The Information Age

A brave new world

Master Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the implications of technological change on the production, distribution and consumption of culture. Arguing that the barriers to entry to these stages of the economic process have been dramatically reduced it makes a case for the democratization of culture. This has been accomplished because – as we find – the expression and recognition of creativity is not solely the domain of the artist but rather a feat accessible to all of mankind. Thus cultural dissemination has completely changed in the information age, giving rise to the long tail. This development is – amongst others - the result of a new institutional landscape where digital platforms are the new intermediaries and the algorithm plays a major role in preference formation. This new cultural landscape is an amalgamation of digital and analogue spaces. As such the possibilities for expressing and valorizing creativity – the way in which we strive to give sense to our lives – has been tremendously increased. Accordingly a new conceptual model for understanding and interpreting these economic and cultural developments – the paradigm we currently live in – is suggested. This method finds its conceptual base in a combination of evolutionary economics and the value-based approach. Important caveat: These findings are the result of an epistemological interpretivistic and ontological constructivist exploration and thus require empirical testing to conform their validity.

Key words: open collaborative innovation, user innovation, producer innovation, information age, technology, creativity, culture, cultural dissemination, produsage, valorization, value-based approach, evolutionary economics, hermeneutics, creative destruction, dialectics.

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Pre-face

Conformity kills. After 26 years on this earth this is my creed. I have learned that adhering to standard practices, societal expectations and any other process that is not self-directed is a surefire way to kill creative potential. This is an absolute sin as creativity is what makes us human. What connects us. Is it the basis of a common admiration for culture. It is likely why humanity expressed a disgust at the bombing of Guernica in 1937. Not only human lives were lost but also a unique expression of human creativity, in this case as exemplified by Basque architecture. As such the limitation of creativity is what bothers, what has always bothered me. It is this admiration of the instrumentality and consequent importance of creativity in achieving a deep sense of connectedness – love as some might put it (Klamer, 2015) – that led me to study Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship.

After I started the programme however, I was disappointed to find out that the majority of it was focused on traditional views of culture such as heritage, museums and theatre that, although they evidently are important, only represent a fraction of human creativity. It is my firm believe that technological advancements have democratized a great many art forms by removing or substantially lowering barriers to entry in terms of production and distribution costs. As such I believe there to be enormous potential for the mass expression, sharing and consumption of human creativity as a consequence of this development and was let down when this topic proved to be only a relatively minor part of the curriculum, especially given the potential creativity has in enabling people to experience joy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) and the omnipresence of technology in contemporary society. In other words, I believe the dawn of the information age has changed the world by enabling mass creativity. I believe this matters greatly because – if true – it provides the potential for everyone to express himself or herself; to participate in the dissemination of culture. I believe this to be of fundamental importance because as such creativity is a currency for the realization of those values – as represented by creative expression – that people hold dear; for making sense of their lives. In sum, I believe we are entering an age of greater possibilities for self-actualization, an age creativity as the basis of *Dasein* is brought closer to us through the advent of technology.

Furthermore I have always had an interest in combining knowledge from different disciplines in an attempt to comprehend the bigger picture. As such the

thesis before you is a fairly unconventional product. I have combined concepts and notions from Cultural Economics, Economics, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Management – as well as a great many practical examples – in order to explore the intersection of creativity and technology, to examine if there is any truth to my vision. Before you lies an epistemological interpretivistic and ontological constructivist exploration. The destination is a new understanding of creativity and culture, and more specifically, their meaning to contemporary mankind.

"Nothing behind me, everything ahead of me, as is ever so on the road."
(Kerouac, 1957, pp. 183).

Introduction

In starting out this introduction I was going to cite a whole bunch of different numbers to emphasize the importance of any exploration of the effects of digitization on both culture and society. For example, 7.2 million people in the Netherlands use YouTube, whereas 1.3 million of those do so daily[1]. Big numbers, especially when considered within the context of the overall population. I was going to reiterate the importance of digitization by quoting a Wired magazine co-founder who argues that the Internet and all the related technologies are still in their infancy, especially in terms of societal impact[2]. Furthermore, I was going to re-emphasize how exploring the hypothesis sketched in the pre-face - the mass dissemination of culture as enabled by technological change – requires us to start out with examining the question of just exactly how universal creativity is. It is, after all, often considered the root of the culture. In the end however, I decided it to be wiser to share with you not the context of digitization or creativity but rather the context of this thesis.

For most of my life I have been very eager to learn yet equally disappointed by educational environments that either fail to challenge me or restrict my creative space. As such it is no coincidence that I elected to write about restrictions on creativity and how those translate into culture. Regardless, I was tremendously looking forward to my time at ESHCC. Attending a top tier institution really got my hopes up. As can be deducted from the pre-face, I was only partially satisfied. While the overall quality of the programme was certainly good I feel there was sometimes a conservative bias as to what exactly constitutes culture. I felt restricted and limited in my creative process once again. As such I went out of my way to find additional sources of literature to complement the teachings on offer and add to my learning process. This thesis is very much a result of that. I have used the tools and concepts handed to me by the faculty and expanded on that using sources I found elsewhere. In fact, as you will find, I am fairly critical of some of the existing literature. Accordingly, what lies before you is a personal document. It is the culmination of what I have learned in the past year. It is 'lived-through-knowledge' in the sense that it is the synthesis of the vision inherent to the Cultural Economics and

[1] http://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2102326-schelden-vreemdgaan-en-slaan-alles-voor-de-views-op-youtube.html

[2] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/internet-still-beginning-its-kevin-kelly

Entrepreneurship MA programme (as interpreted by me) and my own vision; a written version of my intellectual journey in Rotterdam. This thesis is reflective of how I have developed myself as a human being over the past year. As such I am satisfied with the end product because I feel there is no better way to bring to a close both the academic year as well as my time at Erasmus University.

The only thing left for me to say is that it is my sincerest hope that reading this thesis will be an equally creative experience for you as it was for me writing it. Even though the criticism expressed in the process might seem harsh or even arrogant I would like to make use of this opportunity to humbly offer you my way of making sense, as per my exploration of life so far.

I. Creativity

What exactly is creativity? This is the million-dollar question. Although creativity is evidently very important, as evidenced by not only its role as originator of the arts but also through the increasing importance assigned to it in fields such as business administration and human resources[3] as well as its placement at the core of economic growth – through creative destruction - by the school of evolutionary economics (Potts, 2013, pp. 27) no one discipline seems to be able to home in on a singular definition. Yet at the same time it is acknowledged as the defining trait that separates mankind from the apes. Even though we share the vast majority of our genetic make-up with chimpanzees our ability to create and the subsequent creation and intergenerational transmission of understanding through language decisively divides the ground of existence into the realms of animals and men (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Why then, do we find it so hard to come up with a definition for this quintessential human characteristic? The answer is deceivingly simple. The definition of creativity is null, zero, void. It does not exist. It is from stillness and emptiness that creativity is born. It can only exist by virtue of its non-existence.

Confusing, right? This is good. Hang onto it. In fact, delve deeper into it while we go on a journey through past definitions of creativity before arriving at an honest attempt to explore a new understanding of creativity. Why does this matter? Because we need to ascertain whether creativity is really a human feat or rather restricted to the realm of extraordinarily gifted people like the artist. Why? Because there can be no other point of departure for an exploration of creativity in the contemporary epoch then an exploration of the accessibility of the creative process.

There have been numerous attempts at defining creativity, all departing from different notions. For example, one could attempt to approach the topic by studying and consequently defining the characteristics of the personality that gives birth to creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996 & Schweizer, 2004). Another way of looking at it is by looking at the product. Amabile provides a summary of this train of thought, dichotomizing the judgment of whether or not the product is creative into objective and subjective methods (1983). The essential point here is that in this modus operandi

[3] http://business.time.com/2013/03/05/first-there-was-iq-then-eq-but-does-cq-creative-intelligence-matter-most/

– regardless of objectivity or subjectivity – creativity is dependent on judgment by others. Do other people deem the product to be novel, to be original; to be creative? In more recent years this notion has found both support and more nuance in the work of Csikszentmihalyi who argues that creativity has an outcome and that said outcome is only accepted as a contribution to human culture if the experts capable of determining if the product is truly novel decide in favor, thus acting as gate-keepers to their specific domains, whether this domain may be (1996). Amabile suggested a conceptual definition through which this judgment takes place:

"*A product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic."* (1983, pp. 33)

An algorithmic task is that for which the path to the solution is straightforward, a clearly identifiable goal exists. A heuristic task however, has no such goal and thus no clear-cut path to a solution. In other words, " […] problem discovery is an important part of much creative discovery." (Amabile, 1983, pp. 33). This notion is vital as it implies that before the creative *product* invented by creative *people* there was a creative *process.* Exactly this process is where creativity is born, where any serious definition ought to start. In other words; we need to assess the accessibility of this process to determine if creativity is democratic.

According to Csikszentmihalyi the culmination of the process is a state of consciousness – unattainable by other means – where action and awareness are merged, distractions are excluded from consciousness, worry of failure melts away, self-consciousness disappears, the sense of time becomes distorted and there are clear goals every step of the way. As such the activity becomes the end in itself. The creative process thus culminates in a state of flow (1996). The process is the reward in itself, providing ample motivation for people to engage in it. Even though Csikszentmihalyi found this flow experience was nigh on identical amongst all the athletes, scientists, religious mystics and even ordinary people he interviewed - regardless of culture, gender and age – we now seem to have stumbled upon a discrepancy in the literature on creativity. Did you notice the apparent incompatibility of 'clear goals every step of the way' as experienced during flow and the heuristic nature of creative tasks as mentioned by Amabile? How can clear goals possibly be

compatible with a task that has no clearly identifiable goal? Confusing right? Let us explore.

Csikszentmihalyi described the state of consciousness you can find yourself in as a result of partaking in the creative process, the state of being that is the result of creativity. The heuristic nature of a task as described by Amabile refers to the path towards achieving that state. Accordingly, Csikszentmihalyi has explored and described the mental culmination of the creative process but at the same time failed to explore the route leading there. This is where we shall direct our explorations in order to ascertain not only how clear goals are compatible with the lack thereof but more importantly, to find out how creativity works and as such establish whether it is a trait only held by certain privileged creative individuals or rather a fundamental part of human nature.

Fortunately literature exists on the creative process. Leski argues that the creative process is much like a storm:

"It begins from what appears to be nothing; this corresponds to moisture condensing and rising to form a storm cloud. […] Storms arise out of a disturbance, and act to displace and destabilize. They gather energy and material. They gather force and direction. They propel and are propelled. They have consequences, from saturated ground to rainbows […]. And they have no discernible beginning or end. That is exactly what happens in the creative process.

A storm, like the creative process, is continuously in motion. Both are shaped by their conditions, just as their conditions shape them. The wind and water runoff from a storm shapes the landscape and topography; the temperature and moisture and landscape and topography shape the storm. A creative project grows out of the conditions, content and forces of its situation. And a creative work meant to serve one purpose may transform into serving an entirely different purpose, each shaping the other. […] And just as the water in the ground left by a storm is part of the hydrologic cycle, beginning a new storm or, more accurately, keeping the storm going, the creative process starts itself all over again. […] Like a storm, creativity is bigger than you. It begins before you know it. It is beyond your complete control." (2015, pp. 2-8).

As we explore the most relevant parts of this analogy I ask you to look inward and compare the description on offer with your own experience of the creative process, so as to see if it also rings true for you; to grant our exploration some face validity. Furthermore, bear in mind that while the nature of understanding requires me to explain the different phases step by step, in reality they can occur in a different sequence or possibly even simultaneously.

Citing Epictetus Leski argues that it is impossible to begin to learn what you already know. As she puts it, "Creativity requires an open mind. An open mind springs from unlearning, which rids us of preconceptions." (2015, pp. 11). We need to question what we thought we knew in order to arrive at truly new conclusions. "If your starting point is to name and identify potential solutions before unlearning, it is unlikely to lead to anything creative or outside of what you already know." (2015, pp. 11). In other words, departing from preconceptions entails that every step of the way in your exploratory journey will be based on something that already exists, whilst creativity – creation – is about arriving at something new. This is the paradox we came across earlier. Creativity can only exist by virtue of emptiness; an empty mind. Preconceptions prevent creativity. A creative process displaces, disturbs and destabilizes your own preconceived notions, allowing you to learn. "Inspiration induces an open mind through the realization that there is something unknown that is palpable or on the cusp of knowing. […] Inspiration conveys a sensation of clearing, an opening – an expanding sense of the open mind. That open mind creates space by virtue of the absence of preconceptions." (2015, pp. 16). In other words, the famous Eureka moment comes about as a result of your ability to dwell in that open mental space where you are unhindered by preconceived notions. The key question is then, how can one get there? How does *unlearning* work?

