiesces the biggest fears of both industry in general (intellectual property) and national and federal states and state-like structures (identity). It makes sure who is who and at the same time it makes sure who is talking to whom. It neatly freezes both content and context in between the points of access (going online and going mobile) and the points of identification and authentication (who you are). Any kind of p2p activity is logged and traceable, not to your Internet service provider (ISP) but to you directly. It discourages experiments and works against creative and innovative acts of the rising make generation that cover the grounds in between structured discourses and operating systems. And most interestingly, it seems to acquiesce the fear of the 8 out of 10 satisfied EU citizens too, as they trade their continuous individual time-space coordinates for a high probability free-of-terror comfort zone. They can go shopping without paying, and “with 65 per cent of UK shoppers have suffered from the latest retail phenomena *queue rage*” (Queue Rage, QM Group study), this will no doubt enhance experiences of convenience.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.coli.uni-saarland.de/projects/SecurePhone/>



### **no opposition**

So, where would we look in the EU for the possibilities of articulation of opposition, even before acts of opposition itself? In the consistent 4% of people that is not satisfied at all – 20 million people – there is no overlap of potential points of collaboration, ranging as they do from ultra nationalist to left activists.

All of the above amounts to ever more perception of atomization by individuals whose wants and needs synch with ever growing formats that group them in trends and target groups.

The coming decade will therefore see the European nation states' monopoly of knowledge-power crumble; the ever more digitally literate middle class will script its own forms of solidarity (with its nationally non-affiliated community), breaking with the 19th century democratic institutions (starting with the health, education and security systems) and triggering new class wars between the disempowered majority

of “non-cognitariat” unemployed and the “cognitariat” which abandons national solidarity.

Individuals will ever more decide that the state is simply not organizing effectively enough for the money they have to pay to this unity of organization that has outsourced its law (over 80% European), its money (euro) and privatized its energy, communication, media and health sectors, effectively being perceived as mainly policing. It has no effective way of dealing with the speeds of the digital and the breadth of the network, which was spearheaded by an application that is only 15 years old, just in its teens: the Mosaic visual browser of 1993. From the first visual browser Mosaic 1993 follows the first phase of personal gain: online medication, travel, health information and banking. The second phase is interpersonal gain: sharing, eBay, peer groups, gaming avatars. The coming decade will see the third phase: institutional personal gain, organising parallel structures. The rich have always been able to organize their private networks, structures, forms of travel and living, caring and even dying. And now the old – what was once still to be perceived as mass in Ortega Y Gasset’s terms – middle class in the western European countries – is going to do it too. This withdrawal from responsibility for the commons, public space, public facilities and sense of solidarity will be the end of the democratic state at an organizational level. This stems from the logic of *techné*, outsourcing memory and agency to an ever more seemingly controllable environment on an individual level that is perceived as convenient. The fact that this scenario is hastened by the great cultural and racial tensions in western European cities and countryside (where extreme right wing parties keep growing) is secondary. Intellectuals are as ever moving to the outskirts, leaving the centre wide open for reactionary, wild capitalist forces and the threat of a barren commons, or not grasping the severity of the crisis in high tech capitalism.

Unless we find new ways of scripting new forms of solidarities with digital technology, it seems like we can envisage two roads that both lead to less dialogue, less communication, less innovation, fewer business opportunities, fewer sustainable options. The one focuses on control in a fundamentally flux wireless environment; the other focuses on hiding the technological complexity behind ever more simple user-friendly interfaces. In both cases there is no learning by citizens on how to function within such a system, thereby opening up all kinds of breakdown scenarios. The dominant computing paradigm is aiming straight at a world in which preferably everything is dead, as it can not deal with agency at an operating level. Human activity by its very nature is too messy for these systems. The problem “of temporality is fundamental to the collecting process” according to Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 1994). Well, not anymore. It is covered now.

## **new policies?**

So what does this mean for top-down policy making?

Of course it realizes the crisis in the public domain in the high tech western nations, the loss of belief in its integrity by citizens, the huge agency through the Internet, mobile phones and a growing number of open source hardware projects such as the Open Source Car, openmoko and bricophone (open mobiles), the RepRap (open source 3D printer). According to Neil Gershenfeld from Fablabs prices of lasercutters and 3D printers will go down so rapidly (already at 20 000 euros) to household price level. Thus personal manufacturing and fabrication of goods becomes possible. What does it mean in terms of patents and IP if you can download songs on your very own handmade iPod?

Its current reaction to this threat is overregulation at a personal level and in everyday surroundings. Not only is smoking itself somewhat considered as a personal threat to others and yourself, in a country like Holland it is even regulated where you can smoke in the open air at train stations – near a smoking pole. Manufacturing, keeping a shop, doing business, building on old forms of knowledge that is paid for by public money (universities, polytechnics, government agencies), all this becomes increasingly difficult as more rules and regulations accompany every step in the processes that want to innovate and take risk, and more and more ideas, knowledge and data gets branded as IP of some kind.

Much more productive, but much more difficult too, is for policy to realize that its greatest assets are its ways of working, ways of building consensus, ways of creating formats of organizational behaviour. In between the growing realm of citizens who start doing all kinds of things for themselves in the messiness of everyday life and the structure of formal government, a space is opening up and filling rapidly with all kinds of informal structures and networks, lots of agency, very little accountability. Intervening in this realm through regulation will fail by default, as with *Cradle to Cradle* (the new much hyped but very intriguing book on sustainability), I argue that regulation is always a system failure as consensus should have been scripted into the design. This new space needs ways of working that script solidarity, are transparent, foster accountability and invite critical enquiry. That is the new role of policy and by definition, the new role of the state.

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## **Media users: from readership to co-creators**

**Helena Popović  
Hajrudin Hromadžić**

### **Introduction**

In this paper we will look at the social and cultural changes which emerged with the appearance of media technologies and how these changes influenced the transformations of the mediated public sphere from a historical point of view. We will also discuss how different concepts of media users relate to the previously mentioned variations and how different forms of social disintegration and/or integration occur mediated by media technologies. These questions will be broadly framed within three historical periods characterized by important inventions and the spread of various mediums and their usage: the eighteenth/nineteenth century and the spread of the press; the twentieth century and the appearance of electronic media; the late twentieth century and the appearance of new digital technology.

The changes in media technology and its usage have to a large extent influenced the conceptualization of media users and the communication modes which emerge. Thus, we will focus on two interconnected concepts related to media users: the public sphere mediated through media technology, and forms of societal dis/integration between media users developed through the use of media technology. Indeed, the need for reflection on the concept “media audience” – which emerged in the era of electronic mass media – is usually evoked by two simultaneous and interconnected processes: the invention and spread of new information and communication digital media technologies, and the fragmentation and increasing heterogeneity of the audiences. This change is also historically reflected in the classic scholarly understanding of audiences in which the main focus has moved from the “transmission model” (Shannon and Weaver, 1949, in Watson, 2003), in which the

power of the sender has been scrutinized while the audience (singular) have been defined as uncritical mass consumers, to the “exchange model”, in which audiences (plural) have been granted the role of active citizens who display various modes of use and response to media outputs (Ang, 1991), but who also co-create media content, enabled by digital technologies. This move from “old, traditional, mass media” to “new, digital and interactive” media, from passive and homogenized audience towards active, fragmented audiences, and their influences on the conceptualization of the public sphere, are some of the crucial concepts that need to be viewed from a historical perspective in order to understand the ways in which these seemingly dichotomous categories interplay in a manner of continuity.

### **Media users: print, readership and the public sphere**

The concepts of the public and public sphere, as well as the role of the press in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have been outlined in detail in Jürgen Habermas’ well known work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (first published in Germany, 1962, English translation in 1989). According to his study, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were periods in which the appearance of a press through which private ideas were made public, enabled an open, rational and critical debate about social and political events that served as a critique of the government. This was, according to the author and his ideal model of this historical process, the only period when an open public sphere existed. The institutions of the public sphere, lying between the private realm (the realm of commodity exchange and labour and the intimate sphere) and the sphere of public authority (the state and the court as its constituencies) appeared in the form of coffeehouses, salons, libraries and theatres, i.e., cultural institutions that characterize urban life where people gathered as private individuals to discuss matters of common concern. In that process, cultural products were transformed into commodities available to private people, and the same process formed a public that was, in principle, inclusive. However, as Habermas points out “... more than half of the population lived on the margins of subsistence. The masses were not only largely illiterate but also so pauperized that they could not even pay for literature. They did not have at their disposal the buying power needed for even the most modest participation in the market of cultural goods” (Habermas in Boyd-Barrett, 1995: 239). As many of Habermas’ critiques have argued, the matter of wealth was not the only barrier to inclusion in the public sphere, but also gender and level of education. Only wealthy, educated males were actually participating in the debates that occurred in the public sphere. Others pointed out that Habermas focused on the bourgeois public sphere and neglected other forms of public activities occurring at the time (Thompson, 1995: 252-259). As rightfully argued by Thompson, Habermas points to the role of the press, only to point out the dimension of print connected to public places in which the

content was discussed. The bourgeois public sphere was “conceptualized in relation to face-to-face conversations” in a “shared locale”, stimulated by print media (Thompson, 1995: 257).

Another aspect on the importance of print media in early modern Europe has been outlined by Hallin and Mancini (2004)<sup>1</sup> who focus on the spread of print media<sup>2</sup> that started in the late eighteenth century, and its massive circulation that was in motion by the end of the nineteenth. This was especially true for northern and western Europe and the United States of America in which an early development of capitalism, the protestant reformation with its important impact on the spread of literacy and the strengthening of the bourgeois class occurred. Southern Europe differed to a certain extent due to a late disruption of the absolute state, the domination of church in cultural life and a slow process of industrialization which held back the development of a mass media market. Hence, this region had, consequently, a lower circulation of press, reserved for the elite (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

At the time, readers were segmented, since the eighteenth century press was politically engaged due to the fact that newspapers were mostly financed and lead by political parties, unions and other political groups (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This was common until the second half of the nineteenth century, when commercial press started to emerge, which was then viewed as liberating due to its move from a politically engaged to a politically more neutral content,<sup>3</sup> accessible for a wider population.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the readership was broadened, but still highly segmented along the divisions of class as well as political ideology. At the same time, the nation state

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1 For a detailed overview of the three models of media systems: the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, The North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model, see Hallin and Mancini, 2004.

2 According to Habermas the exchange of news become a regular activity first among administrative people and merchants in order to exchange information useful for their regular business. Later, by the mid-seventeenth century newspapers were distributed on a daily basis, because news started to be a commodity ruled by the law of the market, accessible to the public in general. “The public” consisted of the educated classes, not the “common men” due to the fact that a large part of the population was illiterate and pauperized at that time (Habermas, 1989: 24). The increased number of literate people was a presupposition for the later spread of newspapers, and with the broader distribution of news the press became a tool of the state administration to fulfil their interests and transfer messages to the public.

3 Political “neutrality” (or a less visible political orientation) and the emergence of “omnibus” newspapers with diverse content which also included entertainment, were a successful attempt (then and now) to catch a larger portion of the media market.

4 From a contemporary historical perspective, this liberating evaluation of the commercial press from the first part of the nineteenth century that broadened the readership is viewed as the first step towards the emergence of what we today define as media consumers.

was developing and nationalism was blossoming as a unifying force – a process in which the press played an important role as well.

According to Benedict Anderson (1983), these “imagined communities” – the idea of a nation – could only emerge after the privileged *lingua franca* lost its importance, when vernaculars<sup>5</sup> started to gain their significance in dissemination of public information and the idea of republicanism emerged. The development of “print capitalism”<sup>6</sup> formed “print languages”<sup>7</sup>, a fundamental of the national consciousness that created a unified field of communication, a standardized language that represents the language of authority. Anderson stresses the importance of the daily press, in which the continuity of publishing gave a sense of continuity of the “community” and thus served as a cultural unifier and homogenizer in spite of deep social stratifications within the nation state.

By the end of the nineteenth century, when the growth of market economies occurred, the relations between society and the state changed. This represents a period in which, according to Habermas, the public sphere was in decline. The state infiltrated society and “a polity of neo-mercantilism went hand in hand with a kind of ‘re-feudalization’ of society” (Habermas, 1989: 142). The interventionist policy of the state also affected the relationship between the public sphere and the private realm. In this process the family became more private, fulfilling a consumptive function, and detached itself from the self-sufficient unit, which made the members more and more dependent on the state.

### **Mass media audiences and the rise of electronic media: a critical approach**

With the emergence of electronic media, their spread and the rise of popular culture, new concepts and approaches were needed. This was a period in which the idea of

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5 Anderson defines “vernaculars” (Lat. *vernaculus*) as official languages which started to appear in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as a replacement for Latin as a *lingua franca* of the time. According to his opinion, vernaculars lie between “high” Latin language and “low” native speech and were used in public communication and public affairs. They served as a basis for the development of some contemporary official and literary languages.

6 Print capitalism refers to the interconnection of capitalism, print technology, the emergence of vernaculars, and the spread of literacy which enabled commodification of print languages.

7 According to Anderson, print languages served as a foundation for national consciousness in three different ways: they formed unified fields of exchange and communication, positioned in between “high Latin” and “low” native languages; they were strengthened by print capitalism which contributed to the formation of a subjective idea of a nation; they became official languages of authorities aided by print capitalism.

“media audience”<sup>8</sup> became used, since new electronic media created a need for an extension of the commonly understood concept of “audience” defined as a “group of people before whom a performance of one kind or another takes place”. With the emergence of electronic media, the performance was no longer displayed in a common space, it was now mediated and moved from public to private space; in other words, the “direct” audience was substituted with an audience to whom a performance was mediated through media technology. The audience did not share the same physical space, nor did they usually receive the performance act in a public space (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007) but usually in the private spheres of their homes. Habermas argued that the public sphere and the rational critical debate that once had existed became reduced to debates behind closed doors in front of the television. This type implies a new type of public sphere and a passive role of audience members, not in the sense of interpreting the messages received, but in the sense of participating and co-creating the content of the performance (something that will appear with new digital media).

A pessimistic view of media audiences was also held by the other members of the Frankfurt School<sup>9</sup>. According to their opinion, mass production of cultural products eroded the public sphere based on rational public debates and initiated the making of passive consumers. The new electronic media transformed the public sphere so that it became generally accessible to the masses, but lost its political character. At the same time, new electronic media were used by a broad public but did not give an opportunity to react or reply to the content shown to the spectators. This was a one-way communication that did not allow for a critical response. The quality of the content presented through media was lost: instead of dealing with the common good, and issues relevant to the citizens, the media took over roles of ideology formation of the uncritical spectator, as well as of advertising to a consumerist viewer. The role of the citizen was transformed into the role of consumer. A re-feudalization of society emerged; again the public actors provided a show to the spectators that obeyed a “supernatural” authority. “The aura of personally represented authority returns as an aspect of publicity” (Habermas, 1989: 201). The vision Habermas had of the public sphere that emerged with the new electronic media was best represented in the well-known sentence: “The world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only” (Habermas, 1989: 171).

This pessimistic view of mass culture, mass media and mass audiences provoked an intensive debate in the field, connected to the public sphere, electronic media, the

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8 At the time, in the 1930s, public opinion polls started to be more utilized, only to become an accustomed practice by the 1950s.

9 Members like Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, associated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, established at the Institute for Social Research founded at the University of Frankfurt in 1923.

potentials of the audiences, etc. Some authors linked electronic media, and more particularly public service broadcasting, with the idea of the public sphere in an affirmative mode. In their opinion, the public sphere became accessible, even though mediated, to a large number of citizens. Authors such as Paddy Scannell (1989), and later John Keane (2000), pointed out the positive aspects of the emergence of electronic media that fundamentally changed the modes of communication among people, as well as the structural changes that searched for a different framework of analysis. Scannell opposed the idea of broadcasting as a “pseudo-public sphere” or its role as an “ideological apparatus”. He also dismisses the claim that the audience represents a body of fragmented individuals that are exposed to a one-way communication without any possibility to give feedback on the message (Scannell, 1989: 153). He supports this by a comparison between the idealized public sphere that Habermas advocated and the actual possibilities that a spectator within it had. Scannell argues that in public spheres, as Habermas defines them, locations such as theatres, libraries, salons and cafes that opened up for private persons only provided a spectator role to these participants, where they were not in a position to discuss or give feedback. The latter is more likely to happen in a circle of friends and family, in front of a television set. As he puts it “what life public events have is undoubtedly the “aura” of presence, but aura is as low in communicative properties as it is high in ritual characteristics” (Scannell, 1989: 154).

Keane focuses his critique on Habermas’ reductionist view of the existence of one “single, spatially integrated public sphere” (Keane, 2000: 72). In Keane’s view, public life is subject to “re-feudalization” – not in Habermas’ sense but in the sense of “development of a complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres” (Keane, 2000: 77). Keane distinguishes between micro-, meso- and macro-public spheres. Micro-public spheres represent a bottom-up perspective, local spaces in which “citizens enter into disputes about who does and who ought to get what, when and how” (Keane, 2000: 79), and represent a similar space as the one Habermas described: discussion circles, publishing houses, the churches, clinics, cafes ... These forms of interaction are usually latent and they become publicly visible only occasionally (Keane, 2000: 79). Meso-public spheres appear in the form of the nation state and they are mediated through electronic media and newspapers with a large circulation (Keane, 2000: 80). Finally, macro-public spheres are formed on global or regional levels that can be identified in the form of industrial concerns which cross national state boundaries or in the form of satellite-linked communication systems. These public spheres represent a “modular system of overlapping networks defined by the lack of differentiation among spheres ... which is a useful reminder of the dangers of reifying the distinction among micro-, meso- and macro-public spheres” (Keane, 2000: 87).

As John B. Thompson argues, the supposed re-feudalization of the public sphere ignores new forms of social interaction that emerged with new electronic communication, which is different in terms of space, since we are dealing with mediated communication and not face-to-face interaction, characterized by representative publicness. In his words, the idea of the public sphere, "... based on the idea that individuals come together in a shared locale and engage in dialogue with one another, as equal participants in a face-to-face conversation ... bears little resemblance to the kinds of communication established by and sustained through the media, and hence bear little resemblance to the kind of public sphere which the media have helped to create" (Thompson, 1995: 257). Thus, the "dialogical exchange" has been replaced by "non-dialogical, de-specialized" forms of communication, based on the visual (Thompson, 1995: 258). Another problem regards the idea outlined by Habermas<sup>10</sup> on the public sphere which has "collapsed into a fragmented world of consumers who are enthralled by the media spectacles unfolding before them and manipulated by media techniques" (Thompson, 1995: 255). In Thompson's account recipients are not manipulated consumers, but individuals who interpret the content in a creative manner.

### **The empowerment of media audiences: an affirmative evaluation**

The creative potentials of the audiences and the notion of "active audiences" have been put forward in the last few decades, with focus on the way meaning is created. This idea first developed in the theoretical and empirical research conducted in the field of cultural studies.<sup>11</sup>

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10 In the late 1980s, with the changes of social context, Habermas upgraded his theory, not so much "in its fundamentals" but in "degree of complexity" (Habermas, 1992). Even though the emergence of new electronic media changed the infrastructure of the public sphere that became "infiltrated by power", the move from a "'culture-debating to a culture-consuming public' was too simplistic" (Habermas, 1992: 438). In addition, the "critical potential of a pluralistic, internally much differentiated mass public, whose cultural usages have begun to shake off the constraints of class" (Habermas, 1992: 438), was not taken into consideration in the light of media research and public opinion polls in the 1960s, that showed pessimistic results.

11 This academic discipline, formed in the early 1960s, carried a specificity in that it embraced and connected earlier disparate disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (such as philosophy, cultural and social anthropology, literary studies, communication studies, political economy, art history, etc.) which represented a step towards the appearance of interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches. At an institutional level, cultural studies are primarily connected to the British school of cultural studies, i.e. the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) founded by Richard Hoggart.

Cultural studies, especially their approaches developed in the field of media studies, conducted by Stuart Hall and David Morley (as well as other scholars engaged in this school of thought) are of crucial importance in the understanding of the aforementioned concept of media audiences. In this mode of understanding of the complex nature of media and communication, the old paradigm – according to which media represent mere channels of dissemination of information and messages of information communication – is replaced by a new paradigm within which media play an important role in the construction of reality; however, with various modes of reception. The accent is thus transposed from the question of media effects and media manipulation to the question of meaning, interpretation and reception of media texts. In his seminal text *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* published in 1973 (“encoder” being the producer of the message, and “decoder” being the “reader” of the message), Stuart Hall defines three possible responses to text – dominant mode (accepting the preferred reading created by the author), negotiated mode (questioning attitude, with partial acceptance) and the oppositional mode (rejecting the message).<sup>12</sup> These different modes of “reading” the message showed that an active relation between media content/text and media audiences occurred. Because messages are interpreted and “read” differently, depending on the social context and the individual, personal experience of the “reader”, the media audience could no longer be comprehended in a singular form, but in the plural. In addition, the analysis of particular media practices showed diverse modes of media usage in the context of everyday practice. One scholar who has, perhaps, gone furthest in highlighting the creativity of audiences is John Fiske, who argues that the audiences create the meaning that they want or need out of TV programmes. In his view, audience power is strong and they are capable of redirecting the meaning of the media in progressive or recalcitrant ways, partly because media content is accessible to divergent interpretations and also because the market pressure forces the media to connect to the social experience of people (Fiske in Curran and Morley, 2006: 136-137). Audiences respond selectively to the media by drawing upon the social discourse of their everyday world.

There were certainly other approaches to media studies at the time: the “Uses and Gratification Theory” also placed the audiences in focus, but from a rather individualist perspective. The theory, developed in the 1960s by Elihu Katz (USA)

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12 David Morley was the first to empirically test this encoding/decoding model in the study first conducted in 1978, with Charlotte Brunsdon: *Everyday Television “Nationwide”*. The second project was conducted by Morley, two years later in *“Nationwide” Audiences*, in which Morley explored how media output was decoded by groups with diverse social backgrounds and socio-demographic marks (more specifically race, party-political orientation, class, gender and ethnicity). These are two important examples of studies that have had a tremendous impact on further audience reception research in which the active and creative potentials of audiences have been put forward.

and Jay Blumler (UK), emphasized the audiences role by questioning what individuals do with the media, instead of questioning “what do media do to the individual”<sup>13</sup> as previously in focus. Here too, an active role was given to the audiences, viewed as heterogeneous, in their diverse media uses and various gratifications gained by choosing particular media outputs.

Hence, the initial phase in the 1960s and the further development in the 1970s and 1980s was a period in which the notion of an active, creative audience was established in opposition to the previously mentioned pessimistic interpretation of the negative effects of electronic media. With this swing – from the effects of media messages created by elites and the withdrawal from the public realm to the private, to the various modes of media reception derived by the audiences, and an active role of media audiences – a logical move occurred in relation to the earlier distinction between “high” versus “low” culture. Instead of this, a more inclusive and affirmative approach to mass culture emerged, which also included a change of focus from the role of the media in the public sphere and citizens debating political matters to the entertaining role of the media and the audiences role as consumers of media products.

The dichotomy of media audiences as the public, and media audiences as a market category has been scrutinized by Ian Ang (1991). These two alternative approaches are connected to two major institutional models of the media: as public services and as commercial enterprises. According to the first model, media audiences are composed of citizens who want to be informed, educated and entertained, within the framework of the democratic role of the media. In this sense, this model could be labelled the classical, following the aforementioned concepts of the public sphere and publicity pushed forward by Habermas. On the other hand, the actual, dominant market model of media audiences, lead by profit interests of the media owners, conceived the audiences primarily as potential consumers sold to the marketing agencies.

Commercial media seek well-defined recognizable slices or fragments of the audiences, as different from the former indecisive mass audience, which are then used for profit-making. A good example for this thesis is the well known serial *Star Trek*, which never had a large audience, but the producers discovered that the average profile of a regular viewer of *Star Trek* is a successful business man, single, young,

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13 An approach focusing on “what the media do to the audience” (more specifically television) was also developed in the late 1960s and 1970s but with a focus on long-term consequences (as different from media effects). George Gerbner established the “Cultivation Theory” based on the Cultural Indicators Project, within which a database was created of information related to the interconnection of media content, media policy and media audiences. Gerbner’s research showed that long-term exposure to specific media messages cultivated specific values and worldviews of individuals in accordance with the values displayed in the media.

with a relatively high income, which represents an attractive market niche for advertisers. An opposite example is the magazine *Hello*, which had a huge audience, but mainly with a blue collar background and low income, which made it futile for profit-making, and was therefore discontinued.

### **Media users as co-creators: new digital media technologies and contemporary forms of mediated public spheres – Second Life and Facebook**

The appearance of new digital media has once again changed the way of understanding media audiences, the public sphere and forms of interaction enabled by the medium. The rapid development of various information and media technologies over the past couple of decades has led to the rise of theories concerning the democratic potential that the new digital media carries, as well as towards constructions of new forms of public spheres mediated by contemporary media technologies. In most cases, such expectations usually draw upon the interactive characteristics of the Internet as these allow for immediate feedback, the supply of diverse content offered on the Internet, the possibilities which small interest groups and individuals have in representing their opinions and establishing contacts, etc. In short, these expectations are based on a utopian model of new digital media as a model that allows for direct and participatory democracy, or in Anna Malina's words, "...the emergence of computerized ICTs, known as telematics, has prompted less hierarchical discourses, characterized by the prospect of more intense democratic participation, visible-ness, public-ness and open-ness" (Malina, 2002: 23).

In general, new formations of public spheres supported by digital media technology offer a type of collaborative, media-computer communication in a virtual and digital environment – cyberspace – as a process that allows for active communication between individuals and the creation of their common interests independently of real time and space or the geographical, physical distance that separates them. A space created through the mediation of digital computer technology, such as cyberspace, also allows for the emergence of *cyber society* – or a *virtual community* as a new form of public sphere formation, a space of interaction between large numbers of individuals.

The most common term used to explain users' paradigms within new media digital technology is that of interaction. One of the basic ideas related to the concept of computer media interaction is the thesis of the partial transfer of technological creation potentials from the programmer to the user of the computer. Here, the user is faced with many different programming possibilities and choices, and user practices urge them to interact, i.e., he/she is given the opportunity to choose between links and programs, content, combination of windows usage, etc. In the near future, software

designers will take a back seat in terms of user practices, which will be free to define future contents. However, the “price” of this “freedom” is the acceptance of user responsibility for the action taken.

A recent example of this co-creation of content is the virtual world Second Life, a metaverse, or a “metaphysical universe” (“Wonders of the Metaverse”, *Economist.com*), created by Philip Sosedal from San Francisco in year 2003. It was partly created as a result of his passion for the science fiction story *Snow Crash* (by Neal Stephenson) published in 1992. Here Stephenson depicted the society of the future, whose members spend most of their time in a digital world, a kind of futuristic version of the Internet. Following this, Second Life indeed points at the coming of a new age, a virtualized media society in which real Internet users placed on ‘this side of the computer screen’ have the possibility to create and live their virtual identities on the ‘other side of the computer screen’.

This world is not hard to access if you have a computer and a fast Internet connection; you can sign in for free, and download the program for entrance to the virtual world Second Life. The creation of one’s own virtual identity (avatar), includes the decision on race, gender, age, length, hair colour, etc., as a matter of decision of the user. As pointed out by the creators of Second Life it is “as a three dimensional digital world created by the users” (<http://secondlife.com>). The newly created avatar can start his virtual life and choose among entertainment, adventure, professional career, etc. Second Life is inhabited by millions of permanent residents (every month a couple of hundred thousand new users sign in), who visit virtual night clubs, concerts, shopping centres, consuming virtual versions of real products and consuming diverse services. They open firms engaged with all kinds of activities, from selling goods and services, making friendships, intimate relations, etc. The USA and Sweden are the first states opening virtual embassies in Second Life, and Mark Warner, ex governor of Virginia, is the first politician who has given an interview in this virtual world. A year and a half ago, the first tabloid was initiated, radio Lindeen is at the disposal of the inhabitants of Second Life, and Reuters is the first press agency having a news correspondent reporting from Second Life – Adam Pasick (in the virtual world called Adam Reuters), who is a journalist in real life specialized in technology issues. This is the first case in history where information primarily emerging from a created, virtual world becomes a relevant and equal segment of the mediated construction of social reality.<sup>14</sup>

Second Life is a good example of the actual model of Web 2.0., especially with the new possibilities it offers for user-generated content. However, different to numerous firms that use the model Web 2.0 and attempt to form an audience later suitable for advertising issues, Second Life is created as a company with virtual ownership,

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14 For a more detailed account on Second Life, see Hromád íc, 2007.

which, among other things, earns money through the hiring of virtual space to their “inhabitants”.<sup>15</sup> The visitors to Second Life generate a large income: between 1.5 and 2 million US dollars turnover per day, and the number of participants who earn more than 5 000 US dollars per month is growing exponentially, which is why thousands of people leave their “real life” businesses and turn to money making in this virtual life.

The most popular example of an Internet social network that forms part of the public sphere (alongside the mostly music-oriented Myspace) is Facebook. It was created in 2003 by Mark Zuckerberg, then a student at Harvard University (USA), who established a digital network of Harvard students. The network expanded to other American universities and in 2006 Facebook opened up for other users and soon became a global Internet trend. The formula for this digital network is simple: every user creates his/her own website, his/her “profile”, in which information about the user is uploaded. There is also a virtual file for the creation of a list of “friends” who also have a Facebook account. With the spread of Facebook friends and the collection of data, every user forms a personal Internet social network which enables the maintenance of contacts and updated information related to the “friends”.

The access and the simple model of data transmission, as well as the exchange of user profiles through digital technology, enabled an exponential growth of Facebook members. This socializing Internet service for contacts soon became a sociological phenomenon. One particularly interesting fact about this social computer network is that, even though Facebook opens up possibilities to establish new contacts which enriches the social capital of users, this network facilitates the re-connection of people who are or used to be in real life contact. Thus, it is more based on “old” acquaintances from the “real” world, rather than new, virtually established social contacts. Regardless which mode is at stake, this is an example of a new type of interactive networked media user, who actively participates and co-creates media content around these Internet social networks.

In addition, following its popularization, Facebook has also become a marketing phenomenon, a new channel which has brought new possibilities to advertisers and the distribution of their content. The fact that Facebook gives open access to the profiles of individual users, makes it an easily accessible target for market players who gain free information which enables the categorization of market segments and the targeting of their strategic business activities.

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15 For a more detailed account, see “Wonders of the Metaverse”, Economist.com, 20 April 2006.

[http://www.economist.com/surveys/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story\\_id=6794220](http://www.economist.com/surveys/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=6794220)  
(accessed: 2 September 2007)

The above-mentioned are two affirmative examples of the use of new, digital media technology in the formation of social communities and networks and a recreation of a virtual public sphere. While Second Life is a virtual world of alter egos, which is a reflection of “real” world practices, Facebook is a network which mainly serves to maintain already established connections in the “real” world. However, there are also limitations to this type of social communication in terms of access. As Jan van Dijk argues, there are four kinds of barriers to successful access to the above-mentioned potentials offered by digital media:

1. Lack of elementary digital experience caused by lack of interest, computer anxiety, and unattractiveness of the new technology (‘mental access’);
  2. No possession of computers and network connections (‘material access’);
  3. Lack of digital skills caused by insufficient user-friendliness and inadequate education or social support (‘skill access’);
  4. Lack of significant usage opportunities (‘usage access’)
- (van Dijk, 2003: 315-316).

