Creating cultural products: Cities, context and technology

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ABSTRACT

Cities remain critical for the creation of cultural products whether in the realm of film, television, music, opera, dance, fashion or art. Through the agglomeration of creative talent, cities provide a fertile ground for the development of new ideas and forms of cultural expression. This paper explores the role of culture and its context in fostering the creation of cultural products in cities as well as the role of technology. Changing technology is reshaping the role of cities in the creation of cultural products. The primacy of major cities will be reinforced by technology, while at the same time, secondary and tertiary cities face the prospect of being marginalized.

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Introduction

Throughout history cities served vital functions in the formation of civilizations and the elements of culture embedded in them (Scott, 1997). Often cities grew to facilitate and serve as a nexus for trade and commerce providing an economic base and allowing cities to prosper and grow. The central role of commerce is evident in the initial development of cities such as London, New York and Hong Kong. As major ports they grew rapidly and facilitated growth and development of their respective countries. As commerce and culture grew in tandem, the latter provided distinctiveness to each city. It has been observed, "What links world cities to one another is trade, commerce, and finance. What makes them different from one another is culture." (World Cities Culture Report, 2012). Cities serve as sites for the creation of cultural products and repositories for their preservation. As cities evolved, in addition to being a nexus for trade, they served as gathering places for diverse cultural activities. Trade brought not only exotic goods to a particular locale, but the diverse cultures of the individuals who transported them. Their contributions serve to both enrich and change the host culture.

Cities have always been highly concentrated agglomerations of individuals living in physical proximity. These agglomerations vary depending on their centrality to the country in which they were located and the role they played in the larger economy. Further, the degree of heterogeneity in the composition of the inhabitants contributes to the vitality and cultural richness. New York City has always been extremely diverse. Of the 12 major cities examined in the World Cities Culture Report (2012), New York had the highest percentage of non-native born inhabitants. Contemporary cities continue to function along the lines of ancient cities, only on a much broader scale. Cities such as New York and London play major roles in the world economy and influence culture beyond their geographic confines. Increasingly, technology plays a key role in extending the reach and importance of major cities. This also increases the dominance of cultural institutions in major cities and diminishes the role of those in secondary and tertiary cities.

This paper explores the role of cities in cultural formation and creation of cultural products. As a backdrop, culture in its various manifestations is examined. Once the concept of culture has been explored, the role of cities in influencing its development is considered. In addition, the key role played by changes in technology in making cultural products more broadly available is examined. Finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the likely impact of the changing technological environment on the role of cities in the creation of cultural products.

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Composition and context of culture

Culture is "the man made part of the environment" (Herskovits, 1955). This simple definition encompasses all non-naturally occurring elements. At its core are the abstract or intangible elements of culture, such as values and belief systems. Naroll (1970) refers to these as the *ethnie* core of culture. The more tangible aspects of culture are its material artifacts, such as art, clothing, music, dance, symbols and rituals. These are often manifestations of underlying values and beliefs. Communication links bind and perpetuate a cultural system. These elements exist within different contexts which exert influence and shape the evolution of the components of culture.

Cities provide unique contexts that bring the elements of one culture into close contact with the elements of another. Much of the richness in cultural industries is attributable to immigrant populations (Brandellero, 2009). This also has been examined indirectly in the literature on sub-culture where the changes in the consumption patterns of a particular immigrant population are examined (Penaloza, 1994; Smith, 2002). More broadly, this influence is occurring through direct or indirect exposure to members of other cultures or through cultural artifacts of another culture such as movies, music, television, art, dance and content on the internet (Craig, Douglas, & Bennett, 2009). These multiple influences mean that the proximate context of the city continues to exert influence on culture, but that increasingly a "virtual" context exists both within and outside the city's confines. The specific nature of the virtual context can be different for individuals living in the same locale depending on the degree of exposure to the different external elements.

Composition of culture

Values and beliefs, material artifacts, and communication links are closely intertwined. Communication provides a means of transmitting the intangible aspects of culture, such as values and beliefs from one person to another or from one generation to the next. This communication process is inherently dynamic and at the same time continually evolving. Artifacts ranging from religious icons to popular music and from movies to plays are also expressions of intangible beliefs. All three elements play a role in shaping the creation of cultural products. Increasingly, technology is exposing members of one culture to elements of other cultures. Much of this is through movies, television, advertisements and the internet.