The key elements are confusion, doubt and insecurity. Recall your most recent encounter with a blank page. Your confusion as you struggle to find the right words to start your book, paper or article; to start your creative expression. These emotions are crucial as they are the opposite of certainty. After all, when you are certain you will not have an open mind because you will depart from what you already know. This is why I asked you earlier on to delve into your confusion and now implore you to keep on doing so. It will allow us to move beyond what we think we already know, in turn allowing us to continue our exploration of human creativity. "Knowing must therefor

be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. […], a sort of pure beginning, which makes […] creation an exercise in freedom." (Lescure as cited in Bachelard, 1994, pp. xxxiii).

Having unlearned a void is left, the realization you do not know something. That void is consequently filled by an impulse to know, the drive to learn: The problem of not knowing is created by cleansing your mind of preconceptions. Subsequently the process continues by defining and redefining the problem so as to avoid coming up with preconceived answers. For example, I found it incredibly hard to write specifically this chapter of my thesis. Why? Because I felt the need to structure it in such a way that I avoid both my own and your preconceptions when it comes to defining creativity. I continuously redefined my argumentation scheme make sure I correctly defined the true boundaries of our problem; the frame of what we are exploring. This is of great importance because a too narrow frame preempts certain solutions whereas a too wide frame leaves the problem unfocused. Defining a problem determines the direction of its solution. *Problem making* is contemplating and consequently acting upon an idea that compels you to gather information and thus move forward in the creative process. Accordingly this very process is set in motion by the desire to know something you do not know; creation is based on the emptiness left by unlearning for without it there would be no need to create. As such up until this point the creative process is accessible to all, there are no special features required to engage in it other then the pivotal unlearning.

Much like a storm the creative process starts from indistinguishable conditions before picking up momentum and becoming better organized. The gathering storm draws material – information – from surrounding weather systems – the environment – and structures it. *Gathering* provides the creative project the start of an overall form. Just consider the last time you set out to write a paper and at the start of the process were unaware of the final form it would take. I struggled through this phase; this thesis began life as a quantitative research project into the application of creativity to management. Or did it? If I would have framed it as such I would have ended up in that direction: the framing of a problem determines the direction of your quest for information, of your gathering. In reality, I framed my problem – albeit

subconsciously – as creativity in relation to the human condition. Management was but a form I wandered through during the problem making. In sum, "we gather because our cleared minds need to be filled, […] gathering is how we commence solving the problem of that absence created by losing our preconceptions." (2015, pp. 58).

Simultaneously with this gathering you track your process. Based on the feedback received from the gathered information you adjust the momentum and direction of your project. The reiterative process of *tracking* and gathering is interdependent, an "[…] oscillation of author, work, world, and intention." (2015, pp. 63). Leski goes on to make a distinction between the 'ostensible intentions' – in my case creativity and management – that are implied before unlearning has rid the project of preconceptions and 'initiating intentions' – combining multiple scientific disciplines – that emerge as preconceptions are shed and finally the real intention of the work that is a result of the abstract generative process that takes hold as a result of tracking and tracing; an exploration of creativity in relation to the way the human condition interacts with the world through technology. Accordingly the creative process is still very much a human feat, we still have not found any 'barriers to entry'.

Getting back to the creative process, it is important to note that propelling is another important phase. Fueled by tracking and gathering you move forward in the process by means of the language employed by the discipline. Whether this is sound expressed in tones and timbres, equations, paint or words, discipline-based language is the primordial means of creation and expression. A distinction exists here, between learned language born out of the conventions that form the tradition of the discipline, and the language you develop yourself. The former is important for communication as it facilitates a shared understanding whereas the latter has more of an inward focus. Regardless, as you pick up skill you start playing with your language – your material, your medium – and it starts playing with you. A conversation is born that disrupts the intentions of the creative process prior to the introduction of material into to proverbial equation. All in all, interaction between yourself and the employed language propels forward the creative process, shifting it from the abstract to the concrete. Recall the last time you sat down with your thoughts, intentions and information and tried to write the first pages of a work, possibly running into limitations imposed by language and returning to gathering or even effortlessly jotting

down sophisticated nuances. Regardless, you were *propelling*. As such, the process is still human; private language implies that it is accessible even to those who are not familiar with the tradition per se.

While propelling the way you perceive the material is fundamental, not just on a sensory level but also how you subsequently use said information to conceptualize that which relates you to the world. *Perceiving* through tracking, tracing and reiterated by propelling interacts with your *conceiving* of said information until you are happy with the worldview your creation communicates. Leski calls this interaction of perception and conception sensibility. I for one struggled to shape this very paragraph because it has to convey to you the proper understanding of this ability of any creator to navigate the dialectic between him or herself and the life world[4], so as to achieve what one might term *Verstehen*[5]. In the end I decided to stand on the shoulders of giants to help us see further:

"*Sensibility – by definition mental receptivity, ready discernment as of truth – is probably one of the most important human traits available to the artist. Without this the artist becomes skilled, authoritative eclectic but not truly creative because it is the discernment of truth not previously discovered that proves the creativity of an action*." (Peers, 1962, as cited in Leski, 2015, pp. 93 - 94)

If conception precedes perception the latter will be influenced by the former, leading to preconceptions, effectively preventing the true creative process from taking place. Consequently, if perception is truly unburdened by preconceptions it can lead to great discovery and invention. For instance, it is likely Benjamin Franklin discovered the electricity through his kite being struck by thunder and consequently applied the principle to invent the lightning rod. As Leski puts it, "conceiving is an investment in what doesn't yet exist. It flows from your perceptions, driven by your sensibility, to something abstract that is waiting to become concrete." (2015, pp. 97). When your creative process folds and unfolds accordingly, birthing concrete form to something truly new, this experience of the concrete triggers surprise and more importantly, joy.

[4] In the Habermas tradition
[5] In the Max Weber tradition

The Leski description of the emotional state experienced upon discovery or invention thus is strikingly similar to the Csikszentmihalyi concept of flow (1996). This still leaves us with a question. Although the similarity provides face validity to the Leski description of the creative process it still does not provide us with an answer as to how exactly the heuristic nature of the creative task as described by Amabile (1983) can lead to the clear cut goals experienced during flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). While the heuristic nature of these tasks is more then evident our journey through unlearning, problem making, propelling, perceiving and conceiving; the step to clarity is still missing. Is this step accessible to anyone?

So how do we get to that clarity? This is the *true* million-dollar question. Leski puts it like this: "We see ahead when we make designs that are materialized in the future, when we write problems that anticipate solutions, when we link one step to another in navigating our lives and the way through anything, especially the empty page, the writer's block, confusion, chaos, needs, and questions. These are creative acts." (2015, pp. 104). Through a combination of insight, intuition and imagination this *seeing ahead* comes to be. Insight is described as both a thorough understanding of how things are and the ability to see potential; how these things might develop. As such it is said to be a combination of wonder, experience and recognition. Imagination is a transformational skill that allows you to produce a mental image of something never wholly perceived in reality. Whilst this thing is not available to your external sensory experience, it can be perceived internally. Consequently intuition rests on both imagination and insight and entails a sudden grasp of knowing something without consciously reasoning to that point.

In other words, this intangible act of seeing ahead provides us with the ability to get from chaos and doubt to clarity and effortlessness, a state of consciousness where there are clear goals every step of the way. It is the very core of the creative process and at the same time the least understood by contemporary science (Amabile, 1983), quite possibly because this internal process is not quantifiable. Regardless, through the combination of insight, intuition and imagination you are presented with a view of what is to come and what has been; seeing ahead lets you 'see' possible outcomes, presenting you with a sense of how to get from the abstract to the concrete, from no goals to clear-cut goals. So is the creative process human? This time the answer is ambiguous. One would need insight, intuition and imagination. We cannot

prove or disprove if these characteristics are accessible to all. However, we could argue that denying to posses these traits is a preconception in itself. If you tell yourself you are not imaginative – or not creative for that matter – a self-fulfilling prophecy is born. As such unlearning also applies to this step of the creative process; a human process after all.

Having seen ahead the move towards the concrete takes a more solid form, yet an important question remains. You have gathered and tracked to fuel your creative process. You found the data or literature you needed as input. You're now formulating it into a theory. How do you form the connections between the variables? You have seen possibilities through seeing ahead but which one makes the most sense? Based on these possible outcomes you recognize a pattern, you connect the proverbial dots. "Creativity is just connecting things." (Steve Jobs as cited in Leski, 2015, pp. 122). *Connecting* is the pivotal process that firmly moves the abstract into the concrete and as such finalizes the move from ambiguity to clarity. The irony here is that the dots being connected often already existed, the connection itself is the novelty. "All the conditions of the storm exist prior to the storm, but it is the compounding of the conditions that produces the storm." (Leski, 2015, pp. 129). Perhaps this is where the metaphor *nanos gigantum humeris insidentes* comes from, famously translated to English by Isaac Newton: "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." (1676).

It is when this intersection of sometimes seemingly unrelated causalities causes you to have an insight and consequently whisk a new idea into reality that you "have a feeling of the uncanny, […] an expansive sense of wonder […], a sense of expansion because your point of view has been expanded to the multiple avenues." (Leski, 2015, pp. 140). Again we notice a similarity to the concept of flow, providing even more face validity to the Leski observations. We seem to have now discovered the point where creativity truly happens. Where it becomes real from an internal perspective; where the process turns into a product. We have answered the million-dollar question. Creativity is an internal and reiterative process whereby you connect gathered information – after having rid yourself of preconceptions and thus creating the need to create in the first place – to move an ostensibly new idea from the abstract into the concrete. A complicated process because the very process of moving it to the concrete can influence the direction this concretization takes. More importantly, it is a

process accessible to all, provided you unlearn. As such you have now created something that is – at the very least to your mind – completely novel. This presents us with a new question. Is it also new for others? Or was the frame you previously established too narrow, leading to the creation of something that, unbeknownst to you, already existed?

Leski does present us with two further steps in the creative process that allow us to detach ourselves from our own process in order to regain mental space; to redo the unlearning. You *pause* in order to observe the established frame from a distance and gain a fresh perspective. From this calm – this empty mind – you begin again, or rather, you *continue*. Beginning again as a way to clear self-imposed preconceptions born from either the frame or the desire to find something. The space accordingly created allows the subconscious to make new connections, making the execution – the move from abstract to concrete – natural. "Artists of all kinds […] have stages within their practice that are, for lack of a better word, felt with the fullest awareness of the moment." (2015, pp. 162). Again we are reminded of the concept of flow, the mental outcome of a successful creative process. Recently professional cyclist Tom Dumoulin stated that when he attacked during the Giro d'Italia he did so based on instinct rather than thought: "You cannot explain this feeling, when an animal has an instinct for something, he just does it. I guess that's the same here. It's instinct." (Cycling News, 2016, para. 12) Tom's experience of flow reiterates the importance of viewing creativity not as a trait solely confined to the artist and equally important, it is a solid example of how certain things have to be forgotten by the conscious mind, "so one can be free to be aware of the moment." (Leski, 2015, pp. 162). In sum, we can distance ourselves from our frame and accordingly try to ascertain whether we truly have discovered or invented something novel from an internal point of view; we can check if our creative process has been misguided by preconceptions build up during the process, tunnel vision as science would put it (Bryman, 2003). This matters because these abilities – pausing and continuing – are not restricted to a select few. Again the creative process proves to be a human feat; accessible to all provided we all unlearn. Furthermore, the Dumoulin experience of flow resembling the Leski creative process adds further face validity to our explorations.

Before we now turn our attention to the next step of our explorations – ascertaining whether the creative product is not only novel in your life world but also in the world at large – it is important to examine the similarities between the creative process and the theories of understanding set out by Heidegger and Gadamer. Why? Because in order to move from the internal creative process to the external validation thereof interpretation of said creative product is required. We need to interpret the in what others do.

Heidegger – when discussing his concept of the Hermeneutic circle – writes that it "[…] is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle […]. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood our first, last and constant task never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conceptions to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves." (1962, pp. 153). Although his theory primarily concerns the interpretation of texts the similarity between the necessity of not letting these 'fore-conceptions' getting in the way of understanding and the requirement of not letting preconceptions getting in the way of creation is striking. In fact, Gadamer holds that "Every authentic interpretation must provide itself against the happenstance arbitration of baroque ideas and against the limitations caused by unconscious habits[6] of thought […] – the interpreter's reflection on the preconceptions which result from the hermeneutical situation in which he finds himself." (1987, pp. 129 - 130). Evidently an empty slate in your mind – *unlearning* – is of vital importance for an authentic understanding. If the interpreter does not manage this he will arrive at exactly the understanding he departed from much like the creator who does not create something new because he departs from what he already knows.