In a contemporary world, these limitations are connected to segmentation along the divisions of age, urban or rural settings, class, etc. In addition to the specific type of knowledge (“skill access”) necessary in order to fully exploit the potentials of this technology, a new *lingua franca* version of the English language emerges as a must if one wants to participate in the – so often pointed out – potentials of the Internet, namely the supra-national, global communication possibilities.

### **Concluding remarks**

Perhaps the analogy drawn between the period of eighteenth century and contemporary societies conducted by Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) is useful to explain the new forms of “community building” that occur today. They point out the similarities of the crises that societies were faced with in these two historical periods, such as the crises of family, the transformation of the economy and the crises of the legitimization of state power. In the eighteenth century, with the repressiveness of the ancient regime, critical attention was given to the proper relationship between rulers and the rights of their subjects, between society and authority (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999: 9). At that time, a new bourgeois class appeared, and the tension it provoked had an important impact on the social and economic spheres of life.

As for the present time, the nation state is, once again, changing in its essence, with the emergence of supranational entities and the fight to preserve some of its power by showing monopolistic tendencies. In the same way, the economy and the market have outstripped the functional capacities of the state with the newly emerged neoliberal, globalized form of capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999: 12-13). In these

processes, governments are intrusive, and no longer have control over symbols, information or ideologies. The way global capitalism erodes the nation state is through the diminishing of customs boundaries, the emergence of mobile markets, and the new division of labour that provokes large-scale migrations, supported by new digital technologies.

We are facing limitations to inclusion in the public spheres. In the eighteenth/nineteenth century these limitations were to a large extent connected to class and gender, while the twentieth century peak of electronic media usage (especially in the 1950s) witnessed a large inclusion in the public sphere created by these type of media. However, this inclusion was limited to spectatorship with no possibility to reply. Today, in the twenty-first century, a historical period dominated by new digital technology, the divisions are again present, this time, perhaps more in regard to age, urban or rural settings and level of education.

There is another specificity which characterizes the participation in the contemporary digital world. In the analysis of the ritual practices of media users, new digital media implies a radically individualized usage. While the press – as a mass medium – is easily portable and used in various social settings, television as a technological device holds a central position in the homes of people initiating social gatherings around it, and has replaced the traditional fireplace or the altar. As different from the above-mentioned, new media technology, more specifically personal computers, radically changed these types of practices. The PC is usually placed in a more intimate corner of the residence, and is, due to its form, directly oriented towards the individual as a user. It asks for an immediate physical contact, insists on the closeness of sight. However, television viewing as a collective ritual has also been changed with the trend of multiple television sets in one household, which has changed contemporary consumption of television output. Indeed, this is only one aspect of the contemporary trends of individualization of previously collective practices, something which force us to change the categorical apparatus to a large extent.

This form of individualization is related to contemporary understanding of media users. We are witnessing parallel trends in the analysis of new media users which seems to be in opposition at first glance: on the one hand we are faced with an ever so obvious fragmentation of the audiences, consisting of small niches useful for market players. This trend of fragmentation is to a large extent the result of technological features of the new media which prompt individual usage. On the other hand, we can spot new forms of social integration (networking) of media users, created and supported by interactive digital computer technology, visible in virtual social communities connected by a network of various relationships between their members.

The understanding of media users, as exemplified in the text, has gone through various transformational models. The participants in the public sphere in the eighteenth century implied a face-to-face “dialogical exchange” based on publicly disseminated information, to a large extent mediated by the press, while electronic media implied a mass audience, engaged in a one-to-many form of communication. In the first phase, this type of media user was critically evaluated as passive and uncritical to the manipulative mass media content, while in the second affirmatively characterized as active media audiences (plural), who carry creative potentials in decoding media messages. New digital technology, more specifically the Internet, has again pushed us back to a “dialogical” or “polillogical” exchange; not communicated face-to-face but intermediated by the computer.

In this respect, the inhabitants or avatars of the previously explained virtual Second Life world or the members of Internet social networks such as Facebook could be analysed as new forms of virtual public spheres. Second Life and Facebook include a diffused type of user engagement (more diverse media technologies, more individual, intimate user practices). In addition, media users have become products in a consumer society: a market niche, positioned between the interests of media producers and advertising agencies. Another important question related to the contemporary perspectives of media users is the issue of media pluralism and diversity. On the one hand new technologies potentially enable a more pluralized and diverse media landscape (in terms of offered channels and content) and on the other, we testify to the increasing trend of media ownership concentration, which imperils the above-mentioned potentials opened up by new technology. For these reasons, forthcoming media user research will, in addition to issues such as media digitalization, remediation and convergence, have to deal with contemporary economic issues in a globalized world.

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## **Transformations of cultural production, free culture and the future of the Internet**

**Tomislav Medak**

### **When producing and remixing comes naturally**

As a consequence of technological development over the last two decades two components in the system of cultural production have transformed their socio-economic character – the means of cultural production have become widely accessible and digital networks have made distribution channels for cultural products ubiquitous. What could formerly be provided only by a large industrial system of cultural and media production has significantly changed. The digital regime now breaks away from that system, and what could formerly be provided only by exclusive exploitation rights is now provided by the community of users and creators, of consumers and producers, of “prosumers”<sup>1</sup> using the networked production tools and exchange of cultural goods.

With this massive exodus of consumers from consumption into production and their re-appropriation of the means of production and exchange, both the industry of digital tools (which grows strong in this transformation) and the cultural industry (which grows weak in this transformation) are entering into a structural conflict and competition with their former consumers over their rights and freedom to access means of production, to use products and to exchange goods. While the software and cultural industry is pushing for an ever stronger and draconic protection of

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<sup>1</sup> “Prosumer” is a portmanteau formed by contracting either the word producer or professional with the word consumer. The term has taken on multiple conflicting meanings: the business sector sees the prosumer (professional-consumer) as a market segment, whereas economists see the prosumer (producer-consumer) as having greater independence from the mainstream economy. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosumer>

intellectual property and is criminalizing users as pirates in order to preclude this transformation, an ever greater number of creators make their work freely available for users to share and co-create, parallel to or outside of those industries.

To add to this plight of traditional incumbents in the cultural and media industry, there are new economic actors gaining ground, whose business models are based on growing user-generated content, crowd-sourced production, syndication and access to copyrighted material. Theirs is a model where the greater the social utility, social participation and sharing, the greater the economic value. It is a model where their own product – the technological platform – comes only second to the user-base and the content it generates. An economic transformation of culture from a production model, based on scarcity and control over cultural goods, into a production model, based on abundance and access to cultural goods, is unfolding.

And yet, behind this economic transformation there is another, deeper transformation unfolding – a transformation in the way we understand culture and media as forms of communication. As was recently observed by the ever so ingenious Clay Shirky,<sup>2</sup> while we used to spend hours on end watching television and – in times before television – pursuing other leisurely pastimes, more and more people nowadays choose to allocate some of that time and cognitive resources to writing blogs, editing wiki articles, producing alternative newscasts, expanding communication with their contacts on social networking sites and growing their online communities. Many are perplexed by these forms of productive behaviour, puzzling as to where people find the time and, particularly, where people find the motive to do so, given the fact that there is no economic incentive for participation. Yet, as Shirky estimates, over 200 billion hours is spent every year watching television (just in the United States) while the cumulative effort invested so far in the largest and most prominent of user-generated projects – the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia – amounts to a mere 100 million hours of cognitive effort. As TV viewers report spending increasingly less time watching television in favour of the Internet,<sup>3</sup> that leaves very little “social surplus” time that needs to be freed up for a project as large as Wikipedia to be created. And, what is more, there need not be an economic incentive for it, as TV viewing comes with no economic incentive either. More

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2 Clay Shirky, “Gin, Television, and Social Surplus”

<http://www.herecomeseverybody.org/2008/04/looking-for-the-mouse.html/>

3 Although TV viewing time has been on the rise globally, viewers report preferring to spend more time on the Internet, which over recent years has seen a rise in order of magnitude greater than that of TV viewing. However, new formats of TV delivery - digital video recorders, mobile devices, and, in particular, through the Internet in the form of user-submitted content - have contributed to increased TV viewing: “IBM Consumer Survey Shows Decline of TV as Primary Media Device”

<http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/22206.wss/>

intriguingly, however, are the other incentives that come into play – incentives typical of creative rather than consumptive behaviours: self-expression, knowledge acquisition, social recognition, reputation, sharing, collaboration. For young generations reared on the Internet, the culture will come naturally defined in terms of creative behaviour: “*Here’s something four-year-olds know: A screen that ships without a mouse ships broken. Here’s something four-year-olds know: Media that’s targeted at you but doesn’t include you may not be worth sitting still for... they just assume that media includes consuming, producing and sharing*”.<sup>4</sup> This indicates the deeper transformation that culture and media as forms of communication are undergoing: from consumptive to productive, from monodirectional to multidirectional.

In this article we wish to delve into the social implications of this transformation of cultural and media production, to reflect on the context of copyright regulation where the structural clash between incumbents – cultural and media industries – and their consumers-turned-producers is being played out, and to see how this clash might ultimately impact the future of the Internet. Technological sea change over the last two decades, spearheaded by the Internet, has led to an unprecedented ability of individuals and communities to communicate, organize, grow and express themselves freely. It has allowed both for greater diversification and greater integration, creating an unprecedented visibility of socially and culturally diversified communities, while at the same time exploding the cultural diversity out of its confines of national cultures and national languages. The central issue of this article is that: collaborative cultural production and free cultural works are two pivotal forms of how this transformation will sediment and augment cultural diversity. This article therefore emphasizes how collaborative cultural production and free cultural works emerge in particular forms of cultural interest and particular forms of cultural exchange.

### **Commons-based peer production**

To understand the social implications of collaborative cultural production and free cultural works we need to go back to an event that predates the Internet. In 1984, Richard Stallman, a software developer at the MIT A.I. Labs, came to realize that software, up to that point developed through the same collaborative and open methodology through which scientific discoveries were made and distributed in an uncommodified form as a complement to the computer it was sold with, was starting to become closed, packaged and sold – no longer accessible for others to study, improve and distribute. Thinking that software – the code running the computing

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4 Clay Shirky, “Gin, Television, and Social Surplus”  
<http://www.herecomeseverybody.org/2008/04/looking-for-the-mouse.html/>

machines that will come to shape our societies – needs to stay open for everyone to study, improve and distribute for the benefit of their fellows, he initiated a project to create a free operating system that would incorporate four essential freedoms. Freedom 0 is the freedom to run the program, which is a freedom that in most cases comes unlimited with the proprietary software too. Freedom 1 is the freedom to study and modify the program, and the ability to access the source code of the program is a prerequisite for this freedom. Freedom 2 is the freedom to redistribute copies. Freedom 3 is the freedom to improve the program and distribute the improvements for the benefit of others, and the ability to access the source code of the program is a prerequisite for this freedom too.<sup>5</sup> These four freedoms – articulated in a legal document, a copyright licence: the GNU General Public License – have led to the creation of the free operating system GNU/Linux and free software applications such as Firefox browser, Apache server application and the OpenOffice productivity suite.

Equally important, these four freedoms have led to the development of the Free Software movement and a new form of social production without proprietary ownership: the collaborative production of free software works. The Free Software's ability to create indiscriminate freedoms for everyone, yet to deny anyone who would like to take those freedoms away from others by hoarding it as exclusive, private property, played a pivotal role in mobilizing the efforts of hundreds of thousands of developers from all over the world to volunteer and contribute their work to numerous free software projects. The Free Software's copyleft nature, where everyone can share and everyone can contribute, without having to fear that someone will come along and turn their work into a private property that can no longer be shared and no longer be accessible to its makers, created a model of collective, distributed, horizontally organized, participatively guided production previously unparalleled. For the lack of a better term, we will – together with Yochai Benkler – call this new form of social organization of production descriptively “commons-based peer production”.<sup>6</sup>

We should make an effort to fully comprehend the fundamental novelty this organizational model of production introduces. Economic science has traditionally known two principal models of economic organization – the first being production based on non-hierarchical, supply and demand driven action of individual actors in free markets, the second being production based on hierarchical command over collective action. The example of the first model is the free market; the example of the second is

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5 For more on the definition of Free Software see:  
<http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html/>

6 See: <http://www.benkler.org/CoasesPenguin.html/>, and also:  
[http://www.benkler.org/wealth\\_of\\_networks/index.php/Main\\_Page/](http://www.benkler.org/wealth_of_networks/index.php/Main_Page/)

the firm. But with commons-based peer production we are witnessing the birth of a third model, one that is at the same time non-hierarchical and collective.

We are witnessing this model emerging not only in Free Software production, but all over the networked information environment. Examples are numerous, some of them well known, some of them known only to those directly involved: blogs and the citizen journalism phenomenon, social networks such as MySpace, Facebook or Twitter, content-sharing websites such as Flickr, YouTube, last.fm, open access to scientific publishing, open patent-pools in biosciences, open courseware from the most advanced institutions of learning such as MIT, free culture production under Creative Commons licences, etc., etc. Probably the best known example is Wikipedia. Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia, collectively written and edited in more than a hundred languages by thousands of anonymous volunteers from all over the world, whose writing is motivated only by Wikipedia's sacred norm: a neutral point of view. Over the last five years, this effort of non-professional collective knowledge production has produced the largest encyclopaedia ever, larger and almost as accurate as the Encyclopaedia Britannica,<sup>7</sup> and has become the standard reference work for a significant number of users on the Web today. This has been achieved without anyone hierarchically coordinating the effort, without anyone owning the result.

The commons-based peer production model has introduced a fundamental shift in how people participate in the (information) economy. While the classical (information) economy was a consumerist economy with clear cut functions of active producers and passive consumers, this new model has created a production which is based on participation and collaboration of producers and consumers, conflation of their respective functions. And this is where artists and theorists see a potential paradigm to look into and up to in order to break free from the consumer economy's division between consumers and producers that the contemporary cultural production system has fallen victim to as well.

From the politico-economic perspective this new model furthermore produces a shift in the process of exchange. The exchange starts to shed its commodity form and increasingly takes the shape of exchange of knowledge. For example to use the GNU/Linux operating system often requires a demanding process of learning and communicating knowledge, and knowledge is ultimately the fundamental good travelling upstream and downstream between developers, coders, bug-fixers, documentation contributors and users. It is this knowledge exchange that is ultimately the driving force of Free Software production. And it is this continuum of

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7 <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7070/full/438900a.htm>

knowledge<sup>8</sup> – a continuum of knowledge, innovation and creativity flowing downstream and upstream between producers and consumers (difficult to tell those two apart) – that reduces the divide between producers and consumers and provides the framework through which to understand how this deep transformation is escalating into the larger context of cultural production.

### **Constraints of copyright regimes and private law reform**

The attempt to increase collaborative production without exclusive ownership, developed in the frame of the Free Software movement, into the larger context of cultural production has to start to circumvent the limitations that copyright regimes impose on the ability of cultural goods to be exchanged and built upon in the same way as the GNU General Public License was able to. The most comprehensive attempt to date to do for culture and science what the GNU General Public License has done for software are the Creative Commons licences.<sup>9</sup>

Creative Commons licences were designed to address three challenges of copyright regimes today. First, radical extensions of copyright terms and protections limit the space for collective creativity and reuse that form the foundations of cultural and scientific progress. In 1928, Walt Disney was able to use the plot of the comedy “Steamboat Bill, Jr.” with Buster Keaton, made earlier that year, to create his first Mickey Mouse film “Steamboat Willie”. If you wanted to do the same today, it would require a lot of money and an army of lawyers to clear the rights with the Walt Disney Co., or you could just leave the idea to your kids to realize once this film enters the public domain 95 years after its first release – provided the Walt Disney Co. does not manage to push through yet another copyright term extension act before those 95 years are over.

Second, in the age of analogue media, copyright was meant to regulate the activities of economic actors: the creation of physical copies for commercial distribution and sale, not the end uses of reading and sharing books which produced no copies. In the digital age, however, every use of a digital work creates a copy, making every use subject to copyright regulation. The direct effect of this can be observed in the restriction of user freedoms through digital rights management systems or in law suits brought by the music and film industries against users making available their files on p2p networks.

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8 The thesis on a continuum of knowledge as a move away from the economy based on commodity exchange I have explored at greater length in a short text that originally appeared in *Makeworlds*, No. 4, 2004. See: <http://www.makeworlds.org/node/96>

9 See: <http://creativecommons.org/>

Third, widespread access to digital creative tools and global telecommunication distribution allows authors to create on their own production and distribution facilities that could previously only be secured by the industrial organization of cultural production (although only the few could benefit from the cultural industries: for example, no more than 0.7% of releasing music artists make any money from record sales<sup>10</sup>).

To address the three challenges of copyright in the age of digitization and telecommunication networks, Creative Commons created a set of legal tools, enabling authors to easily license their works permitting users greater copying and reuse rights, while helping authors' works and recognition propagate more easily in the technological environment of growing access. All Creative Commons licences allow users free copying and at minimum non-commercial sharing, and some allow remixing rights, while ensuring authors proper attribution and optional restrictions on commercial distribution and remixing. Thus they allow authors to minimize legal obstacles to creative reuse of their works, abolish criminalization of users copying and sharing their works, and maximize their ability to self-publish and self-distribute benefiting their reputation and, consequently, principle revenue streams from live performances, commissions and commercial licensing.

In the environment of widespread access to digital technologies for creativity and distribution, an increasing number of creators and scientists want to seize the opportunity for their work to reach the greatest number of people, for other creators and scientists to be able to re-use it in their work and thus to make them recognized, popular and in demand. Yet, although many artists will claim that they approve of their audience sharing their works, their audience will be infringing as long as the author's permission is not explicitly stated in writing. Creative Commons licences are an attempt at private law reform aimed at providing authors with an easy way to express their permission in the form of a licence. Whoever receives a work under one of the Creative Commons licences can freely share it without infringing on copyright and can, should the author allow it, re-use it in their own work.

Since its start in 2003, Creative Commons has helped a global free culture movement emerge. The culture of sharing, and the principle of open sourcing and successful collaborative production models have gained traction among creators and innovators. The most prominent users of Creative Commons licences today include musicians, video makers, visual artists, institutions of higher learning such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology with open courseware projects, publishers of scientific journals, scientific laboratories releasing their data sets, large public media houses such as the BBC, Wikipedia, numerous blogs and blogging services, other

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10 See: <http://world-information.org/wio/readme/992007035/1078488174/>

social networking, user-generated content and citizen media services such as Flickr, Blip.tv, LiveJournal.

### **Creative Commons cases in Croatia**

Creative Commons licences have been localized into over 45 national languages and legal systems worldwide. One of the first localizations was into the Croatian jurisdiction. Since 2005 many individual and institutional users have adopted licences.<sup>11</sup> The first prominent user, which promoted the free culture before Creative Commons licences existed and was the foremost reason why Croatian Multimedia Institute has done the localization of Creative Commons in Croatia very early on, was the free content label Egoboo.bits with over 50 performing music and video authors and over 100 hours of music and video available online and CDs. Soon other institutional users followed: the largest Croatian blogging service Blog.org, the largest Croatian culinary portal Coolinarika, the publisher Katapult, Social Democrat Party for their blog, etc.

One illustration of a project using the Creative Commons licence in Croatia is the foodie portal Coolinarika.<sup>12</sup> It is a great example of a corporate service-providing facility for and benefiting from a community of very specific interest – cooking and recipes – that has recently introduced Creative Commons licences for its user-generated content. Recipes are not copyrightable works in themselves. Preparation of food relies on prior art and knowledge passed on through generations of known and unknown chefs. Basic modes of preparation reflect the material conditions of time and territory, cultural observations and practices, while recipes are often merely jotted down experiences of how food ingredients interact and not the strike of genius of some grand chef. For these reasons, there is no copyright over recipes – they are regarded as listings of substances and methods. However, there is copyright over the expression that is built on top of recipes – descriptions, stories, images, sounds that are inspired by the preparation and tasting of food. Creative Commons licences therefore allow users to share all that is built on top of those licences, which is in the case of Coolinarika user-submitted descriptions, articles and photos. Creative Commons licences thus complement the practices of sharing and recipe commons that are inherent to culinary culture.

The culture of sharing and reuse inherent in culinary culture is in many ways similar to the practices of sharing that have been brought about by the ability of the Internet to easily distribute digital content. Creative Commons licences were

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11 For adoption metrics of Creative Commons licences by jurisdiction see:

[http://wiki.creativecommons.org/License\\_statistics/](http://wiki.creativecommons.org/License_statistics/)

12 See: <http://www.coolinarika.com/>

designed to facilitate these practices of sharing and re-mixing through various Internet protocols and platforms in a legal way. A good illustration of how this can work between different communities, forms of expression and cultures can be found in the works of young Croatian experimental filmmaker Ana Hušman: “Meršpajz”<sup>13</sup> and “Plac” (“Market”).<sup>14</sup> In both of these films, which like many of her films are usually licensed under a very permissive Creative Commons licence, Ana Hušman deals with socio-cultural narratives around food and shows how “culinary” commons can be a point of departure for “free” creativity and collaborative work. Building upon her work, the Belgrade music group MistakeMistake has re-edited and re-purposed “Plac” to serve as a video for their hit song “Produ i”.<sup>15</sup>

These two case studies are exemplary for the process of adoption of Creative Commons licences in Croatia. The adoption started early and was amplified by two factors: an emerging community of digital creators adopting and advocating licences to suit collaborative forms of expression, and emerging user-generated media following the practice of user enfranchisement adopted by similar projects elsewhere. While the numbers of Creative Commons licensed works in Croatia has been growing dramatically, with an extremely high rate of permissive licences,<sup>16</sup> free content and free creative works are far from the mainstay of the Croatian cultural and media landscape. Mainstream media outlets are reluctant to adopt free content licences for reasons of their waning business models still generating revenue, while their users gradually defect to new user-generated formats. However, as they increasingly incorporate new user-generated media, they are entering an arena where it is becoming imperative to account for copyright of users over their own submitted content, for the ability of users to move their content across platforms and formats, and the ability of users to build upon the content of others. The more freedom and functionality they will create for their users, the longer their users will stay and the likelier they are to survive the big transformation underway.

### **Struggle over the future of the Internet**

The practices of sharing between creative communities on the Internet, both legal and illegal, conflict with the interest of copyright incumbents – culture and media industries – industries that base their business model on the scarcity of cultural goods and controlled access to information. However, with the global telecommunication networks and digitization of cultural goods, the days of that model seem numbered. The future seems to belong to those who will open content, who will make more

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13 See: <http://www.anahusman.net/video/merspajz/>

14 See: <http://www.anahusman.net/video/plac/>

15 See: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fv\\_jl5vWDus/](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fv_jl5vWDus/)

16 See: [http://wiki.creativecommons.org/License\\_statistics/](http://wiki.creativecommons.org/License_statistics/)

content available, who will offer more freedoms for users. As music futurologist Gerd Leonhard has suggested: music should be (ubiquitously available) like water. And the music business is coming to terms with this shift; this can be well observed in the fact that blanket licences with royalties and levies collected by collecting societies have become almost the only growing and expanding segment of the music economy.

Although the future might seem to belong to users, the chances are that incumbents might succeed in overturning the very technological foundation that has brought about the big transformation they might change the architecture of the Internet by forcing the Internet service providers to filter out certain protocols. However, this will put an end to much more than just the culture of sharing – it will put an end to the Internet that we know, the Internet of unprecedented freedoms of expression, association and media. That is what is at stake in the industry’s crusade against “piracy”.

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## **Access, piracy and culture: the implications of digitalization in Southeastern Europe**

**Jaka Primorac  
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Digitalization has triggered many changes in the last two decades. Prompted by globalization processes, the innovations in information and communication technologies (ICT), intertwining with the field of culture and media, have opened a number of questions in understanding the new nature of distribution, consumption and production of (cultural) goods and services. With the increased availability of tools of production and distribution, everybody is able to create, to present their work more easily and to find their audience. Apart from this, the emergence of “parallel worlds” based on differentiated and specific taste (diversified demand) appears as well, as Anderson (2006: 184) noted: “People are re-forming into thousands of *cultural tribes of interest*, connected less by geographic proximity and workplace chatter than by shared interests.” Thus, with the convergence of (tele)communication and information technologies, new possibilities for interaction are being established. These possibilities allow the swift flow of symbols across borders that cause (among other things) processes of hybridization of cultural forms and (local) cultural change. In this way, new forms of intercultural communication are being developed; new cultural identities are being (re)created and (re)defined through the impact of cultural diversity in the digital domain (Švob-Đokić, 2004, 2005, 2006; Cvjetičanin, 2006). All these changes in digital culture are occurring at such a fast pace that it makes the implications of the newly established conditions (including questions of privacy and free speech) difficult to assess – for the users as well as for legislators.

It is evident that, in order to be present in the virtual sphere, one needs to have access to digital technology and thus, to the content it holds. As Rifkin (2000) has shown, access to technology, to knowledge, to content, etc., is paramount in today’s globalized (creative) economy; who has the power to access this becomes crucial.

Thus, the costs and benefits deriving from access to digital technologies and to the content available through use of these technologies are also pertinent. It is important to be present in the digital sphere, but not only that, it is important to be connected in the right way so as to be visible to the larger number of participants in the digital sphere (Barabási, 2003).

Therefore, there are two levels of access that we have to deal with: on the one hand is access to the ICT infrastructure; and on the other is the question of access to (specific) content in the vast (and still growing) digital arena. The latter mainly concerns the diversity of Web content: the Web is a vast territory of materials, but we are accessing only a small fraction. In this respect, Barabási (2003) showed the importance of “nodes” and “hubs” (i.e. highly connected nodes)<sup>1</sup> for the description of success stories from the Web. It is not enough to be present in the virtual sphere, it is more important as to how one is connected, as the Internet is not so decentralized as it was thought in the 1990s (Benkler, 2006: 10).

With the swift development of the new technologies it can be noted that the current legislation with regard to digital content is lagging behind the development of its new ways of presentation and distribution. This is especially important in the light of the emergence of Web 2.0, that is based on users’ participation and user-generated content and services, for instance peer-to-peer (p2p) and Bit Torrent, as well as various social networking websites and tools (My Space, Facebook, Last.fm, etc.). Open source software, “general public licences” and Creative Commons licences, based on the idea of openness and sharing, are some of the responses to these new conditions. The success of open-source projects, such as Linux and Wikipedia, show us how far such an approach can lead in the newly established conditions. Just a few years ago these projects seemed utopian, but today they are running against the grain of their commercial counterparts.

The regulation of copyrights, especially with regard to the Internet, goes beyond state borders. Piracy<sup>2</sup> is present in all countries, but in differing degrees. In transition

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1 “Just as in society a few connectors know an unusually large number of people, we found that the architecture of the World Wide Web is dominated by a few very highly connected nodes, or hubs. These hubs, such as Yahoo! or Amazon.com, are extremely visible - everywhere you go, you see another link pointing to them. In the network behind the Web many unpopular or seldom noticed nodes with only a small number of links are held together by these few highly connected Websites. (...) The hubs are the strongest argument against the utopian vision of an egalitarian cyberspace” (Barabási, 2003: 58).

2 Piracy is usually defined as unauthorized usage of certain authors’ work - be it books, film, video, music, games, computer software or other author’s works, mainly through broader commercial distribution and sale of illegal copies of authors’ works. In this regard, we should mention the “fair use” principle which allows limited use of copyrighted material (without requiring permission from the rights holders) for the use of scholarship or review.

countries the piracy levels are high due to inadequate intellectual property rights (IPR) regulations, low purchasing power, etc. In this regard, if piracy is done for these reasons, can we talk about it in negative terms if it influenced the development of a certain society? In the light of the discussions on overregulation of the digital sphere, one wonders if the knowledge, information and creativity are going to be available only to those who can afford it, or are they going to be available to everyone? Moreover, how will the authors be paid for their work in such circumstances? How these issues can be reconciled in the fluid conditions caused by digitalization is a major concern. The fluidity of production and exchange in the digital arena is bringing new questions every day, and the interpretation of the current legal framework for the digital sphere creates paradoxes.<sup>3</sup> The interests of the authors, users and the (multimedia) companies are divergent and sometimes create paradoxical situations: the interest of authors is to be rewarded for their work, the aim of users is to access the content as quickly as possible and the companies want to gain the highest profit available.<sup>4</sup> Overregulation that is inadequate for the digital age stifles creativity and its development. New non-proprietary projects are influencing new developments, as Benkler (2006: 2) noted: “A series of changes in the technologies, economic organization, and social practices of production in this environment has created new opportunities for how we make and exchange information, knowledge, and culture. These changes have increased the role of nonmarket and nonproprietary production, both by individuals alone and by cooperative efforts in a wide range of loosely or tightly woven collaborations”.

It is not only important that the Southeastern European (SEE) countries<sup>5</sup> and their cultural sector and creative industries are present in the virtual sphere, but it is also significant how they position themselves and how they are connected. What is the level of participation of these countries in the global digital arena? Is there an adequate access and ICT infrastructure to provide the basic requirements for any

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3 For example, the case of student Jesse James who modified an intranet search engine: as the modified search engine resulted in pirated materials available online, Jesse was branded a pirate and was demanded by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for \$15 000 000 copyright infringements he actually did not make (Lessig, 2004: 48-51).

4 The latest experiment of the group Radiohead showed this very bluntly. To the horror of their media company, they released their new album digitally available to users for download for the price users were willing to pay: most of the users offered zero pounds/euros. The album was recently released in normal CD print with an exclusive booklet.

5 Where we talk in this paper of the region of Southeastern Europe (SEE) we are referring to the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). There are, of course, differences between countries, especially taking into account that three of them are already EU members. This article aims to describe a general trend in the region.

significant contribution from the citizens of these countries to (global) cultural diversity in the digital arena? How much has ‘piracy’ of cultural goods in the region influenced these changes? These were the main questions that prompted this research. In the following several sections we shall try to tackle these issues by outlining the level of access to information and communication technologies in the SEE region, the level of piracy of software and cultural goods in these countries and the expenditure on ICT and culture as such.

### **Access and ICT infrastructure**

The question of access to digital technologies is the core underlying issue for the increasing digital divide in the world, whereby the term “digital divide” denotes the gap between those who have access to digital and information technologies, and those who do not. Not only is the digital divide present in the countries of the so-called North and South (“global digital divide”), but it also occurs within the countries of the North and South.<sup>6</sup> There are trends influencing changes in this area: the lowering of prices of technological devices at the global level and, in parallel, the new initiatives that are emerging which aim to bridge this gap,<sup>7</sup> although this is happening slowly.

At the European level, the differences in access to digital and information technology among countries are also visible. According to Eurostat (2005), the “use of computers and Internet is highest in the Nordic countries – especially in Sweden and Iceland on more than 80% – while the lowest rates are reported in the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey)”.<sup>8</sup> This comes as no surprise, as the SEE countries, apart from having low GDP per capita, went through transition and social transformation processes as a result of changes in their political and economic systems.

To have a better insight into the level of access to ICT technologies in the SEE region Tables 1-3 below present data from selected countries (with the comparative data of the EU where applicable).