Intangible elements of culture incorporate the dominant societal values and belief systems that characterize a society or culture and guide the patterning of behavior in that society. While there may be general overarching value orientations associated with a specific city within a country, there also exist multiple value systems within a particular city. Different ethnic and cultural groupings define their own values, and often there is a comingling of these values. Numerous other intangibles impact individual consumption patterns and ways of behaving (see Hofstede, 2001 and Schwarz, 1992). These include ideals and aspirations, role norms, gender ideology, cultural myths, metaphors and signs (see Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Stern, 1995; Thompson, 1997; Thompson, 2004). They provide an indication of the richness and complexity of the relationship between culture and consumption. Other approaches have examined a specific value orientation, for example materialism or time orientation, comparing two or more societies on these dimensions (Belk & Pollay, 1985). Typically, this is linked to some aspect of behavior, for example, the importance attached to material possessions or lifestyle activities (Dawson & Bamossy, 1990).

Material culture is the most visible aspect of culture and often the most enduring. It incorporates the rituals, artifacts, institutions, music, dance and symbols of a society that bind it together and express underlying values and beliefs. The meaning and symbolism attached to possessions and goods owned by individuals, families or social groups is an integral component of culture. Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) note "objects serve as the set and props on the theatrical stage of our lives" and as "markers to remind ourselves of who we are" (page 531). Consumption patterns also demarcate lifestyles and social class (Holt, 1998).

Modes of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, are integral parts of culture (Hall, 1973; Samovar & Porter, 1994) and provide links within and across cultural units. Communication arises from the need to connect and interact with others and unites otherwise isolated individuals. It provides a mechanism for transmitting and interpreting messages relating to the world around an individual. Communication takes place in a physical and social context such as time, location and the social relationship of the participants, as well as in relation to other competing messages (Hall, 1973). These influence and condition how a communication is received. In addition, often communication is embedded in cultural products such as music, dance, literature, and film. Rapid advances in communications technology have dramatically reduced the importance of geographic proximity for communication. Individuals can now be in instant touch with others around the world by voice or text. As a result, physical proximity is no longer a key requirement for the transmission of cultural values or the formation of a cultural entity.

Culture's context

On a macro level Hermans and Kempen (1998) examine the process of globalization and the interconnectedness of cultures across the globe. They argue that culture is increasingly becoming deterritorilized and is not necessarily confined to specific locations. Pieterse (2009) looks at global culture in terms of hybridization of culture. Essentially new forms of culture are being created by the combination of elements from two existing cultures. Rowe and Schelling (1991) provide examples of hybridization, such as Asian rap, Irish bagels, Chinese tacos, Mardi Gras Indians, and Mexican school girls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isidora Duncan. These changes are magnified in cities by the physical proximity of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, high population density, and a faster pace of life than in rural and suburban areas.

Cultural boundaries are evolving, changing the context of culture and transforming its composition. The dynamics of this process result in alterations to traditional cultures and the creation of distinctly new consumption patterns

(Craig & Douglas, 2006). For example, cultural interpenetration takes place as people from one culture enter another, introducing ideas, artifacts and rituals from their own culture to the new culture. People from the penetrated culture may begin to adopt and absorb ideas and objects from the foreign culture into their own. Consumers in London, for example have adopted Indian foods, chutneys and breads into mainstream consumption patterns and preferences. Cultural interpenetration can also result in cultural pluralism, where an individual may belong simultaneously to more than one culture. For example, the children of Chinese immigrants to New York City may identify with multiple cultures; the Chinese culture, in which they were raised at home, as well as the US teen or youth culture of which they are a part of at school, and more broadly American culture which presents itself in music, movies and television.

In many instances culture is no longer associated with a particular locale. Modern communications, particularly the internet, have made it possible for individuals to maintain cultural ties or be exposed to elements of other cultures, even though they are not geographically proximate. This implies that cultures are no longer necessarily tied to specific localities with defined contextual features. While the immediate context continues to exert influence on individuals, changes beyond the local environment exert influence dramatically expanding the relevant context. What is happening in a particular city is still important, but events far beyond the city are exerting increased influence.