Gadamer goes on to argue that true understanding as enabled by the challenging of preconceptions – what he calls the authentic hermeneutical attitude – opens us up to receiving "[…] the origins and entirely foreign features of that which comes to it from outside its own horizon." (1987, pp. 132). Although the way of challenging preconceptions – Leski unlearns through confusion, doubt and insecurity,

[6] Important: preconceptions can be subconscious

Gadamer acknowledges his opinions and prejudices as just that and thus brushes them aside - the result is the same: an expansion of your viewpoint. Furthermore, Gadamer stresses that the question posed through understanding must avoid any framing of the meaning of that very question, presenting a striking similarity to the process of problem making. *Problem making* can only function if it is preceded by unlearning; otherwise the frame would be born out of a preconception rather than the honest need to know caused by the empty mind. Palmer explains the thinking of Gadamer in a complementary way: "Real questioning then, presupposes openness – i.e., the answer is unknown – and at the same time it necessarily specifies boundaries." (1972, pp. 199). After unlearning – the openness – boundaries are required so as to avoid a too wide frame; leaving the problem unfocused. Problem making. Why does this matter? Because it points us in the direction of the notion that recognizing a creative product as such is a creative process itself.

Furthermore, Palmer stresses that in interpretation a dialogue arises between the interpreter and the text. While a text cannot literary converse, the dialogue consists of questions raised in you by the text and consequently placing the text within the context of these questions. Even though approaching this task without preconceptions is important you do not leave your horizon behind, but rather broaden that very horizon as a result of the dialogue with the text: "The dialectic of question and answer works out a fusion of horizons." (1972, pp. 201). In other words, in the dialogue the interpreter engages with the medium, a process that closely resembles the dialectic interaction of artist and material experienced during the *propelling* phase of creativity. Consequently the interpreter expands his point of view by *connecting* his understanding to that offered by the text. This resemblance provides even more face validity for our comparison between creative expression and recognition.

We thus found striking similarities between understanding and creation. You start by creating a void, by shedding preconceptions so as to enable true learning, to avoid being trapped by what you already know. Consequently a need to know arises, which lets you define the problem. Thus you engage with the medium that in turn engages you. This dialectic process allows the interpreter to come to a greater understanding and the creator to create. As such creativity and understanding can be seen as two sides of the same coin, for without expression, there would be very little to understand. So why is this comparison important? Because as per our exploration so

far we are left with the question of what makes a creative product truly creative. Is your creation novel to the world at large? This question implies judgment that in turn requires understanding. As we have seen, understanding – like creation – requires unlearning; shedding your preconceptions. As such, I did not mention the goal of the comparison between understanding and the creative process earlier. By now it is clear; to further emphasize the importance of avoiding preconceptions as well as to establish that not only creative expression is a human trait, but also that the interpretation thereof is equally accessible because it is essentially a part of creativity as well. Both sides of the same coin thus crucially depend on unlearning. Creativity as such is thus as old as humanity itself. "Creativity has been at work for more than a million years and the process itself and catalytical points in the creative process are essentially always the same." (2015, pp. 1). I cannot stress this enough: Preconceptions are the only block between humanity and creativity. Conformity kills.

The next step in our exploration is to assess the transition of creative expression into culture. To determine when a creative product is not just considered creative as a result of your internal process but also considered novel by the external world; the distinction made by Csikszentmihalyi between personally creative people – leaving no impact upon society – and those who left a trace in the cultural matrix (1996). In order to do so we must bring with us what we learned about unlearning. It is crucial to creativity; to learning something new. As such we must leave our preconceptions at the proverbial door, so as to enable our exploration to be "[…] an event in which something emerges from negativity – the negativity of realizing that there is something one did not know, that things were not as one had assumed." (Palmer, 1972, pp. 201).

II. But is it art?

Csikszentmihalyi neatly sums up the transformation creative expression needs to undergo in order to become a part of any culture: "Creativity cannot be understood by looking at the people who appear to make it happen. Just as the sound of a tree crashing in the forest in unheard if nobody is there to hear it, so creative ideas vanish unless there is a receptive audience to record and implement them." (1996, pp. 6). This school of thought is supported by Amabile who – if we recall from the previous chapter – also feels that creativity is to be judged by others in other to be recognized and agreed upon (1983). Looking at this from a daily life point of view it is easy to see why such recognition it vitally important. Apart from being admitted to and thus making a mark on a culture creative products – like any product – face another challenge. Time. There is only so much of this available to anyone. With tons of creative expressions potentially happening no one has the time to delve into all cultural domains and master them. Accordingly Csikszentmihalyi argues specialized gate-keepers emerge – the so-called field of experts - who through the investment of time – Csikszentmihalyi calls it attention – have mastered their domain; their subculture. Due to their expertise they are able to judge something as novel and as such allow it into their field, often through their jobs as leaders of various institutions of culture. They are effectively gatekeepers. These people as Csikszentmihalyi puts it, "[…] anyone who has a right to decide whether a new idea or product is 'good' or 'bad' […] (1996, pp. 45) and thus allow a domain to function properly. Were it not for them, the unlimited addition of creative expressions to a culture would make it regress into pure chaos, affecting not only the quality of expression on offer but also the accessibility thereof; the sheer volume of expressions would overwhelm anyone attempting to sift through them.

So why does this matter? Because Csikszentmihalyi defined the way in which we think about how creativity is made real. How the internal creative process results in a product that potentially influences others and thus makes a cultural mark. We have ascertained that anyone can engage in the creative process, both in terms of expression and recognition. However, there is gate-keeping mechanic in place in between creative expression and culture. We thus need to examine this process in order to be able to fully explore creativity in a socio-cultural context. What structures prevent or allow a creative expression to become part of a culture?

"Culture develops authentically as a process in its making. If culture is understood as a condition that sits as a context for design, then design is not a result of the creative process but instead it is based on connoisseurship. In other words, the objective would be to meet the standards of cultural conventions or tastes […]" (Leski, 2015, pp. 19-20)

Culture understood as such would pre-empt the production of true novelty. This process is just as applicable to understanding – to those who interpret new ideas and decide upon their admission to a domain – as it is to creation. Consequently expertise can be used as a crutch: if one depends on it for judging the novelty of new ideas one risks being guided by preconceptions, thus preventing your horizon from being expanded. In other words, if an expert relies solely upon his expertise as the guiding force in judging an expression he will likely become entrapped in the hermeneutic circle, rather than coming to a more profound understanding: "The interpreter is torn between his belongingness to a tradition and his distance from the objects which are the theme of his investigation." (Gadamer, 1987, pp. 136).

As such the premise of the Csikszentmihalyi theory is shaky at best. While the need for some sort of a gatekeeper - due to the scarcity of attention and the discrepancy with the vast supply of creative expressions - is clearly a great idea, the problem thus lies in the notion of expertise and all the preconceptions implied by just that. So, if expertise is a bad point of departure for the evaluation of art or culture, how does one go about this process? After all, some sort of gate keeping is evidently needed.

Heidegger wrote an essay on art in which he offered a different way of understanding it. Very relevant here because as he puts it himself, "But what and how is a work of art?" (2002, pp 2). In answering this question he walks us through three interpretations he argues to be wrong. Whilst the details – however interesting – are beyond the scope of this thesis it is important to point out why he feels these three models of understanding – things as bearers of traits, as perception or as formed matter – are all wrong: "This long familiar mode of thinking preconceives all our immediate experience of beings. The preconception shackles reflection on the being of particular beings." (2002, pp 12). Again the importance of avoiding preconceptions

is confirmed. Instead of these preconceived ways of understanding Heidegger suggests seeing art as the dialectic struggle between earth and world. Earth is existence, that which according to Heidegger the ancient Greeks called 'Φύσις' (2002, pp. 21), or *physis*; Being. World on the other hand is meaning, the meaning called into being by the work from which it is born. A work accordingly opens up a world, a world of significant relations if you will.

Whilst these terms essentially relate to a profound yet complicated existentialist discussion on the meaning of life – again interesting but way beyond the scope of our explorations – the key thing to take away here is that exactly because a work of art opens up a struggle between existence and meaning it is a work of art. To put it differently, art is an attempt bridging the gap between being and meaning; an attempt at explaining the meaning of life through that very work. Accordingly, art is the production of truth. What then you ask, is truth? The ancient Greeks called it, ἀλήθεια, or as Heidegger puts it, unconcealment (2002, pp. 16). In art, this happens through the strife between earth and world. From this struggle a space opens up in which truth is brought forth:

"*Truth is not present in itself beforehand, somewhere among the stars, so as then, later on, to find accommodation among beings. This is impossible since it is the openness of beings which first affords the possibility of a somewhere and a place filled by the things that presence. Clearing of the openness and establishment in the open belong together. They are the same thing, an essence of the happening of truth. This happening is, in many different ways, historical."* (2002, pp. 36 - 37)

Whilst the similarities between 'clearing of the openness' and the internal creative process as described by Leski are – again – striking, the fundamental point here is that truth is historical. As long as the struggle takes place – as long as the meaning of a work of art is contested – truth is produced. Once this struggle subsides, truth is no longer produced and the work of art becomes an object of art. In other words, once a work of art no longer engages people the very dialectic struggle between existence and meaning that defined it ceases to be. The object now still exists but no longer has meaning.

Meaning, in this context, is incredibly important. If a creative expression manages to invoke a debate over its' meaning, it engages with a culture, it is real.

Accordingly it is not so much the expertise of the gatekeeper that decides if said expression can become part of a culture, rather it is the question of whether or not the work can engage people. Participation makes creative expression real. This raises a question: How does one participate in a work of art?

Klamer has suggested one such model. His value based approach holds that all economic life is about the valorization of values; the making real of said values (2015). Accordingly, the truth produced by a work of art – that is, the struggle between meaning and existence – can be seen as to represent certain values, whatever these may be. As long as these values appeal to people the creative expression will induce participation, not so much in itself, but rather in what it stands for. If it does not engage people, if the value - the subjective truth if you will - at its core, is not valorized it will never become part of a culture, it will never become a work nor an object. If the value has been valorized at some point but now no longer is, it ceases to be part of a culture; it becomes an object. This matters for our exploration because it sheds light on the process through which creative expression is made real.

These explorations cast more doubt on the Csikszentmihalyi theory. If judgment by experts precedes the admission of an expression to a domain then it is very hard if not impossible for these experts to determine admission based on participation. After all, for people to participate a work logically already needs to be admitted. Thus I propose a new dialectic model for understanding creative production:

Creative production is the synthesis of the internal creative process (thesis) and the external environment (antithesis).

Much like every phase of the internal creative process, the thesis and antithesis are highly connected, and as such part of an iterative process. It is impossible to draw a distinctive line between the parts of the whole. While I realize contemporary science often calls for hard data and measurable variables – hence the initial focus of academic thinking about creativity on the product rather than the process (Amabile, 1983), it is fundamental to understand that the phenomenon of creativity is not a quantifiable as such for the very simple reason creativity itself cannot exist in isolation. Both *gathering* inspiration and *connecting* the dots during the internal process are reliant upon the environment of the creator. Consequently the making real

of the creative product - the valorization - requires *participation* in order for the creative product to be confirmed as such. Leski was right, creativity is like a storm. Not just internally though; in relationship to external creativity – the making real - as well:

"A storm, like the creative process, is continuously in motion. Both are shaped by their conditions, just as their conditions shape them (2015, pp. 3)

Furthermore, even if experts were to brush aside their preconceptions, there still is a major fault in the premise of any 'acknowledgement by experts' theory regarding creativity. To judge something as novel, the result of a heuristic task or whatever other criteria relevant to that specific domain, would be a major faux pas in understanding and interpretation. Judging something by the traits it bears implies first defining that thing. As we learned from Heidegger, understanding creative expression through listing characteristics disregards the very nature of that thing; it overlooks any truth that might be called forth by the expression; it neglects to check if a world is opened up by this expression; if it is indeed a work. This in fact, is a hard thing to check for any one expert, for even if he or she were to go by this method of understanding then a world might not be opened for this individual, whereas it might for someone else. To phrase it within the vocabulary of the value based approach; the expert might care about different values and thus not acknowledge the values present in that particular expression while for someone else the values represented by it are very real. In other words, the risk here is that those responsible for gate-keeping, an act still required due to the scarcity of time, face a nigh on impossible task. The implications are that there is a disconnect between the 'production' and subsequent 'consumption' of certain values. They might be produced, but the experts do not recognize them as such and consequently do not let them into the respective domain. This translates to experts effectively imposing cultural conservatism rather than cultural innovation.