Table 1 gives the main information and communication technology (ICT) indicators in selected SEE countries,<sup>9</sup> in comparison with Germany as an old member of the EU. In the SEE countries the number of personal computers per capita is still low – ranging from 1 computer per 100 users (Albania) to 19 computers per 100 users (Croatia) which is still far behind Germany (60 computers per 100 users). Concerning

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6 As noted on: Digital Divide.org and Digital Divide Network.

7 For example, the One Laptop Per Child initiative, Project 50x15 and similar.

8 It should be noted that Bulgaria and Romania are not candidate countries anymore; this is an old quote from: Eurostat (2005).

9 Data for Macedonia was not available.

the number of broadband subscribers, the situation in countries of the region diverges, with those that have entered the EU (plus Croatia) having approximately 5 broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants, while in the other countries of the region the number is generally below 1 subscriber per 100 inhabitants for the year 2006.

**Table 1: Main ICT indicators for 2006 (per 100 users), in %\***

	Main telephone lines	Cellular phones	PC	<b>Internet</b>	Broadband
Germany	65.53	101.92	60.47	<b>46.67</b>	17.03
Montenegro <sup>10</sup>	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>44.34</b>	4.30
Croatia	40.22	98.11	19.42	<b>34.60</b>	5.53
Romania	19.44	80.45	12.96	<b>32.36</b>	8.18
Bulgaria	31.28	107.59	6.34	<b>24.38</b>	5.01
Bosnia and Herzegovina	25.28	48.25	5.43	<b>24.28</b>	1.02
Greece	55.52	99.62	9.17	<b>18.38</b>	4.38
Moldova	24.27	32.38	8.28	<b>17.35</b>	0.52
Albania	11.30	48.89	1.73	<b>14.98</b>	0.01
Serbia	25.91	63.29	16.19	<b>13.34</b>	1.16

**Source:** UN E-government Survey 2008.

\*Sorted by Internet indicator

Table 2<sup>11</sup> provides us with information on fixed and cellular telephony in the SEE region with comparative data on the EU-25 countries (total number), showing trends in the recent period. It demonstrates that the number of subscriptions to cellular telephones is constantly rising in all of the countries of the SEE region, while the number of telephone landlines is decreasing in Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro and is slowly rising in other countries. If this trend continues, the number of cellular phone subscribers will soon be at the EU level, which is especially

10 Data for Montenegro was taken from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) website.

11 This table is based on Table 11.1 taken from Eurostat (2007a). The data presented here differs in the countries defined as SEE countries in this article.

important in the context of the convergence of mobile technology and the new roles of the cellular phone – as a music device, photo and video camera, etc. This could open new dimensions of cultural production and consumption in the digital arena for the citizens of SEE countries.

**Table 2: Fixed and cellular telephony (thousands)**

	Number of main telephone lines				Number of subscriptions to cellular mobile telephone services			
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>EU-25(a)</b>	226 331	225 682	n/a	n/a	337 559	368 046	n/a	n/a
<b>Bulgaria (d)</b>	2 906	2 856	2 770	n/a	2 600	3 534	4 842	6 241
<b>Romania</b>	4 207	4 330	4 390	n/a	5 099	7 065	10 215	n/a
<b>Croatia (b)</b>	1 685	1 684	1 676	1 675	2 340	2 551	2 842	3 650
<b>FYROM</b>	793	723	733	670	366	608	998	1 216
<b>Turkey (c)</b>	18 915	18 917	19 125	18 973	23 374	27 925	34 736	43 631
<b>Albania</b>	220	255	n/a	243	851	1 100	n/a	1 220
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	903	938	n/a	n/a	749	1 050	n/a	n/a
<b>Montenegro</b>	187	188	178	178	479	418	484	543
<b>Serbia</b>	2 299	2 409	2 457	2 673	2 420	2 991	4 324	5 222
<b>Kosovo/UN SCR 1244</b>	91	93	n/a	n/a	342	n/a	n/a	n/a

(a) Break in series, (b) From 2002 to 2004 the number of main telephone lines presented is the total of telephone lines (analogue), ISDN lines and FGSM lines; for cellular: data presents the number of prepaid and postpaid users; (c) Data provided by the Telecommunications Authority, (d) for cellular 2004 estimated value; 2005, Data source: Communications Regulation Commission.

Taking this data into account let us now look in more detail at the trends in Internet usage in the SEE region in comparison to the European average. As can be seen from Table 3, the increase in the number of Internet users in the last 7 years (2000-2007) has been huge (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2000-2007) topped the list with a skyrocketing 18 748% and 13 471% respectively). Some of the countries of the region are getting close to the European average (such as Montenegro, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria, the last three already being EU members), while other countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia) are still lagging behind.

**Table 3: The growth of Internet use in Europe and in Southeastern Europe\***

	Population (2007 est.)	Internet users, latest data	% population (penetration of service)	% of total number of us- ers in Europe	User growth (2000-2007)
<b>Europe**</b>	801 821 187	348 125 847	43.4 %	100%	231.2 %
<b>Albania</b>	3 600 523	471 200	13.1 %	0.1 %	18 748.0 %
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	4 552 198	950 000	20.9 %	0.3 %	13 471.4 %
<b>Bulgaria</b>	7 322 858	2 200 000	30.0 %	0.6 %	411.6 %
<b>Croatia</b>	4 493 312	1 684 600	37.5 %	0.5 %	742.3 %
<b>Greece</b>	10 706 290	3 800 000	35.5 %	1.1 %	280.0 %
<b>Macedonia</b>	2 055 915	392 671	19.1 %	0.1 %	1 208.9 %
<b>Moldova</b>	4 328 816	727 700	16.8 %	0.2 %	2 810.8 %
<b>Montenegro</b>	684 736	266 000	38.8 %	0.1 %	n/a
<b>Romania</b>	22 276 056	7 000 000	31.4 %	2.0 %	775.0 %
<b>Serbia</b>	10 150 265	1 400 000	13.8 %	0.4 %	250.0 %

\*The table is based on the data provided by the Inter World Stats (2008).

\*\*Figures for "Europe" include all 52 countries of Europe.

On the other hand, although this increase in the number of users is rather high, looking at the penetration rates, there is still significant room for a further increase. As can be seen in Table 3, half of the SEE countries still have a penetration of Internet service of less than 20%, while in other countries it ranges around 30% (the span being from 13.1% (Albania) to 38.8% (in Montenegro)). This shows that the European level of connectivity to the Internet has still not been reached in all of the countries. When looking at the penetration of service, we can see that the use of the Internet is still limited to a rather narrow stratum of people in SEE countries.

The data presented above provides a general insight into the changing nature of digitalization in the SEE region. Although the usage of ICT is still low in comparison to Western EU neighbours, it is growing rapidly. This situation can also be partly attributed to the transition processes of the states in question where problems with adjustment and implementation of legislature in this field are still present. One should also mention the SEE region's poor overall economic position in the last decade (high unemployment rates, low purchasing power of citizens, etc.) which is an additional reason for the situation.

### **Access and piracy issues**

When speaking about the legislative framework in SEE countries it has to be noted that it is in the process of being harmonized with EU regulations so as to be in touch with current global trends. Intellectual property rights (IPR) are also included in this process. Nevertheless, piracy is widely present and there are significant obstacles to the implementation of the legal framework. As Ram (1999: 14) noted on the IPR situation in Romania: “Implementation problems stem from limited staff, limited knowledge of the law, and unfamiliarity with the type of rights it protects. Not only are police, prosecutors, lawyers, judges, and custom officers ‘absolutely unfamiliar with copyright issues’, according to the President of a copyright collecting society, but a prosecutor often does not continue with a penal case because they believe copyright infringement ‘has no social danger’”. This issue was also pointed out by the cultural workers in creative industries of SEE countries – they have to create their own forms of protection for their ideas and their work, as they will not be protected adequately by the current legislature and its implementation (Primorac, 2008: 34). In such a situation where the whole concept of intellectual property rights is not well known, understood or implemented, it is even more difficult to discuss it or make an adequate critique of the concept of IPR and copyright systems (where applicable) due to the changing conditions caused by further digitalization and the creation of new tools of production and distribution.

While in the West the debate on IPR issues has shifted away from the discussion on piracy towards discussion on the overregulation of digital content and on new models of its management and of distribution, etc., in the SEE region, the regulation of IPR issues is still to be significantly upgraded, especially the control mechanisms. This is an important issue in the light of the digital divide debate which is problematic not only in the SEE region, but in other countries going through transition processes as well. When speaking about piracy the argument is usually focused on the losses of revenue of a certain proprietor, i.e. software, but what should be discussed here are open alternatives for societies that cannot afford the commercial ones.

To have a better outline of the issue of piracy in the SEE region in the last few years, let us now take a look at the available data. In this context one could mention the data on software piracy as noted in the *2006 Global Software Piracy Study* (IDC), as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Software piracy rates and losses by country\***

	Piracy rates**			Losses (\$M)		
	2006	2005	2004	2006	2005	2004
Albania	77%	76%	77%	\$11	\$9	\$7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	68%	69%	70%	\$14	\$13	\$12
Bulgaria	69%	71%	71%	\$50	\$41	\$33
Croatia	55%	57%	58%	\$62	\$51	\$50
Greece	61%	64%	62%	\$165	\$157	\$106
Macedonia	69%	70%	72%	\$10	\$9	\$8
Moldova	94%	96%	-	\$56	\$44	-
Montenegro	82%	83%	83%	\$6	\$9	\$8
Romania	69%	72%	74%	\$114	\$111	\$62
Serbia	78%	80%	80%	\$59	\$95	\$85
EU	36%	36%	35%	\$11,003	\$12,048	\$9,786

\*Table is based on the 2006 Global Software Piracy Study (IDC).

\*\* "Piracy Rate" is the total number of units of pirated software put into use in 2006 divided by the total units of software installed.

**Losses:** The retail value of pirated software is calculated using the size of the legitimate software market and the piracy rate. The actual formula is: Value of Pirated Software=(Legitimate Market)/(1-Piracy Rate)-Legitimate Market" (BSA, 2006: 17-18).

As can be seen from Table 4, the software piracy rates in the SEE region are rather high, ranging from 55% to 96%, which is far above the EU average of approximately 35-36% in the 2004-2006 period. This indicates that a large amount of participants in the digital arena within the region are connected using pirated software platforms.

Concerning the sector of cultural goods – the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) data on motion pictures, records and music business software and entertainment software estimated trade losses due to copyright (Lange, 2004: 5). It showed that for the year 2004, Bulgaria was on the Priority Watch List and Romania on the Watch List, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Serbia and Montenegro were on the Special Mention List. In the 2007 report only Bulgaria and Romania appear on the Watch List.<sup>12</sup>

12 Countries on the Priority Watch List do not provide an adequate level of IPR protection or enforcement, or market access for persons relying on intellectual property protection. Countries on the Watch List merit bilateral attention to address the underlying IPR problems (bilateral meaning US and country in question), and the Special Mention List contains countries of specific interest for US intellectual property (see: IIPA data, accessed 2008).

Similarly, looking at specific branches of cultural production – the music industry as part of the creative industries of the region – Table 5 below shows us data on domestic music piracy levels in 2004.

**Table 5: Domestic music piracy levels in 2004\***

Country	Over 50%	25-50%	10-24%	Less than 10%
Europe	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Croatia</b>	Belgium	Austria
	Czech Republic	Cyprus	Finland	Denmark
	Estonia	Hungary	Netherlands	France
	<b>Greece</b>	Italy	Slovenia	Germany
	Latvia	Poland	Spain	Iceland
	Lithuania	Portugal		Ireland
	<b>Romania</b>	Slovakia		Norway
	Russia			Sweden
	<b>Serbia/Montenegro</b>			Switzerland
	Turkey			UK
	Ukraine			

Domestic music piracy levels are calculated as pirate units divided by legal units plus pirate units.

\*Source: IFPI, 2008 .

Although the table above does not give us data on all the countries of the region, one can note the trend, which shows that the majority of the SEE countries presented here have a high domestic music piracy rate of over 50%, while only Croatia has a rate lower than 50%.

Piracy as defined previously (organized piracy for commercial purposes) is thus very much present in the SEE region according to the available data presented above. On the other hand, what should be mentioned are the new models of digital distribution, promotion and exchange, primarily p2p, that are branded as piracy. The distinction has to be made. In this regard, we would agree with Lawrence Lessig (2004: 66) when he stresses "...even if some piracy is plainly wrong, not all 'piracy' is". Lessig stresses that there are questions raised by the p2p sharing as the latest "piracy" concern, but we need to understand it better before defining it as *piracy*. "For (1) like the original Hollywood, p2p sharing escapes an overly controlling industry; and (2) like the original recording industry, it simply exploits a new way to distribute content; but (3) unlike cable TV, no one is selling the content that is shared on p2p services. These differences distinguish p2p sharing from true piracy. They should push us to find a way to protect artists while enabling this sharing to survive" (Lessig,

2004: 66). Otherwise, if we take the usage of p2p shared material as piracy, then almost everybody using the Internet is a pirate, and an insurmountable number of lawsuits would appear. The practice has shown that p2p actually helps promotion of artists, the making of new content and new ways of creating (Lessig, 2004: 60). Furthermore, the power of peer production, distribution and filtering changes the economics of culture and commerce, as shown by Anderson (2006) in his work.

The alternative licences such as Creative Commons (CC), Copyleft and other similar licences, although present, are not well known or widely accepted in the mainstream cultural industries in the region, which creates certain confusion among cultural workers in the SEE region (Primorac, 2008: 34). This might come as no surprise as CC licences for some of the countries have not been promoted, or only recently.<sup>13</sup> Completed and developed licences are available for the jurisdictions of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Greece and Croatia, while for Romania the work on licences is still in progress. In this way when discussing the “alternative licences” with cultural workers in the region, one usually does not speak of such models as CC and similar, but about the self-made models of protection that authors develop so as to protect themselves and their work, as they cannot rely on the legislation being applied.

The data presented above show that, when talking about access and ICT infrastructure, one needs to stress that on a technical level participation in the digital arena in the SEE region has been in part through pirated software (as shown in Table 4). Part of the cultural goods in the region have been exchanged in this way (through the grey economy), through the diverse channels of distribution of these materials (i.e. through the sales of copied works on CDs, DVDs or cassettes) on the markets in the city, renting of CDs in CD shops, photocopying of entire books, etc. This is not only limited to the level of cultural consumption but to the level of cultural production as well – of mixing and matching of selected cultural materials. This issue is of interest in the SEE region (although it is not a specificity only of this region). It can be illustrated in relation to the SEE context through the welcome note of the Romanian president Traian Basescu to Bill Gates on the opening of the Microsoft centre in Bucharest: “Piracy helped the young generation to discover computers. It set off the development of the IT industry in Romania”.<sup>14</sup> This opens up discussion as to what can be defined as piracy and whether there are any other models available that

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<sup>13</sup> For Macedonia the licence was prepared for June 2007, and for Serbia in December 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Quote taken from Thomson (2007). Bill Gates of course did not answer this note, on the one hand as he is one of the severest advocates of copyright in the software business, but also because he knows that piracy promoted their products and thus made his success easier. In a period when he was not so strict on piracy issues he noted: “They’ll get addicted and then we’ll collect” (Piller, 2006).

governments of transition countries could take into account.<sup>15</sup> The “addiction strategy” (such as the above-stated Microsoft one) is not new in the business world, but the question arises – why not circumvent it with the use of open and free options (for example the Chinese used the free GNU/Linux operating system (Lessig, 2004: 65) instead of the Microsoft one)? The answer lies in enhancing the lobbying power of the creators and promoters of open-source models.

### **Expenditure on ICT and culture**

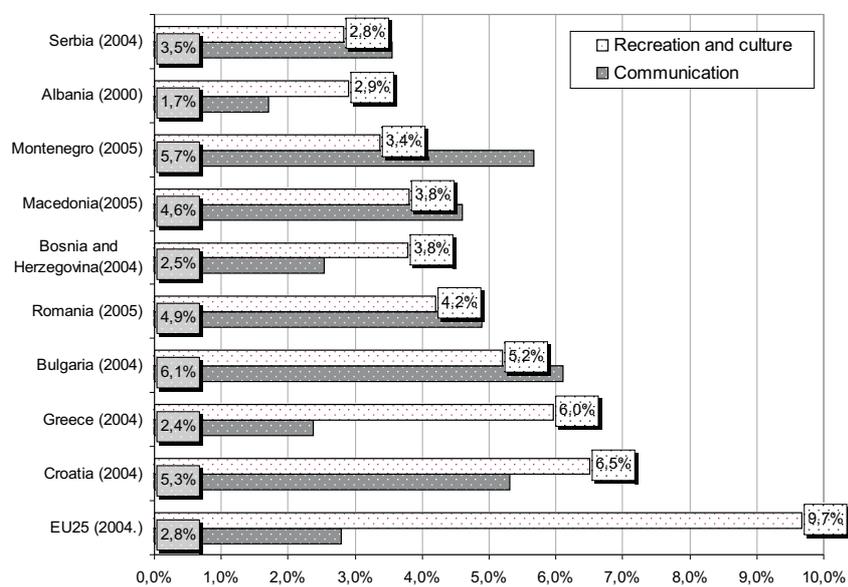
As has been noted in the previous sections, cultural consumption and production in the SEE region have been executed partly on pirated software, while a certain proportion of cultural goods have been exchanged through the grey economy. But how much do citizens of the SEE region spend on ICT and on culture? In the light of this enquiry, we will take a look at what the difference is between “recreation and culture” and “communication” at the level of household expenditure in the SEE countries (in comparison to the EU25). What is interesting is the difference between the EU countries and the SEE countries regarding the share of household expenditure on recreation and culture as can be seen from Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 shows that in the majority of the SEE countries (Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) the expenditure on communication is higher than the EU25 average. Also, in more than half of the SEE countries the household expenditure on communication is higher than on recreation and culture (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria). This can be attributed to the high prices of the services in the SEE countries. To be more precise, the most important impediment to catching-up with modern ICT development within the SEE countries is the level of prices of telecom services that matches the level within the developed countries in nominal terms, while it is considerably higher in real terms.

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15 For example, the Brazilian government (especially its Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil) is one of the biggest promoters of Creative Commons.

**Figure 1: Percentage of selected categories in total household expenditure\***

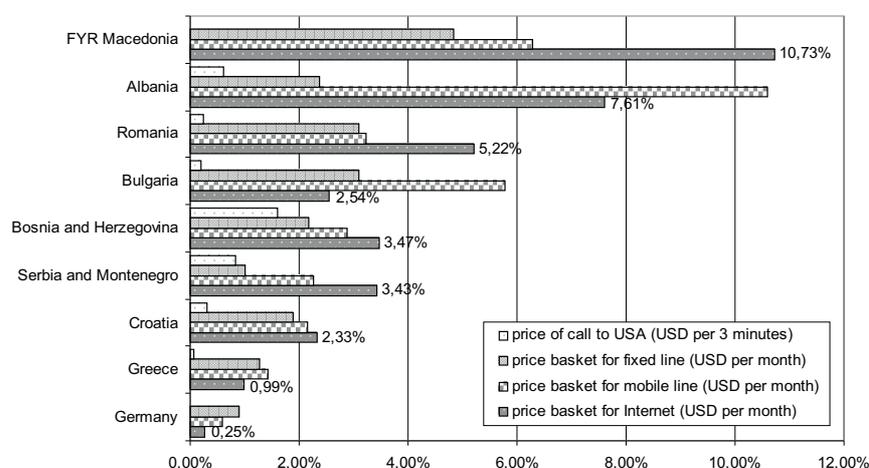


Source: Eurostat, National Statistical Offices

\* According to the international classification COICOP-HBS (Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose adopted for the Household Budget Surveys), 0.8. COMMUNICATIONS is comprised of: 08.1. Postal services, 08.2. Telephone and telefax equipment, 08.3. Telephone and telefax services; while 09. RECREATION AND CULTURE includes 09.1. Audiovisual, photographic and information processing equipment, 09.2. Other major durables for recreation and culture, 09.3. Other recreational items and equipment, gardens and pets, 09.4. Recreational and cultural services, 09.5. Newspapers, books and stationery and 09.6. Package holidays.

The following Figure 2 presents ICT prices, calculated as percentages of the (monthly) Gross National Income per capita in the SEE countries and in Germany.

**Figure 2: ICT prices (2005), in the SEE countries and in Germany (% of monthly GNI per capita)**



Notes: the price basket for fixed line is calculated as one-fifth of the installation charge, the monthly subscription charge, and the cost of local calls (15 peak and 15 off-peak calls of three minutes each); **the price basket for mobile** is calculated as the pre-paid price for 25 calls per month spread over the same mobile network, other mobile networks, and mobile to fixed calls and during peak, off-peak, and weekend times (includes 30 text messages per month); **the price basket for Internet** is calculated based on the cheapest available tariff for accessing the Internet 20 hours a month (10 hours peak and 10 hours off-peak; the basket does not include the telephone line rental but does include telephone usage charges if applicable); **the price of a call to the United States** is the cost of a three minute, peak rate, fixed-line call from the country to the United States.  
 Source: World Bank (2005).

It is evident that the use of ICT accounts for a considerably higher share of income in the SEE countries than in the developed countries. The Internet basket price in Germany is a mere 0.25% of monthly gross national income (GNI) per capita, while ranging from 1% in Greece to more than 10% in Macedonia. There is also a similar relationship between the other ICT prices. For instance, while 3 minutes call to the US accounts for 0.01% of monthly GNI in Germany, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the same figure stood as high as 1.61%. The presented data indicate that in the SEE

countries ICT usage may still be considered as a luxury and not as an inexpensive option for contributing to national and global cultural production.

On the other hand, what is interesting is that the household expenditure on recreation and culture in SEE countries is lower than in EU countries. This can be attributed in part to the already discussed finding that cultural consumption is partly oriented to pirated (cultural) goods and software, and thus expenditure on these goods is lower, though we must also realize that these articles (CDs, DVDs, etc.) are also expensive for the average SEE citizen. The lower expenditure on recreation and culture could also be attributed to the existing market of cultural goods and services, but also to the priorities for household expenditure in the SEE region (general low expenditure power). Thus, it could be expected that with the increase in living standard in the region and decreasing prices of communication, a higher amount of household expenditure could be dedicated to recreation and culture and thus the piracy level might be expected to decrease.

**Table 6: Use of the Internet for cultural purposes in 2006 (% of individuals who used the Internet in the last three months)**

	Reading/ downloading online newspapers/ news magazines	Playing/ downloading games and music	Listening to Web radios/ for watching Web television	Training and education	Other communicat- ion uses (chat sites, etc.)
<b>EL-Greece</b>	48	39	19	32	10
<b>BG-Bulgaria</b>	47	48	43	29	59
<b>EU-27</b>	35	34	22	35	33
<b>MK-Macedonia</b>	29	51	19	24	37

*Reading note:* In EU 27, 35% of individuals who used the Internet in the last three months used it for reading/downloading online newspapers/magazines.

*Source:* Eurostat (2007b).

The use of the Internet for cultural purposes in the selected SEE countries is showed in Table 6.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that for each country presented, one specific but different use of the Internet dominates for cultural purposes. In Greece, 48% of individuals who used the Internet in the last three months used it for reading/downloading online newspapers/news magazines; in Bulgaria, 59% of individuals who used the Internet in the last three months used it for other communication uses (chat sites, etc.); and in Macedonia, 51% of individuals who used the Internet in the last three months used it for playing/downloading games and

<sup>16</sup> The data for all countries was not available.

music. Thus, the use of the Internet for cultural purposes differs from country to country, highlighting the diversification of the cultural content on the Internet, as well as the interest of users for cultural content and services. What is accessed on the content level (global or/and local content) still remains an issue to be researched. In this regard, due to the current difficult economic conditions in the SEE region, what is most important is that users in the region have some kind of access to the (global) digital arena – to present their cultural content and to be introduced to the already existing one.

## **Conclusion**

The digitalization processes during the 1990s have opened up enthusiastic discussions on the egalitarian properties of the Internet and the Web. The last decade has shown the other side of digitalization – the great digital divide, possible breaches of privacy and the issue of control. “Who’s gonna monitor the monitors?” reappears as an important question. The current data on digitalization in SEE countries show us that these countries are still not as developed in their ICT access and infrastructure, and therefore in access to (cultural) content as well. The new technologies are still used by a limited number of people in the SEE region. The growth of Internet users in the SEE region in recent times has been exceptionally high, but there is still room for further development. In addition, looking from the aspect of household expenditure, the costs of communication services in SEE countries are high in comparison to EU countries. This creates obstacles to better connectivity to the digital arena for participants from the SEE region, as ICT usage can still be considered as a luxury for SEE citizens. In this way, this also contributes to the piracy level, which is still higher in the SEE region than in Western Europe. This means that a certain amount of participants from SEE countries that are active in (global) digital culture use pirated platforms. They also consume cultural goods distributed on pirated materials. Additionally, those authors working in the creative industries of the SEE region have problems with the implementation of legislation connected to intellectual property rights in their respective countries. The alternative licences for open software and creative exchange have just started to be implemented or to be taken as a valuable alternative. Such licences could be an answer to better connectivity and participation of SEE countries, i.e., the orientation towards open-source software and sharing platforms. If applicable, these issues should be discussed at the policy level of the governments in question.

It should be stressed that the notion of piracy here has to be rethought, to take into account the new context that ICT brings, so that those new possibilities could be embraced and used to their full potential, enabling sharing and other forms of online cooperation, but, at the same time, finding ways to protect authors. Although the SEE

region still has to regulate the IPR area it should be taken into account that overregulation brings its own pitfalls.

Thus, the changes in the digitalization field in this region are particularly swift, and there are a number of participants from the SEE region who are able to communicate in the digital arena in cultural exchange. With further economic developments in these countries, as well as through changes in IPR implementation and the introduction of Creative Commons, the level of access to ICT will broaden and the SEE countries will be more present in the digital sphere. New tools of distribution and exchange of digital content such as p2p, etc., should be taken into account as well. Nevertheless, as noted, the Internet is not as egalitarian as it was once thought. At the next stage we should think not only about whether we are connected to the vast inventory of the Web, but also how we are connected in it.

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## **Copyright and the digital age: a *contradictio in terminis***

**Joost Smiers**

Copyright is in its declining days. Even massive criminalization of users of artistic materials does not work any longer. The billions and billions of dollars and euros invested in cultural industries are on the brink of vanishing into thin air. There is hard work to do to avoid an economic catastrophe which is due to the concentrations, the mergers and the monopolistic control of copyright, one may say the bad habits of a sector in our societies that even destroys our freedom of expression.<sup>1</sup>

A radical change in the conditions for the production, distribution and promotion of artistic and cultural expressions is necessary. The Creative Commons, as proposed by Lawrence Lessig (Lessig, 2002, 2004) is not even a shadow of an answer for the dangerous economic and cultural situation for which we have to find a solution. Why not? It does not address four important topics. It does not say how artists and their producers can make a living in a system that is based on sharing. That is nice for people who have a rich aunt or uncle, but we should have the responsibility of caring for the income of cultural workers. Most of them, even in the present copyright system, do not get a fair remuneration for their work. So, our responsibility for them, for their income, should be high on the agenda. The second failure of the Creative Commons is that it still believes that artists should be the owners of their expressions. In no culture, anywhere in the world – except in the Western world, up until only a couple of centuries ago – did “ownership” of cultural expressions exist (Bettig, 1996; Boyle, 1996; Brown, 2003). It was just not imaginable; imitation was a more accepted

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<sup>1</sup> Viacom, the owner of MTV and Paramount, demanded that YouTube pay one billion dollars for missed copyrights and is bringing this case to court. Google bought YouTube for 1.65 billion dollars. Every day we see such kinds of figures pass before our eyes. We see an industry where fabulous amounts of money have been invested and lost because of copyright issues.

way. With digitization this is more than ever a possibility that is unstoppable (Lessig, 2002; Litman, 2001; Schiller, 2000; Vaidhyanathan, 2001).

In this sense Creative Commons has a lot in common with the opposite movement that is coming from the cultural industries. They would also like to completely control the use of artistic works in the digital field, in their case by offering potential users contracts of use: licences, which they try to enforce through systems of digital rights management. It is interesting to observe that two, seemingly opposite, movements prefer to control “their” works of art in all aspects. The industry by obliging users to obey their licences (though if it works is another question); the Creative Commons by taking the ownership that copyright gives them and then by controlling use through different kinds of licences. What is alarming is that the industry as well as Creative Commons is leaving the copyright system (which cared, at least in principle, a little bit for the public interest through exceptions like fair use) and replacing the protection they would like to have with contract law. This is what user-licences are doing: this is the contract of use, take it or leave it.

The third missing point of the Creative Commons is that it cannot imagine that totally different market relations can exist in a world without copyright where artists and their producers can make good money from their work. I will explain in this article how this could function. The fourth, and most serious blind spot in the analysis of the Creative Commons is that it does not address the problem of the existence of huge monopolistic enterprises in all sectors of the arts – music, film, books, design and, increasingly, in the theatre and the visual arts – that control what will be produced, what we will see, hear and read, and in what kind of ambiances we will enjoy them. This control is harming democracy and is really a threat to our human rights relating to free communication (Bettig, 1996; Bollier, 2003; Boyle, 1996; Coombe, 1998; Drahos, 2002; Lessig, 2004; Litman, 2001; Vaidhyanathan, 2001). The Creative Commons is a tool for, what I cynically call, the “coalition of the willing”. However, Disney and those other cultural superpowers will not put the works they “own” in the Creative Commons!

The solution I propose has two aspects: the complete abolition of copyright and, at the same time, that the cultural monopolists should be cut into small pieces. Let’s first have a look at what will happen if we do abolish copyright, while bearing in mind that at the present moment the system is losing its legitimacy and that every day it is becoming more difficult for the cultural industries to maintain and enforce copyright; digital rights management is also a game full of failures.

We should realize that copyright is simply a protective layer of armour around a work of art. At the same time we should not forget that artists, and their agents and producers, are entrepreneurs. What then justifies the fact that their work receives vastly more protection – i.e. long-term monopolistic control over their work – than

the work of other entrepreneurs? Why can't they simply offer their artistic work on the free market and try to attract buyers?

Let's try to predict what would happen if copyright were abolished. One of the first effects would be intriguing: all of a sudden, it would be no longer interesting for large cultural industries to focus so heavily on best-selling books, blockbuster movies and superstars. Why not? In the absence of copyright, these works can be freely enjoyed and exchanged by anyone. Thus, the cultural industry giants lose their exclusive rights to works of art. As a result, they will also lose their dominating market position which keeps so many other artists out of sight. The market would become normalized, which would enable many, many artists to show their work, make themselves known, and make a fair income from what they produce. For most of them that will be for the first time! This income initially results from being the first in the market with a specific work. But there's another factor contributing to the artists' success. A more normalized cultural marketplace will offer more artists an opportunity to build a *reputation*, like a brand name, which can subsequently be exploited to sell more works at a higher price.