An important distinction is the difference between cultural identity and the types of cultural products an individual consumes. A person's cultural identity may be deeply rooted in a particular tradition, albeit one that has evolved over the centuries. Consider a teenage girl immigrating from Mumbai, India to New York City with her parents at a young age. She will hold many of the values and beliefs of her native India and may also have saris that are worn on special occasions to celebrate Hindu festivals, such as Diwali. These beliefs may be strongly held and are a central part of her cultural identity. However, as she lives in New York longer and becomes exposed to elements of American and New York culture, her choices of cultural products may change dramatically. Instead of watching Bollywood films, she may now watch American romantic comedies and listen to popular music. At the same time, her counterparts still living in Mumbai have an even stronger cultural identity anchored in Indian culture, but they may also choose cultural products such as movies and music from the US. Thus, culture most directly influences the creation of goods, but there is a weaker link to consumption choices. For example, saris are a distinctive mode of attire rooted and produced in India. However, increasingly Indian women, particularly highly educated urban women, are not wearing saris, or wearing them only on occasions that have cultural significance. Staymen and Deshpande (1989) refer to this phenomenon as situational ethnicity, where individuals with a particular cultural heritage manifest different behaviors in different situations.

Cities, context and culture

In addition to the physical goods created as part of normal commercial activities, cultural products are part of a city's output. Cultural products derive from and are an expression of underlying values and beliefs of a particular culture. Historically, it was relatively easy to identify cultural products that were created by a specific culture. However, increasingly, the patterning of culture and its influences are becoming more complex. Expanding networks of intra-personal and mass communications, spawned by rapid advances in technology and the internet have changed notions of locality based culture (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Although this is not necessarily a new phenomenon the pace and extent of this process is enhanced by advances in technology. As members of different cultural groupings move from one locale to another, they bring their interests, values, and distinctive behavior patterns with them. Also, as they intermingle with each other, the spatial and social boundaries of culture become blurred (Craig & Douglas, 2006). Further, even if there is no physical movement, contact with other cultures and values occurs through mass media and the internet.

Consequently, traditional concepts of culture as consisting of static, delimited and homogeneous entities are being replaced by different views of culture. One perspective views culture as a fluid concept consisting of geographically dispersed, but interlinked entities (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Historically, cultural products created by one culture reflected that culture, and although there were sometimes influences from other cultures, the objects, art, dance, and music still reflected the primary culture. Cultural interpenetration causes cultural boundaries to be porous and mutable. Consequently, the role of geographic locality in defining cultural groupings is diminished. The distinctive traits and artifacts of a particular culture are often less clearly delineated.

The changing conception of culture also has profound implications for the creation of cultural products. The traditional perspective of culture and its manifestations as localized homogeneous sub-groupings or ethnie cores (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Naroll, 1970) is increasingly less meaningful. Of particular relevance is the role of context in shaping culture (see Berry, 1975; Berry, 2001; Douglas & Craig, 2011; Georgas, van de Vijver, & Berry, 2004). On a more macro level, scholars such as Pieterse (2009), Featherstone (1990), and Hermans and Kempen (1998) look broadly at the influence of globalization on culture. Cities are at the forefront of these major trends. High population densities and physical proximity of diverse groups intensifies the rate of change. Nowhere is this more evident than in the increasingly complex cultural patterning in urban areas (see Sassen, 2010). Their size and diversity establishes critical mass for the co-existence of multiple types of cultural products in the same genres.

Creation of cultural products

Creation of cultural artifacts can range from a solitary writer or artist laboring in isolation to a full orchestra with a multitude of singers on stage at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City or legions of actors, technicians, production assistants, and support staff making a movie. A quote from Orson Wells captures the production process for three types of cultural products succinctly, "A writer needs a pen, an artist needs a brush, but a filmmaker needs an army."

However, it does not address the context or milieu that inspires the creative process. Cities in addition to being centers of commerce and reservoirs of culture, foster creativity and the production of cultural products (Knudsen, Florida, Stolarick, & Gates, 2008). Cities create environments where creativity can flourish. They provide critical mass for artists, writers, musicians, artisans, dancers, and actors to interact. At the same time, a city provides a critical mass of individuals with an appetite for various forms of cultural products who provide economic support for the cultural activities. Further, city governments recognize the importance of cultural products in creating a vibrant economy and attracting workers in other fields and are encouraging the creation of arts districts (Chapple, Jackson, & Martin, 2010).