While some might argue that being an expert implies that you are highly aware of all relevant values in a domain, this is not a valid argument per se. After all, we have learned that expertise due to its very nature invites the preconceptions that might block an expert from understanding new values. In fact, "Discovery and invention happen outside the existing tracks or matrices of thought within a

discipline." (Leski, 2015, pp. 161). A domain understood as such by an expert is stagnant. Rather any domain needs to be understood as a fluid phenomenon – much like creativity itself – in order to account for novelty originating from outside rigidly defined domains. If this is not acknowledged innovation is lost and the entire domain is at risk of becoming an object of art. Accordingly experts need to consider that their – often life-long – training imposes upon them a tradition, a point of view inherited from the past burdening them with preconceptions; a historical consciousness. This dialectic relation between "[…] the prejudice organically a part of a particular system […]" and "[…] the foreign element which provokes a system […]" (Gadamer, 1987, pp. 138) again emphasizes the incredible importance of unlearning. While one might argue that any gate-keeper – expert or not – born into any tradition would suffer from the same challenge, this is not necessarily the case. The less training received, the younger one is, the less one is submerged into tradition. Recall for example the curiosity and incredible open-mindedness of young children. Furthermore, imagine if a paradigm shift in society happens, causing a cultural rift between two generations. This newer generation might consequently be attracted to a wholly different set of values than those admitted into domains by their elder experts, leading to yet another disconnect between the 'production' and 'consumption' of values. If one recalls the societal upheaval of the 60's such a rift is not unimaginable at all.

In sum the recognition of creativity is very much like creativity itself. It requires unlearning. While this does not automatically exclude experts it does pose a bigger challenge on them than on those not burdened with these great amounts of expertise to set aside. What does exclude them is this: creative expressions can appeal to people because they represent a certain subjective truth – certain values. This can be the only logical criterion through which we can judge if something is culture because if it appeals to people the respective creative expression is consequently valorized. After all, values can only be made real when shared (Klamer, 2015). Consequently judgment of an expression prior to it entering a domain is impossible because at that point it has not yet been possible to ascertain whether the values on offer appeal to people. Thus our conclusion so far can only be this: Creativity is a distinctively human affair. It requires humans to come to pass, whether in terms of production or in terms of valorization. The less the humans involved are burdened with preconceptions the more creative the outcome is likely to be. This conclusion matters because it

implies – in the context of creativity in the information age – that anyone can engage in creative expression and recognition, not just the artist and the expert. The sole requirement is unlearning. These findings point to human nature. This leaves us wondering if the societal structures in place in the current epoch allow for the realization of this behavior. To put it differently, we pointed out a mistake in the established thinking on creativity. The premise used to do so however, is a philosophical one. We thus have to ask ourselves. So what? Are there any practical implications? After all, the scarcity of time implies there is still very much a practical need for gate-keeping, leaving our exploration so far moot. Accordingly we shall now explore the contemporary context so as to find out if are findings so far have any practical merit.

III. Creative or Cultural Economy?

Based on our exploratory journey so far we can now safely do away with this dogmatic distinction between different sectors. As we learned in our explorations so far, creativity becomes real when it is valorized. Accordingly no creative expression without recognizable values inherent to it will ever make it into the economy if no one but the creator is attracted to these values. As such it makes much more sense to drop the distinction and refer to every valorized – and thus economized, the economy is submerged in the cultural sphere (Klamer, 2015) – creative expression as part of the cultural economy. Creativity that is not acknowledged by others does not become culture and does not make it into the economy. Creativity that is valorized and thus admitted into the cultural matrix[7] is economized. Such is the characteristic of market capitalism. Accordingly we need to turn our explorations to the inner workings of this brand of societal design in order to ascertain how creativity physically turns into culture, moving our exploration from the philosophical into the economical. What are the mechanics through which this process takes place? We shall assess this through different strands of cultural economic literature as well as concepts from mainstream economics. Due to the lack of a dominant paradigm binding the cultural economics discipline together (Blaug, 2001), this chapter should be seen as an honest attempt to explore appropriate ways of relevant academic thinking about the valorization of creativity in the context of the information age. After all, a complete examination of the field of Cultural Economics as per our explorations so far would be way beyond the scope of a master thesis.

Before we start of on this journey a brief reminder is required of the relevance of this exploration is due. Back in 2000 Caves wrote that the focus of the field of Cultural Economics had thus far been on public subsidy for the elite performing arts. Such a view – as per our findings so far – is outdated because it neglects to consider whether the art in question is a work of art or an object of art; whether the values represented by it are alive. In fact, we might argue that lack of demand – assuming there are no market failures – is an indication of the art form in question becoming an object. As such a subsidy would be a waste of money as it would mean sinking public

[7] Culture here is thus defined in the anthropological sense: Shared values, meanings, symbols, artifacts, et cetera. C1 as per Klamer (2015, pp. 7). Or as Heidegger would put it, truth revealed through contested meaning.

money into something that is no longer felt by the public. While this is an interesting notion to play with it is beyond the scope of our explorations; the assumption made in the argumentation is a big one and would require massive further explorations. The point here is that the Klamer approach to culture – all things valorized – makes a lot more sense.

As such, in a market economy the consumption of culture implies the valorization of the values at the root of those cultural products or services. Accordingly studying cultural economics implies studying the process through which valorization happens. If a frame is set a priori to this study – for example, one focusing on elite performing arts – then the frame almost automatically becomes too narrow. In other words, determining what is culture before studying it is a preconception, preempting true learning. On the flip side of that argument however, is a frame so wide there is a lack of focus. As such we shall focus our exploration on the paradigm shift society is currently moving through – digitization - exploring examples of both digital techniques applied to existing domains and new domains arising through the possibilities offered by the general purpose technology that is ICT (Bekar & Haswell, 2013).

In sum, our frame holds that we look at cultural goods - both products and services – as enabled by digitization. Cultural goods those that are the result of creative expression and are consequently valorized through their consumption. As such we will use a chronological approach for our journey, starting out with production, following up with distribution and ending with consumption.

§3.1 Production

Production of culture has long been an expensive affair. Whether you needed to purchase musical instruments, a photo or film camera and the necessary stock of celluloid, marble and a chisel or even an easel, paint and canvasses, your wallet was bound to take a hit. Add to this the rival nature of the good that is the result of the production process and you will end up spending both a lot of time and money for the production of a cultural good, even more so for a multitude of goods. Bear in mind that hardly everyone interested in expressing themselves creatively is able to earn sufficient income from this process so as to be able to pay the bills. Accordingly time spent on producing creative expressions is even more costly as it limits time spent on

earning money to provide sustenance. This shadow price of cultural production, along with the high costs associated with purchasing the tools, placed a big constraint on production. Furthermore, we have to consider that for certain types of production – particularly the more complicated ones – access to an institution was required. For example, if a former professional freestyle skier was interested in using his athletic skills to produce a movie or documentary about the sport he would have to have access to all the facilities provided by a production company. Filming in the mountains required not only a camera and celluloid but also a crew, a helicopter for areal shots, editing, sound design, transportation of all equipment and staff to such remote locations, and so on and so forth. Similarly, recording an album required not just an instrument but a studio equipped with acoustic treatment, microphones, a mixing desk, a sound engineer… You get the point. It was such an expensive ordeal that you would need an institution – a record label or a production house – to chip in. Consequently you would need access to these institutions, for which you would have to adhere to their norms. After all, these experts decided whether the project was worth pursuing, it was their job to act as gatekeepers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Production was thus constrained by costs, income and access to institutions, the latter being based on whether or not you would adhere to the dominant norms.

Due to the advent of technology this changed. That very same skier can now purchase a cheap drone[8], or even strap a GoPro to his head[9]. Consequent footage can be edited on most stock laptops using pirated software. Likewise, physical recording studios can now be squeezed into a laptop through recording software, potentially replacing the mixing desk as well as offering digital versions of the required instruments[10]. Furthermore, you no longer have to go out and find a teacher – whether for recording technique, musical theory or mixing – because there is a myriad of resources available online, often for free[11]. In fact, online platforms now exist that allow numerous producers to work on a project simultaneously, regardless of their physical location[12], potentially revolutionizing collaborative innovation. Similar platforms exist for different ways of creative expression, Google Docs being the most

[8] https://www.bol.com/nl/p/quadcopter-met-camera-drone/9200000048975894/
[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKP7jQknGjs
[10] https://www.ableton.com/en/live/
[11] https://www.attackmagazine.com/technique/
[12] https://splice.com/

well-known example. The point to take away here is that digitization has – at face value – dramatically reduced economic constraints traditionally placed on creative production. The tools have gotten cheaper and the learning curve has been reduced – both due to availability of online information as well as computers taking over tasks that previously had to be mastered[13] - leading to a lesser need for access to institutions and also lesser time constraints: if computers take over parts of the production process the process is quicker and there is also less of a need for learning, freeing up time to spend on actual production.

Baldwin and Von Hippel have modeled an economic explanation of this phenomenon. They argue that as a result of digitization both design and communication costs have dramatically been reduced.

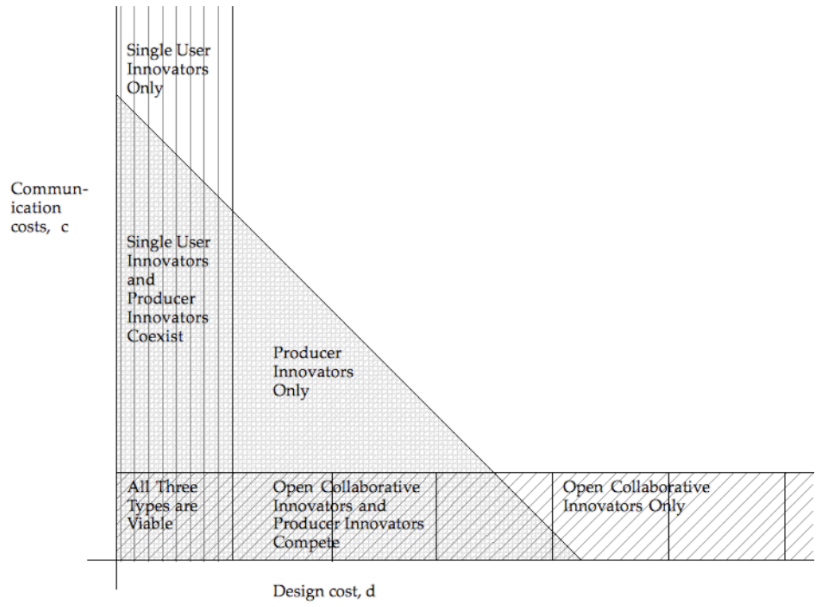

Figure 1: Bounds of viability for all three innovation models (Baldwin & Von Hippel, 2011, pp.20)

[13] For example: presets in audio production or filters in image editing

As a result three types of innovation now exist. Next to the producer driven innovation that characterized the mechanical age and gave birth to the big corporations ruling the industrial and institutional landscape (Chandler, 1977), new forms of economic organization and innovation now exist. Single user innovators are single firms or individuals creating innovation – thus using their creative process – initially for their own use. Imagine an athlete inventing a product not yet in existence but required for his sport[14]. Open collaborative innovation entails numerous participants who collaborate – often on an ad hoc basis – in a collective effort to produce a freely shareable output or design[15]. Design here is taken to mean either the instruction required to produce a physical product[16] or in the case of information goods, the good itself. The point here is that the oligopoly of major corporations – whether this be major labels, film studios or publishing houses – has been broken. Where the technologies inherent to the mechanical age and consequent costs structure led to the firm being the dominant form of economic organization, the information age and its digital technology invite a different economic landscape where different forms of organization and innovation co-exist. (Baldwin & Von Hippel, 2011). A lot of economical restraints have thus been removed, increasing accessibility of production, as evidenced by these new forms of innovation and the subsequent change in institutional landscape.

An important consequence is that people can now be both user and producer at the same time; produser as Bruns (2013) would put it. These people are not motivated by profit per se, but rather the ability to steer an innovation in a direction suitable to them – the lead-user effect (Von Hippel, 2005) – or even the simple satisfaction of contributing to a successful project; a possible extension of the warm glow effect encountered in more traditional forms of cultural philanthropy as described by Snowball (2007). In fact, some of these amateurs – in the sense of not being paid – are putting out at a professional quality level (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004). In the case of journalism, Highfield and Bruns even found evidence of professionals and amateurs producing and distributing content in a collaborative manner (2012).