Before discussing some questions that may arise when we realize that with digitization works can be multiplied very quickly, we should first focus our attention on the monopolistic market position some cultural industries have. In general we should be more active in breaking down dominating market positions by using competition policies. Neoliberalism implanted in our head the wrong and harmful idea that we may not put strict limits on the size of enterprises in our societies. However, concerning the most sensible field of cultural expressions we may not tolerate that there are only a few corporations, and their stockholders, that control our common field of cultural communication. As previously said, democracy and the human right of freedom for everybody to communicate and participate in the cultural life of our communities is at present in danger. Four music conglomerates control 80% of the music that circulates in the world; there are just a few film and publishing groups that have a massive interest – production, distribution and promotion – in cultural markets; and most of them are even horizontally and vertically linked to each other (Doyle, 2002; Towse, 2000, 2002).

So, what can be done? Abandoning copyright would remove one major support from the dominance of our current cultural industries, but this does not necessarily mean that their dominance would end. Established industries would still hold the means of large-scale production, distribution and marketing of cultural goods and services in a firm grip; this is one of the reasons for their current success: keeping total control over artistic works from the source to the end consumer, and this distribution model is what largely determines which films, books, theatre productions and image materials we can enjoy. Therefore, the cultural market should be subjected to

competition law with a strong cultural bias. Cultural industries must be made substantially smaller, so that no enterprise could have a decisive influence on what we will see, hear and read.

Therefore, we should investigate all corners of the cultural market and report which enterprises are present: what is their size, what are their horizontal and vertical links, what is their market share, and what is their market behaviour? When we have this precise knowledge we should establish norms as to what the limits are and how we can effectively cut enterprises that are too big and market-dominating into much smaller units. Obviously, we should not be afraid to do this. It is a neoliberal misunderstanding that markets flourish better the more unregulated they are. However, it might be disappointing to hear: never and nowhere in history have unregulated markets existed. And is the World Trade Organization not a big circus that regulates markets in such a way that huge enterprises, mostly coming from the Western world, dominate the globe?

If the market is a level playing field – control through copyright and market dominating positions no longer exists – many artists and their producers could do very well, even in the digital era. Musicians will make most of their money from their concerts and it is likely that people who love their music will pay for the CD or for downloading their work. They will not be pushed outside the public attention any longer by the marketing efforts of the four major music conglomerates. Another example: a writer will make a contract with a publisher, as is the case now. The publisher then publishes the book. Of course, the next day another publisher could publish the book as well, but is it likely that this will happen? Of course not. The same day thirty or forty other publishers could do the same if copyright does not exist any more. But, because no enterprise has a dominating market position, it is not attractive to engage in this sort of investment. Let's imagine that it nevertheless happens that one publisher would take the risk. In order to market the book, this publisher needs the support of the writer for publicity. In the case of a second publisher, it would be harmful for his/her reputation if the writer announces that he/she didn't get any payment.

Artists should not worry that they will not get a fair remuneration for their work and that it will be "stolen" from them. Two concepts come to mind when we consider their position in a world without copyright. First, it is not likely that this "stealing" will happen because no enterprise will have a dominating market position. The second concept is reputation. Whoever steals all the time will be shamed publicly. We are coming closer to a society where we do not go to court for everything. The price is simply too high to pay a substantial part of our earnings to lawyers. This means that practices of shaming and the destruction of reputations for bad commercial behaviour – informal law – will become more powerful.

So, we can identify an essential change in behaviour: if there are no enforcement mechanisms, evidently other mechanisms – like reputation building and the shaming of reputations – will become more effective. Enterprises have an inherent need to keep markets workable. That is also in their obvious self-interest. This reality confirms our analysis that reputation and shaming will have a stronger position in the proposed new market relations. If there is no copyright, then other mechanisms to keep markets viable will replace the legally binding (but for most artistic enterprises ineffective) intellectual property rights.

This might be true, and it will become true. However, with respect to the reality that cultural markets are heavily embedded in the global economy, we must recognize that in those contexts a defence mechanism like shaming might not be sufficient. This brings us back to the fundamental question as to whether many, many artists – and their producers and other intermediaries – can make a living from their efforts. Let's analyse more precisely what is going to happen in a market without copyright where at the same time market-dominating positions no longer exist in the fields of production, distribution and promotion of cultural expressions, including all forms of entertainment.

As always in history it will happen that some artists attract much more attention than many others. For reasons of the quality of their work or because they have the right gimmick at the right moment? Who knows? For our argument this is not of any interest. The consumption and reception of the arts is, and always has been, a social event that produces bandwagon effects. The rumour goes around that the work of a certain artist is the event of the day – why? – and the buzz snowballs. More relevant for our argument is whether such a “discovery” will become a best-selling artist as could happen nowadays. The answer is simply: no. Why not? Let's remember, again, that we have decided to cut the big cultural industries into many pieces. Obviously, this has far-reaching consequences. One of them is that no cultural enterprise has the marketing clout and potentiality to turn a *well-selling* artist – the discovery of today – into a global star, a *best-selling* artist.

This reality is hugely different from the current situation. In the new situation no enterprise has the size to spend such incredible amounts of money on marketing, and if there is one who would like to try, this enterprise will have to deal with considerable business risks. If matters really get out of hand, such behaviour and spending patterns will be condemned (and forbidden) as falsifying competition. In other words, the principle of winner-takes-all is losing ground and can no longer be effective in markets. This has the healthy effect that the exorbitant incomes of a few artists – a few best-selling stars – are downsized. Of course, a normal well-selling artist will still make a very good living, but will at the same time have significantly less income than presently is the case for the best-selling artists. This is a healthy development.

Currently, income distinctions in the cultural sectors are extremely skewed. Reducing these gaps is a more than welcome result.

Of course, it might happen that well-selling works are spotted by free riders, who start to bring the work onto the market more cheaply and without paying the original author and producer. Is this a problem? Not really. For the artist this copying will take place after she or he has realized a more than substantial income from his or her work. Moreover, the wider distribution of the work makes the artist more famous which contributes to her or his earning capacity from many different sources. For the general public, the distribution of such “white” copies of the work is good news, because the price will drop.

So far we have focused our attention on well-selling artists. Before putting the spotlight on lesser known artists, let’s examine the position of producers, publishers, music agents, etc. How does the alteration from best-selling stars to normal or well-selling artists affect their businesses? For sure, they will no longer harvest extraordinary revenues from stars. However, we must remind ourselves that only a few cultural corporations had the chance to do so in the first place. In the newly proposed market structure there are no longer powerful corporations that can create worldwide best-selling stars. What we will find in the market, therefore, are medium-sized and small enterprises. Of course, some of their artists are selling well; if not, those enterprises would have a hard time to survive. These well-selling artists could be essential for their revenue stream.

However, of increased significance is the fact that, under the new conditions, the middle segment of their artists will sell relatively better than before, in the old situation. In this middle segment we can find those artists whose financial results mostly balanced around break-even, or maybe a little bit above. With the radical change we propose, their financial position will improve considerably. For many of them their sales will improve – probably not to the same level of well-selling artists, but in any case much better than before. As stated, they will not be pushed from the public eye by a few stars that dominate the screens, the bookshops and the theatres.

This changed reality makes the position of many artists much, much stronger. At the same time this positively affects the financial position of the enterprises that produce or represent them. Cultural enterprises will no longer be dependent for their financial results on a few stars. They will have the possibility to generate their revenues from a broad layer of artists in the mid-segment who are doing substantially better than before. At the same time, it is not to be expected that global free riders will copy the work of those artists without remunerating them. Their turnover is not of great enough interest to (what we before labelled as) “pirates”. The accumulated turnover from artists of the middle segment will become the cornerstone for the flourishing of many more cultural enterprises.

This improved financial position makes it possible for cultural enterprises to cover the unavoidable losses from some of their artists. In no imaginable situation will every artist reach the point of break-even. There are always risks involved. Under the new conditions a substantial variety of medium-sized and small cultural enterprises can exist in a profitable way, and can pay their artists a reasonable amount of money. From a cultural and an economic viewpoint this is a more than welcome development. Apparently, a vibrant cultural world can exist without the copyright system, but under the strict condition that there are no market-dominating forces.

At the same time, we should be realistic. It will never be the case that all artists can make a living from their efforts, and sometimes this is not related at all to the quality of their works. This is a centuries old phenomenon. There is always more supply than demand, and the development of taste in cultural markets is a rather volatile process. This reality will not be “outlawed” by the introduction of new, fairer market relations. It must be feared – or enjoyed? – that through digitization and the Internet the number of active artists may even grow.

For them it is hard work to find audiences, but that is no different from the huge efforts that artists had to make to be visible in the old analogue world. Beside YouTube and MySpace, there are new digital platforms and sites developing that specialize in selected kinds of music or films, for instance. Artists try to get the support of friends and aficionados, who contribute, financially, to the production of certain works. Such kinds of direct relations are something we will see growing. Artists and their medium-sized and small entrepreneurs are developing new business models. For instance in the field of music, the concert will become the most important money earner. The CD will still exist and it will be promoted or sold after concerts, in specialized networks and/or on the Internet. There, people who love the work of this specific musician will pay accordingly. Why not, if you feel attached to this specific musician? It is of the utmost importance that a research institute should take upon itself the task of investigating what different kinds of new business models are developing. Such an exploration would be fascinating in the first place, but most of all of great use for the free development of the arts in the digital domains. Now is the chance, with digitization, to get rid of the dominating control by cultural industries of our cultural landscapes. Let us not lose this momentum!

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**PART TWO**  
**CONCEPTUALISING POLICIES FOR DIGITAL CULTURE**

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## **Challenges for cultural policies: the example of digital culture**

**Biserka Cvjetičanin**

Who still remembers the first comparisons of cultural policies that were undertaken in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s? It was a result of a French and Swedish initiative launched within the framework of the Council of Europe's activities in cultural policy, aiming to carry out a comparative research and evaluation of their cultural policies (Girard, 1982; Wangermée, 1988; Myerscough, 1989). This project has shown that comparative research of cultural policies of several countries can highlight important issues, such as the development of cultural practices in different countries in a given period, cultural priorities, the overall level of cultural investment in comparison to other countries, and the investment into particular cultural sectors. These comparisons could be used as one element in the decision-making process regarding the orientation and the development of the cultural policy. Although comparison and evaluation of cultural policies later became an important aspect of international cultural cooperation, these early studies showed that international cooperation in itself had no place in cultural policies and was not, therefore, the object of analysis or research, these being focused more on the development of cultural practices and investment in the arts and culture. Some twenty years later, the situation is completely different: one could almost say that everything concerning cultural policies has become international, that there are no issues without an international dimension. The dynamics of communication penetrate into all aspects of cultural policies, as is evident from the European cultural policy (Littoz-Monnet, 2007).

Cultural policies today focus on two questions: cultural diversity and intercultural communication. Why?

### **Cultural diversity and intercultural communication**

Our world is becoming more and more interdependent and there is a rapid development of new and multiple approaches to cultural diversity, aiming to promote cultural specificities as the basis for intercultural communication. The processes of globalization have intensified not only the transnational exchange of cultural goods, media products and information, but also transnational migration. UNESCO statistics indicate that 175 million of our planet's inhabitants live in a country other than the one they were born in (UNESCO, 2005). One in every ten people in the developed regions of the world is a migrant. One has to add to this a growing mobility, above all among young people, owing to the European Union's *Erasmus* and *Erasmus Mundus* programmes (more than a million students have already taken part in these programmes), as well as an increasing artists' mobility thanks to efforts undertaken by cultural networks and portals (for instance, *on the move*). Through their openness, their non-hierarchical, horizontal and flexible character, these networks support cultural diversity and facilitate intercultural communication. Questions concerning cultural diversity, as well as those concerning instruments of cultural policy, were previously essentially linked to the problematic of minorities (the "multicultural mosaic") at the national level. New dynamic forms of mobility and transnational migration have created new links and ways of exchange and cooperation, and have developed new expressions of cultural diversity, especially in the urban and metropolitan context. These transnational and transcultural forms of diversity represent a new challenge for cultural policies (Robins, 2006).

Cultural diversity "is nurtured by constant exchanges and interaction between cultures" (UNESCO, 2005). Today, it is impossible to deal with the European and worldwide dynamic of cultural diversity without referring to intercultural communication and dialogue. Intercultural communication is a dynamic process of interrelations, of transmission and exchange of cultural values, as well as of interaction between different cultures under the impact of information and communication technologies. The management of cultural diversity poses itself as a necessity before the global community, and can only be approached through flexible and tolerant intercultural communication. This is why, like cultural diversity, intercultural communication is a new challenge for cultural policies.

### **Change and digital culture**

The third challenge for cultural policies relates to digital culture. The development and rapid changes induced by the information and communication technologies complexify the approach to cultural policies. Digital culture "has been produced out

of the complex interactions between heterogeneous elements”, such as postmodernism, post-avant-garde, punk etc. (Gere, 2002).<sup>1</sup> Digital culture is not transforming only our world, but also the way that we understand this world. It is “un séisme dans la culture” [a cultural earthquake] to quote from the title of the book by Marc Le Glatin (Le Glatin, 2007). Digital culture reduces barriers and difficulties emerging in communication – primarily those linked to time and place – thus allowing people to adopt new forms of interaction and participation, above all those related to web 2.0 which “widen the experience of community by helping to connect with others who have different beliefs or backgrounds” (Mechant, 2007: 24). Castells’ scepticism, when he estimated that new technologies would for long exclude a great part of humanity from communication, is disputable (Castells, 1996), as even the least developed regions of the world are showing some progress in the use of these technologies (World Bank, 2007). Digital culture transforms the cultural field, encourages new forms of creative expression and offers a new perspective to intercultural communication: “Le courriel, les ‘chats’, les blogs insistent sur ce qui nous lie, au-delà de la géographie, du corps, de la couleur de la peau” [E-mail, chatrooms and blogs focus on what brings us together, irrespective of geography, body or colour of skin] (Dyens, 2008). Digital culture changes the relationships between actors. “Collaboration in the digital era” became a slogan for cultural institutions, above all for museums and libraries in communicating with their audiences (visitors and users). The audiences also became more creative. These profound changes mean that we not only have to re-think but also to re-invent several established concepts in the field of arts and culture.

Bearing in mind the transformations and challenges that digital culture has brought on, we have to ask what place it has in cultural policies. Is it possible and conceivable that digital culture can develop and bypass cultural policies which fail to recognise or understand it? We have to realise that, in the current state of affairs, most cultural policies in Europe do not give digital culture a particular space. There are some exceptions. The Flemish cultural policy has put e-culture among its priorities for the 2004-2009 period, with strategic objectives to digitize cultural heritage and encourage digital creativity (*Searching Routes*, 2008). The Netherlands have a policy document on e-culture since 2002, which explores the implications and possibilities of new technologies for cultural institutions and media (*Searching Routes*, 2008). *The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*, a major project set up jointly by the Council of Europe and ERICarts, puts digital culture under the heading of “New technologies and cultural policies” (4.2.8), in the chapter on “Current issues in cultural policy development and debate” (4.2). This analysis of 40 European

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1 Other terms are also used, such as cyberculture (Levy, 1997; Lovink, 2003), computer culture (Emerson and Forbes, 1990), e-culture (Dragojević, Dodd and Cvjetičanin, 2005), Internet culture (Porter, 1997), virtual culture (Jones, 1998, O’Regan, 2004).

countries and Canada shows that the digitization of cultural heritage, museums, archives and libraries is in the forefront, followed by the digitization of audiovisual documents and photographic collections. The field of “e-art” (digital artistic creativity) is rarely mentioned. According to the *Compendium*, only a few countries have adopted a strategy which, in the context of new technologies, includes digital cultural content (Finland, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Moldova, Slovakia), the most developed being those of Finland: *Digital Content Creation Strategy* (2007) and Great Britain: *White Paper on Competitiveness* (1998) and *Culture Online* (2002). Finland’s strategy defines digital content creation as “production of cultural, documentary, educational, research, entertainment and marketing content for the electronic media”. The key aim of the British *Culture Online* is to mobilize the resources of the cultural sector to enrich school education, particularly in subjects such as history, literature, music, art and design, strengthening new links between digital technology and cultural resources.<sup>2</sup> The Canadian strategy – *Digital Content Strategy* – which is not mentioned in the *Compendium* despite this country’s participation in the project, concerns cultural heritage, but also underlines the power of the digital content industry. Canada has also developed a Digital Culture Online Branch in the framework of the Department of Canadian Heritage with the aim of promoting policies and programmes concerning digital culture.

The analysis shows that, in the process of creation of a digital future, cultural policies are focusing their attention more on the digitization of heritage than on the emergence of a new culture where interactivity and convergence are becoming the main aspects. Now that museums and libraries, the cinema, photography, music and books have already become part of the digital revolution, it is high time to rethink the role of cultural policies. In fact, it is necessary to start “a process of deconstruction and refocusing of cultural policies” (Cowen, 2002). Aware of the importance of digital culture in strategies and cultural policies, the Council of the European Union, in November 2007, adopted a resolution on a European Agenda for Culture (Council of the European Union, 2007), which put digitization among five specific priority areas of action for the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the 2008-2010 period.

### **Interactive content: creators, users, consumers**

The study of interactive content, undertaken by Screen Digest, CMS Hasche Sigle, Goldmedia and Rightscom for the European Commission (European Commission,

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2 In this respect, we can highlight the creation of the first national virtual museum in Britain (the 24 Hour Museum) which is one of the five most visited cultural websites in the United Kingdom, see pp. 154-161 in this book.

2006), foresaw an impressive growth in the distribution and use of digital content (music, films, games, TV, publishing, radio) in Europe between 2005 and 2010, as shown in the following table:

#### Uptake of digital distribution/exploitation of content in Europe – Key figures

	2005		2010	
	m <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	m	%
Music (online and mobile)	196.3	2.0	1,794	20.4
Movies (VOD)	30	0	1,269	7
Games (online, mobile)	699	11.2	2,302	33.4
TV programmes (VOD and digital advertising)	4.5	n/a	689	n/a
Publishing	849	2	2,001	5.4
Radio	15	0.3	250	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,793</b>		<b>8,303</b>	

Notes:

a. Market size in terms of revenues

b. Percentage of total sector revenues

**Source:** Screen Digest, CMS Hasche Sigle, Goldmedia & Rightscom: *Interactive content and convergence. Implications for the information society, The Final Report 2006.*

As well as showing an impressive change in the technology platform and market orientation of digital content, this data also allows us to think of a strong increase in users. They devote themselves more and more to a participatory culture. Recent developments in the field of cultural consumption indicate that the users/consumers are not only increasingly demanding in relation to the culture they consume, but are also becoming more creative. This indicates a transition from simple, passive consumption of the mass media to an involvement with more interactive and creative content (Lessig, 2004). This user-created content (UCC) opens up new ways of communication and the very idea of participation is changing. The distinction between creators and consumers is becoming fluid. Individuals can “tell their stories”, produce cultural goods such as music and video, and transform the information and media content environment surrounding them (Benkler, 2006). The proliferation of content creativity is leading people to look for ways that they can participate and assert themselves in the production of culture and meaning (Tims and Wright, 2007). There is a new question for cultural policy in the creative age: “So, what do *you* do?”. The issues relating to the widening of audiences and the democratization of culture, which so preoccupied cultural policies in the 1980s, have changed considerably. The altered structures of participation and communication, active relationships built on exchange, have an impact not only on the way that

citizens and users express themselves but also on social relationships and society in general and consequently cultural sector cannot ignore these changes taking place.

The new and diverse ways for creation and distribution of content, as well as the interaction which develops between creators, users and consumers have an enormous effect at different cultural levels. For example, the effects of the long tail phenomenon can potentially heighten creativity or considerably raise the cultural level of a society. Some artists have become famous by using user-created content. To give an example from Korea, there is a cultural portal which contains more than 150,000 literature-related forums where classic and novel genres are created and commented on by amateur critics (National Internet Development Agency of Korea, 2006). On this subject, we cannot mention amateur critics without referring to the book *The Cult of the Amateur* by Andrew Keen, which foresees serious consequences of web 2.0 and focuses on the threat that this represents to our values. Keen summarises his ideas in his *Anti Web 2.0 Manifesto*, in which he highlights the fact that “the cult of the amateur is digital utopianism’s most seductive delusion which will have a destructive impact upon culture, particularly upon criticism” (Keen, 2007).

One of the threats lies in the fact that the three dimensions of time have been lost: everything is synchronised and there is no longer any distinction between past and present; the utopia of waiting has disappeared. We no longer live in time but in an infinite space. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* or the tragedies of Aeschylus are no longer the beginning of a cultural tradition, but run parallel to strip cartoons of Batman or to the adventures of Harry Potter (Solar, 2008). If it is true that the aim of a cultural policy is, to quote André Malraux, “de supprimer les barrières d’accès à la culture” [to break down the barriers of access to culture], then cultural policy should deal with the changes in communication that digital culture has brought about, as these phenomena will have decisive consequences for future cultural development and culture in general.

### **Cultural institutions in the digital age**

The whole cultural sector is going through changes in this digital age and, as we have already highlighted, cultural policies cannot continue to function as they have done in the past. In the future, a particular effort needs to be made regarding the new configuration of cultural policies in favour of digital culture, with an especial commitment, both nationally and internationally, to the creation of new forms of partnership at all levels: public, private and at the level of civil society. This presents profound challenges for the people working in cultural organizations. The work of the cultural sector and, in particular, of those cultural organizations acting under new conditions and in the process of becoming somewhat hybrid institutions developing

digital resources, needs to be defined in the cultural policies. The most valuable assets of these institutions being the content and potential of their work, they make use of information and communication technologies in two main ways: on the one hand in the sense of a presentation of content to users in the most adequate and efficient way, and on the other, in the sense of creation of new knowledge that they can transmit and develop through intercultural communication. This means that cultural institutions can no longer continue to function in their usual way with a “digital add-on”, in other words with a static presentation of their web pages. They should offer new ways of communicating their content to users, embracing their feedback and participation, and identify new concepts for interaction. Communication and cooperation in the digital age are becoming their basic way of working.

### **A case study: Connecting Croatia**

To reply to the question as to whether digital culture in Croatia is opening a new perspective on intercultural communication, a group of Croatian researchers have undertaken a study called *Connecting Croatia: public, private and civil cultural sectors in the digital space*. The study involved eleven Croatian towns, investigating to what extent they are developing towards “digital towns” and focused on the virtual presence and presentation of public and private cultural institutions as well as civil society associations in the cultural field. Three basic aspects of the digital content of the towns’ web pages were studied:

- the multilingualism of the content,
- interactive and multimedia content and
- online services.

Content presented in several languages is essential for the establishment and development of communication. The analysis showed that more than half the towns only had content in the Croatian language, therefore aimed at Croatian users. The language barrier is still a problem for the promotion of international communication. Interactive and multimedia content is still rare and is limited mostly to virtual museum tours and games. Online services with little multilingual content or interactivity are geared mainly towards the Croatian public.

The research showed that the digital resources of Croatian towns and the public cultural sector are not used sufficiently for the development of communication in the virtual space. As regards the private cultural sector, which includes cultural industries, their web pages are mostly static and have little interactive content. The situation is pretty much the same for the civil society organizations working in the cultural field, whose existence and role is not sufficiently recognised by Croatian society. In addition, most of the cultural organizations studied use the Internet to

advertise themselves but not to open up the possibility for interactive participation or communication at national or international levels with organizations and networks who are very active in the European context. Web 2.0 is not a concept widely embraced in the mainstream cultural virtual sphere in Croatia. Web 1.0 is still the prevailing logic in developing digital culture in Croatia.

Although these findings are modest, research has managed to grasp the changes that digital culture is bringing and which we need to be aware of in cultural policies. The presentation of towns is using new formats, the history and modern life of towns is being rethought, the field of cultural tourism is being redefined with the postmodern tourist in mind, and a new impetus is being given to creative industries. The answer to the question as to whether digital culture is opening up a new perspective of intercultural communication for Croatia could be positive but it has to be borne in mind that all these phenomena are happening on the margins of cultural policy or development strategies relating to digital content (except in the field of cultural heritage). Digital culture is considered as an add-on in the Croatian cultural sector, with a lack of innovative approaches in the European context.

## **Conclusion**

The traditional approaches to cultural policies need to change, since the transformations taking place are rapid and under these new conditions cultural policies can no longer keep operating in the same framework they did so far. An effort is needed for a 'new configuration' of cultural policies, encompassing engagement on both the national and international planes, in creating new forms of partnership on all levels – the public, private and civil society level, and embracing both spheres – real as well as virtual one.

Different aspects and consequences of digital culture are becoming the object of increasingly intensive analysis, but this is still being taken into account insufficiently in conceiving cultural policies. It is thus possible that cultural policies bypass these new phenomena. Digital space is a space where the development of resources, content and projects can be promoted, focusing on issues that affect the whole of the international community, such as the questions relating to the interdependence between cultural diversity, intercultural communication and digital culture. Cultural policy should not be missing from these issues. If cultural policy does not include digital environment more significantly, other fields of public policies (such as health and education policy, information economy policy) will also escape it in the future, deepening the lack of understanding for a pluridisciplinary and holistic approach to policy development and its position in the international scene.

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## **Digital culture in policy documents: the national(istic) perception of cultural diversity - the case of Slovenia**

**Vesna Čopič**

### **Introduction**

Digital culture holds many different contents, has many different dimensions and enjoys a wide repertoire of envisaged measures from various policies and political layers. It represents a change of paradigm since the information society is changing our cultural experience. New technologies are bringing new conditions under which cultural goods are preserved, produced, distributed and consumed. A high development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) usage in culture promotes new ways of creation, storage, dissemination, public exhibition, preservation and re-use of cultural content. Digital technology has conquered cultural production, post-processing and archiving. The integration of ICT in cultural processes does not mean only their technical support, it changes processes themselves. On the production side new technologies are changing established forms of art and creating new ones. Some fields like audio production have totally become part of the IT world while video is about to follow the same path. The development of infrastructure services and content is leading to the convergence of mobile communication, Internet services, and broadcasting, facilitating universal telecommunication services across the mass media (Internet, television, mobile phones). Building a quality website opens up an arts organization to a much larger audience. Cultural heritage, presently stored in museums, libraries and archives, that preserves the intellectual memory of society and humankind, has not only found the solution for its preservation in the digital environment but also a second life in relation to its users. Digitization, digital content, digital services and public accessibility to culture and the cultural heritage are crucial for the development of creative industries and tourism. They also provide a foundation for the direct application of digital cultural content in educational, training and lifelong learning

processes. ICT enables the virtual mobility of arts which have a great informative role at the very least.

Museums, libraries and other cultural institutions are eminently suitable and important locations for public access points, education for the information society and for access to it for all citizens. The new means of communication and the related expansion of media content is listed among a number of developments (others are, for example, migration flows, EU enlargement, globalization, geopolitical changes, etc.) that “have given intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and social cohesion a more prominent place on the political agendas” (Wiesand et al, 2008: 3).

In the digital age “new tools and technologies enable consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content” (Jenkins, 2002). They enable amateur producers to engage in cultural production that had been previously reserved for professionals only due to the demanding and expensive professional technology. Thus affordable digital technologies have opened entirely new possibilities for amateur film making and video production. Similarly, modern technological support empowers smaller cultural groups to organise their cultural life and communication, for example forming Internet groups based on shared ethno-cultural identity. Therefore ICT can contribute to the democratization of culture, meaning better access to the means for cultural production and dissemination. The Internet is a reservoir of diverse content and together with other new technologies of communication has greatly contributed to what is now frequently described as “multiple cultural identities”. The digital world is diverse in its very nature. Interaction within cyberspace offers new possibilities for connecting people. The new communication technologies help to overcome problems caused by the dispersion of new migrants. In the past, the territorial autonomy of minorities was in the foreground, while today it is being replaced by functional autonomy. If different associations – for example the associations of Macedonians or Bosnians in Slovenia – have new technologies at their disposal, they can implement the vision of collective autonomy despite dispersion. With functional autonomy, the individuals’ roles can be different; they can function as a vehicle of cultural identity wherever they may live. In this way, we are outgrowing the correlation between cultural identity and a certain territory, and thereby autochthonism. In such circumstances, a person can freely choose his/her cultural identity.

Nevertheless there are also voices stressing the more negative aspects of today’s digital age which is marked by the fear that a “capitalist deployment of technology serves mass deception” (Cox, Krysa and Lewin, 2004: 8). The increase in forms of production, by blurring the traditional divides between producers, distributors and recipients raises the question of how society will react to them and hence how we can sustain diversity of different cultural contents and expressions, and combine human

communication and economic production. Is digital culture an ally of cultural freedom or is “it simply that digital technology extends what Adorno and Horkheimer call *a rationale of dominance*”? (ibid.). Mass production requires identical needs which lead to standardization. In consumer driven society there is little resistance to this kind of majority decision, while minorities of all kinds – linguistic, ethnic, religious – are exposed to prevailing standards. Local cultural vitality is closely related to cultural rights which could be jeopardized by economization of cultural resources through the profit driven deployment of technology.

The socially optimal level of integration of digital technology in culture cannot be wholly ensured by the market which puts cultural policy on the political agenda at different levels. This article investigates how different policy documents deal with digital culture in Slovenia and elaborates the context in which intercultural communication and cultural diversity are understood in these documents.

## **Proliferation of strategic planning**

### ***EU driven production of national strategic documents***

The EU has indeed recognized the positive contribution that ICTs can make to the economy, society and to personal quality of life. Its policy framework for the period 2005-2010, *i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment* reflects the importance of ICT for the Lisbon Strategy.<sup>1</sup> This strategy builds on the eEurope initiative, which came to an end in 2005. The various actions such as regulation, funding for research and pilot projects, promotion activities and partnerships with stakeholders were envisaged in order to create a Single European Information Space with an open and competitive internal market for information and media services. There is a request for annual reporting which encompasses the analysis of developments in the ICT sector and of implementation of ICT objectives in the member states.<sup>2</sup> From the Lisbon Strategy, e-inclusion programmes, e-learning, e-content, the Lund Principles, Minerva activities and the eEurope initiative to the i2010 initiative, all of these also place emphasis on encouragement

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1 Already the *eEurope 2002 Action Plan* proposed programmes for creating national development plans and strategies of digitization in European Union (EU) member states. The guidelines for development plans were agreed in 2001 in Lund and were formulated as the Lund Principles and the Lund Action Plan. The “eEurope+2003” Action Plan aims to assist in accelerating reform and modernization of the economies in the candidate countries through the use of information society technologies and tools. It is mirrored in the *eEurope 2002 Action Plan* of the EU-15 but with additions and changes of the objectives, actions and timetable to reflect the economic and social situations in the candidate countries.

2 Due to the rapidly changing ICT environment, an updated strategy is to be presented on the basis of a mid-term review in spring 2008.

and preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity. ICT should play a major role in expanding cultural content and access to European cultural wealth. However, the idea of developing an information society in which “everyone can share” including marginalized and vulnerable groups (immigrants, disabled people, older generations, the unemployed and those who live in remote or economically disadvantaged areas) is linked more closely to social and economic policies than cultural ones. Thus, in its “European i2010 initiative on e-Inclusion – to be part of the information society”, which was adopted in November 2007, the European Commission (EC) calls on policy-makers to facilitate economic and social participation.

Others address cultural diversity more directly, such as the EC Communication on creative content online in the Single Market (COM (2007) 836) and the EC Communication on a European approach to media literacy in the digital environment (COM (2007) 833).<sup>3</sup> The latter explicitly refers to the Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008.