Role of cities in creation and consumption of cultural products

Content creation is typically highly centralized or clustered in specific geographic areas (see Lazzeretti, Boix, & Capone, 2009; Porter, 2000). In addition to the primary industry, there are various support industries which are critical to the production process. The creation of recorded content, that can easily be reproduced, such as films, DVDs, music, and TV shows is concentrated in certain clusters. Studio film and TV production are heavily concentrated in Los Angeles. Also clustered in Los Angeles are a variety of support industries, including post-production houses, actors, talent agencies, special effects houses, writers, and directors. The major record labels are headquartered in New York City, but specific genres are located elsewhere. Nashville is a center for Country and Western music while Miami is an important US center for Latin music. In each instance, there are production facilities, session musicians, attorneys, promoters, and other entities necessary to support the primary industry. A detailed analysis of both Los Angeles and New York revealed that while both cities share many creative industries and related occupations in common, Los Angeles has an edge in dancers, actors and multi-media artists. New York has a larger populations of musicians, fashion designers, writers and artists (Currid-Halkett & Stolarick, 2010).

The production and consumption of live entertainment content occurs simultaneously at a particular time and location. Performers, as well as the audience, must come to a specific location. Consequently, to draw sufficiently large audience major opera houses, symphonies and dance companies perform in major cities. In the case of static venues, there are typically support industries that facilitate creation of the cultural good. For example, in cities where classical ballet is performed there are typically stores that specialize in shoes and apparel, private teachers to help develop talent, and schools that train young dancers. The fixed location also limits the number of people that have easy access to the performance. Touring live events, such as concerts or Broadway plays, extend their geographic reach bringing much of what they need on the road with them and are typically self-contained and self-sufficient. Art museums and other types of cultural product exhibitions follow a pattern similar to live cultural events. A museum's permanent collection is fixed at a particular location and patrons must visit the museum to see it. Some exhibits may travel to other locations to broaden the audience, but at any given time, they are limited to one location. Art museums also cluster in major cities to generate a sufficient number of visitors to sustain themselves, although admission fees rarely cover the full cost of operating a museum. Museums take advantage of the large resident population as well as transient tourist populations that incorporate a museum visit into their travel plans.

With the possible exception of visual arts, the production of most cultural products requires large upfront costs which are largely fixed (see Caves, 2000). As a consequence, most cultural products are extremely scale sensitive, i.e. they require significant sales volume to cover the substantial fixed costs. Recorded cultural products are very expensive to produce, but relatively inexpensive to reproduce. The cost to make a summer blockbuster movie can be well over $200 million, but it costs less than $1.00 to make a copy of it on a DVD. For digital distribution of the same video, the marginal cost to stream or download another unit is essentially zero. Since distribution is ubiquitous, the sales potential is much larger than where sales are confined to a limited geographic area, such as one city. Heavy promotional efforts and multiple ways to exploit the intellectual property contained in the original movie provide additional revenue streams.

Consumption of recorded entertainment content is highly decentralized and can take place anywhere after the content has been created. Watching a film can take place in a movie theater, on an airplane, in someone's living room, on a tablet, or smartphone. The nature of consumers' consumption preferences also has implications for the manner in which the entertainment products need to be distributed. While production may take place in a single geographic location, the products must be widely available and easily accessible to consumers as they typically will expend very little effort to acquire most types of recorded content. This involves multiple retail outlets and more recently digital distribution of movies, television shows, music and books over the internet.

Cultural products value chain

The value chain for culture begins with the creation of specific cultural products, such as a painting, live performance of an opera, or filming a movie, and ends with its consumption by a specific group of individuals. In the case of a movie the audience can be quite large and geographically dispersed. During the summer of 2012, *The Avengers* opened in more than 4,000 theaters in the US, was shown multiple times each day at each theater, and generated gross revenue of over $200 million on its opening weekend (www.boxofficemojo.com). At the other end of the spectrum is a live performance of an opera or a symphony. Here the audience size is limited by the number of seats in the performance space. Also, in contrast to movies, there is typically only one performance on a given day and a limited number of performances overall.

A critical stage between creation and consumption is the distribution of cultural products. Live performances occur in a specific location and if consumers want to consume that particular cultural good, they must travel to the location. Art exhibits may be limited to a specific museum

and if individuals want to see that exhibit, they must travel there. The goal for distribution of recorded cultural products is to make them widely available to facilitate consumption. Consumers are not willing to expend much effort to rent a DVD, so companies like Netflix and Redbox make it as convenient as possible to see a movie. Netflix has over 30 million subscribers, some of whom receive physical DVDs through the mail and others who stream the videos over the internet. Redbox has over 40,000 kiosks at supermarkets and retail stores in the US to facilitate DVD rental and return.