[14] http://www.redshiftsports.com/our-kickstarter-story/
[15] Wikipedia is a perfect example
[16] Imagine the consequences for the economic landscape when 3D printing available to consumers at a cheaper price due to economies of scale dramatically reduces the costs involved in physical production

So what is the point? Sticking to the journalism example, it is fair to assume that what drives this collaboration is a shared a goal, an underlying ambition – either conscious or subconscious – to achieve a certain value, in this case likely truth. As such the argument is as follows: Not only has digitization reduced the barriers to entry of the production of creative expressions, it has also implicitly laid bare the motivation for this production. Money is not the key currency here, as evidenced by the lack of direct financial reward in the newer innovation models, rather an opportunity to realize certain values is the key goal in this type of economic behavior. While this principle is certainly not a break from the past – in fact it is likely a part of human nature (Polanyi, 2001)[17] – the technologies employed in the process have changed, consequently democratizing creative production. As such participation is again a key variable, shedding further light on our earlier finding that participation is central to creativity. We have now learned that it also plays a central role in not only the philosophical making real of creativity as discussed in the last chapter but also in the actual – the economical – production process.

This notion is emboldened by the more readily available nature of another humdrum input required for the production of creative goods, capital (Caves, 2000). Online crowd funding platforms such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo allow people to invest in the realization of a good they believe in; the valorization of a shared value. Additionally, technology has the potential to influence another crucial factor in the production process. Luck. While crowd funding certainly increases the chances of bumping into a likeminded investor, some projects require an overall team effort, the intangible being at the right place at the right time; serendipity. While there are now online communities facilitating exactly this[18] there is also a conferencing company that uses graph theory, network science and modularity algorithms[19] to engineer serendipity[20], to enforce luck. While their scope has so far been limited to finance and tech one can imagine the impact this could have if it were to be applied to sectors considered being part of the creative industries paradigm.

In sum the production of creative expression is a lot more accessible in the information age, as numerous constraints have been either removed or lessened. At

[17] Polanyi argued that economic motives were born from social life in pre-industrial society
[18] http://www.galeria.io/#!about/b9yv8
[19] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modularity_(networks)
[20] https://blog.websummit.net/why-you-shouldnt-attend-web-summit/

the same time the likely motivation for this process – the realization of values - has remained the same. Of course these conclusions are much more valid for information goods[21] than for non-reproducible art forms, however given the multitude of back-office tasks that have likely gotten cheaper both in terms of time and money due to the lowered communication and design costs it is likely that the decreased constraints on production have had an impact across the board (Towse & Handke, 2013). This matters because the principle of creative expression may only limited by preconceptions physical production was restricted. Recent technological changes have essentially democratized the production of creative expression.

§3.2 Distribution

A while ago I was sitting in my parents' garden working on this document when I was disturbed by the banter of children passing by on the nearby cycling lane. At first I felt annoyed but as I listened to what exactly they were saying I had a wonderful insight. One kid asked the other if a certain app could be found in the (Google) Play store or only on the (Apple) App Store. This reminded me of how I had to nag my mom to take me to either the toy store or the bookstore if I wanted a new piece of entertainment when I was growing up. Instead of visiting a local node of an elaborate physical distribution network you can now log onto the Internet and access a host of digital stores where there is an incomparably bigger and more varied supply available. Consequently you can either immediately download or even stream your digital product – e-book, music, movie, et cetera – or have a physical product shipped to your doorstep. Technological advances even mean that in the nearby future a package ordered online can be delivered to your door within thirty minutes using a drone[22]. This is a stark contrast with being dependent on visiting a local shop with a limited stock of product available. Add to this picture the marginal costs for all digitized goods approaching zero and we are presented with an information age reality where technology has dramatically reduced the notion of distance in distribution networks, increasing the scale of supply to magnitudes – in the US YouTube reaches more

[21] "Anything that can be digitized" (Shaprio & Varian, 2013, pp 3). We are after all discussing the information age.
[22] http://www.amazon.com/b?node=8037720011

people than any cable network[23] - previously unimaginable to man. Digitization changed the world. Or has it?

When we explored production we discussed the rise of new innovation models, resulting in a changed institutional landscape where major corporations, small medium enterprises and passionate amateurs now co-exist. The picture painted here though, is one reminiscent of the 20th century. Amazon, Google, Apple and even logistics companies such as DHL seem to control the institutional landscape, bankrupting a whole lot of bricks and mortar stores in the process who were unable to compete with the lower fixed costs structure of internet based businesses[24]. Appearances can be deceiving. While the app stores, Amazon or even YouTube appear to be huge corporations at first, they are actually more like platforms. Leadbeater uses a powerful analogy to explain. If the economic landscape were to be a beach, it were to contain only a few big boulders – big corporates - during the late '80s. Ever since the rising tide of technological change has washed ashore a host of small pebbles; SME's or even aforementioned amateurs. Consequently some of the boulders have been swept off the beach. At the same time however, some new boulders have appeared. Upon closer inspection these boulders are actually baskets containing a great many pebbles (2009). Companies like YouTube and Instagram are perfect examples, as are the app stores. Third party developers or content creators offer their business through these platforms, tremendously increasing their potential audiences through their use of these previously nonexistent networks. Accordingly, these third parties rely upon the network effect (Liebowitz & Margolis, 1998) that provides these platforms wit their humongous size, to reach previously unheard of audiences: YouTube alone has a billion users[25].

Let us examine some practical examples. Back in Chiara Ferragni was a 22-year-old student in Italy who liked to post pictures of herself in fashionable outfits on Flickr. She did this because she liked sharing her life – thus indirectly her passion for fashion - with people and seeing their reactions to it. These posts however, were so well received that by 2014 she had turned her hobby into a world renowned blog – The Blonde Salad - with several subsidiary businesses such as a shoe line, generating a €6 million revenue (Keinan et al, 2015). Through the unparalleled access provided

[23] https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html
[24] http://fortune.com/2015/10/05/retail-bankruptcy/
[25] https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en/statistics.html

by the Internet and, initially, the intermediary platform of Flickr, she has managed to set up a highly successful business. Likewise a Swedish YouTube blogger called Felix Kjellberg started vlogging (a video blog) about computer games. YouTube enabled him to reach so many people that as mid-2016 his audience is at 44,2 million people[26], earning as much as $12 million in 2015[27].

In other words, digitization provides unprecedented access to audiences worldwide, often through big brand 'boulders': platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook or even Amazon[28]. What does this mean to our exploration? Taking music as an example it means that someone can now produce a song or album using nothing but a laptop and pirated software, having learned the necessary skills through information available on the Internet. He or she then proceeds to distribute the content freely through platforms such as Soundcloud or YouTube or sell the right to play it through iTunes or Spotify. This is a pale contrast with the pre-digital era where you would have to pass through the gatekeeping process of the major labels in order to get them to fund the very expensive process of not only recording an album – as explained earlier – but also getting stocks of vinyl or CD's pressed and physically distributed to record stores. Constraints are now minimal as distribution on these platforms is often free and uploading content takes very little time. This can even be done from mobile devices[29], further increasing accessibility. Most platforms accept any content provided it does not violate copyright and meets their community guidelines[30]. Digitization has thus made not only production but also distribution much more democratic. Leadbeater predicted that by 2017 teenagers would be running their own Internet television channels (2009). By 2016 already it looks like he was right, we only need to open YouTube to see a myriad of examples. The increased accessibility of distribution networks allows you to share creative expressions much more easily then in the past, consequently making their potential valorization much easier. This matters because it provides further evidence for democratization of creativity in the information age. The only stone in the process –

[26] https://www.youtube.com/user/PewDiePie
[27] http://www.forbes.com/sites/maddieberg/2015/10/14/the-worlds-highest-paid-youtube-stars-2015/#369113d2542c
[28] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jun/23/amazon-marketplace-third-party-seller-faustian-pact
[29] https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/57407?hl=en
[30] https://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/nl/communityguidelines.html

starting out with internal creativity, moving onto the production and distribution of those expressions and ending up with the consumption or valorization thereof – left unturned is the scarcity of time. Is the information search prior to consumption still limited by the scarcity of time and is creativity thus still limited by gatekeeping by experts? We now need to explore the recognition and thus valorization of creativity.

§3.3 Consumption

Did you notice that while this unparalleled access to huge audiences seems like a big departure from the non-digital past, intermediaries are by no means a new phenomenon? There is an undeniable need for gatekeeping, especially since we are discussing experience goods (Caves, 2000). In the past experts in their respective fields would sift through the supply and based on perceived quality come up with recommendations. Whether this expert was a professional critic publishing lists in magazines dedicated to their cultural field or the owner of a store determining which products to stock, a frame was set on which consumers in turn relied due to their scarcity of time. As a result of digitization however, citizen criticism has been on the rise (Cameron, 2011). There are myriad of places[31] where consumers can leave their reviews of cultural products, serving as a more democratic form of the signaling function of quality. Nevertheless it is evident that this function remains important. The key change here is how information regarding quality – the result of the gatekeeping – reaches consumers and exactly how this gatekeeping process changed.

In the past, if you were interested a certain domain you would have to take time to familiarize yourself with the most important gatekeeping mediums in place, and more specifically, those appropriate to your preferences. As such you would have to find a critic or store close to these preferences and consequently physically obtain the magazine or newspaper where the critic published his reviews or travel to said store. This was a time and often also money consuming process, placing constraints on consumptions. Furthermore, you would be dependent on the norms of the institutions responsible for gatekeeping to provide you with goods close to your

[31] http://www.amazon.com/Storm-Creativity-Simplicity-Technology-Business/dp/0262029944

preferences. Digitization has changed this. You can now turn on a computer and use Google to quickly and cheaply direct you to whatever you might be interested in. Technological change has thus not only increased production and distribution possibilities to cultural goods but consequently also increased consumer access, effectively lowering the price of consumption (Potts, 2014).

What is more, you can use consumer reviews – whether in the form of third party websites[32], user ratings, comments, likes or even the amount of plays – as a signaling function for quality and preferences before consuming the cultural good in question. But wait… we almost made a mistake! To use the amount of likes or plays as quality signaling mechanism would be a faux pas as these are indicative of quantity and thus not so much a fair assessment of inherent quality of the good on offer but rather a judgment based on the likelihood of quality based on the decisions of consumptions of said good prior to your choice, in this case thus evidenced by amount of plays or likes. Because these information cascades are based on the behavior of others rather than verbal communication (Bikchandani et al, 1992) the implication is that the signaling function in terms of quality is an assumption at best. A good example is the music video Gangnam style, a K-Pop song that – in todays Internet terminology[33] – went viral, yet suffers from a debatable quality[34]. Accordingly we are now faced with a cultural landscape where sheer numbers can propel a cultural good into fad or fashion. This would lead us to believe that superstars could monopolize all attention, leading to a homogenization of culture; the superstars would crowd out all competition within their respective domains.

The opposite is true. As we have learned, economic constraints on production and distribution have been alleviated by digitization. This in turn has massively increased the spectrum of supply across the board. Imagine your big passion is the Polynesian nose flute. You can now produce a video of yourself playing it using your laptops webcam and consequently share it through YouTube[35]. Now imagine someone else – living in a small town somewhere – shares this passion. This person can go online and consume your content; *participate* in making that particular value real. This is a huge departure from the non-digital past where it would have been

[32] http://www.rottentomatoes.com/
[33] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangnam_Style_(music_video)#Viral_spread
[34] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0
[35] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EQOuHDi2Xs

impossible to consume such niche cultural goods in any small town as the rent juxtaposed with the demand would make it not only unprofitable but rather a very costly affair for shops or other cultural institutions – including but not limited to TV and radio - to have it on offer. There was simply too little demand to make it feasible, forcing people to turn to more mainstream conceptions of culture.

We have to keep in mind here is that information cascades precede the Internet. Gangnam style was just another fad, albeit on a global scale. This scale difference is fundamental. Digitization dramatically reduced the need to find local audiences and thus – combined with the lowered barriers to entry in terms of production and distribution previously discussed – increased the likelihood of finding an audience for any niche as well as drastically lowering the rent required to offer products. As a consequence the cultural landscape takes the shape of a long tail, catering to both information cascade driven superstars as well as obscure products (Anderson, 2004). A much wider range of preferences is covered, increasing consumer options manifold. YouTube again serves as a perfect example, as Potts found that the content on offer there takes the shape of a genre rich long tail (2014). This matters because there are now many more ways available for us to make our values real, whether this be through Gangnam style or the Polynesian nose flute. The scale and scope of cultural consumption and thus the cultural experience has been raised. As such Baumol argued that a dissemination revolution took place, that " […] made all forms of art accessible to a degree beyond anything previously experienced." (2006, pp. 344). To phrase these increased valorization options economically, the increased variety of supply has led to an evolution in consumers preferences.

So, what technology exactly enables this cultural change? Recommender algorithms[36]. These pieces of software – for example, the buying or viewing suggestions on Amazon or Netflix – offer you options for your next consumption based on your past behavior. Accordingly a much better match between supply and demand, one not previously possible due to the physical constraints placed on both information search and actual consumption, enables niches to now exist globally. No longer do you need to physically interact to share a value set and interact from a common desire to realize these.