Therefore, EU activities and expectations are those that gave a strong impetus to the production of strategic papers for Slovenia relating to the information society, with the special sensitivity for cultural and linguistic diversity. The first Strategy for the Republic of Slovenia in the information society (Strategy, 2003) was a response to the eEurope+2003 document adopted at the Gothenburg summit. One of the major target areas concerned preservation and strengthening of citizens’ cultural identities through “creating cultural content and preservation of cultural heritage and language” (Strategy, 2003: 3). Cultural heritage, diversity and tradition were recognized as potentials which will lead to the development of individuals as well as of the economy as a whole. In the Action Plan there is no special chapter for e-culture: “creating digital cultural content and preservation of cultural heritage and language” are conceived as activities for the attainment of adopted objectives and are tackled in almost all of the chapters (Strategy, 2003: 14, 15, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29). The strategy defines as measures the digitalization of content and the provision of public access, the development of libraries as information centres and the establishing of multicultural information centres. As has been stated in the strategy, a lack of quality digital content on Slovenian websites is the main reason for Internet use lagging behind in Slovenia. This is even more true for multilingual digital content which should be published in the languages of national minorities, not only in Slovene and English. The weakest point of the strategy lies in the acknowledgment of its authors that the correlation between goals and funds is not given in greater detail. It is anticipated that its annual updating will become an instrument which will provide for better correlation between the strategy’s objectives and costs (ibid: 32).

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<sup>3</sup> They are taken as the starting points for the conference “Online Content for Creativity” in June 2008 in Slovenia.

Unfortunately none of these reports have been prepared, and the new government which started its mandate in November 2004 abolished the separate Ministry of Information Technology and included it in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

Another factor that initiated a need to formulate a new national framework strategy for developing the information society in Slovenia was the adoption of the new EU i2010 strategy in 2005. The national document followed in June 2007. In addition to the EU guidelines, the Development Strategy for the information society in the Republic of Slovenia (si2010) takes into consideration all relevant national strategic documents: Slovenia's Development Strategy for the period 2006-2013, the National Development Programme 2007-2013 and the Resolution on National Development Projects 2007-2023 since the development and efficient utilization of information and communications technologies represent key factors in achieving faster growth and development of the Republic of Slovenia. It is the first time that the basic national strategic document, Slovenia's Development Strategy for the period 2006-2013, has employed among developmental factors "to become a recognizable and distinguished country around the world" and includes the integration of the national identity and culture to achieve sustainable development among Slovenia's five key development priorities, with the fifth objective saying that national identity "should act as the backbone supporting its confident participation in global integrations" (Slovenia's Development Strategy for the period 2006-2013, 2005: 20).

This time the representative of the Ministry of Culture was included in the task force for the preparation of the strategy and the strategy itself has a separate line on e-culture under the heading of "Inclusive information society and the quality of life" where there are also subheadings dealing with other selected areas such as education, health, justice, transport and the environment, those which are currently relevant for the national priority tasks and guidelines. The structure and the goals of the national strategy comply with i2010 and follow strategic goals of EU strategy. In the three basic areas of implementing measures – (1) the Single European Information Space and Slovenia, (2) Innovations and Investments in ICT and (3) An Inclusive Information Society and the Quality of Life, culture is directly addressed in all of them. The key aspects for culture concerning the first area are broader accessibility for users and producers of culture to allow them access to broadband electronic communication networks and to enable transition from analogue to digital broadcasting, to offer consumers improved image and sound quality, better mobile reception and more television and radio channels (ibid: 32). The second basic area is important for culture due to its ambition to establish a suitable research and development environment. This should be equipped with appropriate infrastructure and support institutions including the establishment of technological platforms, as staff in the libraries and other cultural institutions have acquired considerable

expertise and experience through cooperation in several international research and development projects, which in the future will require better domestic opportunities (ibid: 37 and 38). Another contact point with culture in this area is to ensure the participation and quality cooperation of Slovenian partners in EU programmes allowing them access to EU budgetary funds (ibid: 28) As already mentioned, e-culture is included in the third basic area with a separate subheading with the following vision (ibid: 49):

“Ensure development and broad access to Slovenian digital cultural content as a foundation for increasing Slovenia’s international profile, creating added value in culture and related cultural industries, and contributing to knowledge for a better quality of life.”

There are several strategic goals and areas of activity predicted as follows:

Strategic goals:

- accelerating the process of digitization of existing analogue cultural content found in museums, libraries, archives, the media and art;
- introducing digital content, e-business and e-services for collaboration between cultural institutions and citizens and other information society organizations;
- participation in the European digital cultural area in the field of content, standards, protocols and digital rights management systems;
- exploiting Slovenia’s advantage in Europe – its small size makes it an ideal environment for experimental implementation of complex digital culture models involving material, legal, commercial and informational dimensions;
- ensuring the material, professional, legal and educational incubator support for creators and users of digital cultural art.

Scope of activity:

- ensuring adequate computer and broadband communications infrastructure for transmission, processing, long-term storage and use of digital cultural content;
- encouraging digitization of all types of cultural content through suitable documentation, development of Slovene language terminology and permanent storage of digital content;
- supporting the creation of digital cultural content and services, especially by SMEs and individual authors;
- continuing the development of the Slovenian Digital Library (dLib.si), Slovenian e-Archive and the national television broadcasting service’s multimedia centre;
- expanding the central cultural heritage register to include all segments of cultural heritage;

- establishing one-stop-shop Internet access for the entire range of Slovenian cultural heritage and culture, connected to the European digital library and other places storing digital cultural content around the world.

Economies of scale place smaller language groups at a disadvantage and threaten the preservation and promotion of smaller cultural spaces and their identities. To ensure a “socially optimal” level of development and usage of quality Slovene language e-content, adequate measures which could be defined as “appropriate” or “essential” for civilized society (Casey et al., 1996: 5) need to be taken by the public authorities. The Republic of Slovenia’s development strategy (si2010) followed this rationale and prescribed the following measures to be taken by the state (The Development Strategy for the information society in the Republic of Slovenia (si2010): 28 and 29):

- support the development of Slovene linguistic standards, translation mechanisms and collaboration to build a multilingual thesaurus which must include the Slovene language, among others;
- create and enforce the legal bases to consistently ensure the use of the Slovene language in the digital environment;
- promote access to multilingual content for all citizens of Europe in terms of achieving maximum inclusion, accessibility and increasing the quality of life;
- intensively develop new (original or translated/localized) Slovene language software tools (the Slovene language should not appear only as the content of databases, etc., but it should also be the language of computer commands, dialog boxes, menus, spreadsheet titles, etc.), computer analysis systems and programs for synthesized speech in the Slovene language.

What makes this document special from a cultural point of view is that the use of the Slovene language as an equal language in the field of e-content and e-accessibility is not regarded as a sectorial issue. Instead it is considered as a horizontal priority guideline which is listed among the general challenges of the strategy such as interoperability and open standards, security and privacy, copyright on the Internet and accessibility and inclusion. In this way it follows the fifth development priority of Slovenia’s development strategy (integration of measures aimed at achieving sustainable development – development of the national identity and culture) where a common Slovenian cultural space and the preservation and development of the Slovene language is also understood as a transversal issue.

As with the first strategy, this one lacks a financial plan for the adopted set of objectives and related activities. There is only the list of potential resources, as follows:

- public funds at the national level from the participating ministries and other responsible bodies;
- economic funds through direct investments in ICT and research and development in business including private-public partnerships;
- structural funds from the EU (mainly EFRDP, ESF);
- EU programme funds (IST, eContentPlus, CIP, Safer Internet plus).

It is obvious that this strategy also suffers from a lack of explicit financial planning by offering largely implicit forms of financing. The good news is that in 2008 the national budget for culture introduced a special budget item for digitization (1 million euros) with the aim to increase this amount in 2009 to 1.3 million euros. This kind of decision was very necessary since the strategy si2010 clearly stated the following (ibid: 49):

“With its choice and availability of digital cultural content, Slovenia is trailing behind other EU Member States (EU-15), and in certain segments of digital culture we are also trailing behind new EU Member States and even non-member states (Serbia, Croatia). On the other hand, however, we should not ignore Slovenia’s great progress in the broader European context in terms of excellent innovation achievements in certain areas, e.g. registration of cultural heritage, the National and University Library, archives, multimedia centres and general libraries.”

### ***Sectorial strategic documents for culture and language***

The main sectorial document on cultural policy is the National Cultural Programme. The first such document was adopted for the period 2004-2007. In April 2008 the next one was enacted for the years 2008-2011. Both of them have special chapters devoted to e-culture. The older document focused on normalization in culture, stressing the need to increase access to culture, access to comprehensive information about culture and enhancement of scientific research and evaluation in culture (National Cultural Programme 2004-2007, 2004: 3105). Several measures have been envisaged aiming at digitization of cultural content on the one hand and improving the conditions for cultural institutions to be able to develop their services related to digitized cultural objects on the other. Some of them are very concrete, such as the establishment of the net of regional multimedia centres, the Music-Information Centre, the national cultural portal, the national register of objects of cultural heritage in electronic form and the development of the special information system “books on the market”. Others address cultural organizations in general by announcing special priority for the digitizing of the written cultural heritage in order to present it on the Internet, to archive culturally important electronic publications, to provide for the

informatization of processes in institutions for the preservation of cultural heritage and to develop libraries as public information and lifelong learning centres. However, the first measure cited in the document is to ensure financial resources for the improvement of ICT equipment in public libraries and other cultural institutions.

Another sectorial strategic document was adopted in 2007: the Resolution on a National Programme for Language Policy 2007-2011 (2007: 5964), in which digitization is explicitly underlined as a technological means for language development. In this regard, new and improved Slovene language software tools (translators, search engines, educational applications, accounting and bookkeeping applications, online shops, telecommunication services, etc.) and Web design (cultural and other practical content) are presented as important vehicles for expanding linguistic capacities.

National Cultural Programme 2008-2011 (2008:3385) defines the enabling of access to e-culture as one of seven directives for the next period, repeating all the already known arguments for integration of information and communication technologies into cultural services and products while referring to the relevant EU documents on the topic.

### ***Individual strategic documents***

The next level of documents refers to individual projects, such as the Digital Library of Slovenia Development Strategy – dLib.si 2007-2010. It reports how the National and University Library (NUK) has been successful in the application of metadata standards and communication protocols (Digital Library of Slovenia Development Strategy – dLib.si 2007-2010, 2007: 14) while it lags behind in the development of the digital library portal and archive (ibid: 7). The quantity of digitized materials is sufficient in comparison to other national libraries. The weak implementation of user-oriented technological solutions to support creation of and access to digital collections and other digital library services (ibid: 13) is a consequence of the absence of serious “new money”. Apart from some project money, including from international projects, it has been generally expected that institutions can manage these new tasks within their regular funds and existing working force.

Concerning the diversity aspect we can see (ibid: 14):

“NUK joined 20 European national libraries that had signed the letter to support the development of the European Digital Library, emphasizing the need for the European Member States to defend their cultural and linguistic diversity.”

### **National(istic) perception of cultural diversity**

The extension of documents,<sup>4</sup> general and sectorial, shows that culture is an important part of strategic thinking in the development of the information society in Slovenia.<sup>5</sup> All these political papers mention cultural diversity, mostly together with linguistic diversity, when they discuss the possibilities and challenges of information society. However, the term “diversity” is highly ambiguous in these documents and requires further explanation of its political context. The thesis of this paper is that in the strategic documents analysed the term “cultural diversity” is not used in the first place to characterize the increasingly diverse socio-cultural structure of Slovenia nor does it follow the pluralistic origin of cultural content as outlined in *The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. There is no precedent to show that cultural diversity can be seen as a framework in which different ethnicities coexist within the nation state. When they elaborate the role of digital culture there is no stress on the new citizenship landscape searching for conditions of equity and fairness for cultural participation. Culture

- 4 We are not going to discuss here that the weak point in the transition to an information society is not strategic thinking but the transponibility of documents in practice. However, it is worth mentioning that the strategy si2010 recognized the following critical factors for the achievement of its goals: constant and firm political back-up for the implementation of strategy as a precondition for a project of this size and complexity; and interaction among all interested stakeholders which includes not only different sciences but also cooperation between the business and academic worlds and capacity building of users who need proper skills to use e-services and e-content; adequate funding that corresponds to strategic objectives; training for IT and computer professionals who take care of the functioning of information society; investment in research with an ambition to transfer results into practice; the preservation of digital content with solutions to store and retrieve information and special attention for national cultural heritage; and user oriented services where users and their satisfaction is a central element of the system.
- 5 There are many successful individual stories (e.g. the development of the Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS) for public libraries, the Cooperative Archival Computer Information System of Slovenia (AERISS) together with the InfoArh application for archives, the establishment of the Internet portal of the Digital Library of Slovenia and the regional portal KAMRA, the Slovene Music-Information Centre (SIGIC), the net of 19 multimedia centres across the whole country, etc.) but essential issues (such as the availability of digital cultural content, “fresh money” for digitization, cooperation between the main institutions, concerted action in digitization, capacity building of professional staff, proper awareness of the importance of digitization of cultural heritage, etc.) remain problematic although there are some positive signs such as the already mentioned introduction of a special budget item for digitization in 2008 (annual reports on implementation of the National Programme for Culture for the year 2004 and 2005; progress reports of the National Representatives Group coordination mechanisms for digitalization policies and programmes MINERVA eC Project and MICHAEL project (Gazvoda, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006); Rajh, 2007; Korun, 2005).

differences (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) remain at the centre of the political arena but as a national problem in the international environment. The central concern is how could a small nation such as Slovenia preserve and protect its cultural diversity in the process of globalization and its tendency towards standardization, homogenization and subordination. Therefore the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity represents in Slovenia primarily the re-affirmation of its national cultural sovereignty. Where are the grounds for this thesis?

The Strategy for the Republic of Slovenia in the information society indeed refers to the preservation and strengthening of citizens' cultural identities (plural!) through "creating cultural content and preservation of cultural heritage and language" (Strategy, 2003: 3) but it speaks only about official minorities while omitting new migrants completely. Slovenia is among those countries where there is a clear division between so-called traditional minorities (meaning ethnically distinct communities which are the result of earlier movements of national boundaries characterized by autochthonism, dense settlement, mother country and constitutional recognition<sup>6</sup>) and "new migrants" – namely groups from the former Yugoslavia who migrated when the war broke out there or were already established in Slovenia when the country declared its independence in 1991.<sup>7</sup> While the official minorities enjoy all collective rights (bilingual education and administration, parliamentary representation, mandatory funding of their cultural activities, presence in the media, etc.), as laid out in Article 64 of the Constitution, the new minorities enjoy their cultural rights as citizens only on the basis of human rights as individual rights. That is why they are not mentioned in the cited strategy. The general recognized problem of insufficient digital content provision in Slovenia is even bigger in the case of the new minorities. Since digital content is extremely important for the preservation of European cultural and linguistic diversity, some basic questions need to be asked again from this specific point of view.

The official minorities, due to their long, continuing history of maintaining a distinctive culture and identity within the nation, are considered "as a more or less 'natural' part of the national landscape" (Bennett, 2001: 29) which means that even though these official minorities enjoy the same rights as Slovene nationals, they tend to reproduce a cultural policy model driven by the idea of a nation state.

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6 The Slovenian Constitution recognizes three minorities: Hungarian (6 243 - 0.32%), Italian (2 258 - 0.11%), and Roma (3 246 - 0.17%).

7 "New minorities" - which do not have the status of official minority: Croats (35 632 - 1.81%), Serbs (38 964 - 1.98%), Bosnians (21 542 - 1.10%), Macedonians (3 972 - 0.20%), Albanians (6 186 - 0.13%) and Montenegrins (2 667 - 0.14%). This data was taken from the 2001 census. More factual estimates indicate that they actually represent an even larger percentage, from 7% to 9% of the whole population.

The new strategy, the Development Strategy for the information society in the Republic of Slovenia (si2010), is following the same path as far as small nations and minorities are concerned. It is not wrong if ICT is conceived as the preserver and promoter of smaller cultures and identities, the problem lies in the fact that support for digital content in local languages is limited to the Slovene language and minority languages while intercultural communication and cultural diversity do not refer to the new minorities at all.

It is not a surprise then that the Resolution on a National Programme for Language Policy 2007-2011 focuses entirely on the Slovene language when discussing the important role of ICT.

The perception of cultural diversity as a promotional tool for Slovene culture can be found in the belief that cultural diversity is an ally of less known countries which suffered in the past from a lack of international recognition. Thus the si2010 strategy supports “access to Slovenian digital cultural content as a foundation for increasing Slovenia’s international profile” (si2010, 2007: 49).

The problem with understanding cultural diversity is also reflected in both annual reports for 2004 and 2005 on the implementation of the National Cultural Programme 2004-2007. Both of these underline the successful realization of the priority to promote cultural diversity by speaking about the international funding of Slovene cultural projects, namely the EU supported schemes such as the structural funds and community programmes such as Culture 2000 and Media plus (Annual reports 2004:10; 2005:13 and 14). There is no awareness that the EU aims with these programmes either to overcome structural gaps in socio-economic development or to create transnational cultural space which should underline the European dimension without any ambition of cultural exchange as such.

*The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* states among its objectives: “to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace; and to foster interculturality in order to develop cultural interaction in the spirit of building bridges among peoples”. Together with its other articles it is obvious that it refers to cultural diversity from an internal and from an external point of view. It is understandable that a small country sees the importance of maintaining cultural vitality for the further development of its cultural policy measures, when it cannot survive without public intervention. The principle of cultural diversity is certainly present in policy papers in relation to the traditional and as well as to the new minorities, but in the latter case only within the narrow sectorial policy for minorities. Cultural diversity poses a profound challenge to traditional formulations of cultural policy in all its aspects.

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## **Managing culture in virtual realms: policy provisions and issues - a European perspective**

**Ana Lučevič Bušnja  
Daniela Angelina Jelinčić**

### **Introduction**

The present communication age imposes relentless change as standard. The rapid development of information connectivity, communication and availability, facilitated by ever-emerging means/mediums of new technology and digital culture, is racing ahead in a challenging way which suggests numerous issues for research and analysis of its impact and social relevance. This has not kept pace with the changes, however. Digital cultures concentrate on communication as the strategic input to cultural development. The impact of constantly changing digital cultures is focused on the users who produce different digitalized art forms. Still, neither digitalized art forms nor trends they produce are recognized by cultural policies.<sup>1</sup> New actors and new types of cultural creativity should be acknowledged and form part of cultural policies.

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1 Cultural policy refers to the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life. It is embodied in systematic, regulatory guides to action that are adopted by organizations in order to achieve their goals. In brief, cultural policy is bureaucratic rather than creative or organic: organizations solicit, train, distribute, finance, describe and reject actors and activities that go under the signs of artist or artwork, through the implementation of policies (Miller and Yudice, 2002: 1). For the purposes of analysing cultural policy within an institutional definition in the European context, the term “cultural policy” is used to describe those activities and products that directly or indirectly come within the competence of the governmental bodies and agencies, i.e. ministries of culture and arts councils.

The precipitous development of new technologies and the emergence of digital cultures has intensified the emergence of new forms of cultural organization.<sup>2</sup> As Lessig (2004:9) stated, “...the Internet has unleashed an extraordinary possibility for many to participate in the process of building and cultivating a culture that reaches far beyond local boundaries” and in fact far beyond national or conventional organizational boundaries and borders that defined the functioning of cultural institutions and arts organizations.

The constant increase in the number of cultural portals and networks in the virtual sphere and the areas of their activities indicate that the conventional notion of a cultural organization’s functioning, operation, governance and management is being redefined and challenged.

As the number of cultural portals and networks rapidly evolves, the question arises as to whether the associated management structures follow their growth – do they progress, do they expose themselves to the risk of adopting new approaches to dealing with kaleidoscopic environments?

Out of all public policies and systems, cultural policies can be distinguished as key resource structures that support and assist cultural organizations in their path from their foundation to the time when they are reaching audiences – in brief, cultural policy provides for cultural content and activity to be generated while arts and cultural organizations find their position in the wider public context.<sup>3</sup>

This paper will attempt to define the status of the cultural portals and networks or cultural organizations that concentrate their activities and predominantly operate in the virtual sphere in the framework of European cultural policies. It sets out to identify and investigate the standing models of management<sup>4</sup> and governance in cultural portals and networks and measures them vis-à-vis a cultural policy scale of

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2 Although there are many new and quite exciting forms of cultural organizations that base their activities in the virtual sphere (online galleries, libraries, archives, blog posts, design rooms, etc.), for the purposes of this paper by new forms of cultural organizations, we refer to cultural portals and cultural networks exclusively.

3 Cultural policy in this context is regarded in its core meaning implying that cultural policy provides structural guidelines and legislative frameworks that define and assist arts and cultural organizations in methods and ways of functioning. These include legal acts on founding an arts organization, governance, finance, etc.

4 By establishing models of management, we can consider the application of standard arts management practice, i.e. the application of the five traditional management functions - planning, organizing, staffing, supervising and controlling (Martin, 1998: 128 in Chong 2002: 8). The research presented in this paper does not investigate all these aspects of managing arts organizations but focuses mainly on the governance and management structures, their roles in the decision-making processes and how it affects overall organizational prosperity.

relevance while examining whether there are suitable provisions or positions that these organizations have in the European cultural policies structure. It is to be noted that the paper does not, at any point, attempt to focus on cultural policies' treatment of changes in cultural consumption and production cycles as initiated by new technologies. Finally, the paper proposes a debate about how cultural policy provisions, or lack of them, might have profound consequences on the future of the new generation of arts organizations.

### **Contextualizing cultural portals and networks**

Cultural portals<sup>5</sup> and networks<sup>6</sup> can be defined as the new generation of cultural organizations – their audiences are widespread, their activities displayed in an international arena and their operational tools (communication mediums) subjected to constant change and upgrade. They are regarded as virtual communities based predominantly in the virtual sphere of online communications, offering and sharing cultural and creative content (Castells, 2003:131).

The role of cultural portals and cultural networks in contemporary cultural development has been widely acknowledged; they successfully overcome and reduce barriers, they provide the unrestricted space where cultural diversities and identities are communicated and affirmed, where intercultural dialogue and communication are

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5 Portals are generally explained as gateways for websites on the World Wide Web that are or propose to be a major starting point for users when they get connected to the Web or that users tend to visit as an anchor site. They are divided into general portals and specialized or niche portals (definition quoted from [http://searchcio-midmarket.techtargget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid183\\_gci212810,00.html](http://searchcio-midmarket.techtargget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid183_gci212810,00.html) where further definitions on Internet portals can be obtained). Research carried out by Culture.mondo in 2005 states that launching of the cultural portals is predominantly initiated to offer cultural and creative content for wider audiences to explore their own as well as other diverse cultures (research report available online at [www.culturemondo.org](http://www.culturemondo.org)).

6 A basic definition of a network in the vocabulary of information technology would be that a network is a series of points or nodes interconnected by communication paths. Networks can interconnect with other networks and contain subnetworks (definition quoted from [http://searchnetworking.techtargget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid7\\_gci212644,00.html](http://searchnetworking.techtargget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid7_gci212644,00.html) where further definitions on networks can be obtained). When referring to the cultural networks and with reference to the topic of this paper, a more narrow definition on networks by Barry Wellman can be used; he considers networks to be connections between individuals or groups that give us information, support, sense of community, sense of belonging and common identity (Wellman, 2001:1 in Castells, 2003: 142). Additionally, Aleksandra Uzelac defines cultural networks that base their activities predominantly in the virtual sphere as networks “whose members are communicating through Internet infrastructure, but have common aims and activities and they collaborate on particular joint projects” (Uzelac, 2006).

established and promoted.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, this new context of cultural organizations is faced with old cultural policy systems. Thus, as research results further in this text show, cultural portals and networks often have similar or even the same organizational set-up and governing structure as the conventional arts organizations and cultural institutions: from managing/governing bodies that represent the founders and main funders with decision-making capacity (e.g. steering committees, managing boards, assemblies, etc.) to expert bodies which have advisory capacity (stakeholders forums, editorial boards, artistic boards, etc.) and some input into the decision-making bodies (representatives on advisory boards becoming members of governing boards). As new technologies provide the main medium of existence of portals and networks, they are not operationally subjected to having a physical or actual space of functioning along with permanent members of staff. Due to the participatory nature of how audiences consume and contribute to their activities, cultural portals and networks could benefit from having horizontal models of both governance and management that would enable setting structures which could be described as innovative and flexible. Accordingly, existing policy framework is yet to propose stipulations that would be appropriate for these new forms of cultural organizations. Hence, it is often the case that cultural portals and networks have numerous difficulties in their operation precisely due to the following two factors: an overwhelming institutional structure and difficulties with obtaining funds. Despite this situation, the number of cultural portals at the global level is continuously increasing. According to the surveys carried out in 2005 and 2006 by Culture.mondo,<sup>8</sup> the number of cultural portals has grown from just a few in the 1990s, to over 300 that were identified in their survey in 2005, and to over 600 that were identified in the survey in 2006. Additionally, in the European context, there are more than 200 networks that operate within Europe listed in the networks directory at the LabforCulture website.<sup>9</sup>

Although this can be construed as a positive advancement, it also should be viewed with caution and much consideration. One of the principal critical points in a paper by

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7 Although it does not build on any written sources, this claim emanates from proven practices of the networks and portals that are investigated in this paper's research. Also, as both authors have years of experience of working in a cultural network of networks (Culturelink Network), this claim developed throughout those years of work, observance and continuous communication and collaborative projects with numerous cultural networks.

8 Available at [http://www.culturemondo.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2006/08/culturemondo-32pp-wi\\_14790d.pdf](http://www.culturemondo.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2006/08/culturemondo-32pp-wi_14790d.pdf)

9 [http://www.labforculture.org/en/Directory/Networks/\(offset\)/30](http://www.labforculture.org/en/Directory/Networks/(offset)/30) (information obtained on 7 February 2008)

Paul van Paaschen from the Hivos Culture Fund<sup>10</sup> entitled “What prevents many foundations from engaging in international cultural cooperation?”, is that the donors and sponsors perceive that there exists a great number and variety of cultural portals and networks. Van Paaschen claims that it is difficult for the donors to get the complete picture of who is who and who does what. Moreover, he asserts that many virtual organizations are duplicating or intersecting work of other discipline-based, issue-based, or lobby-oriented organizations. Listed as the main critical points are tendencies of virtual organizations to take on too many themes and issues instead of focusing on two or three along with matters of “actual ownership by and commitment of participants” which is directly related to the problematic decision-making structures, unstable funding basis and finally the whole issue of continuity. Although it can be asserted that most arts organizations and cultural institutions face difficulties with matters of funding by default, conventional arts organizations and cultural institutions do have guidelines and legislative frameworks for decision-making structures and funding proposed for them by cultural policy provisions.<sup>11</sup>

### **Research outline and methodology**

Arts management is inherently associated with cultural policy. Further confirmation for this stance in the academic sense (and in addition to the legislative and executive relation between the two fields in practice) is the fact that nowadays almost every course teaching arts management includes parallel study of cultural policy.<sup>12</sup> Numerous books and articles have been written on arts management and managing cultural institutions and organizations, from public/state-owned to non-governmental

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10 This paper was distributed to the participants of the cultural networks meeting at the World Culture Forum in Rio de Janeiro, November 2006. Although it was written by the representative of Hivos Culture Fund, it reflected opinions of other cultural foundations that are mostly based in Europe (i.e. Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, European Cultural Foundation, etc.), and whose representatives were present when this paper was discussed in Rio de Janeiro. A similar stance to the one taken by Paul Van Paaschen can be found in a research report by the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo “Cultural Cooperation in what Role for Foundations?”

available online at <http://www.compagnia.torino.it/comunicazioni/pdf/NEF.PDF>

11 By guidelines and legislative framework we mean acts that are brought in and which set and recommend organizational set-ups, structures and funding schemes for arts organizations and cultural institutions. For example, in Croatia these acts are the Law on institutions ( NN 76/93; NN 29/97 and NN 47/99 - Amendment), the Law on governing and managing public cultural institutions (NN 96/01) and the Law on financing public needs in culture (NN 27/93).

12 For example, the most well-known course on cultural policy is the one at City University in London which includes arts management, followed by the courses at University College Dublin, Warwick University, and Carnegie Mellon University, etc.

organizations (NGOs) but there is very little or no information on governing and managing cultural networks and portals or their connection to cultural policy developments and provisions. They are left to their own *modus operandi* without any rules they should follow. If we take a look at the Internet as a working space, it also follows the same principle: there are no regulatory rules “entrepreneurs” should follow; it serves as a working tool but without any editorial policy. Research into the systems of management and governance that are most commonly found in cultural networks and portals is, therefore, dependent on data collection by surveys/questionnaires and comparative analysis of cultural policy provisions for new technologies rather than being based on a theoretical framework.

In order to collect data that would serve as a basis for analysis of the governing and management of cultural organizations operating in the virtual sphere, we conducted research based on questionnaires. They were sent to 41 email addresses of cultural portals and network representatives who participated in the Culture.mondo Round Table entitled “New Era of Cooperation” in Dubrovnik, October 2006. Additionally, questionnaires were disseminated among cultural network and portal representatives who attended the cultural networks gathering at the World Culture Forum in Rio de Janeiro, November 2006, and 17 replies were collected in total by 2007.

The research aims to identify existing models and practices so as to give indications on the positioning of cultural networks and portals within the framework of cultural policies.

This is to investigate whether the organizations whose activities are based in the virtual space (cultural networks and portals) and are involved in the same field (e.g. cultural development, intercultural communication) actually operate in a similar way regardless of the respective social/national contexts, especially in regard to the structures of governance and management. The questions were set so as to identify only the key features which would give a brief outline of surveyed organizations:

- organization name
- founding body and year of foundation
- type of organization (non-profit, non-governmental, public institution/state-owned, manufacturing, etc.)
- brief description of the organization
- scope/area of activities
- governance structure (brief description)
- management structure (brief description)
- organizational decision-making procedures (brief description)

- evaluation of the organization's governance and management (efficiency, effectiveness and usefulness?)
- main source of funding (governmental bodies, foundations, corporations, etc.).

The aim was not to ask for information on future developments, operational aims and goals, participation statistics, content, demographic and thematic scopes or profiling of target user groups, but to get information and a description of the types of organization (profit, non-profit, governmental or non-governmental), affiliated governance and management structures, related organizational decision-making procedures and their brief evaluation.<sup>13</sup>

In order to define the involvement of new technologies in cultural policy (i.e. the position and relevance of new technologies in the policy and the relation between the two), a separate survey was conducted to analyse and compare the new technology categories as listed in the most comprehensive search tool for European cultural policies – the *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*.<sup>14</sup> The Compendium structure allows all data to be researched and studied by a comparative method; therefore research was conducted by surveying and comparing the cultural policy profiles of all 40 countries.<sup>15</sup>

The enquiry included a comparative analysis of the category “New technologies and cultural policies”<sup>16</sup> in all listed member states and assessed the extent, if any, of policy requirements for cultural portals and networks.