Part of the distribution process is the aggregation of cultural products. Over time, museums acquire works of art and assemble collections dealing with specific periods, artists, types of art, and genres. The aggregation of paintings from a particular artist, country or time period allows visitors to the museum to enjoy a range of works and appreciate the breadth and depth of a particular period or genre. It can also provide insights into the evolution and influences on the development of a particular art form. Aggregation is not limited to fine arts. Both Redbox and Netflix, referred to earlier, aggregate video content so consumers can obtain much of what they want to watch from one source. By aggregating and grouping content, organizations dramatically reduce consumer search costs.

Economic context

In addition to a significant number of inhabitants who value live cultural products, cities need a thriving commercial base to support cultural activities. This is particularly true for cultural products that involve high fixed costs to produce and have limited capacity to accommodate audiences. During the Renaissance, the church and wealthy individuals provided support for the arts. While the church is no longer at the forefront in supporting the arts, patrons of the arts remain critical. For example, from 2005 to 2009, 40 percent or more of the Metropolitan Opera's expenses were covered by contributions (Metropolitan Opera, 2008–2009, p. 26) and in 2011 the Metropolitan Museum of Art relied on donations and endowment for over 50 percent of its support (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010–2011, p. 50). Much of this wealth is derived from commercial activities contained within the city. When a city's economy ceases to flourish, there are diminished resources available for cultural products. As the economy of Detroit, Michigan contracted, there was increased pressure on many of its cultural institutions. For example, the Detroit symphony endured a six-month strike that eventually was resolved when musicians agreed to a major pay cut (Bennett, 2011). In contrast, outside the US support for the arts is typically provided by the government and not dependent on private contributions.

A critical factor is whether there are a sufficient number of individuals in a given locale to support a particular kind of cultural product. Symphonies provide a good example regarding what happens when audiences dwindle. In 2011, the Philadelphia Symphony filed for bankruptcy (Wakin & Norris, 2011) and the Honolulu Symphony went out of existence in 2010 after 110 years (Gutierrez, 2010). The dwindling audiences for classical music is related to changing tastes and preferences, as well as the fact that the audience for classical music is older and organizations have had limited success in attracting a younger audience. Major cities will continue to play a role in providing critical mass for audiences of sufficient size, but cultural institutions in secondary and tertiary cities will find it increasingly difficult to prosper. Major cities also continue to attract performers who come to study and work in a city. The top five cities for classical music, according to the recently released World Cities Culture Report (2012), are Paris, New York, London, Tokyo and Berlin

Recorded cultural products are less dependent on a specific local economy as they can be sold over a wide geographic area. This allows the fixed costs associated with their creation to be spread over a much larger revenue stream. Movies produced in Hollywood can be shown on any of over 40,000 screens throughout the US. A typical summer blockbuster movie will be shown on as many as 4,000 screens on its opening weekend. Further, the box office revenue for many Hollywood films is often larger outside the US than it is domestically. Certain types of music and television shows also travel well and have large audiences outside of the city and country in which they are produced.

Technology's role in reshaping cities

Cities play a key role in agglomerating creative talent as well as other resources necessary for the creation of cultural products. They also facilitate achieving critical mass to attract large audiences that enjoy and pay for the consumption of cultural products. However, both these roles are being reshaped by technology. Creation of both recorded and live cultural products tends to be highly centralized and reside in major cities. However, as indicated earlier consumption of recorded cultural content is highly decentralized while live and exhibition cultural products remain largely centralized. Technology is gradually making the consumption of live and exhibition cultural products more decentralized and has the potential to contribute to the decentralization of some aspects of their creation as well.

Cyber consumption of cultural products

Rapid advances in technology enable cultural products to be distributed much more widely. Historically, the availability of a particular cultural product at a specific location limited access to only those in proximate locations or those willing and able to travel some distance for the experience. However, increasingly, live events can either be simulcast or recorded and broadcast or streamed later. While the experience generally is not comparable to experiencing the event live or an exhibit firsthand, the broader availability dramatically expands the audience size. Starting in 2006, the Metropolitan Opera began simulcasting live performances in high definition to movie theaters throughout the world (www.metoperafamily.org). For the 2012–13 season, the simulcast were available in over 50 countries and at over 400 movie theaters in the US. This has not only expanded the reach and exposure of Met Opera performances, but serves as a source of increased revenue. As the Met Opera's simulcasts and audience continue to grow,

opera lovers around the world may forsake local performances with less talented performers. This reinforces the primacy of the Met Opera and New York City while potentially jeopardizing local opera companies in smaller cities.