[36] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recommender_system

Consider the following example. I like to ride road bikes and consequently consider myself a cyclist. This practice is a particularly physical activity so you would think I would need to ride with other people – that is; to share the acitivty with others - so as to make it a cultural activity. This is not true. If I had ride or race during which my muscle memory took over - where I managed a certain descent effortlessly - almost as if from an animal instinct (recall the example cited earlier as experienced by Tom Dumoulin during the Giro d'Italia), I can make that particular 'creative' experience real by sharing it with others through conversation (Klamer, 2004). Both in the non-digital past and now I would need to find people with similar interests in order to have this conversation. Now however, it has become exponentially easier to find these people. Strava is a company with a homonymous application that allows me to record my rides and consequently share them with fellow cyclists on a social network[37]. This goes one step further than just having a bigger community to talk to; the captured data as well as the ability to share pictures allow me to more precisely convey the experience I had on the bike. Furthermore another company is now offering the experience of riding together digitally through a combination of virtual reality software, your bicycle and an indoor trainer, creating a digital space for enthousiasts to not only meet but to share their practice[38]. Once again YouTube is a great example. The platform hosts a great many conversations in the comments below the videos, as does Soundcloud (music) and so does Instagram (photos). These platforms all cater to different ways to valorize – that is different forms of creative expression and as such to different preferences - yet are comparable in their ability to host conversations surrounding their respective fashions, niches and fads.

Consider these examples are largely based around a physical activity, whether that is playing a musical instrument, riding a bike or taking picture. Now imagine digital activities such as online video games. These communities suffer even less physical constraints, allowing for communities to exist almost strictly in a digital space, negating the effects of distance. Even though they lack physical contact these communities and their shared efforts to achieve their values are very real, as evidenced by the existence of their own 'language'[39]. After all, as Palmer put it, "Linguisticality provides the common ground […]. Language is the medium in which

[37] https://www.strava.com/athletes/8303311
[38] http://zwift.com/
[39] http://thecircular.org/the-language-of-gamers/

the tradition conceals itself and it transmitted." (1972, pp. 207). Accordingly, gaming – and in all likelihood other forms of e-culture – are new domains, as per the existence of their own language.

In a very similar fashion domains predating digitization have somewhat transcended physical space through the emergence of global communities, existing in a digital space. Apart from a shared language used to have the conversations that make the culture real these communities often also include many symbols and rules[40]. As such, just as Clifford Geertz laid bare culture through observing physical behavior (1987), so can we now interpret culture through the examination of a digital space where shared language is used to have conversations.

Accordingly, communities – whether based around physical or digital activities - can now exist globally, sharing a digital space in which they valorize. The conversation needed for this realization of values happen digitally, allowing people who in the past could not find their preferred way of valorizing in their physical environment to go online and valorize after all, as evidenced by the long tail. While some have found that in the thin part of the long tail it is very hard to profit (Elberse & Oberholzer-Gee, 2008), this is beside the point. Some rewards are not monetary, but rather come in the form of the achievement of values. Thus we have now answered a 'why' question; why do there now exist a great many small niche cultural communities? Because depending on preferences people have an equally great many ways in which they aspire to realize their values, to valorize their lives. This is now possible due to the lowering or even downright removal of constraints to the production, distribution and consumption of culture.

Recapping, our explorations in this chapter thus taught us that from an economic point of view both expressing and recognizing creativity have gotten a lot more accessible. Additionally, in the previous chapters we learned that creativity itself is a purely human process, a trait accessible to all, both in terms of recognition and expression. As such the fundamentally human nature of creativity is now no longer limited by the economic superstructure; access to the means of production and distribution is no longer limited. Gate-keeping no longer limits the options available for consumption in the same restrictive and conservative way it did in the past.

[40] http://www.velominati.com/the-rules/

Technology has been instrumental in allowing creativity to impact the cultural matrix on a massive scale. This is of fundamental importance because it points us towards the democratization of culture. This realization can lead us to only one question. Has everything changed?

IV. Has everything changed?

The answer to this question is not very straightforward. At face value we could argue that nothing changed because people still have conversations in the pursuit of valorization, just as they did prior to digitization. In fact, Pratt would argue the new technologies are embedded in social structures, like much like the old ones (2013). At the same time the scale at which this valorization takes place as well as the available preferences seem to have changed. What is the state of creative expression in the information age? In order to examine this we shall walk through our explorations so far in a bottom up fashion, starting with the internal creative process, consequently making that real philosophically and economically, the order in which it has been discussed in our explorations so far.

Creativity is a human feature. There are no distinctive creative personalities much in the same way that Csikszentmihalyi found that there is no singular personality type that can be fingered as being the source of creativity (1996). Crucially Schweizer found that people whom are considered to be creative are novelty seekers (2004). This quintessential quality is likely a quantitative finding of the *unlearning* we explored about in the first chapter. Shedding your preconceptions is naturally a search for novelty as it creates the need to know. As such the notion of unlearning is the pivotal admission requirement for engaging in the creative process. If you can do this, you can be creative. That is not to say that everyone is creative, but rather that everyone has the potential to pursue creative expression. Crucially, expertise can help you out when you are interacting with your medium but at the same time it can act as a clutch. Departing from your expertise implies setting a frame based on this expertise, preventing you from reaching something novel. The only block between anyone and creativity are their preconceptions. We found support for this argument in the hermeneutic theories of Heidegger and Gadamer, who argued that – presenting a striking similarity to the internal creative process – understanding hinges upon the ability to *not* depart from what you already know. The similarity is not coincidental. If true internal creativity is the want to know that which you do not yet know, then creative expression is simply understanding taken one step further. It is understanding expressed. Not only do we find the first step in our approach to creativity validated, we also concluded that the recognition of creativity is a creative process itself. As

such, the unlearning step is of crucial importance to both creative expression and the interpretation thereof.

This interpretation is the fundamental next step. It deals with the question of whether your 'new' discovery or invention is also new and relevant to the world at large. It thus determines whether your creative expression is admitted into the cultural matrix. Due to time constraints access to domains is guarded through a gatekeeping mechanism. According to Csikszentmihalyi these are experts in their respective fields, allowing them both the expertise and the institutional power to acknowledge or deny novelty and accordingly decide whether or not to grant access. While this argument erstwhile held due to the sheer necessity that arose from the scarcity of time the notion of expertise – as we learned from chapters one and two – is a very dangerous one. It invites cultural conservatism through a reliance on connoisseurship, which through the frame it sets can preemptively exclude novelty. For examples we need only think of the initial reactions to the works of Copernicus and Darwin. Gatekeeping might be a necessity, but departing from expertise is a potential threat to the domain in question because excluding certain visions of novelty puts the entire domain at risk of becoming an object of art[41]. In other words, if you stick to the preconceptions inherent to expertise you risk only admitting those works adhering to tradition. If it the same time society no longer supports that tradition – that specific way of valorizing – the entire domain ceases to have meaning because it is no longer *alive* in society. It becomes an art form that only has meaning in a historical context and is no longer engaged by people today.

This leads us to conclude that a better way of understanding the making real of creativity – judging whether or not it is worthy of admission into a domain – is the extent to which it is engaged by society. That is, the extent to which it is valorized. This presented us with quite a conundrum. Scarcity of time requires gatekeeping, which is in turn was done by experts. The proper way for experts to do so is not through their expertise but rather by evaluating the extent to which the expression in question engages (parts of) society; the extent to which people *participate*. At the same time this is impossible. In order for them to do so the work in question would have to have been admitted to the domain in the first place, otherwise it would have been impossible for it to be valorized for it would never have reached an audience.

[41] Recall our discussion of Heidegger in chapter two

Make no mistake, the philosophical premise might have been wrong but in reality Csikszentmihalyi was very much right in arguing the way he did. Back when he wrote his book.

Ever since, as we learned in chapter three, things have changed. The barriers to entry to the production, distribution and consumption of creative expression – in other words the barriers to the valorization of culture – have been dramatically reduced. Furthermore, gatekeeping has changed. People now use search engines and even recommender algorithms in their information search process. Provided you have internet access information search is often completely free in terms of money and is getting cheaper and cheaper in terms of time as technology improves and algorithms get better and better at pointing you in the right direction. Experts whose sole task it is to spend hours dissecting possible new entrants into a domain have been replaced by the engineered precision of computers. The scarcity of time argument no longer holds.

Now, we might argue that much like humans, computers are also limited by the frame in which they think; their operating system. We would have had a good point. Not anymore. Deep learning is the next step in artificial intelligence; it is a technology that allows the machines to reprogram themselves, thus avoiding preconceptions they might have had as a result of their initial human programming[42]. Recommender algorithms can now unlearn. These developments enable us to circumvent the need for human experts in gatekeeping positions. Preference matching is no longer dependent on judgment by others but can be calculated. In other words, the values espoused by a creative expression can now be matched to people looking to realize their values in that specific way. This is not a Utopian dream but a reality evidenced by both the existence of the long tail and the demise of the professional critic.

These cultural and technological developments are closely related. The information age has spawned a new economic institutional landscape[43] where – sticking to information goods for the sake of the argument – the traditional big firms co-exist along SME's and produsers[44]. In this complex multi-stakeholder environment all participants curate, organize, and produce on an ad hoc basis (Bruns & Highfield, 2012). Accordingly, some big corporate firms no longer engage in vertical

[42] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_learning
[43] Recall our discussion of the work of Baldwin & Von Hippel (2011)
[44] Recall Bruns (2013)

integration, as they would have done in the mechanical age. Rather they provide platforms on which the SME's and produsers and other corporates can share their content. Regardless of the motives for sharing – profit or passion; professional or amateur – the end result is the same. Sharing no longer is intermediated by experts and as such it is far easier for people to participate in valorizing these creative expressions. In fact, following the lead of corporate giants such as YouTube and more recently Netflix SME's have now started launched platforms for this very purpose. Sticking to cinematography, MUBI is a start-up providing people with a streaming platform for art house movies[45]. The point is clear, platforms provide the digital spaces for people to have the conversations that valorize creative expressions into actual culture. The very existence of these conversations makes the debate on which of them are culture and which of them are not – as Cowen would put it (2008) - obsolete. Additionally, from these developments we can conclude that technology and culture co-evolve as they are facilitate one another (Potts, 2014). Furthermore, it is highly likely that these developments will continue well into the future as the path dependency created by costs of change will guide both culture and technology further down the digitization path. It is not until the next wave of creative destruction displaces the current technological path that we can expect to see another paradigm shift in technology (Handke et al, 2014) and more importantly, in culture.

Digitization has thus made valorization much more accessible, in terms of both those expressing themselves and in terms of those looking for expressions matching their preferences; the subsequent creative recognition. In fact, digitization has even touched those works long since expressed. Vastari is a digital platform connecting art and antique collectors to museums and galleries worldwide, enabling the exhibition of these works[46]. In another example, Google has recently launched a service that allows people to visit the Guggenheim museum from their couch, using virtual reality[47]. Add to this the increased availability of this technology to consumers – you can now buy the required tech in supermarkets[48] – and we are indeed presented with a brave new world. In other words, in these particular cases digital technology aids the valorization

[45] https://mubi.com/
[46] http://www.vastari.com/
[47] https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/checklist/extending-the-museum-experience-with-virtual-reality
[48] http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2016/06/02/albert-heijn-brengt-virtual-reality-naar-de-massa-2545485

of non-reproducible experience goods; those high art goods some might have considered impervious to digitization. In a final example, digitization has enabled the rise of dating apps[49] – digital spaces where people looking for love – can meet and converse, before deciding to meet in person.

We are thus presented with a cultural economy – here defined as the sum of creative expressions that are valorized – that is characterized by a "[…] complex amalgam of online and offline, of the digital and the analogue, which are materialized in various ways in particular spaces, which in turn constitutes them as 'spaces'." (Pratt, 2013, pp. 43). These spaces are often either provided or facilitated by platforms, emphasizing the way in which the economy has changed. This movement is characterized by a complex interdependence between old and new media. Think of TV formats failing to attract enough viewers to justify their airtime yet going viral on the Internet [50] or an Internet format centered around video gaming now being broadcast on public television[51]. Consider an established TV personality taking to the blogosphere[52]. Contemplate on the way Airbnb and Uber displaced the vacation home rental and taxi businesses through their participation based sharing-platforms[53], re-emphasizing the importance of participation in the new economy.

This all points to the incredible importance of the platforms that facilitate the spaces in which we valorize all these expressions. Apple (through ITunes, the app-store and their dominance in the market of the devices we use to access the Internet), Google (through both the homonymous search engine and their ownership of YouTube), Facebook (through their likely role in the formation of information cascades) are the new corporate giants of our age because they provide the platforms that play a central role in matching supply and demand. They cater to the majority of information searches in the distribution over the long tail whereas more specialized platforms such as Strava facilitate the valorization of more niche preferences. More specifically, their algorithms are the new intermediaries.