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13 Questionnaires were given out to organizations that are based not just in Europe, but only the European examples are used as the analytical basis of this paper. The organisations that responded to the questionnaire are European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), Culturelink Network, LabforCulture, Informal European Theatre Meetings (IETM), On-the-Move, EUCLID, Connect CP, Culturenet.hr, Clulture, European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts), European Music Council (EMC), SEECult.org, Arts Management Network, European Network of Information Centres for the Performing Arts (ENICPA), European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC), CIRCLE and European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH). We would like to thank them again for time and effort given to the questionnaires.

14 [www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net)

15 The *Compendium* offers cultural policy profiles for 41 countries, but the analysis in this paper excludes Canada.

16 The category “New technologies and cultural policies” is listed as section 4.2.8. (sub-chapter of section 4.2 “Current issues in cultural policy development and debate”) in the structure of the *Compendium*.

## Research findings

### *Questionnaire analysis*

Responses from the questionnaire indicate that the surveyed European portals and networks have been mostly founded since the year 2000, some in the mid/late 1990s and only a couple at the beginning of the 1990s. The majority of organizations are non-profit, non-governmental; only three organizations are under direct governmental authority and two have no status as they are Internet projects set up by different bodies. For example, the Culturelink Network was founded by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, LabforCulture was founded by the European Cultural Foundation, the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe was founded by the Council of Europe and the ERICarts Institute, Connect CP was founded by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), etc.

Three main areas of activity can be detected from the organizations' description and scope of activity: cultural policy development, information resources for artists and cultural professionals (including artistic exchange, mobility, production, cooperation and funding opportunities) and finally research activities, training and education programmes (including the organization and coordination of expert meetings, e.g. conferences, symposiums). The areas and scopes of activity indicate that the core audiences of the cultural portals and networks are the artistic and research community. The trends in online and offline cooperation among arts and cultural practitioners are constantly increasing. This could be interpreted and explained through the ongoing search and exploration of new mediums of cultural production, consumption, cooperation and communication (with online communication itself becoming a creative medium) by the artistic and cultural community.

The responses on governing structures vary and correspond to the organizational set-up (governmental, non-governmental, owned Internet projects). Thus, the main types can be distinguished as:

- a) organizations directly governed by the project owners/founders (17.6%),
- b) organizations governed by their general assemblies and executive boards<sup>17</sup> (17.6%),

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<sup>17</sup> The General Assembly, being the highest decision-making body, elects and appoints members of the executive board.

- c) organizations governed by their board of directors or steering committees<sup>18</sup> (35.3%) and
- d) organizations with flexible governing structures<sup>19</sup> (29.5%).

Following on from this, the outlines of management structures are diverse: most organizations are managed by the portal or network director and by the portal or network coordinator. Only a couple of organizations are managed by editors. All organizations have administrative staff, content editors and technical coordinators. Half of the responding organizations have staff delegated for coordinating research while a third employ staff in charge of finance and only one organization has a communications manager. Also, only one organization has a marketing officer.

Organizational decision-making procedures for 9 out of 17 of the organizations (53%) follow the management structures (directors/coordinators/editors take all the everyday decisions) in collaboration with staff and periodical reports to higher levels (boards, etc.) while the remaining 8 organizations (47%) have stated that their decision-making procedures require approval from the boards, assemblies or the founders.

Of the surveyed organizations, 53% evaluate their organization's governance and management structures as efficient. The ones that considered their organization to be efficient state that independence in decision-making is the main element of efficiency whereas the main reason behind the unsatisfactory responses is the size and complexity of the structure and decision-making process.

Finally, the main sources of funding for 10 organizations (59%) are listed as:

- a) governmental (EU, supra-national, national and local),
- b) cultural foundations,

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18 Boards of Directors and Steering Committees are made up of the representatives of the key interested parties or stakeholders.

19 We used the term "flexible" as the governing structures in some organizations are changeable according to the management set-up or are duplicating managing structures (managers, coordinators, employees and volunteers participate both in decision-making and executive roles according to the work requirements). It is to be noted that all of the surveyed organizations which have this kind of set-up are predominantly the result of artistic initiatives which heavily rely on a volunteer workforce. There is also an example where governance and management structures are duplicated in one role - the Chairperson of the Board of the Directors is also the acting manager and works voluntarily. Through informal conversations with portal and network representatives, we gathered that these flexible structures lead to a significant amount of financial insecurity but are more efficient in the sense of the decision-making procedures (less time-consuming, less demand for administration work and also lower financial costs in setting up and organizing meetings of representative bodies).

- c) private donors and sponsors and
- d) membership fees.

While the majority of the organizations (83%) are financed from combined sources, some (15%) are financed from government funds exclusively and only a few (2%) from members' fees and donations.

***Comparative analysis of new technologies category  
within the structures of European cultural policies  
- examining the position of cultural portals and networks***

The survey of the *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* shows that digitization and new technologies are part of cultural policy structures in as much as they are tools for making the respective heritage and knowledge more accessible. In other words, the main agenda found in most country profiles is the building of the information technology infrastructure, creating platforms for e-knowledge societies followed by the digitization of heritage, archives, museums and libraries. Needless to say, these initiatives contribute to increasing the prospects for expanding content diversity and consumer access, thus enhancing interactive communication through cultural sector resources.

Referring back to the research query – the investigation of the policy provisions for cultural portals and networks and their positioning within the policy context – analysis of the 40 country profiles indicates that cultural portals and networks are not given a significant status or accurate position of relevance. Moreover, cultural portals or networks are not mentioned as separate organizational entities nor are they addressed by any special policy provisions.

Furthermore, cultural portals are regarded and valued only in their capacity of web services for presenting and collecting information on respective national cultural profiles, as is the case with Slovakia, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Ireland and Scotland. Also, in the United Kingdom's case, one of the examples listed is the first national museum online (the 24 Hour Museum).

As for cultural networks, apart from initiatives which involve the collections of previously mentioned national library resources, only a couple of countries mention cultural networks and those are or were government initiatives such as Culture Net Denmark and Culture Net Sweden.<sup>20</sup> The Croatian profile is the only one presenting a non-governmental cultural network – CLUBTURE – as an important actor in advocating for new cultural policies.

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20 Culture Net Sweden was a government initiative located within the Swedish Arts Council from 2000 to 2005 when the organization was taken over by a private organization.

With reference to possible policy requirements which would address the issue of funding of cultural portals and networks, two remarks relating to that question were found in the Austrian profile, where it is stated that in 2005 the City of Vienna launched a new support scheme for “net culture” initiatives which included grants, and in Finland where the Ministry of Education and Culture has assigned special funding for the development of a “cultural” information society.

Although many countries have some kind of policy document on the information society which is closely linked to cultural development, that being a strategy (e.g. Ireland), a state initiative (e.g. Austria) or a state programme (e.g. Azerbaijan), there are no clear indications or any sort of policy guidelines which would provide some guidance for the organization, governance, funding and overall purpose of cultural portals and networks.

## **Conclusion**

The research into the governance and management of cultural organizations operating in the virtual sphere (cultural portals and cultural networks) has elucidated that there is no standard structure of both governance and management. Some structures are exact replicas of the ones proposed by the existing cultural policy provisions for conventional arts organizations and some are more flexible and prone to adapt to the shifting environment they all operate in. Diversity is possibly the key word in describing the operational framework of cultural portals and networks – not a single question in the questionnaire was answered with a similar response by the majority of respondents. Through the analysis of the individual questionnaire sheets, it is evident that the majority of organizations (53%) are following the track of the conventional cultural institutions and organizations; a third of organizations (29.5%) are experimenting with more innovative approaches and structures which are also explained as more suitable for the nature of the work they are involved in; and the remaining number (17.6%) are Internet projects or virtual presentations of actual organizations and are organized as a special unit or department within the respective organization. It can be observed that almost all responding cultural portals and networks are rather small organizations according to the number of staff and data and there are very few organizations that employ marketing officers and communication managers. From the job outlines, it is evident that all organizations have administrative staff. Given the type of core activities in all organizations, the fact that all surveyed organizations have technical staff and content editors is commonsensical. However, the information that only a third of organizations have staff solely in charge of finances is somewhat surprising, especially bearing in mind the demanding tasks of fundraising and financial management. Finally, no single or coherent conclusion can be drawn at this stage from the questionnaire responses. The

information gathered is so diverse that it truly cannot be synthesized into an articulated supposition.

Analysis of the cultural portals and networks position within European cultural policy structure has shown that both portals and networks are only mentioned in their capacity of national relevance (national cultural portals and networks). They are not included or considered by policy structures as organizations that are a commonsensical result of new technology advancements nor are they recognized for their abilities and possibilities to be productive mediums for intercultural communication and dialogue, thus promoting cultural diversities and identities.

Going back to the claim that cultural portals and cultural networks are a new generation of cultural organizations, and to comparative analysis of cultural policy provisions for these organizations (or rather, lack thereof), this situation is predictable. Every organization is putting effort into finding the most suitable way to organize itself. This can be viewed as a positive progression – after all, the scopes of activity and areas that these organizations cover is not a fixed condition upon which the entire organization's undertaking can be firmly estimated and planned. Indeed, the global cultural landscapes can be described as everything but fixed. Hence, the concern arises for the organizations that have inflexible governance and management structures – whether these structures will be able to respond and react appropriately to the challenging and fluctuating environment in which they operate. However, the main issue can be defined as inappropriate or non-existent cultural policy provision. If there was actual articulated interest and substantial expertise to adapt current policy structures and integrate these new types of organization (with emphasis on acknowledgement of their worth and value in the context of international cultural cooperation and promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural communication), there would be less improvisation in the governance, management and funding of these organizations. However, going back to the anticipated input of expertise, one of the most important points of this research surely is the absurdity that whereas most of the surveyed cultural portals and networks are active in the field of cultural policy by informing it through research work, the same policy that they inform does not recognize or include them in its structure.

Until they are given assistance through policy provisions, the organizations are left to themselves to attain the best form and way of functioning. The extent of their continued existence, or rather the continuity of the active functioning of existing and emerging portals and networks, will show whether this is an effective solution.

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**PART THREE**

**CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE DIGITAL TERRITORY**

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## **Ecology of the media and hyperhumanism**

**Hervé Fischer**

This paper on the ecology of the media intends to analyse the historical, sociological, institutional and economic characteristics of the production, diffusion and social uses of cultural contents.

The myth of the Tower of Babel is the first myth of modernity. It places God as the initiator of the information society and it is the founding myth of linguistic and cultural diversity. Then we may consider a strange myth of the digital age: is the Internet actually a planetary hyper-cortex?

The faithful of the Internet religion believe that digital globalization is the end result of human evolution. They invoke the prediction of Teilhard de Chardin that at the end of the process of creation there will be a kingdom of the mind, of a superior human intelligence characterized by shared knowledge and wisdom. They see the Internet as the instrument of this evolution towards perfection and employ metaphors of a connective skin that grows to cover the world, or of neurons of a planetary hyper-cortex. It's that old nostalgia, that time-worn myth of human unity that will return with the digital realm. Chateaubriand, among others, had already spoken of the dream of a universal society: "The folly of the moment is to achieve a unity of peoples and to make a single man of the entire species."

Is the Web as unified as Internet devotees dream? Is it not in fact an ocean on which voyagers immediately lose their way? A complicated cacophony rather than a dream of a unifying global connection? Perhaps we could say of the Internet what Jorge Luis Borges said in *La Biblioteca de Babel* about old books:

"O Time thy pyramids. This much is known: For every rational line or forthright statement there are leagues of senseless cacophony, verbal nonsense, and incoherency. (I know of one semibarbarous zone whose librarians repudiate the

‘vain and superstitious habit’ of trying to find sense in books, equating such a quest with attempting to find meaning in dreams or in the chaotic lines of the palm of one’s hand ... They will acknowledge that the inventors of writing imitated the twenty-five natural symbols, but contend that that adoption was fortuitous, coincidental, and that books in themselves have no meaning. That argument, as we shall see, is not entirely fallacious.)”

### **The Internet: a metaphor for the Tower of Babel?**

We could say that the same arrogance, the same will for power that the Bible tells us provoked God when men tried to build a tower that would rise up to meet him, are naively expressed today in the desire to create unified global communication through digital technology. According to the myth, we owe the birth of 10 000 different languages to God. In effect, to put an end to man’s inordinate pride in aspiring to reach heaven by building this tower, God acted in a way that foreshadowed our current information society. He did not hurl lightning bolts or unleash other forces of nature to destroy this defiant tower; instead, he created the diversity of languages. Unable to communicate among themselves, the men could not coordinate their building project and deserted the work site. The abandoned tower fell into ruin. This myth involves the punishment of humankind and we have traditionally interpreted it as being negative. But we should instead look at it as the birth of cultural and linguistic diversity, the will of God and a heritage that is as precious and as necessary as biodiversity.

Aficionados of globalization also take delight in the fact that the Internet is promoting the spread of English as a universal language of communication. We are supposedly witnessing an American cyberunification of the world, progress for one and all. In reality, while the use of English is growing on the Web, it is losing steam. International Technology and Trade Associates, in its *State of the Internet 2001*<sup>1</sup> pointed out that of the estimated 308 million Netizens, only 51.3% use English (less than half this percentage connect from North America). Of course, 78% of Web pages are still in English, and 95% of them are devoted to e-commerce. But, the report concluded, “as more users come online in Europe and Asia as well as the rest of the world, the Internet is becoming multicultural, multilingual, and multipolar.” By 2006, Internet development had confirmed this. The expanding array of languages on the Web has begun to reflect the importance of diverse linguistic groups.

According to UNESCO estimates in 2000, English represented only 65% of content<sup>2</sup> and this will soon drop below the 50% mark due to the rapid rise of other

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1 [www.itta.com/internet2001.htm](http://www.itta.com/internet2001.htm)

2 [www.globalenvision.org/library/8/1472](http://www.globalenvision.org/library/8/1472)

languages on the Internet – mainly French, Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Bengali and Portuguese. Specialists predict that in 2007, Mandarin will exceed the 50% mark in terms of Internet content.<sup>3</sup> The Web will soon become a Tower of Babel – in other words, multilingual, as it is already, but more equally balanced.

In 2006, UNESCO stated<sup>4</sup> that more than 90% of languages have not yet appeared on the Internet, and about 3 000 languages will disappear if we do not work to ensure their survival. It is significant that UNESCO has proposed using the Internet to do the job (this, of course, poses a huge challenge for the poorest countries, many of whose languages are purely oral and have no alphabet).

In such a research field, it seems therefore significant to consider specifically the multiplication of online cultural portals which appear in many countries every day. Let us first consider the ecology of cultural portals.

### **Ecology of cultural portals**

We see all kinds of cultural portals and we may consider all of them as a challenge in the profusion of websites, information and diverse media growing around us in this information society which runs us today. In the following classification, we shall try to consider them from the point of view of their objectives.

Media ecology is a human science dedicated to the study of media environments. The Media Ecology Association has proposed the following definition: “The study of media environments, the idea that technology and techniques, modes of information and codes of communication play a leading role in human affairs”<sup>5</sup>. It seems to me also that the history and the social and political context of development of those media, the users they tend to reach and the sociological analysis of their contents are very relevant to explain their nature, their success or limits, and their evolution. Media ecology was developed by Neil Postman in a Program of Media at New York University in 1971. Marshall McLuhan is frequently quoted for having formulated the basic idea inspiring ecology of media:

*“[It] means arranging various media to help each other so they won’t cancel each other out, to buttress one medium with another. You might say, for example, that radio is a bigger help to literacy than television, but television might be a very wonderful aid to teaching languages. And so you can do some*

3 <http://crisscrossed.net/2007/12/17/not-english-but-a-multilingual-social-web-is-the-key-for-collaboration/>

4 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001421/142186e.pdf>

5 <http://www.media-ecology.org/mecology/>

*things on some media that you cannot do on others. And, therefore, if you watch the whole field, you can prevent this waste that comes by one cancelling the other out.”<sup>6</sup>*

### ***Typology of portals according to the objectives***

The portals' objectives may be publicly declared or not, but they always appear easily according to the local contexts. They may also vary a lot, inviting us as a first step to classify these objectives in relation to two main parameters: the sociocultural significance and the actual political aims.

We may observe that according to the country of origin, these portals have specific main and/or simultaneous objectives, such as:

- putting online cultural data for administrative purposes
- offering a public cultural service
- promoting public or private cultural institutions
- commercial promotion
- promoting cultural diversity
- education and prevention
- contributing to building the national identity
- escaping the isolation of a region or a country
- offering cultural contents to remote areas
- promoting cultural activities and contents thanks to an online cultural magazine
- promoting national identities by updating traditional cultural contents
- fostering cultural life and production in a social community
- expanding cultural democracy
- encouraging the younger generations to share cultural values
- promoting cultural and tourist attractions internationally.

One may observe that these portals, although they always declare themselves as neutral cultural public services, always follows political national aims, which are related directly to the origin of their financial resources. Most of them are therefore under the control of government departments or public administrations.

These different purposes often converge. Usually they are not declared. Publicly announced objectives may dissimulate hidden strategies. But there is always an investment, human work and therefore a strategy and an aim. They may result from

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<sup>6</sup> McLuhan, Marshall: *Understanding Me: Lectures and Interviews*. Ed. by Stephanie McLuhan and David Staines, Foreword by Tom Wolfe. MIT Press, 2004, p. 271

governmental or corporate action plans, which instrumentalize these portals of “natural” appearance. It would be nonsense to think that culture is a neutral service, such as roads or public health. You cannot separate culture and the state, as you do between religion and the state in a secular country. The investments of the state are therefore always linked to identity affirmation, social consensus, education, international prestige and tourism or any specific local interest, which are fully legitimate as long as they don’t slip into political propaganda.

### ***Characterization***

To clarify the objectives and strategies of these portals, it may be useful to consider a series of parameters:

- origin of the financial resources
- type of governance (public, private, commercial, NGO, hybrid, etc.)
- type of contents
- architecture of the portal
- design and aesthetic of the portal
- type of users
- level of open access, interactivity and possible participation of the users (closed architecture of collaborative openness - Web 2.0).

According to these ecological parameters we may discover that cultural portals are a typical illustration of media ecology theory and its preoccupation with understanding media, as McLuhan would say (2004).

We do not intend in a general ecology of media, nor in the specific analysis of cultural portals, to introduce implicit hidden values and conclude with political judgments. All these categories, purposes and strategies may be recognized as legitimate social functions. Evaluating the political system of a society or the cultural state policy of a country would bring us to another type of analysis and discourse.

But it may be useful to allow the sociocultural, commercial or political logics to appear, those which inspire these cultural portals, and to verify their design and coherence, or to demonstrate their ambiguity and confusions and, according to these, to predict their success or failure. Any public institution or commercial group who decide to create a cultural portal should systematically question these ecological parameters and carefully analyse these issues according to their declared and explicit purposes. It would allow them to be efficient and not to work hard just for a final frustrating result. The ambiguity of cultural enterprises, reflected in the architecture, design, aesthetics and contents of any cultural service, is certainly leading to a final failure, especially in the field of cultural portals, which are very complex and sensible

services. No additional financial or human investment, no added visual seduction could avoid failure, if the coherence between governance, architecture, content, aesthetics, targeted public and social purpose appears weak or contradictory in the ecological grid we have conceptualized.

### **Cultural diversity and hyperhumanism in the digital age**

This being said, and according to my own values, I would like to underline the importance of developing online portals to promote cultural diversity. Our vision of today's world is impressionistic in that it is fragmented. But it is also structured according to the opposite poles of our consciousness, and even our cosmogony. We are caught between a fragmented conception of humanity and a global need to progress as humans. We simultaneously fight for the right to be different, deviant even, and for universal ethical consciousness. Are we being completely contradictory? Not at all – paradoxically, it is the same need. The right to diversity is a universal one, whether this diversity is based on language, identity or history, the colour of our hair or skin, or our sexual orientation. And because our burgeoning, individualistic, middle-class humanism has already lost its credibility as a result of the many wars, genocides and cynical human exploitations that have ravaged our so-called modern era, we have no choice but to invent a new humanism. That is how we came to discover the need for hyper-humanism, where the hyper prefix here means both an increase in our humanism and the need to build human solidarity links. I am obviously using a metaphor that relates to the Internet, that Web in which we create meaning and human relationships by activating hyperlinks.

In the light of the permanent and intolerable moral scandal that is today's world, rather than resigning ourselves to a feeling of helplessness, we must imagine and want to create a hyper-humanism. Because the Internet is not just a metaphor: it is a powerful technology that can help us to join our solitudes to build networks of solidarity. Respecting one another is respecting ourselves, the sharing of a common humaneness that is indivisible. We must try to imagine a virtual solidarity between every human being, thus asserting the universality of our conscious in the struggle for global ethics. Of course, needs vary according to culture – the glass or the roof may vary – but every human being has the right to clean drinking water and physical safety on a daily basis. Every person should have the same basic human rights: shelter, food, health, education, freedom of expression and peace; these should not vary according to culture. These rights, while so basic, are so often scoffed at that we need to continually repeat official declarations. Unfortunately, there is no moral sense or justice in nature. Human progress and the global ethical conscience we are fighting for are not natural; they require willingness and are an added value by humanity to the natural law of the jungle. The current anti-globalization movement is a symbol of the

global critical consciousness that we are so desperately in need of. We prefer to talk about hyper-humanism rather than humanism and universality, the concepts of which are now discredited by a history that abusively linked them to the perverse effects of imperialism, colonial conquests, communism, and now the neo-liberal globalization that attempts to impose abusive powers. Cultural variety is supposed to be a good thing, but when basic ethics vary, it is always to the detriment of humankind.

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[http://www.media-ecology.org/media\\_ecology/readinglist.html](http://www.media-ecology.org/media_ecology/readinglist.html)

It is also worth visiting a few other portals such as:

[www.culture.ca](http://www.culture.ca)  
[www.cubarte.cult.cu/](http://www.cubarte.cult.cu/)  
[www.culture.fr](http://www.culture.fr)  
[www.kultur.de](http://www.kultur.de)  
[www.culture.be](http://www.culture.be)  
[www.culture.it](http://www.culture.it)  
[www.acn.net.au](http://www.acn.net.au)



## **Turning cultural websites inside out: changes in online user behaviour, Web 2.0 and the issues for the culture sector**

**Jane Finnis**

Do you own an iPod? Maybe you share your photos on Flickr or watch videos on YouTube? Well, if you do, you are part of the Web 2.0 revolution. Not a revolution in what you are doing, but a revolution in the *way* you are doing it. The web is changing the way we work and learn. In fact, I'm so interested in this idea that it is reflected in the title of my blog: "*Thoughts about the web and how it creates new ways of working*" (<http://janefinnis.wordpress.com>).

Has this online revolution hit the cultural sector yet? The answer is yes and no. Some get it, some don't. But the bottom line is that the impact of the online world is growing and places like museums, galleries, archives and libraries have a responsibility to make sure that they are part of it. Let's be clear: we're not talking about some sort of real versus virtual debate. It is about the opportunities the online world offers that *coexist* alongside those of the physical.

One of the key differences between the cultural sector and a lot of the biggest Web 2.0 sites or services is that the web services were born digital – their structure, functionality, premise, purpose, delivery – everything was conceived to be online, and the nature of the technology defines what they are and how they work. Those businesses and services not born digital – i.e. everything else (including practically all the websites from cultural organizations) – are mostly going through some process of evolution, from the real to the virtual, and with varying degrees of success.

The same evolution is happening with people as well, as those of us who grew up in schools without computers grapple with the "digital natives"<sup>1</sup> that most of our children were born as.

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1 <http://www.digitalnative.org>

## Challenging institutional thinking

For organizations like museums and galleries this evolutionary phase is challenging and difficult, many institutions carry with them hundreds of years of history, and established and institutional ways of thinking and working. The culture of that thinking is very well defined in many cases and does not sit easily with the open, non-hierarchical, interactive nature of the Web today.

A few years ago, we invited Simon Waldman, Director of Digital Publishing at *the Guardian*<sup>2</sup> newspaper in the UK to give a talk at the annual UK Museums on the Web conference<sup>3</sup> that 24 Hour Museum was sponsoring. Simon Waldman talked about the parallels between the challenges that face the publishing sector and the museum sector, and the similarities as both are establishment institutions with long histories of real world activity. He showed a photograph of the outside of *the Guardian* headquarters in London taken in June 2000, a time when a lot of people were pulling away from the net after the burst of the dot com bubble.<sup>4</sup>

*The Guardian*, however, made a corporate decision to engrave onto the stone sign outside their offices the logo of their online brand “*Guardian Unlimited*”, alongside those of their established newspaper brands (*the Guardian* and *the Observer*). It was a critical message to those in and outside their business of the importance of the role they saw the online world having in their future.

This status for online activities is mirrored by Tate<sup>5</sup> who have called their website their fifth gallery (the other four being physical galleries around England). Both of these examples demonstrate the recognition, at the highest level within an organization, that online technologies are new challenges that need their own specific skills and considerations.

This view is also inevitably reflected in the staff structures of both those organizations. At Tate, they have a whole department called “Tate Media” (previously “Digital Programmes”) with a Director at a senior level. They are not aligned with some of the traditional departments that online usually is, such as marketing or IT. The Tate team has in-house expertise and skills in new media. A similar story is true at *the Guardian*: Simon Waldman was the first person to have the job title that recognized digital publishing as an area in its own right.

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2 <http://www.guardian.co.uk>

3 <http://www.museumscomputergroup.org.uk/meetings/2-2007.shtml>

4 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dot-com\\_bubble](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dot-com_bubble)

5 <http://www.tate.org.uk>

So both Tate and *the Guardian* have evolved their thinking to consider the online space in its own right, in a way that is similar to those businesses that have only ever existed online – those that were born digital. Crucially, both organizations value the role of the digital curator or editor in the process of developing what they do online. A good way to understand this is to consider the fact that a museum would not put on an exhibition without a curator and likewise at Culture24<sup>6</sup> we would not publish a website without an editor or digital curator.

Interestingly, *the Guardian*'s evolution has continued, and they have made the move from a news site with a lot of columnists to having one of the most active professional (as in, the writers are paid) blogs in the world – both in terms of actual blog posts and in terms of the public response to them. In fact, the site has come so far from its origins as an online news site that it almost feels now like it could have been born digital.

## Evolution and vision

For many people technology only comes alive when they find a personal reason to use it, something that helps them to do something they already want to do, but better. Then they start to see the potential it has through real experience, e.g. sharing photographs with family members in other countries on a photo sharing website is a great way to get you into the whole world of social networks and tagging.

But how could an organization evolve its online thinking? How does it set a vision and who in the organization should do this? Do you try and recruit the skills in-house or do you buy them in as you need them? Crucially – how do you know what skills you need?

Let me give you an example: imagine you are a curator and someone says to you, “We are going to build a wiki, what do you want to do with it?” How do you answer that question unless you know not only what a wiki is, but what makes a good wiki (and there are a lot of bad ones)?

If you are that curator, you would need to have your own good reasons and focus for your wiki. You would need to know what the editorial issues were about moderation, user engagement, etc., as well as more technical issues about authoring, control, development, sustainability, hosting, etc. Also, crucially, you would need to know if the audience you were supposed to be targeting would know what a wiki was and care enough to want to use it.

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6 <http://www.culture24.org.uk>

These areas of expertise are not within most curators' job descriptions and they don't need to be. They simply need to understand the potential of the wiki as a tool, they don't need to know how to actually build one themselves. Maybe what that curator needs is support from someone who has the skills to build one, who they can work with to make sure that the wiki is the right tool for the job and answers a real need?

This kind of collaborative working and skill sharing, within a practical context, is fundamental to the successful adoption and implementation of a digital publishing agenda in the cultural sector. The people working, running and managing our cultural organizations need to understand it enough so that they can exploit the technology to their advantage without feeling they have to jump on every new bandwagon that comes along.

A really nice example of collaborative working and skills development is the National Museums Liverpool Blog.<sup>7</sup> Here, staff are working together to publish a blog about their activities. They are tagging stories, sharing experiences. It is low tech, low cost, low risk but high impact as the nature of a blog is that it is visible to search engines because of the way they are built. It is also only a part of their overall online activities, which also include RSS<sup>8</sup> feeds, online collections, events and a more formal brochure site. Individually they are all simple but together they create a sophisticated online offering that gives them a well-optimized Web presence. Learning how to work with technology in this kind of open, flexible and collaborative way is something that the cultural sector is going to need to do more of, and soon.

Aside from a growing handful of cultural sector blogs, the Web 2.0 phenomenon has facilitated millions of people online to share their own *personal* content – stories, ideas, rants and trivia. Technorati<sup>9</sup> currently tracks over 57 million weblogs and the blogosphere continues to double about every five months. But does any cultural content play a role in these blogs? Do bloggers want access to cultural stuff or are they busy with other things?

### **Changing user behaviour on the 24 Hour Museum website**

At Culture24 we publish a website called the 24 Hour Museum<sup>10</sup> and we found in the last three years that we share a lot of traffic with blogs, although to find the touch

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7 <http://blog.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/>

8 RSS is a format for delivering regularly changing web content. Many news-related sites, weblogs and other online publishers syndicate their content as an RSS Feed to whoever wants it.

9 <http://technorati.com/>

10 <http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk>

points you need to look carefully at the logs from our website. The shape of that contact is not immediately obvious but nevertheless it is happening, a lot. Sometimes a blogger links to one of our RSS feeds<sup>11</sup> and embeds it into their own blog. Sometimes they quote from an article and then link to a piece of our content. This example is from a blog about “policy, museums and cultural diversity” in France and is a good example.

**Image 1** – Mary’s research blog<sup>12</sup>



But very often, they link to an image from one of our articles. When they create this link, in effect they are embedding our image into their own blog but it is still being served up from our own website and counts as traffic in our logs, even though the end result is seen on their blog. This is called image hijacking.

11 [http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/etc/formuseums/TXT25949\\_gfx\\_en.html](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/etc/formuseums/TXT25949_gfx_en.html)

12 <http://marystevens.wordpress.com/2006/10/29/whose-heritage-new-developments-in-the-uk-culture-sector/>

One of the biggest single referrers to the 24 Hour Museum site is Google image search (about 14%) and these queries are people looking for images, probably to use in their blog or social networks. Sometimes what they are looking for are images of cultural stuff – paintings, places, people, objects, events, etc. – and through Google image search they sometimes find what they are looking for on our website. When they do, they use that image to illustrate their blog posts with a hijack.

### Image 2 – All Saints

**Masonic Boom**  
*New blog. Gloves off. All my mouthy opinions with no holds barred.*

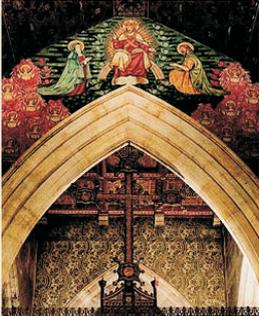
**About Me**  
 **NAME:** MASONIC BOOM **LOCATION:** SOUTH LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM  
[View my complete profile](#)

*Recent posts*  
[You Feel Hope As Much As You Feel Hopelessness](#)  
[ROTFL](#)  
[Versprung Durch Technik](#)  
[We Spend A Lot Of Time Playing Music Together. We ...](#)  
[What Does It Feel Like, To Cry?](#)  
[Dear Reader](#)  
[There Are No Mistakes, Only Happy Accidents](#)  
[Battle Hymn For The Wounded Mathematician](#)  
[It's a Bad Wind That Don't Blow Somebody Some Good...](#)  
[Total Perspective Vortex](#)

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2006**  
**The Cambridge Museum Of Obsolete Technology**  
Went off to Cambridge for the weekend to hang out with TISSP! and see the Palimpsest Festival and other assorted spacerock japes. (Read: drink so much tequila you can't see straight.)