The internet has allowed art museums to broaden the availability of their collection beyond the confines of their physical space. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts website allows virtual tours of its collection over the internet (www.mfa.org). The collection is conveniently arranged along the lines of the permanent collection. More broadly, the Google Art Project allows access to 45,000 works of art from over 260 collections throughout the world (www.googleartproject.com). The site is organized by collection and by artist to facilitate access. The latter feature changes the nature of the experience. For example, the site organizes 162 works by Vincent Van Gogh that are in the collections of multiple museums throughout the world. To broaden its appeal even further, the site can be accessed in 19 different languages. The high resolution photographs provide an opportunity to enjoy and study the works of art, but the experience is not comparable to visiting a museum, although it does provide extensive access to works of art in multiple collections at the same time. Broader access to art collections outside of major cities may simply serve to reduce attendance there with a corresponding reduction in revenue.

The Public Broadcasting System in the US broadcasts recordings of live performances of select Broadway plays, operas, dance, and other performances. As with the other technologies, the broader availability of content enables a much larger audience to enjoy a particular form of cultural experiences. Until the advent of the internet, listening to WQXR, New York City's classical radio station, was confined to those who could receive a terrestrial signal from the broadcast antenna. Today, anyone with an internet connection can listen to the station by logging on to www.wqxr.org.

The availability of live content electronically both broadens the exposure and changes the nature of the experience. As indicated earlier, in addition to making the content available to a larger audience, the organization can realize increased revenue from electronic distribution. This benefits dominant cultural organizations in major cities, but the impact on local cultural organizations is less clear. Revenue for the Met Opera's simulcasts grew from $5 million in 2006 to $47 million in 2010. The optimistic view is that exposure to more opera increases demand for local live performances. The pessimistic view is that opera lovers will forsake local productions in favor of simulcasts featuring the world's best performers.

Virtual content creation

For the present, creation of cultural products remains the purview of the city, but technology changes the centrality of the city in terms of consumption of live and exhibition cultural products. Cyber consumption of cultural products enables products, such as opera, art or music, that exist or were created in a particular geographic locale to be consumed anywhere in the world. Spatial proximity becomes, largely irrelevant and no longer necessary for consumption and enjoyment of a particular form of cultural expression. Virtual communities on the other hand, allow geographically dispersed individuals who have a common interest in a particular form of cultural expression to come together to share thoughts and ideas about specific cultural products. The internet essentially provides the virtual equivalent of a forum, coffee house, or salon where both creators and consumers of cultural products can gather, even though they are spatially dispersed. These online interactions supplement face-to-face interactions and dramatically increase the diversity of ideas that enrich and modify cultural expression.

Traditionally, purchase of visual arts, required travel to a gallery, many of which are located in major cities throughout the world. However, this has changed dramatically in the past decade with web sites that allow visitors anywhere in the world to view, comment on, interact with the artist, and even purchase visual art. DeviantArt.com (www.deviantart.com) displays a wide range of visual art forms and allows individuals to comment on the works. On the web site is a link called "Groups", which provides links to a range of other web sites that display visual arts to achieve an even broader audience. Artflute.com (www.artflute.com) and Dhonuk.com (www.dhonuk.com) are web sites that specialize in Indian art. Prices at Artflute.com are shown in US dollars as well as Indian Rupees. While the business model of both is based on the sale of art, they have blogs that allow users to post comments and exchange ideas. Dhonuk.com also encourages the artist to comment on the art and visitors to interact with the artists and share reactions and ideas. These web sites allow individuals living in different parts of India and well as all over the world to view, comment on, and buy Indian art. The users also become part of a virtual community and the exchange of ideas can influence the direction of artistic expressions. More broadly, Aftflute.com and Dhonuk.com provide broad exposure to contemporary Indian art, which may potentially influence emerging styles in Europe or North America. Consequently, a person no longer needs to travel to Mumbai or New Delhi to view or buy contemporary Indian art. The local context remains important for the creation of Indian art, but through the internet, the scope of its influence is increased. At the same time, artists in India and elsewhere have access to web sites, such as Artspan.com (www.artspan.com) and Wotartist.com (www.wotartist.com) that display contemporary art from other parts of the world. Without technology, the only way an artist could be exposed to works of art from other locales, would be through travel to galleries or museums. Now art from virtually anywhere in the world can be viewed over the internet. The key aspect is that the city no longer mediates the connection between art and artist and art and its consumption.

