**Potentials and Boundaries for Cultural Access Inclusiveness in the Digital Age**

The cultural access inequalities between and within countries has been largely studied by the literature and these disparities are significant for both developing and developed countries. Empirical investigations have consistently supported an “elitism hypothesis”, since education and income have presented a positive relation with cultural activities (Courty & Zhang, 2018). However, there is not enough evidence on whether online cultural consumption may shift this scenario or, instead, mimic and reinforce the existing asymmetries.

During the 2000s, digital technology and the Internet impacted all copyright-based products, enabling the emergence of a new trend in business model for delivering cultural goods: one based on online platforms that shift cultural access from ownership to access (Datta et al., 2017; Waldfogel, 2017). For instance, the music streaming platforms have increasingly gained strength across consumers. Although data of streaming usage is scattered, IFPI 2017 surveys suggest that near half of the music listeners use regularly audio streaming services and two thirds consume music through video streaming platforms. From a broader perspective, this effect is not restricted to cultural industries, but it is part of the “sharing economy” context, in which platforms have likewise emerged for intermediating the rental of many physical goods, such as apartments, cars and bicycles (Belk, 2014; Duch-Brown et al., 2017).

Most of the literature discussing the digitalization impacts on cultural industries has focused on the supply side effects, including the consequences of costs reduction for bringing new products to the market (Waldfogel, 2017); the investigation of whether streaming substitutes or complements other modes of cultural consumption channels, so as to verify the effects on the industries global revenues (e.g. Aguiar and Waldfogel, 2018); and the roles and strategies of digital platforms (Belleflamme, 2016).

On the other hand, the demand side effects remain underexplored, especially considering the potentials and boundaries for the inclusiveness of cultural access. By combining the evolutionary and the institutionalist approaches, this paper proposes a framework to analyze to what extent the new technological paradigm may offer equal cultural access opportunities for people from different localities and social classes.

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