TISSP! lives in a beautiful house in a weird gated community just off the River Cam. I noticed a gigantic Victorian chimneystack in his back garden, like something out of Lord of the Rings. "What's that?" I ask. "It's the Cambridge Museum Of Obsolete Technology" he replies, which sounds like the best thing ever.

Anyway, yes, we went to the folk festival. I felt a bit left out as I did not have a beard and resolved to grow one as quickly as possible. First off, the venue... All Saints Church. The most incredibly beautiful and psychedelic full-on Arts and Crafts Masterpiece I've ever seen.





The first post contains an image from an article on the 24 Hour Museum of the All Saints Church in Cambridge. The person writing the blog has used it to illustrate a post about a trip to Cambridge and the beautiful old church.

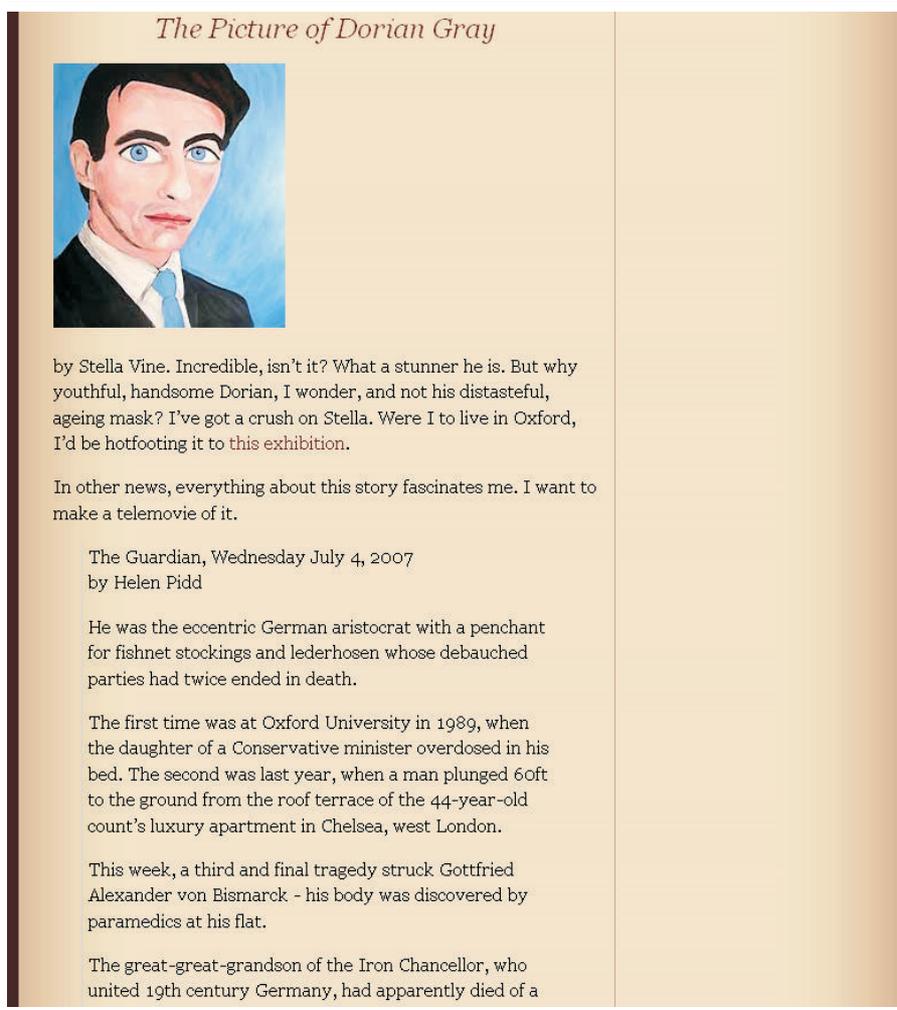
## Image 3 – Armouries



This second example is a photograph of an exhibit about the First World War at the Royal Armouries, Leeds. It is being used in a football fan forum to mock their opposition team. The first example has been used in its correct cultural context: the blog post is actually about the same thing as the image. The second has been used out of context – the image is simply illustrative, in this case for humorous effect.

When we first noticed this phenomenon in 2005 most of the images hijacked were being used out of context, but in the last three years this has shifted. In 2005 it was hard to find hijacks that were “in” context. Now the opposite is true and it is hard to find examples that are not. The situation has reversed. It has also evolved. Look at these examples of more recent blogger hijacking.

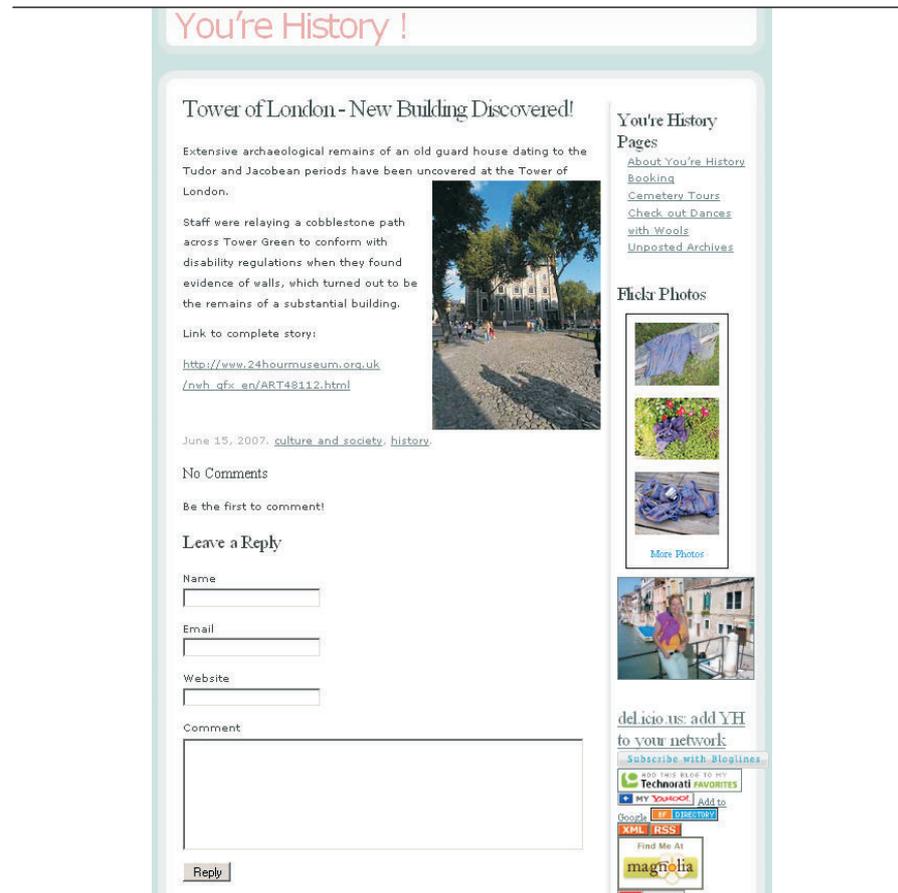
Image 4 – Stella Vine<sup>13</sup>



Here the blogger is writing about how much they love the artist Stella Vine and how they would like to visit an exhibition of her work at a museum in Oxford. The post contains an image hijacked from an article on the 24 Hour Museum about the exhibition. The author has also included a link in the post to the website of the museum in Oxford.

<sup>13</sup> <http://chalkhorse.wordpress.com/2007/07/>

Image 5 – Tower of London<sup>14</sup>



This is a history blog where the post includes a picture of the Tower of London and also a link back to the original article where the image came from on the 24 Hour Museum.

There is also another new use that bloggers are using our hijacked images for. Aside from illustrating their posts, they use them as avatars.<sup>15</sup> In this case the hijacked image is used as a kind of emblem on a blog that the person has chosen to represent their persona. It only gets picked up in our logs when the post is read by a lot of people. What happens is that a particular post rises to the top of a social network in

<sup>14</sup> <http://yourehistory.wordpress.com/2007/06/15/tower-of-london-new-building-discovered>  
<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avatar\\_\(virtual\\_reality\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avatar_(virtual_reality))

popularity terms, but its popularity is always brief as the turnover of content is so high because so many posts are being made all the time. Once its popularity has expired another post takes its place. The result on our logs is a short lived spike of referrals from somewhere like MySpace and it is very difficult to trace exactly what the image was, or even to find the original post unless you manage to catch the spike as it is happening.

The popularity that an individual post can achieve is due partly to an increase in the quality of blogging. It has gained credibility in the mainstream as a form of media in its own right, with its own stars and professional bloggers. This leads to a higher quality and popularity of blogging overall which is helping the number of relevant referrals to sites like the 24 Hour Museum via hijacks. This in turn makes the argument for better-tagged content as, alongside search engines, it will be bloggers who will increasingly have a role to play in helping people to find relevant cultural content that is online.

Like the National Museums Liverpool, the 24 Hour Museum site is well optimized in its own right, which is why our content is being found by bloggers. This optimization is grounded in the frequency of our publishing and the use of RSS feeds to get our stories out into the Web very effectively.

So why have things changed in the last few years? Why are more people who hijack these images using them in context? Well, it is a result of a number of different things; the 24 Hour Museum site has become more popular and hence is better optimized (visitor numbers have risen from 83 000 in January 2003 to over one million per month in January 2007); there are a *lot* more people who are blogging; and crucially, people are getting better at searching. It is also important to note that this is not something that is happening exclusively to the 24 Hour Museum site, the percentage of referrals from Google image search is similar on other big image rich sites like the UK's Natural History Museum.

But is all this a good thing? The view at Culture24 is definitely yes. It is an example of people appropriating an aspect of culture in personal ways that mean something to them, a sign of engagement. It is also a sign that search engines can see these images and that means people are finding them and they are then popping up on blogs and social networks like Myspace. But it is still problematic for a lot of organizations as it challenges the boundaries of their institution, their curatorial control and their sense of the authority of their data. It necessitates the need to be open to the idea that knowledge comes from different places and to accept that people may want to use

their cultural content online in many different ways that have value to them specifically.

### Sharing content with social networks

There are some institutions that already understand this challenge and are beginning to be proactive and push their content out to social networking sites. An article<sup>16</sup> about the latest online activities of the Brooklyn Museum in the US illustrates this point. The museum is letting its stuff flow out into social networking sites like Twitter<sup>17</sup> and Flickr<sup>18</sup> and it is beginning to have an impact on the level of active user engagement such as posting videos, photographs, comments, etc. What is particularly interesting is that the Brooklyn Museum has put back onto its own website<sup>19</sup> a feed of images from Flickr of the photographs their visitors have taken of their visit. They are embracing the Flickr online community and being open about its interpretations of how they see the museum. They are also, and this is a crucial point, improving their own search engine optimization through the relationship with Flickr.

Most people using the Web start their online activity in a search engine.<sup>20</sup> You could say that at the moment people are living in search engines. They start their online activity in a search engine and if they don't find what they want, they go back to a search engine. Maybe they add another word, maybe two words to refine their search, maybe they switch search engines, but they stick with searching as their method of discovery.

**Image 6** – Google with house



16 <http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3628257>

17 <http://twitter.com>

18 <http://www.flickr.com>

19 <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/photos/>

20 Oxford Internet Institute [http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/oxis/oxis2005\\_report.pdf](http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/oxis/oxis2005_report.pdf)

Common Information Environment

[http://talk.talis.com/archives/CIE\\_CC\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://talk.talis.com/archives/CIE_CC_Final_Report.pdf)

Digicult [http://www.digicult.info/downloads/thematic\\_issue\\_3\\_low.pdf](http://www.digicult.info/downloads/thematic_issue_3_low.pdf)

The most popular sites around the world right now are either search related or communities. This is true *all* over the world as traffic rankings in Alexa<sup>21</sup> clearly show and there is no reason to believe that this is going to change in the future. But what is going to change is the way search engines work and how people use what they find in their online communities or in their own lives.

Who could have imagined five years ago there would be over 60 million people publishing their own blogs? Or 2 billion shared images on Flickr? Who could have imagined how sites like YouTube<sup>22</sup> have changed our viewing habits or the way that the iPod and iTunes have challenged the way the music industry makes its money? The consistent thing through all of these changes is the need to share, the desire to produce as well as consume, to be active and not passive – and there is no going back now to the old one-way exchange of media from the past for the new digital natives.

There are now some high profile examples from the cultural sector where a more open approach to data sharing with communities of users is having an impact. The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney has been experimenting with user tagging – with a dramatic effect on the number of visits to their online collection and also on their search engine optimization (SEO). They put their digitized collection online and allowed people to tag objects with their own meanings. This combination of the accessibility of the records and user interaction led to a 100% increase in Web traffic in six months. Their key developer, Seb Chan, has documented this extensively in his excellent blog *Fresh + New*<sup>23</sup> and in various conference papers<sup>24</sup> internationally.

In early 2008, the Library of Congress launched an online collaboration<sup>25</sup> with Flickr described as: “Your opportunity to contribute to describing the world’s public photo collections”. They have put into the Flickr network over one million images from collections such “1930s and 1940s in Colour” and “News in the 1910s”. They state the key goals of this pilot project to be “to firstly give you a taste of the hidden treasures in the huge Library of Congress collection, and secondly to show how your input of a tag or two can make the collection even richer.”

These images are mixed up with the wealth of photographs on Flickr that represent more of a contemporary social history. The images, once in the network, are tagged by the existing (huge) photographic community, who are often willing, and able, to

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21 [http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top\\_500](http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_500)

22 <http://www.youtube.com/>

23 <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/dmsblog/>

24 <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2007/papers/chan/chan.html>

25 <http://flickr.com/commons>

tag the libraries' images. The end result is a set of new meanings, contexts and pathways that come from the many different interpretations of these pictures that users put onto them through the use of tags.

What is interesting here is that the historical imagery, that previously was hard to find, is made available to a huge existing online community. The photographic community within Flickr already engaged in higher quality tagging and user-generated content and Flickr already has a lot of "similar" contemporary content with which these historical images can be linked. This puts both sets of images into different contexts.

Of course, the other important part of the equation is that Flickr's API<sup>26</sup> opens up interesting possibilities for combining the info into other projects or services.

Right now, looking for stuff online is not *that* easy: cultural content is not as visible as it could be. However, it's going to get much harder as the swell of digital information grows, as more and more databases are exposed, more and more services put online, more and more people contribute their own stories, pictures or gossip. Also, culture is in competition with the many other things that make demands on peoples' attention online.

In this data overload how will we find anything? How will we know the genuine from the fake, the authoritative from the speculative, the institutional from the personal or the excellent from the simply mediocre?

The British Library in the UK has been part of a report that looks at the implications of what they call the "Google generation myth".<sup>27</sup> It looks at search-based Internet behaviour and the evidence that younger people in particular do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the Web.

### **Set our data free**

So what is the answer? Better education in search engine techniques at school? Perhaps ways to tell people when a result comes from a trusted source like a museum? These are important but in part the answer also lies with machines: robots, spiders, aggregators and search engines. If you like, these are the librarians, shop keepers, delivery vans, gate keepers, lollipop ladies of the Web – you can think of them in lots

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<sup>26</sup> Application Program Interface

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.bl.uk/news/2008/pressrelease20080116.html>

of different ways, but they are our guides to the enormous quantities of digital stuff online that is growing all the time and they are getting *clever*.

People talk about Web 3.0 or the semantic Web and no one really knows exactly how it will all work, but they do know it is vital *how* digital information is packaged, offered and understood by machines.

It needs standards. It needs structuring. It needs tagging with its meaning or meanings depending on who you are. In a way, search engines are becoming the digital equivalent of the original collectors of the past: people like Henry Wellcome, John Soane or Pitt Rivers. But the machines and robots of the future will be collecting digital meanings not physical objects. The digital meaning sits within the different interpretations of objects that come from its original source (e.g. the museum or curator), and the tags that are given it by users whose view of that object or its use differs from that of the institution.

The pioneering STEVE<sup>28</sup> project makes this point very clear in all their work as they realized that the words the curators used to describe works of paintings in museums were not the same that people used to describe the same paintings. One of their starting points was that searches for the term “impressionists” on the San Francisco Museum of Art website used to come back with “no matches” despite the fact that the museum is well known for its impressionist collection. This was because the term was not a curatorial term, so nothing was marked in their system with this language.

So search engines need to know an object can have different meanings to different people and will need to understand those meanings from its digital identifiers (tags, metadata, etc.) but also from the context in which it sits.

Places like museums, galleries, libraries and archives need to get their stuff – their digitized collections, objects, texts, archives, podcasts, videos – out into the online world where these machines can find it and where it can be integrated into social networks. Once in those networks, it can gather different interpretations and meanings that will enrich it as a digital object for both search engines and real people.

And if those clever search engines can find it and they know what it is and where it is from, then they will be able to deliver it to whatever new services we will all be using in the future. The new generation of online services that will customize and

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28 <http://www.steve.museum/>

personalize this huge sea of digital information for us. Perhaps it will be some of these new services that will help to shape the way cultural content is seen and found.

One thing is for sure, our rich cultural data needs to be available digitally to be mashed up, interoperated with and re-used in other places and other contexts. Available to Web developers, designers, artist, entrepreneurs, programmers to use. That way it can begin to plug in and mingle with the communities and people that are online, no matter where they are, or who they are, or what they are doing.

The new online services of the future we cannot imagine. In fact, I bet our understanding of what online means will not even be the same. But whatever it is, we need to make sure that culture is part of it and that will mean working together more closely, agreeing the language we use to talk to machines and sharing our data more openly.

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## **The online power of users and money: can culture gain?**

**Lidia Varbanova**

### **Web portals: vehicles to increase participation and access**

Only a few years ago, we used to meet only in traditional “offline” spaces – classroom, conference hall, meeting room, university. Today the online communities are pioneering new forms of collaborative processes and production that also revolutionize markets and companies. Not so long ago, a Web portal was just a structured framework of tabs and icons, containing very few images and hyperlinks to other websites. For a very short period of only a few years, the Web portal became a service-delivering online tool, a connector and facilitator, a meeting point, a place to share ideas and gain friends, but also to buy and sell goods and services. It seems more and more that we share our life between the “real” one and the “virtual” one.

Digital culture is one of the global phenomena of the twenty-first century. It is a fascinating trend, because it is about access – to everybody by everybody, it has no limits. It helps us to overcome borders and offers us a “second life” in the virtual spaces. Irrespective of our cultural background, traditions, religion, ethnicity, gender, we can get together and exchange experiences, ideas and knowledge through the Internet. We do this in most cases also for fun, for entertainment and pleasure. Digital culture proves that in spite of coming from different corners of the world, diverse countries, cities and regions, we all have similar needs: to know, to create, to share and to communicate. The information is just there – available and accessible for each one of us, anytime.

Web portals are one of the important online platforms for facilitation of the creation and sharing of digital culture. The way portals are set up varies from broad networking tools encouraging online communication and sharing to pure business

models which generate revenues. There are also “hybrid” versions of portals, covering elements of both.

A very important element of a Web portal is the ability to connect individuals and communities globally and to enable them to share and communicate in groups (small or extremely large) based on their interests. Nowadays a number of factors should be considered for a Web portal to be a successful social networking tool and to eventually earn money:

- real-time collaboration services: instant messaging, discussions online, group calendars, shared online encyclopaedias;
- integrated applications: workflow integration, syndicated content, group emails, common online workflow;
- personalized delivery of content: providing information specific to needs and preferences of a user, filtering based on priorities;
- e-commerce possibilities.

The term “user-generated content” was first used in 2005, reflecting the various kinds of media content produced by users, uploaded online and publicly available (such as blogging, podcasting, videos, etc.). In 2006 the global media announced the new Web world as a tool to make each person on the planet matter and giving him/her possibility to contribute, to promote, to be visible worldwide. The Web 2.0 tools (discussion groups, blogs, wikis, social networking sites, podcasts) started to become more and more popular and spread across the globe. They form an online environment created by users’ interactions and the content is published, changed, managed and used by everyone who wants to be part of the network. It is an intangible user-orientated structure.

The emphasis in Web 2.0 tools is on the end user who has the power to speak out, to promote and develop his/her own brand with much less initial capital than was needed before. Creators and developers of websites realized that they could make money by increasing the users’ traffic and attracting advertising. This can happen of course only if content is very interesting for large numbers of users, or if the online platform is set up in an easy-to-share way. Artists, musicians, writers and photographers today have a low-cost publishing mechanism to distribute their creative works. They can choose among numerous portals for posting their music, photos, books and other creative products. Producers also watch online self-promotion websites: record companies actually monitor the number of friends that a MySpace band has and often sign up musicians when they reach a certain number of friends.

### **The power shift: users as creators and producers**

Today's virtual spaces drastically change users' behaviour and positioning online: from consumers of information and an "information-receiving" attitude, users become active participants and collaborators. Portals offer plenty of options to users to freely promote their talents, creations and achievements – at no cost and without any intermediate managers, producers or agents. From a passive role, online users become active self-promoters where their voices, opinions and creative products could reach millions of other users, accumulating the accessibility effect through interest and high users' rating.

Here are several very popular and extremely successful Internet business models, based on users' driven content, which much changed the conventional way we produce, write, create and share.

The video sharing website YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) allows users to upload, view and share short video clips. Starting in 2005, a year later it reported that more than 100 million videos were being watched every day. The site allows an unknown individual to become a celebrity for a very short period, attracting much publicity through an uploaded video. According to an article in *The Wall Street Journal* (August 2006), YouTube was hosting over six million videos, growing at about 20% every month. The total time that people from all over the world have spent watching YouTube since it started last year is approximately 9 305 years! The site is a kind of "global laboratory" for studying how some forms of content become so popular.

Many personal success stories of artists prove that YouTube is now the most powerful promotional tool for artists. With the right key-word and few good "hints", an artist's video can be seen by a million people. Not all the content on YouTube is user-generated, as there are songs or video clips that are protected by copyright laws. Some companies authorize the use of images or music for YouTube and similar websites, but other companies refuse. The accessibility of the website content is growing drastically due to the new YouTube Mobile site, YouTube TV Channel and availability on iPhone.

Another successful "product" of the digital culture is MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) – the social network website with 106 million accounts, where anybody can find friends, listen to music, watch videos or just share interests with other people around the globe. Among the users there are theatre companies, individual musicians, artists, record labels, radio stations, music publishers, politicians .... It seems like organizations and people coming from every branch of the economy want to be heard, seen, exposed, commented, found.

Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) started in 2004 as a social networking site for university and college students. Nowadays it has more than 60 million active users, spending on average 19 minutes a day, and it has spread far beyond just students. Users can create profiles, upload hundreds of photos, tag their photos with names, comment on photos of their friends, find old friends and schoolmates, and compare interests in films, cocktail drinking, travelling and many other hobbies. The new applications and functions grow rapidly and each user can also create a new application.

The software known as “Wiki” also changed the world. The obvious examples like Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)) show that it is possible to transmit the power of editing and uploading, changing and updating to the millions of people around the globe. Wikipedia is the biggest multilingual free-content encyclopaedia on the Internet and became very popular because each one of us can contribute – can write an article, evaluate the content, suggest changes and make changes. And no author is paid for contributions.

There are some less known (for some of us) but also very powerful online tools, focusing on community engagement, users’ interactions and critical mass of entries:

- SourceWatch ([www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org)): a collaborative project of the Center for Media and Democracy, USA, which produces a directory of people, organizations and issues shaping the public agenda. Unlike some other wikis, SourceWatch has a policy of strict referencing and is overseen by a paid editor.
- Debatepedia (<http://wiki.idebate.org>): a wiki project of the International Debate Education Association (IDEA), improving the ability to think through complicated issues, to debate and to take an action as a citizen by participating as an editor on the site.
- Torontopedia ([www.torontopedia.ca](http://www.torontopedia.ca)): a website about Toronto, Canada that anyone can edit without being an expert in websites. This is an online project to explore, discuss and share everything about this city.
- Mashable (<http://mashable.com>) is the world’s largest blog, focusing exclusively on social networks, and inviting users to submit a story related to their online networking experience and news.
- Reddit (<http://reddit.com>) is a social news website, allowing users to post links to generated content and to vote on the posting by other users. The links with more voting appear more prominently.
- Yelp ([www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)) is an easy and fun way to find, review and talk about what’s great (and not so great) in your area. It contains users’ uploaded information on restaurants, shopping, spas, night life, beauty salons and much more. Each review is linked with the user’s profile, giving a sense of the activities of users.

- ClickZ network ([www.clickz.com](http://www.clickz.com)) is the largest resource of interactive marketing news, information, opinions, research and references.
- Slideshare ([www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)) is a large community for sharing presentations on the Web.
- Podcast.net ([www.podcast.net](http://www.podcast.net)) allows users to record a story, a presentation, a lecture, or a radio programme and then to create a podcast for listeners.
- Nokia Concept Lounge ([www.thesedays.com/conceptlounge](http://www.thesedays.com/conceptlounge)) invites users to share their thoughts on the future of mobile communication.
- Orange's Talking Point (<http://talkingpoint.orange.co.uk>) is a place where users can say how they feel about a lot of things, not just telephones.

Not without reason, *Time Magazine's* 2006 Person of the Year was "You" and the reason was the phenomenon of users' participation in generating content and self-promotion.

The social networking phenomenon went even further, "decompressing" our daily life and breaking it into pieces. One example is the Twitter (<http://twitter.com>) service that allows users to send short messages to their family, colleagues and friends, telling others what they are doing – eating, walking, thinking, etc. It started to raise diverse reactions – from happiness because of the possibility of finding your friend to join you for a party or being connected to your beloved ones at any moment, to a sadness about too much connection for not very important things, such as what you are having for dinner, what kind of chair you are sitting on or what shampoo you are using to wash your hair. This website also raises the question of security vulnerability as everyone knows what everyone else is doing at a certain time.

The phenomena of websites and portals driven by users raise numerous discussions about user-generated content, its value, level of professionalism and quality. This is because such content is usually created by non-professionals, with no expectations for profit or direct financial benefit and, in most cases, it does not have an institutional context. Users are motivated to participate in order to connect, to share, to get visibility, to express opinions and viewpoints. Content generated by users is, in most cases, the result of a collaborative effort – every next user contributes to what the previous one has said/uploaded/written.

### **User-generated content: why culture doesn't gain enough**

It seems that cultural professionals involved in cross-border cooperation, cultural networking, cultural research, policy making for the arts or managing artistic organizations and projects in Europe are not profiting enough from the opportunity to

develop user-generated content on cultural websites. There are various possible reasons.

- Fear to post personal details: social networking sites encourage users to share their personal information and messages openly, and everyone can see it. Obviously, many of us do not like that.
- Spontaneous means unfinished: cultural researchers, consultants, professors and policy-makers create books, articles and research works or write statements and documents. They are used to publishing final, “ready-to-be-viewed” materials. Social networking and user-generated content requires spontaneous reactions, which for many of us might not look like a comprehensive, serious and elaborated piece of intellectual work.
- Loss of control: since any user can create content it is difficult to control the quality and the relevance of the content input, therefore it might become unfocused and unstructured. In some cases user-generated content might cause content overlap or duplication. Many of us in the cultural and artistic field like to focus and are distracted by unfiltered information.
- Online copyright mess: there are a lot of unsolved questions about the ownership of the content generated by individual users, by groups and communities of users. For example, when users provide commentary using corporate online resources, will the company or the author own the intellectual property?
- Social networking seems unserious: we appreciate credible authors. Since in this case each user can become a content provider and we are not sure who exactly the person posting content is, we are less likely to be inspired by his/her thoughts and viewpoint.
- We are afraid that user generated content can be highly inaccurate and even not appropriate. It can also contain abusive or sexual material. Therefore more and more sites are setting up editorial control for double-checking against such uploads.

Websites and portals in the field of new media and arts and technology, as well as innovative cross-border case studies and projects across Europe, are less fearful and are based on a higher participation and user generation of content. There are also examples of cooperative blogs, online discussion forums and groups in the field of culture and the arts who are open and show the power of sharing and joint communication online. There is a need to provoke deeper research and debates among our cultural and artistic circles on issues such as: online copyrights, privacy policies, openness versus editorial control, etc., so that we can find out how to move ahead with more strength and less fear.

### **Is it easy to sell on the Web and increase revenues?**

In the new digital culture today, cyberspace is not just a space for knowledge, information and entertainment. It is a new form of economic relations and transactions, based on mass collaboration and use of the Internet. The book by D. Tapscott and A. Williams: *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, discusses how the economy of “the new Web” depends on mass collaboration and therefore it is important for the new media companies to find ways of making a profit with the help of Web 2.0 tools. The two authors name the new Internet economy “Wikinomics” and base it around four ideas: openness, peering, sharing and acting globally. This mass collaboration relies on free individual agents coming together and cooperating to solve a problem, improve a given operation or just to entertain and have fun. It is important that companies and organizations recognize these principles and try to profit with the help of Web 2.0 applications – assembling products not *for* but *with* their customers.

As discussed above, in the online world the user has a voice. The users are the ones to control the quantity and quality by building up communities around sharing and remixing content. The user is also a consumer, a buyer: therefore, this voice is having an impact on other users/consumers purchasing decisions. Successful portals create new business models for open content, much more responsive to customers’ demands and very different from the traditional media establishments. There are many new opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs in the area of user-generated content as it creates a medium where masses can interact and can become an incredibly powerful force.

Cyberspace acts more and more as a global virtual market, filled with suppliers and buyers, connected with bargain schemes. Hundreds of thousands of websites offer products for sale and act as virtual stores. The general economic rule is that the digital culture is a “money saver” for customers and “money-maker” for providers. Web portals’ developers understand more and more that they have an economic value, because they grab the attention of large numbers of visitors, who are also potential buyers in the e-economy. The attention is attracted and kept only if a Web portal offers 3 main things: excellent content, community involvement and a larger context.

Here are some examples of how websites implement successful business models and tools for generating high revenues.

- The very famous online auction and shopping website e-Bay ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)) has around 30 million registered users today, buying and selling nearly anything: from antiques and jewellery, to computers, furniture, vehicles, equipment, also services and intangible properties. The site also offers

professional services for all kinds of business needs. It has established localized websites in thirty countries outside of the USA, the newest one in Vietnam.

- The business model of YouTube was based on advertisements (before being purchased by Google), making 15 million US dollars per month. In May 2007, YouTube gave an exclusive status to some of its most viewed users, allowing them to earn revenue from advertisements posted next to their videos.
- Facebook generates revenues from advertising: banner ads and sponsored groups and makes over a million per week. In 2007, Facebook introduced few new business-related features:
  - a new gift feature was added to the site: one gift is free, and each additional gift at the cost of US\$1;
  - Facebook Marketplace, allowing users to post free classified ads within the categories: for sale, housing, jobs.

