
Collaborative Space and Circuit of Culture

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Abstract

This paper presents the need to understand circuit of culture at physical hub when designing a virtual hub for collaborative space. The idea is cultural aspect of the physical hub should be understood first, and then this circuit of culture may serve as a base to develop an interface design for virtual hub. This paper represents an early stage of my PhD research which is focusing on facilitate local talents and creative people to establish their enterprise. In a wide-geographical country such as Indonesia, the idea of connecting the creative using virtual hub will increase capacity building and local productivity. Without centralized to the capital city or major cities, local talent will have access to resources and specialists to develop their enterprise in their respective hometown.

Author Keywords

Collaborative Space; Digital Hub; Virtual Incubator; Circuit of Culture.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.3. Group and Organization Interfaces.

Introduction

Virtual hub is an extension from the physical hub to digital world. Just as postulated by McLuhan that medium is the extension of man [9], and then virtual hub serves as an extension of the agents in digital production. Physical hub or digital hub is a space for the agents to interact, do networking, and production of new media. Digital agents such as programmer, media, researcher/university, public relation agency, programmer, start-up, venture capitalist, law firm [4] are having a shared meaning for what the hub is. By the term itself, digital hub might be called as creative hub, incubator, co-working space and accelerator space depends on the purpose of used. With the purpose of this study, digital hub is not merely a place for networking or dialog but also a place to produce. The term digital hub itself expound widely compare to studio, workshop, or a lab because of its contemporary meaning. The meaning of digital hub as a modern and futurist place is arguably important to drive or attract new media producers/ actors.

Culturally, technology and the hub itself are seen as cultural artefact/product. Both represent way of life from a group of people. As mentioned above, hub shares certain meaning to the member. Hub considers as culture because we can talk, think about and imagine it. It is also 'cultural' because it connects with a distinct set of *social practices*, it is associated with certain *kinds of people*, it has been given or acquired a social profile or identity, and because it frequently appears in and is represented within our visual languages and media of communication [5]. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to study hub will give benefit for the virtual collaborative design.

One of the approaches to study culture is circuit of culture approach. It was developed by Richard Johnson to represent a circuit of the production, circulation and consumption of cultural product [8]. Previously, there is notion of meaning encoding/decoding of television program by Stuart Hall but the model itself has not provide feedback loop back to the encoder [6]. Taking from this account, Johnson developed the circuit. Later, circuit of culture is developed to study how Walkman is represented, what social identities are associated with it, how it is produced and consumed, and what mechanisms regulate its distribution and use [5]. Contemporary, on her essay about circuit of culture, Julia D'Acci proposed circuit of media study [3] and Taylor et al conducted an in-depth examination of Napster, a peer-to-peer music exchange, using this circuit [11].

To develop a collaborative space, one must think of discourse that is represented by the design of interface. For example, if the space would present an instructional approach then the design should follow the step-by-step of instructional design. In a sense, this interface represents discursive practice because it will give how much control for the users, limitations of users, a series of sign and symbol configuration, and represent certain meaning. This idea has been developed further to methodological level by Stanfill using Foucault's Discourse and Power [10]. This collaborative space for local talents would be suited to them if there is an acceptable discourse represented by the interface. While the discourse itself comes from the cultural aspect.

Although this work have not provided a result from existing technology or infrastructure to enable the

development of virtual and mediated work environments, this paper presents an effort to extend the social connectedness by considering virtual workspaces at a much larger scale: of virtual technology hubs, comprised of many related businesses spanning a whole country. While there are a number of online collaboration tools that might be used to facilitate interaction between companies across a country, we need the kinds of in-depth understandings of the culture of the way physical tech hubs operate to be the basis for establishing a virtual hub.

Research Process

This research agenda will require a thorough look into the hub. I will employ in-depth observation and interview with the digital actors in the hub. Circuit of culture by du Gay et al, is going to be my entry point to understand the dynamic at the hub. There are five interrelated moments that appears in the circuit: Representation, Identity, Production, Consumption, and Regulation. Champ has given an explanation of each moment [1]: "Representation" is meant to stand for the process within which a particular language or other forms of symbolic systems are used to present potential meanings; "Identity" (or perhaps more properly, "identities") can be thought of as stories, "social profiles", and "types" that circulate throughout cultures in the processes of production, consumption, regulation, and representation; "Production" stands for all of those things having to do with the creation of many forms of goods, services, and experiences; "Consumption," according to the Open University scholars, is the moment, or cultural process, in which we "appropriate and make sense of various cultural forms in our routines in everyday settings"—it is what

Stuart Hall meant by the act of "decoding"; "Regulation" stands for the attempt to codify, or control, in some way, practices related to the other processes of the circuit of culture; it is often the goal of those with the power to do so to fix meanings in ways they deem desirable.

I will do the interview with the people that involve in the development of physical hub. For instance, I will interview the hub manager, hub workers, start-ups, venture capital, media and PR agency because they provide content and boost reputation, consultant, law firm and related of resources that improve the new enterprise, and local talents that visited and involved at the hub. These people are considered as the agents that nurture and develop the growth of hub. Therefore they will provide insights and information to answer key questions such as:

1. How the interplay of agents in term of production and usage of the digital hub?
2. How these agent create and share the cultural identity of the hub
3. How they regulate this hub?

A field study for this work will be conducted in the UK context. Based on reports, there are three major hub or cluster in the UK that is Cambridge Cluster, London Roundabout, and Manchester [12] [2]. Currently, the government runs the Northern Powerhouse program to boost creative industry growth in the northern area of UK. In order to understand the circuit of culture from the UK context, then I will also do field study to the current hub in Sheffield, Leeds, and Liverpool.

I choose the place not only by consider geographical and economic factors, but there is cultural factor. Previously, local talents should go the first three cities to develop their ideas and accelerate their start-ups. Culturally, these talents are deterritorialized from their origin culture. This deterritorialized means that there is a weakening ties between culture and place, to the dislodging of cultural subjects and objects from particular or fixed locations in space and time [7]. By adding the latest three cities, then the flow of culture is reterritorialized. In supporting my mission to establish a virtual hub that will connect local talents and creative-digital agent from different places, then this field study will cover comprehensive data from the territories.

This field study is my first part of the research. In order to connect the local talents by creating a virtual hub, then I will explore interface design for the next step.

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