The question we now have to ask ourselves is this: How objective – free of preconceptions – are these pieces of software? While deep learning certainly present a

[49] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_dating
[50] http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/04/29/wel-likes-geen-kijkers
[51] http://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2091380-gamecompetitie-voor-het-eerst-ook-op-de-tv.html
[52] http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2016/05/03/heeft-lubach-de-vpro-straks-nog-wel-nodig-1614740
[53] NRC Weekend-bijlage, januari 2nd and 3th 2016

leap forward we still have to question the neutrality of these institutions. Google for one, has tremendous market power. The first thing that springs to mind is a tech term called SEO. Search Engine Optimization[54]. In a nut shell this is marketing strategy that accounts for the way search engines operate when picking keywords for your content, thus attempting to make your website the first hit that pops up in certain information searches. You can also opt for SEA, the paid version of the same process where you can pay for a higher ranked result[55]. Additionally, you can pay both YouTube[56] and Facebook[57] to have your content pop up as a recommendation to very specifically targeted audiences. In fact, a dating app has been known to direct users to people of their own race, because the developers feel people gravitate towards similar others[58].

Accordingly, digitization has heralded the long tail; the opportunity to make real those values you care about through creative expression or recognition in whatever niches your evolving preferences might dictate. It has however, also birthed the potential of a manipulated information search that results in matches between supply and demand burdened by (commercial) preconceptions. On the flipside these business models do allow the companies running these platforms to provide a freely accessible space where valorization can take place. This might very well be the digital version of the dialectic societal struggle between profits and society – the double movement - as predicted by Polanyi in his seminal book The Great Transformation (2002). Corporate profits through manipulated information search allow for a free space – a commons – where social relations and reciprocity govern behavior. At the same time exactly these manipulated searches potentially threaten the accessibility of these commons.

Regardless, as a result of digitization – our journey into the information age – the economy has changed. The institutional landscape now seems to revolve largely around platforms that create the spaces in which the social sphere that is required for the valorization of culture takes place. These platforms are the stage and the people and organizations providing and consuming the content – whether driven by profit or

[54] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization
[55] https://www.google.nl/adwords/
[56] https://support.google.com/displayspecs/?topic=4588474&_ga=1.182573862.1417921827.1454494584#topic=4588474
[57] https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads
[58] http://www.fastcoexist.com/3057514/your-data-footprint-is-affecting-your-life-in-ways-you-cant-even-imagine

by passion – are the players. As such the world is not one stage but a vast collection of stages. This works because the Internet provides the connection required to get people exited about creative works (Cowen, 2008). Simultaneously, the economic concepts examined here have remained unchanged. Demand and supply still interact using – amongst others – the network effect, information cascades and do so through intermediaries. The scarcity of time is still a fact of life – although the (temporal) costs of information search have been reduced - and fixed and marginal costs along with rent still determine the costs of offering a good. "Technology changes, economic laws do not." (Shapiro & Hall, 1999, pp. 2). Furthermore the abstract principles through which creativity is made real have not changed either. Expression still requires valorization through conversations, through the social sphere (Klamer, 2015). What changed is the scale on which these now take place. In the information age – characterized by hyper connectivity and decentralized ideas delivery (Cowen, 2008) – a great many conversations on an equally great number of topics can be had. Valorization is no longer limited by what human experts – regardless of whether they can successfully unlearn - in their field decide to admit to specific domains. A large part of the gatekeeping has been removed. This has led to the democratization of valorization on a massive scale. A huge range of preferences and tastes can now be covered. Furthermore, a lot of these expressions do not take place because people are chasing monetary gain – this would be impossible as a lot of the content is free (Cowen, 2008) – but rather because people aspire to realize their values through creative expression. Technology has enabled this. Effectively we now live in the age of *mass valorization*. This cultural paradigm shift has been enabled by and co-evolved with technological change. As such a new moral order is born where expression and recognition play central roles in the economic process[59], where creativity is thus the medium and where valorization - as enabled by participation - is the reward. Everything has changed.

These developments do raise questions of quality and novelty. After all, we learned that these new intermediaries can be commercially influenced through for example SEO. Furthermore, all the valorized expressions happening now are no longer passed through the filters of experts. While we found that experts through their very expertise

[59] Economic process here taken to mean 'behaviour in the market place'

are at risk of not recognizing novelty as such, this does not automatically mean that non-experts recognize novelty. In fact, there is no guarantee that everyone engaged today in creative expression is free from preconceptions. We found that this is ostensibly possible. Not that it is a given. The implications are that there is a very real chance that the majority of expressions being valorized today are neither novel nor very qualitative. As such – especially in the case of novelty – would they still be creative? We could argue the Internet gave rise to a very superficial culture, one that is neither creative nor qualitative. A valid counterargument however, holds that the lowered access costs can bring forth more amateur geniuses (Potts, 2014).

In any case, does this matter? The answer is a resounding no. There is the humanist argument: If people experience creative joy through the flow state attained as a result of engaging in their creative process, then that is simply great. If the consequent outcome – the creative product – is new to the rest of the world, it will simply not be valorized. No one loses. If it is new to a segment of the people interested in the domain in question, but not to the domain as such, is this really a bad thing? In this case the creative product will only be valorized by that specific minority, who will still derive pleasure from it. People aware of the lack of novelty will simply not engage in it. The same goes for quality. In some segments of the long tail there might be a diminishing quality or novelty rate due to the increased accessibility of domains. After all, accessibility to the field is far less relevant as these experts – as we found – are no longer in firm control of their domains. Accordingly the quality and novelty discussion is moot. Values are being valorized through conversations. These cultures exist. It is not up to us to make value judgments concerning culture. It is up to us – as cultural economists – to study these judgments. As such, let us now move forward. I would like to suggest a scientific frame for the purpose of undertaking these future studies. Why? Because a new moral order requires a new method of understanding; a method capable of grasping the zeitgeist.

V. Making sense

Making sense of culture has long been an objective within the field of cultural economy. What is art? What is culture? Hard questions but they have to be dealt with because defining a method for undertaking a study without first defining what exactly is being studied would like a broken pencil: pointless. Throsby defined culture as theater, opera, music, visual arts, dance, literature, community and folk arts (1999). Ever since Handke and Towse have argued that the creative destruction unleashed by digitization has lead to seminal changes in both the classical cultural industries as well as the newer creative industries (2013). Albeit a very valid point is not quite spot on but rather a momentary observation. We learned in chapter two[60] that art that no longer has a meaning carried by society ceases to be a work of art, it becomes an object. In other words, it still physically exists yet the interpretation of the artwork, the cultural significance ceases to be. This distinction is of crucial importance because if cultural economics were to stick to studying a form of cultural expression traditionally regarded as high art - a form that at the same time no longer engages an audience – then the discipline would be studying objects of art. As such Cultural Economics would risk becoming an object of art – or rather an object of science – itself. A relic from the past, alienated from society.

Any study of cultural economics thus needs to depart not from tradition – what is traditionally regarded as art or culture – but rather from present day. Trying to understand the present using a method of understanding based in the past will never work. The discipline needs to be aware of and safeguard against becoming trapped by a historical consciousness[61]. This notion is equally important for defining what is being studied as well as for the methods for undertaking this study. Consequently culture needs to be understood as a fluid phenomenon; as those creative expressions – regardless of their age – that are at present engaged by (sectors of) society. Society in this sense needs to be understood not as the population of a nation-state but rather as people occupying the same cultural space, whether this be digital, analogue, or a mix thereof.

[60] Recall Heidegger
[61] In the Gadamer sense (1987)

This notion of societal support is of crucial importance. Habermas argued that during the dawn of modernity mankind created three autonomous spheres, separate from society, so as to constitute a worldview to replace unified worldview previously provided by religion. Science, morality and art. These three domains subsequently became the territories of experts and were carefully guarded over (1987). The similarity between this revelation and the Csikszentmihalyi way of thinking about creativity is striking, pointing out how correct the latter was at the time he wrote his book. His way of thinking however, is erroneous because experts cannot judge a priori if a creative expression will be valorized. Habermas takes a different approach but reaches a very similar conclusion: "What accrues to culture through specialized treatment and reflection does not immediately and necessarily become the property of everyday praxis." (1987, pp. 149). As such he concludes that the creation of these three separate spheres led to separation between them and everyday hermeneutics, that is, everyday understanding. This firmly reinforces our earlier argumentation that all things valorized are culture and need to be studied as such. Such an approach will simultaneously bring the sphere of science closer to society as it would entail studying what goes on in society, rather than just what goes on in the separated 'art' sphere, consequently allowing for a better understanding of the new moral order mentioned at the end of the previous chapter. Accordingly it is not an unreasonable at all to conclude that the paradigm shift in the information age has potentially brought the spheres of science, art and morality firmly back into the life-world of society. In reaction to this initial separation of the spheres – the so-called failure of modernity - Habermas wrote that "the life-world has to become able to develop institutions out of itself which sets limits to the internal dynamics and imperatives of an almost autonomous economic system and its administrative complements (1987, pp. 154)". This has happened. The institution in question is called the Internet. It has allowed for the re-appropriation of culture from the experts, firmly back into the life-world; into society.

Consequently a valid method for studying culture has to be the valuation approach, if only because it offers the flexibility of not being pinned down on one specific interpretation but rather focusing on the process of valorization. On top of that, if economic value is not derived from the production of creativity but rather from the adoption and retention thereof (Potts, 2013) then an approach focused on studying the process of valuation through the institutions that make up the markets for cultural

goods (Dekker, 2014) is very suited to the process. After all, we have learned that although the specific institutions that used to fulfill an intermediary function changed institutions do still very much shape the cultural and thus the economic landscape[62]. However, we need to consider that while economic concepts discussed here did not change, economic evolution[63] did take place as a result of digitization. More importantly, if ICT gave birth to such profound economic changes – recall the Baldwin & Von Hippel model for different ways of innovation – it is vital to consider that more changes are not impossible. Even though the path dependency argument discussed in the previous chapter warns against such paradigmatic change, computational power is still projected to double every two-and-a-half year[64], opening the proverbial door for further technology-driven creative destruction. As such we need to adopt not just a fluid definition of culture but a fluid definition of economy as well.

The evolutionary approach to economics provides just this by addressing "[…] consumer and producer uptake of new ideas, innovation dynamics and industrial revolution […]" and emphasizing" […] private entrepreneurship, not public intervention; market processes not market failure; innovation not conservation; technological opportunities not technological threats; coordination problems not allocation problems […]" (Potts, 2013, pp. 27). In other words, the evolutionary approach acknowledges both the contemporary nature of the economy as well as the possibilities of creative destruction driven paradigm shifts and all the subsequent displacements. It is a flexible method allowing us to grasp the reality of having moved from the 20th century and its rigid forms of economic organization into the information age, where different forms of innovation – as per Baldwin and Von Hippel – enable large firms, amateurs and SME's to co-exist. This is important because – as we learned in chapter four – the current economy is a complex interdependence of all these forms of organization and innovation. As such, evolutionary economics helps us understand how technological changes have reduced barriers to entry to cultural production, distribution and consumption and consequently led to a much greater variety in both supply and consumer preferences.

[62] The economy after all, is submerged in culture (Klamer, 2015)
[63] "A change in what the economy is made of and how it is ordered" (Potts, 2013, pp. 28).
[64] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore%27s_law

In sum, the valuation approach provides us with a working definition of culture and the evolutionary perspective allows us an understanding of the economy, both considered as fluid phenomena. What we need now is a method of understanding why economic actors behave the way they do. Klamer provides exactly this with his value-based approach by arguing that economic life is about the realization of values (2015). This continuation of the valuation approach provides us with the crucial insight that self-interested individual action is doubtful modus operandi for any economic actor. Whether you are looking for valorize ideals specific to your passion – amateur or produser based behavior – or are a firm looking to sell something, you need to appeal to the social sphere. Conversations are the basis for the valorization of culture, thus for economic actions. Culture without others is not real. The combination of these academic perspectives helps us understand how society – through the reshaping of intermediary institutions into technology driven platforms[65] – was able to re-appropriate the cultural dissemination[66].

Accordingly we are left with a method for understanding where not utility but rather values are the leitmotiv in economic behavior, this behavior in turn being submerged in culture, culture taken to mean the sum of all things valorized. A method where the economic landscape is subjected to technology driven change. A method where the firm – for the moment - is no longer considered the central economic actor. And finally, a method that is thus capable of capturing the zeitgeist of the age of mass valorization; an era where participation is the key to creativity, culture and the economy. By adhering to these flexible definitions of both culture and the economy we avoid the pitfall of the hermeneutic circle. "Method is incapable of revealing new truth; it only renders explicit the kind of truth already in the method" (Palmer, 1972, pp. 165). Combining the value based approach and evolutionary economics avoids a rigid method and as such is the perfect way of understanding the current fast paced era.