The internet also allows for virtual collaboration in the creation of cultural products. Agglomeration of creative talent can be achieved via the internet. Interactions that were once face-to-face can now take place electronically. As more and more cultural products begin to exist in digital form, clusters of support industries can be assembled electronically in dispersed geographic locations. For example, in creating some of the visual effects for *Tron Legacy*, Disney relied on EyeQube, a visual effects studio in Mumbai, India (www.eyeqube.com). Collaboration can take place over vast distances. Being nearby becomes less important than

having the requisite skills and abilities. For live cultural products, at some point the performers must come together physically, but the development process can be enriched by contributions from geographically dispersed individuals. Also, technology makes it possible for distant individuals to observe rehearsals and to help shape the finished product.

Conclusions

Traditionally, cities were critical for the creation of cultural products whether in the realm of film, television, music, opera, dance, fashion or art. By agglomerating creative talent, cities provided a fertile ground for the development and expression of new ideas and forms of cultural products. However, critical mass of creative talent is only one part of the equation. In addition to nurturing the creative muse, the clustering of creative industries in certain cities facilitates the creation of cultural products. Clustering creates significant efficiencies and fosters the development of industries that helps insure that vital support functions are readily available. Access to the myriad of support industries becomes increasingly critical as the creation of cultural products is becoming more dependent on technology.

While cities remain critical for the creation of cultural products, the pattern associated with the consumption of cultural products is diverging. Technology is facilitating the consumption of recorded cultural products over increasingly dispersed geography dramatically expanding the market size. For example, in the past the distribution of recorded music required the physical transport of the CD to a store where it could be purchased. Outlets in the hinterland would be unlikely to carry the latest hip-hop album. Today access to a new song from an obscure genre can be gained almost immediately from iTunes or the singer's web site. Cultural products which continue to be consumed live require cities for their creation and in addition still need to be located in major metropolitan areas to attract a large enough audience to be economically viable. Cyber consumption of live events through simulcast is increasingly prevalent, dramatically expanding the size and geographic dispersion of the audience.

At the same time, consumption of cultural products is less culturally dependent. While in the past, individuals in a particular culture consumed goods produced in that culture, rapid advances in the technology and communications infrastructure are resulting in increased access and openness to goods from other cultures. Changing tastes in film preferences are evident throughout the world. In 2012, 60% of box office revenue in France was from non-French films. The percentage of box office revenue generate by non-local films was 78% for Spain and 87% for Russia (Mitchell, Holdsworth, & Schilling, 2013). Also, there is increased ambiguity regarding the cultural origin of many goods and services. While McDonald's and Coke are uniquely identified with the US, the origins of many products with cultural connotations are less clear. Concomitant with this is the creation of hybrid cultural products which reflect elements of two or more cultures. These new forms of cultural expression are finding broader acceptance around the globe.

Technology plays a key role in sharing and modifying cultural products. The internet enables individuals who are great distances from cultural epicenters to experience the cultural elements firsthand. Web sites that specialize in particular forms of cultural expression, such as DeviantArt.com (www.deviantart.com) and Myspace.com (www.myspace.com), are accelerating this trend. More broadly, Facebook has over one billion users and over 80 percent of them are outside the US (www.facebook.com). This provides a forum for exchanging ideas and exposure to new and different modes of expression. As a consequence, certain cultural elements transcend individual cultures and become associated with a global teen or young adult culture worldwide. In addition, aggregation of inputs necessary for the creation of cultural products can be augmented by electronic means, suggesting a diminished role for physical proximity.

As the context for the creation of cultural products becomes increasingly virtual the primacy of the physical city will erode. Cultural products, such as music, film and television are consumed directly over the internet and this trend will continue to expand to encompass additional cultural products. Live performances can be enjoyed far from the city, as performances are increasingly being simulcast around the world. As this trend accelerates, the primacy of major cities in shaping culture and molding cultural products will be magnified by the broader reach and a larger revenue base afforded by cyber distribution of cultural content. Secondary and tertiary cities will see their role diminish or disappear. To survive smaller and medium sized cities will need to carve out a particular cultural niche that cannot be easily duplicated, such as South by Southwest in Austin, Texas, Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, and Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. This also spawns diversity and innovation which eventually influences creation of cultural products more broadly.

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