

Chapter 3.5

Cultural Knowledge Management and Broadband Content in Development: Open Content Platforms, Copyright and Archives

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the possibility of creating online creative production archives with which to make locally and internationally sourced high quality video, audio, graphics, and other broadband content available to grassroots producers in developing economies. In particular, the possibility of Cultural Knowledge Management Systems and the use of innovative Creative Commons copyright licenses are explored. It is argued that in

a global knowledge economy, cultural production is a major driver of economic growth. The creativity and culture needed for cultural production are plentiful in developing countries indicating that if technical and institutional conditions are right there is significant potential for developing economies to compete in the global economy. It is, therefore, desirable for local groups to be able to acquire, store, and distribute locally and internationally sourced content to stimulate local-level cultural production.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the authors argue that the recognized potential for social, cultural, and economic benefits that accrue from widespread participation in the production of cultural materials, as it has been discussed in developed countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom (Cutler, 2003; DEST, 2002; National Broadband Taskforce, 2004), and in the academic literature (Florida, 2002; Rooney & Graham, 2004), is equally applicable in developing countries. Recent discussions about cultural industries in the developed world show a concern for digital cultural production modes in the context of the Internet and broadband infrastructure. This chapter, therefore, discusses key aspects of capacity building for developing economies to take advantage of these new conditions. The kinds of capacities discussed are concerned with infrastructure, industry, creative expression, and cultural maintenance and renewal capacities. Furthermore, working on the assumption that culture is an expression or mode of enacting knowledge (Holden, 2002; McCarthy, 1996; Rooney & Schneider, 2005), the authors argue that such capacity building will be conducive to the emergence of developing countries as knowledge societies and economies.

In particular, this chapter is concerned with how cultural knowledge management in a digital broadband environment, and innovative copyright developments from Creative Commons (Creative Commons, 2003) have assisted in the creation of an “open” cultural content commons. This commons can develop into a global network of Internet accessible digital archives that collect, hold, and diffuse materials for use in creative production (for commercial or noncommercial purposes) in ways that increase the capacity for independent cultural production in developing countries.

Why Cultural Production?

Beyond the purely economic, there are important though less tangible benefits related to widespread participation in cultural life. Mumford (1934) identifies a civilizing aim that should reside at the centre of all economic endeavours:

The essential task of all sound economic activity is to produce a state in which creation will be a common fact in all experience: in which no group will be denied, by reasons of toil or deficient education, their share in the cultural life of the community, up to the limits of their personal capacity. (p. 430)

There are very practical reasons for taking such a stance in respect of economic goals. These include the health of democratic participation through sophisticated media practices; the economic and cultural benefits that flow from a vibrant, active, and innovative culture of creativity; the proven net economic benefits of a knowledgeable, educated, and intellectually active population; the decentralization of media power; diversification of sources and forms of media content; the maintenance and promotion of local, regional, and national identities; and the widespread personal fulfilment that comes from active and visible participation in the life of a culture. In more general terms, cultural participation assists in resisting the worst aspects of the Western tendency to instrumentalism and technocracy that impoverish culture, make authentic expressions of grassroots culture invisible and devalued, and make it difficult for non-Western countries to compete in the global creative or cultural economy.

One simplistic explanation for the disparity in cultural economic power of the U.S. is that its media corporations hold a global “monopoly” on distribution channels and key production enabling resources, and forcefully impose unfair

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