[65] The platforms we discussed in chapter three. YouTube is a primary example.
[66] In the Habermas sense, as discussed earlier in this chapter

VI. Conclusion

Life is a river, everything flows. The water molecule remains unchanged. This molecule however, "[…] goes on an extensive and transformative journey. It leaves the ocean, encounters the air, and warms up and cools down, experiencing countless collisions, rising in a cyclone and then falling as rain. The line drawn between the storm's features is not just porous but also constantly in flux." (Leski, 2015, pp. 84). This hydrological process consequently causes the river to erode a new path through the landscape.

Much like the creative process itself the ways in which we strive to make our values real are consequently in flux. The way we as a species interact with our environment and the tools we use for both creative expression and economic interaction constantly change, very much dependent on what (technological) tools we have at our disposal. Simultaneously some things – the internal creative process and the need to involve others to subsequently make our creative product real and accordingly impact the cultural matrix – never change. To put it differently, the world changes while human nature remains eternal.

The information age gave rise to an unprecedented age of mass valorization through the diminishing of barriers to entry to production, distribution and consumption. As such the traditional gatekeepers to domains have largely given way to online platforms with search and recommender algorithms now acting as intermediaries in our search for information. This democratized the valorization of creativity as it bypassed the previously all-important experts. While this might give rise to debates concerning quality and novelty we have also learned culture can only be defined as everything valorized. As such this re-appropriation of culture by society – the democratization of culture - is worthy of study. The best way to approach this is through a combination of the value-based approach and evolutionary economic perspective, thus firmly accounting for the partial digitization of spaces in which conversations – valorization – takes place and subsequent long tail. These realizations are important not just to the field of Cultural Economics but to humanity as a whole, because the information age has given birth to a new moral order that has creativity at its core, enabled by the participation in turn induced by technology. A brave new world is upon us indeed. I believe this to be of great importance to us all because

expressing ourselves is basically the human way of making sense of our lives, our way of giving meaning to existence. This is effectively the implication of our exploration; the age of *mass-valorization* entails an unprecedented opportunity for humanity to deal with the human condition.

On a more personal note I would like to emphasize that the creative process does not have a distinct beginning, nor an end. While the moisture condensation that started the storm probably happened when I for the first time in my life encountered limitations in an educational system – when I was expelled from a Christian kindergarten for asking how God could build the entire earth in six days while it took a team of construction workers months to build but one house – this particular hydrological process is far from finished. This thesis is a momentary reflection of a continuous contemplation on what the creative process means to both myself as well as the world around me. As such I have noticed that in exploring creativity itself, I went too far. The chapters in question could have been shorter to address the matter at hand. I intentionally left them intact though, for two reasons. Firstly, it is my hope that by exploring the full process you can relate it to your own experiences, just as I did, and realize that creativity is indeed a human phenomenon. Secondly, it is because exploring creativity made me realize that restrictions to the creative process have tremendously bothered for as long as I can remember; they limit my personal growth. As such I believe cultural conservatism to be a block to the growth of the human race. By leaving the chapters intact it is my profound hope you have come to share this realization, thus sharing with me my bright vision for the future of humanity.

This does lead us to one important point not yet discussed. While I am (perhaps overly) optimistic about the implications of technology there is a flipside to this ordeal. The dialectic process as suggested by my method of understanding implies that there is an antithesis to the mass-valorization. Having these sheer amounts of information at our fingertips - being faced with instant connectivity – can be seen as excess. While books can be – and are being - written about the topic, offering a manifold of arguments against the advent of technology, I feel the picture[67] below suffices for our purposes.

[67] Retrieved from: http://cinismoilustrado.com/

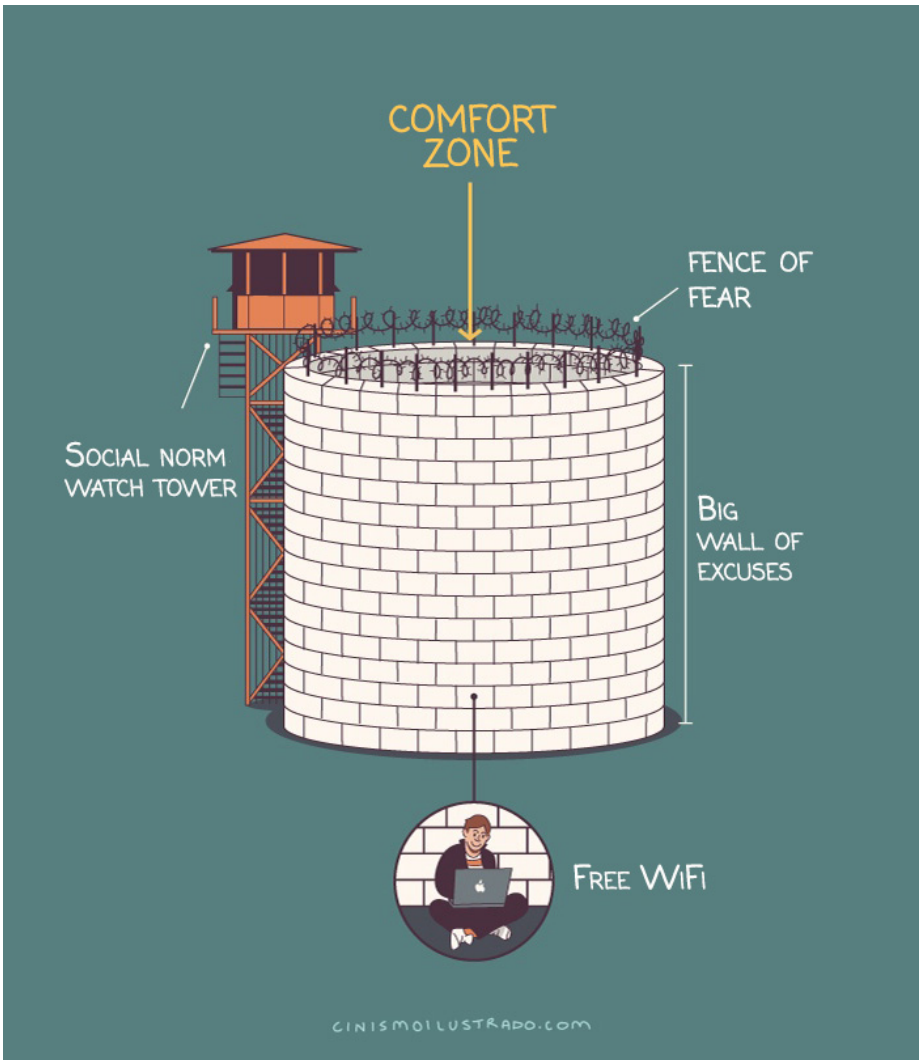

Figure 2: copyright Eduardo Salles, 2015

A picture says more then a thousand words. It is not my position to dictate where you stand on this issue, I merely hope to have informed you on the possibilities offered by technology. History will ultimately teach us which vision was correct.

From our explorations we can extrapolate numerous research suggestions. The most obvious the empirical validation or falsification of the social movements we discussed, including but not limited to the new dialectic model for understanding creative production[68]. The second is the matter of state intervention in culture as per arguments concerning either 'art for arts sake' or 'existence value'. After all, if art is no longer supported by society, does it really still have existence value? An important question to address. Furthermore, issues of ownership and income distribution are of

[68] See page 25

vital importance as evidenced by the market power of the new intermediary platforms. If sharing creative expressions constitutes the new economy, then it is vital to research who owns what is being shared. As such, if participation determines if and how creative expressions are made real then the ways in which people participate in culture – as opposed to the one-sided notion of 'consumption' – is worthy of further research. Just exactly how do people valorize in the different spaces available? Finally, the explorations set out here vitally depend on the accessibility of technology and the Internet. Given the growing inequality in the world (Gordon, 2012) investigating any gaps in the accessibility of mass valorization to either the third world or the poor in the first world needs to be routed firmly on top of any research and policy agenda.

In concluding our explorations – and in reply to likely remarks that we have failed to discuss the validity of our journey - I would like to leave you with a quote by Heidegger, on the very nature of science:

"Science is not an original happening of truth but always the cultivation of the domain of truth that has already opened. It does this through the apprehension and confirmation of that which shows it self to be possible and necessarily correct within this sphere. If, and to the extent that, a science transcends correctness and arrives at a truth, i.e., an essential disclosure of beings as such – it is philosophy." (2002, pp. 37)

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Footnotes

[1] http://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2102326-schelden-vreemdgaan-en-slaan-alles-voor-de-views-op-youtube.html

[2] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/internet-still-beginning-its-kevin-kelly

[3] http://business.time.com/2013/03/05/first-there-was-iq-then-eq-but-does-cq-creative-intelligence-matter-most/

[4] In the Habermas tradition

[5] In the Max Weber tradition

[6] Important: preconceptions can be subconscious

[7] Culture here is thus defined in the anthropological sense: Shared values, meanings, symbols, artifacts, et cetera. C1 as per Klamer (2015, pp. 7). Or as Heidegger would put it, truth revealed through contested meaning.

[8] https://www.bol.com/nl/p/quadcopter-met-camera-drone/9200000048975894/

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKP7jQknGjs

[10] https://www.ableton.com/en/live/

[11] https://www.attackmagazine.com/technique/

[12] https://splice.com/

[13] For example: presets in audio production or filters in image editing

[14] http://www.redshiftsports.com/our-kickstarter-story/

[15] Wikipedia is a perfect example

[16] Imagine the consequences for the economic landscape when 3D printing available to consumers at a cheaper price due to economies of scale dramatically reduces the costs involved in physical production

[17] Polanyi argued that economic motives were born from social life in pre-industrial society

[18] http://www.galeria.io/#!about/b9yv8

[19] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modularity_(networks)

[20] https://blog.websummit.net/why-you-shouldnt-attend-web-summit/

[21] "Anything that can be digitized" (Shaprio & Varian, 2013, pp 3). We are after all discussing the information age.

[22] http://www.amazon.com/b?node=8037720011

[23] https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html

[24] http://fortune.com/2015/10/05/retail-bankruptcy/

[25] https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en/statistics.html

[26] https://www.youtube.com/user/PewDiePie

[27] http://www.forbes.com/sites/maddieberg/2015/10/14/the-worlds-highest-paid-youtube-stars-2015/#369113d2542c

[28] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jun/23/amazon-marketplace-third-party-seller-faustian-pact

[29] https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/57407?hl=en

[30] https://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/nl/communityguidelines.html

[31] http://www.amazon.com/Storm-Creativity-Simplicity-Technology-Business/dp/0262029944

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[34] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0

[35] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EQOuHDi2Xs

[36] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recommender_system

[37] https://www.strava.com/athletes/8303311

[38] http://zwift.com/

[39] http://thecircular.org/the-language-of-gamers/

[40] http://www.velominati.com/the-rules/

[41] Recall our discussion of Heidegger in chapter two

[42] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_learning

[43] Recall our discussion of the work of Baldwin & Von Hippel (2011)

[44] Recall Bruns (2013)

[45] https://mubi.com/

[46] http://www.vastari.com/

[47] https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/checklist/extending-the-museum-experience-with-virtual-reality

[48] http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2016/06/02/albert-heijn-brengt-virtual-reality-naar-de-massa-2545485

[49] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_dating

[50] http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/04/29/wel-likes-geen-kijkers

[51] http://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2091380-gamecompetitie-voor-het-eerst-ook-op-de-tv.html

[52] http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2016/05/03/heeft-lubach-de-vpro-straks-nog-wel-nodig-1614740

[53] NRC Weekend-bijlage, januari 2nd and 3th 2016

[54] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization

[55] https://www.google.nl/adwords/

[56] https://support.google.com/displayspecs/?topic=4588474&_ga=1.182573862.1417921827.1454494584#topic=4588474

[57] https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads

[58] http://www.fastcoexist.com/3057514/your-data-footprint-is-affecting-your-life-in-ways-you-cant-even-imagine

[59] Economic process here taken to mean 'behaviour in the market place'

[60] Recall Heidegger

[61] In the Gadamer sense (1987)

[62] The economy after all, is submerged in culture (Klamer, 2015)

[63] "A change in what the economy is made of and how it is ordered" (Potts, 2013, pp. 28).

[64] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore%27s_law

[65] The platforms we discussed in chapter three. YouTube is a primary example.

[66] In the Habermas sense, as discussed earlier in this chapter

[67] Retrieved from: http://cinismoilustrado.com/

[68] See page 25

All digital sources last accessed 07/06/2016