On 24 October 2007, Microsoft announced that it had bought a 1.6% share of Facebook for US\$246 million.
- Amazon.com was one of the first big companies to sell goods on the Internet and it started with an unusual business plan – no expectation of profit for the first five years. Now it offers online shopping from the earth's biggest selection of books, magazines, music, DVDs, videos, electronics, computers, software and more. The website keeps customers coming back online again and again, as it tracks their tastes and cultivates relationships. A very popular feature is the opportunity for users to submit reviews on each product and rate it. A few months ago, the company announced its intention to launch its own online music store, selling downloads exclusively in MP3 format.
- The developers of MySpace plan to attach ads, product sales and sponsorships to their application and keep all the resulting revenue.
- IMEEM is the fastest growing social networking site for artists, musicians and regular customers in North America, with more than 20 million registered members. In this online community millions of fans and artists discover new music, videos and photos, and share their tastes with friends. It's free for members but it is very profitable because corporate companies pay to advertise on the site. They pay for the opportunity to have 20 million potential customers.
- The multinational corporation Cisco Systems, the leading supplier of networking equipment and network management for the Internet and one of the bigger investors today in virtualization of the technologies, has 90% of its sales conducted over the Internet.
- In some of the social networking websites, bloggers could be paid a percentage of the profit for having ads on their profile, and they are paid by the number of people visiting the profile. Therefore, the authors strive to write blogs that will be read by lots of people and this could drive a better content.

The existing business models of online portals and websites show a clever mixture of adaptable business plans (changing over time), good promotional ideas, innovative features, smart technological development and thinking, understanding customers' needs and expectations and predicting them. The analysis of these successful business models shows that there are several key areas to consider when designing and running a profitable Web portal or a website:

- Focused and filtered information: different tools for different users. This is a key to success, as there is free information anywhere on the Internet, but most of it tends to be disorganized and chaotic. That is why customized and personalized information is worth paying for.
- Uniqueness. All rapidly growing online businesses are based on a distinctive and non-traditional way to attract users through a unique concept, features, new opportunities, well developed informational pool or online networking.
- Global reach and regional diversification. Relying on millions of users and increasing these numbers every day is the only way to attract supporters and business companies to spend money advertising online.
- Offering advice and consulting. Together with offering information and social interaction, many successful websites provide an opportunity to offer professional help for specific areas, linked with the core business.
- Introducing new products or services on a regular basis: innovative products and packages. None of the successful models mentioned above stops development once they have become very popular globally, but they continue investing more and more in research and development, new features and innovative tools.
- Developing a well-elaborated online marketing strategy, focusing on nurturing and pampering the customer.
- Making users feel special: offering subscription models and VIP online client packages, as well as a variety of discount offers, is also one of the ways to succeed.
- Providing an option to sell products or services online (where relevant). In this case it is important to implement an easy and reliable method of payment, fast online services, delivery on time, reliability and a return policy for dissatisfied customers.
- Giving a good feedback option and review on every item: possibilities for buyers and sellers to post their comments online and rank the product or service, giving advice to future users and buyers.
- Giving a sense of ownership to the community of users: involving users in the modification and extension of the website's features and the modification of guidelines and policies.
- Measuring success: building up reporting and feedback tools.

- And finally: a customer friendly interface, allowing users to orientate fast, to browse easily and to find the information they are looking for within seconds.

It is a question of further research and collective thinking to find out to what extent cultural portals could generate profit, and what are the factors influencing this process: field of art, scope, main mission, users' participation, content generation and development, funding strategy of the portal, etc.

### **A money-making and smiling cultural online tool: is it possible?**

How can we make our cultural websites more attractive for users? There are hundreds of websites of European cultural networks, research centres, directories, cultural observatories, online databases, artistic platforms, online libraries and cultural organizations.<sup>1</sup> On a vast majority of them, users are not given the possibility to pay online for a professional service or for a cultural product. It is of course important to emphasize that most of these websites operate in the non-profit field, serving the users for no payment, with the aim to secure wide access and fulfil a public aim. Therefore, their financial structure is set up to rely on government support, foundation grants or another funding agency. They do not exist to primarily increase their revenues based on users' interactions and payment. But does it mean all the existing possibilities should be entirely denied by website managers and developers, especially in a world of ongoing financial constraints and fundraising problems we face in the arts and cultural field? Can the non-profit by nature cultural websites and portals support part of their budgets by making money, implementing wise marketing ideas and promotional tools and making users more satisfied, more committed and happier? Here is a selected list of possibilities we could consider, among the many:

- advertising through banners and direct marketing;
- membership fees and subscription models;
- rebates on cultural products (shows, concerts, exhibitions, conferences, etc.) for regular customers;
- awards, contests, competitions for creative ideas and projects;

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1 LabforCulture is one of the major pan-European online initiatives, aiming to develop innovative approaches, tools and technologies to strengthen, stimulate and facilitate cultural collaborations across geographic, cultural and imaginative borders. It works with and for artists, arts and culture organizations and networks, cultural professionals and audiences in all of the countries of the wider Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world. The main mission is (1) to ensure that all those working on cultural collaborations have access to up-to-the-minute information and (2) to encourage the cultural sector to become more experimental with online technologies. LabforCulture is an autonomous project initiated in 2004 and hosted by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) in Amsterdam.

- selling artistic products online (books, journals, paintings, tickets for concerts, theatre shows, exhibitions);
- selling information and “know-how”;
- selling services (consulting, education, information, educational tools);
- paid participation in collective intelligence tools.

An attractive website is the one containing “fun” elements, an “easy-to-digest” content and “make user feel important” concept. Somehow, my analysis and browsing convinces me that we miss these three variables when designing our online platforms in the non-profit arts and cultural world. The formula of attracting and increasing the online viewers and users online today seems very simple: research and understand what people like the most, irrespective of their nationality and cultural differences, and deliver it. There are words that work like magic and attract audiences instantly: YouTube proves that words like “dance”, “girls”, “funny” and “music” are used around 50 million times a day!

We European cultural professionals (researchers, academia, managers, curators, decision-makers at all levels) tend to believe that fun and entertainment aspects are not a serious attitude. For many of us, culture and entertainment are two different and unconnected areas. The same applies to culture and media. We are somehow afraid to implement fun and jokes in our online tools, to give a very personalized approach, to criticize with a sense of humour and even sarcasm, to mix the serious reviews, newsletters, discussion forums and blogs with joy and fun for everyone. One of the exceptions is the Budapest Observatory Memo ([www.budobs.org](http://www.budobs.org)) which, not without reason, attracts many fans and supporters around Europe, who read it with pleasure and a smile. Adult users are like kids: they love not to take everything too seriously. In their busy daily schedules, they would be happy to have bits of entertainment and fun. But of course, we can’t even imagine publications by the Council of Europe or the European Commission, entitled: “Tips on how to make a cultural administrator laugh?”, “100 best jokes about artists”, “Recipes for surviving when applying for EC money”, “66 selected amusing adventures of artists crossing borders” etc.

### **Looking ahead**

No doubt the digital production and distribution of content will become increasingly important and, to succeed in such environment, businesses in media, arts and entertainment should test new tools, take risks, be innovative all the time and try to anticipate users’ needs. How then can conventional cultural organizations and their non-profit websites survive in the digital world?

The gathering of the whole family at one place and time around a conventional media (radio or TV) is already nostalgia from the past. No doubt in less than 10 years from now we will probably no longer sit and watch television, even individually, or use our telephone, but will surf the Internet instead, using our computers as multimedia personalized stations. Traditional media business models will maybe fail under the pressure of users' power to generate content. The signs are already here: in 2006, CNN launched the CNN iReport, a project designed to bring user-generated news content to CNN. The "CNN-YouTube presidential debates" are the first series of televised debates in history in which questions are submitted by YouTube users and the partnership between the conventional media and the social networking website is a successful reality. The updated Yahoo News personalized homepage provides options for users to post comments on each news item, announcement or article they read, contributing to the global information distribution online world.

Should we then not think of gradually transforming our cultural newsletters, online journals, blogs and forums in such a way as to involve users more and more and hear their opinions? We are not as big and powerful as CNN or YouTube, but it might be worth giving it a try.

Media managers and entertainment industry producers are aware that users are gaining more and more control and power, which is certainly one of the biggest threats and opportunities to these businesses. User-generated content will continue to grow, but there is no clear answer as to how conventional media and entertainment businesses will adapt to it, or how they might use its strengths. The common belief is that the money will continue to be generated through advertising and sponsorship of social media; subscription models; pay-per-view or pay-per-play offerings; or moving the businesses more and more from "advertisers" to "participants". It is very possible that the digital and non-digital business models will gradually consolidate, the "supply-consume" model will most likely be replaced by a "consumer-participation-supply" model, and this process will have a very serious impact on the media and the different branches of the entertainment industry over the next few years. Will European non-profit cultural organizations and networks watch or participate in this new game?

My wish is that we not only participate, but gain, learn and increasingly use the power of our audiences, supporters and users, bringing them online and together advancing the innovative tools to share mutual profits and pleasures.

So, yes, it's worth being a player in the digital world!

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- Orange Talking Point – [talkingpoint.orange.co.uk/](http://talkingpoint.orange.co.uk/)
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Slideshare – [www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)

SourceWatch – [www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org)

Twitter – <http://twitter.com>

Torontopedia – [www.torontopedia.ca/](http://www.torontopedia.ca/)

Wikinomics – [wikinomics.com](http://wikinomics.com)

Wikipedia – [www.wikipedia.org/](http://www.wikipedia.org/)

Yelp – [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)

YouTube – [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## **A glance at the Cuban culture through its cultural portals**

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### **Cuban culture on the Internet**

The contemporary technological revolution is having a profound impact upon ways of working and communicating, changing and developing all the spheres of human activity. Its overwhelming impact has been reflected in the fact that it gives a name to a momentum in contemporary modern society – i.e. information society or information and communications technologies (ICT) era. The fast pace of development in modern society, facilitated greatly by the new technologies, has an effect on the way we live and many forms of cultural expressions have been rapidly disappearing thus diminishing the wealth of our cultural diversity.

This new context implies serious challenges for today's cultures and proposes different perspectives for culture. Culture can be viewed as a process of human creation, supported by the new information and communications technologies; it can be looked at from a historical, national and regional prism, as well as from the globalization perspective – which goes hand in hand with the technological revolution – and is imposing certain stereotypes that affect the cultural heritage and the existing linguistic diversity.

Cuban Internet access and possibilities for development of digital culture are defined on the one hand by the country's economic difficulties and the economic blockade that the United States imposed on Cuba,<sup>1</sup> which hampered Cuban access to the Internet until 1996 and still hampers Cuba's access to submarine fibre optic cables, making the country dependent on satellites for linking to the Internet – a fact

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1 <http://www.cubaminrex.cu/bloqueo/inicio.htm>

that increases the costs significantly, provides a rather narrow bandwidth and which is less reliable than the up-to-date technology of submarine fibre optic cables. By 31 December 2007, according to the annual report of the Ministry of Information and Communication of Cuba (2006), out of a population of 11 236 790 inhabitants, the country had 1 310 000 Internet users (11.7%), with 321 000 of them enjoying full Internet access (2.9%). For more than 45 years, however, Cuba has been creating the educational bases essential for the mass appropriation of the ICTs, with a high literacy level and an average level of schooling very nearly equivalent to the 11th grade of Senior High School in the US. Cuba devotes 8.5% of its Gross National Product (GNP) to education, a fact that places Cuba among the first five countries in the world (UNDP, 2004) as regards the proportion of the GNP assigned to the educational sector.

Free access to information is one of the myths of current times. It has been widely debated that the continuous information and news overload – having a seemingly objective nature – responds to the interests of the oligopolies and doesn't have a truly objective nature. There seems to be a uniform way of thinking or seeing things. Regarding this, Eduardo Galeano has affirmed: "There is an obligatory uniformity that is hostile towards the cultural diversity existing in the planet" (1998: 17). This sums up one of the most complex challenges that the ICTs impose on us at a global and national level. Knowledge itself is going through a complex process of commercialization, which opposes UNESCO's statement that says "...in the twenty-first century science must become a shared asset benefiting all peoples on a basis of solidarity..." (UNESCO, 1999). The capacity of the endogenous production of knowledge, a necessary condition for the information society, clearly seen in the resources assigned to research studies in universities and specialized centres, has reached 1.75% in Cuba, in contrast with the 0.6% of the GNP of Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDP, 2001).

Globalization and particularly the increasingly commercialized and concentrated mass media have a significant (and not always positive) impact on culture. The Internet does not escape the trend of commercialization and the network of networks has a big impact on the planet concerning the creation of values that modify our behaviours. Still, the development of new technologies is a product of culture, and it forces us to appreciate it as an instrument, a mediator. As Hervé Fischer points out: "It may be stated that the cyber-world is also a parallel world, and not only a replacement mirror-world, because it self-generates previously unknown contents that are part of it, and are far away from the obligations of a real world" (Fischer, 2004).

The Internet brings many advantages due to its huge communicational potential, but it is dependent on the quality of information that is available through it. So for a small country, such as Cuba, it becomes significant how it is represented through it,

and especially how its cultural richness is represented and whether it contributes to online cultural diversity. Only a serious policy of cultural promotion, the creation of websites with a great variety of content and, above all, the high cultural level of the population, helps us face the challenges that current times impose on us, encouraging creativity. The defence of Cuban national identity inserted within the global context became a giant's challenge for Cuban policy.

Within this context, in 1993, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Cuba established the Cultural Information Center CUBARTE, aimed at developing research studies and promoting cultural proposals that contribute to the appropriation of the ICTs, at its extension throughout the national territory and the training of its workers regarding the use of the new technologies (Ministry of Culture, 1993, 1997).

Cubarte started building its network infrastructure in 1997 by integrating the existing local systems from all provinces and the majority of the national cultural institutions into a national network infrastructure, thus enabling national coverage as well as global reach. This infrastructure led to a wide information exchange of Cuban culture inside and outside the country, as well as online applications that boosted the development of culture. An example of this is the territorial literary project, where selected texts by the authors of each municipality were digitalized and then sent to the publishing houses in each province. These have published more than 2 000 books in the previous five years, using up-to-date digital printing technology.

The presence of Cuban culture on the Internet is a high priority assigned by the Cuban Ministry of Culture to all the institutions and administrative units. This began in 1998, with the creation of the Cubarte website. In 2001 the Portal of the Cuban Culture started to work together with 10 provinces and 40 municipalities that had also created their websites and pages (Cubarte, 2006).

There are several advantages in having a national cultural centre coordinating ICT-related activities, from the methodological point of view, for all institutions, and it has led to the development of workshops and training courses for developers and webmasters; the creation of a common cultural information system; a design of common data formats for similar institutions; as well as the creation of Web tools that gave the cultural institutions in all provinces within this cultural system the possibility for decentralized content updating. The following chart shows trends in the development of Cuban cultural digital content and services.

<b>Cultural portals and websites</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Cubarte portal	1	1	1	1	1	1
National institutions	10		85	85	86	116
Provincial institutions					304	304
Provinces	10	14	14	14	14	14
Municipalities	40	85	142	159	169	169
Other websites			41	41	99	99
Magazines			17	28	25	67
Bulletins			60	132	120	120
Cultural events			18	162	50	68
Museums and monuments			50	50	149	149
Pages devoted to personalities			393	393	602	659
Sites devoted to personalities						79
<b>Total</b>			<b>821</b>	<b>1 065</b>	<b>1 631</b>	<b>2 504</b>

Source: Cubarte, 2006

The application of ICT in the cultural field has been a slow but continuous process. Various obstacles and difficulties had to be overcome in this process, such as limited available infrastructure at the start and the need to train cultural professionals to work with the new technologies – a group that is heavily attached to the traditional working forms so typical of the artistic and literary sector. However, the strong nature of Cuban national culture, its traditions and continuous development, the artists' sense of creativity that goes from the most popular to the most refined, as well as the social dedication to cultural development, have contributed to establishing a strong link between technology and culture (Alba Rico, 2004). The ICTs have become an instrument of cultural policy, closely linked to highly important elements, such as creation; preservation of the cultural heritage and its accessibility; promotion; cultural production as a big industry; teaching; and exchange of information. The ICTs have been recognized as a vital element for the promotion and international diffusion of the Cuban culture.

The presence of Cuban culture on the Internet can be evaluated from different angles. A simple look at it places us within the most elementary trilogy: the sender, the channel/media and the receiver, though we must remain aware that we're dealing with a much more complex socio-cultural process.

This paper attempts to:

- provide a statistical analysis of the presence of Cuban culture on the Internet during the period 2002-2007, taking into account the number of visits made to the cultural websites and portals and the subscriptions to the cultural bulletins issued by Cubarte. These were taken to be parameters that measure the interest of virtual visitors in Cuban culture;
- survey the 24 most important cultural websites and portals in Cuba, with the purpose of analysing their various aspects, such as the tools used, the content of the information and its update, linking patterns, etc.

### Cultural system statistics

In the period 2002-2006 the introduction of new websites and portals went from 100 to more than 2 500 in the whole country, a consequence of an inclusive and far-reaching policy of inserting Cuban presence on the Internet. This was followed by great efforts to position cultural content on the Internet, through an increase in the content and an improvement in the quality of information, the links exchange and other synergies within the system, all of which reveal the presence of Cuban culture on the Internet. There are four sites with more than a million visits in 2006. These are: Cubarte, CubaLiteraria, José Martí's National Library and La Jiribilla.

<b>Number of Visits</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Cubarte portal	281 343	353 523	673 022	864 466	1 117 337
Institutions	272 188	2 135 106	3 155 333	3 176 934	1 903 846
Other websites	72 114	249 598	189 736	1 091 303	3 072 931
Cultural events		90 520	134 780	176 808	240 782
Provinces	38 318	938 347	1 475 450	1 684 149	3 427 879
Issues	34 769	90 826	123 094	1 808 790	2 119 465
Artists and musical groups					251 252
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>729 450</b>	<b>3 857 920</b>	<b>5 751 415</b>	<b>8 802 450</b>	<b>12 133 492</b>

Source: Cubarte, 2006

The above table shows the exponential increase in the total of visits received by the websites and portals of Cuban culture from 2002 up to 2006. This five-year period was an important one as regards the penetration and extension of the Internet on a global scale, where the number of Internet users almost duplicated (1.95 times, according to Morgan Stanley, 2006<sup>2</sup>), and the number of visitors to the websites and portals of Cuban culture multiplied 16.6 times.

The number of visits during 2007 shows an impressive increase of more than a million and a half visitors per month, which, if it continues, would allow us to finish the year with more than 18 million total visits to Cuban cultural resources on the Internet, representing an increase of 50% as compared to 2006.

<b>Monthly visits in 2007</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Institutions	236 560	246 219	231 096	241 388	955 263
Other websites	32 379	32 881	43 239	34 416	142 915
National portals	458 201	467 072	582 731	527 700	2 035 704
Artists and musical groups	21 448	22 199	26 084	24 341	94 072
Cultural events	32 075	29 263	35 761	34 553	131 652
Portals in the provinces	406 837	366 103	387 188	402 690	1 562 818
Magazines and bulletins	218 867	228 267	312 312	317 540	1 076 986
Sites of Cubarte	30 621	31 628	46 028	43 273	151 550
<b>Total of the whole system</b>	<b>1 436 988</b>	<b>1 423 632</b>	<b>1 664 439</b>	<b>1 625 901</b>	<b>6 150 960</b>

Source: Cubarte's Statistics System, 2007

Cubarte has experienced a growing trend during recent times. The original website, created in 1998, became a portal in 2001. Cubarte has had a remarkable increase in number of sections and services, the number of the data entries went from 10 751 in 2002 to more than 100 000 in 2006. It also included two more languages – English and French – within the news and opinion sections; it created news bulletins and a magazine in French – *Lettres de Cuba*; some sections led to the creation of new

2 <http://www.morganstanley.com/>

websites that fused into what we may call a “mega portal” or a “Web complex”, with 903 911 visits during the first 120 days of 2007.

At the same time new websites and portals have been developed, in coordination with Cubarte, thus avoiding repetition and favouring the shortest access to available information and the establishment of hierarchical relations. For example Cubarte Gallery, which was initially one section of Cubarte portal, is today a website showing 59 exhibitions, 173 artists, 1 037 works of art and receiving an average of 654 visits per day.

<b>VISITS</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>
CUBARTE	554 024	1 168 581	864 466	673 011	395 572	28 1343
English	38 446					
French	29 471					
Ministry of Culture	43 130	99 480	79 541	56 120	549	
Country	30 481	84 885	71 004	47 500	380	
Directorate	41 318	14 479				
Gallery	78 457	17 033				
Lettres de Cuba	18 090	31 425	30 565	15 856		
Forum Disc.	9 971	23 246	8 838	10 767		
CultyDes	53 312	100 449	65 723	26 222	347	
CEISIC	5 334	15 814	18 160	16 390	155	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>903 911</b>	<b>1 561 189</b>	<b>1 146 868</b>	<b>854 393</b>	<b>397 059</b>	<b>281 343</b>
Average per day	7 532.6	4 277.2	3 142.1	2 340.8	1 087.8	770.8

**Source:** Cubarte’s Statistics System, 2007.

A tangible indicator of new services development is the fact that information available on the websites is also complemented and communicated through various e-bulletins and e-newsletters that bring users’ attention to available cultural content (Cubarte, 2006). We can mention a news bulletin in Spanish, first issued in 2001 which allows those readers who wish to be informed to get access via e-mail, instead of having to spend time surfing the Internet. As of May 15 of this same year, Cubarte

had three weekly cultural bulletins issued in Spanish, English and French, and 42 852 subscribers in the whole world.

If we take into account that our work aims at producing cultural information, mainly in Spanish, and the fact that this takes place in a small Caribbean island with barely 11 million inhabitants and a very limited satellite connection to the Internet, we may conclude that Cuba has reached a good position and presence on the Internet.

### **An analysis of the main Cuban cultural portals**

In the analysis of the 24 main Cuban cultural portals we started with defining differences between portals and websites.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the criteria relating to the amount of information, to be defined as a cultural portal a web resource has to be organized as a platform that provides access to other cultural websites and it has to deal with culture in general or some of its specific aspects (e.g. arts and literature, cultural promotion, heritage preservation, etc.).<sup>4</sup>

In 2001 Cuba had 15 portals, in 2002 it had 20 portals and in 2007 it has 24 portals.

<b>24 main Cuban portals</b>	<b>www address</b>
<i>National portals</i>	
Biblioteca Nacional José Martí	www.bnjm.cu
Casa de las Américas – La Ventana	www.casa.cult.cu
Consejo Nacional Casas de Cultura	www.casasdecultura.cult.cu
Consejo Nacional de las Artes Plásticas	www.cnap.cult.cu
Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural	www.cnpc.cult.cu/
ICAIC – Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfica. (Cubacine)	www.cubacine.cult.cu
CNAE – Centro Nacional de Artes Escénicas (Cubaescena)	www.cubaescena.cult.cu
ICL – Instituto Cubano del Libro. (CubaLiteraria)	www.cubaliteraria.cu
Portal de la Cultura Cubana (CUBARTE)	www.cubarte.cult.cu; www.cubarte-english.cult.cu/; www.cubarte-francais.cult.cu/

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3 <http://www.informaticamilenium.com.mx/paginas/espanol/sitioweb.htm>

4 The main artistic manifestations are literature, music, cultural heritage, performing arts, visual arts, cinema, the audiovisual and community culture.

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Portal del Cine y el Audiovisual Latinoamericano y Caribeño	<a href="http://www.cinelatinoamericano.org">www.cinelatinoamericano.org</a> ; <a href="http://www.cinelatinoamericano.cult.cu/">www.cinelatinoamericano.cult.cu/</a>
<i>Provincial portals</i>	
La Habana (Angerona)	<a href="http://www.angerona.cult.cu">www.angerona.cult.cu</a>
Matanzas (Atenas )	<a href="http://www.atenas.cult.cu">www.atenas.cult.cu</a>
Cienfuegos (Azulina)	<a href="http://www.azurina.cult.cu">www.azurina.cult.cu</a>
Holguín (Baibrama)	<a href="http://www.baibrama.cult.cu/cultural.htm">www.baibrama.cult.cu/cultural.htm</a>
Villa Clara (Cenit)	<a href="http://www.cenit.cult.cu">www.cenit.cult.cu</a>
Granma (Crisol)	<a href="http://www.crisol.cult.cu">www.crisol.cult.cu</a>
Guantanamo (Guantanamera)	<a href="http://www.gtmo.cult.cu/">www.gtmo.cult.cu/</a>
Sancti Spíritus (Hero)	<a href="http://www.hero.cult.cu">www.hero.cult.cu</a>
Santiago de Cuba (Iré a Santiago)	<a href="http://www.cultstgo.cult.cu/">www.cultstgo.cult.cu/</a>
Ciego de Ávila (Ornofay)	<a href="http://www.ciego.cult.cu">www.ciego.cult.cu</a>
Camagüey (Puerto Príncipe)	<a href="http://www.pprincipe.cult.cu">www.pprincipe.cult.cu</a>
Ciudad de La Habana (San Cristóbal)	<a href="http://www.sancristobal.cult.cu">www.sancristobal.cult.cu</a>
Las Tunas (Tunarte)	<a href="http://www.tunet.cult.cu">www.tunet.cult.cu</a>
Pinar del Río (Pinarte)	<a href="http://www.pinarte.cult.cu/">www.pinarte.cult.cu/</a>

These 24 cultural portals are the main portals and a large number of specialists are working in them, updating the information and keeping them in good condition. In 2006 their traffic accounted for 64% of all the visits made to the cultural sites and during the first four months of 2007, this figure increased to 75%. Thus their objective of drawing the Internet users' attention and leading them to the information users are looking for, seems to have been fulfilled.

The underlying Web technology those portals use in 84% of the cases is based on a database structure that allows for dynamic data generation and, in 74% of the cases, free software has been used. This policy corresponds with the aims of the Cuban Ministry of Culture to promote the use of non-proprietary software.

We have observed a good use (92%) of the portal's front page, the headlines match the content (88%), and the links and reversible navigation options are easily recognized in 77% of the portals analysed. Likewise, 71% of portals have their own search engine and 58% of them use an advanced one. It's very remarkable, however, that 29% of the portals make use of Google, or simply have no search engine at all included. Also, there is an appropriate and wide use of links (92%) when dealing with attached entities or other places of similar interest. This figure decreases to 77% when

dealing with sites of a higher hierarchy. 84% of the portals exchange banners with other websites or portals.

Analysis of the portals shows the following relevant features:

1. The main content categories covered by the analyzed portals are:
  - cultural events - 92%
  - cultural programming - 79%
  - historical dates, directories and publications - 75%
  - personalities - 71%
  - art galleries - 42%
  - awards - 63%.
2. Interactivity is at a very low level. Only 32% of portals give their users the opportunity to express their opinion on published content, 29% enable users to download files, 17% have forums or communicate with their users through online questionnaires and surveys. 29% do not include any of the above-mentioned options. New approaches, related to Web 2.0, together with the need to have certain interactive and feedback elements, should make portals change this situation.
3. The use of metadata is very high when we analyse the titles (96%), but less when dealing with descriptions and key words (75%), and low in relation to authors (46%). The use of alternative text is also low and the use of metadata for images is practically zero.
4. Concerning the portals positioning on search engines, a search using Google achieved good results, especially for its front page. The results for Yahoo were acceptable and for Altavista low. Almost half of the studied portals reached a good position in the three search engines. There are two portals, however, that do not appear in the first three pages of the web search engines studied:

<b>Matches through related key words</b>	<b>Google</b>	<b>Yahoo</b>	<b>Altavista</b>
In the top three entries	88%	56%	44%
Among entries 4-10	4%	8%	12%
Among entries 11-30	0%	16%	12%
Do not appear in first 30 entries	8%	20%	32%

The correlation between the use of metadata and the positioning achieved in the search engines is significant. This has great importance if we take into account that for the Cuban portals, occupying a certain position on the

Internet costs nothing in any foreign currency, given the very limited options as a consequence of the US blockade.

5. Looking at the linking patterns among the surveyed portals one can observe that they serve the function of promoting a national culture and its Internet resources. The 24 portals have 287 links among them, assuming in theory that the maximum number should be 552. There are links in 52% of cases. Some 156 of them are reciprocal (54%) and 131 (46%) are not. Two thirds of the portals provide links to 13 or more of the analysed portals, while only 29% have links in fewer than 7 portals.

The links established by Cubarte and the portals in the provinces are stronger than the links among the theme portals. Furthermore, the specific theme portals are not favoured by the links from the rest of the portals. Only two portals (8%) have no or only one outside link that goes to the outside of the institution or the territory. The 7 theme portals have links with all the provinces; meanwhile 3 provinces (21.4%) have links with up to 2 theme portals, and 4 of them with only 1 (28.6%); that is, 7 provinces (50%) delegate their links with the national theme portals to similar institutions.

### **Developing cultural presence on the Internet**

Analysis of the features that characterize the decade since Cuba was connected to the Internet for the first time shows the high priority assigned to the insertion of cultural content, as part of wider efforts to promote national identity and Cuban culture in a world where the geopolitical elements put Cuba in a disadvantageous position, in addition to the new processes, such as globalization and increasing commercialization and concentration of the media, that are also elements affecting cultural diversity.

Developing Cuban digital culture resources on the Internet has been an enriching experience. Since 1993, through activities coordinated by Cubarte, Cuba has been developing a model national information system for culture, which has been characterized by sustained and systematic development.

An analysis of the main features achieved by Cubarte effort in developing the system shows:

- **General coverage:** the system includes all the cultural institutions covering all the regions of Cuba, the governmental and administrative entities, as well as artists, specialists, cultural promoters, artistic groups and projects, and heritage.
- **Integral development of the system:** this includes (1) building the underlying technical (i.e. network) infrastructure; (2) building databases and other IT tools

for enabling cultural production and promotion; as well as (3) providing a Web scenario focused on cultural promotion and development.

- **Vision of the system:** the system aims to improve creation of information at the cultural institutions located throughout Cuban territory.
- **Synergies within the system:** through cooperation, links, cross-references, good quality of the information has been published, and repetition avoided.
- **Common formats:** these enable interrelations and a complementary approach thus providing good quality information that is published in the different portals through sections such as cultural programming, personalities, events, awards, contests, directories, publications and others.
- **A strong emphasis on developing human resources:** enabling them to get training so they can make better use of the existing equipment and available tools.
- **ICT use for cultural purposes:** such as promotion of cultural products and services.
- **Digitalization of heritage:** to ensure improvement in the quality of information, with the purpose of its further preservation.
- **Integration of an information system on Web support:** able to process and produce information, with certain advantages and links that allow the Internet user to find the information requested.
- **Implement a security system:** applied to networks, databases and the saving of information, as well as to the user's protection against intruders and adverse weather events.

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## New realities, new policies?

Much more productive, but much more difficult too, is for policy to realize that its greatest assets are its ways of working, ways of building consensus, ways of creating formats of organizational behaviour. In between the growing realm of citizens who start doing all kinds of things for themselves in the messiness of everyday life and the structure of formal government, a space is opening up and filling rapidly with all kinds of informal structures and networks, lots of agency, very little accountability. ...I argue that regulation is always a system failure as consensus should have been scripted into the design. This new space needs ways of working that script solidarity, are transparent, foster accountability and invite critical enquiry. That is the new role of policy and by definition, the new role of the state.

Rob van Kranenburg