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Flash Mob Impact on Dissemination and Evaluation of Cultural Heritage

ABSTRACT: Flash mob is a newly coined practice which is flourishing in urban spaces in the beginning of the 21st century. Its specific form known as art mob is affirmed as a good means for promotion and dissemination of music and dance as well as for demonstration of ideas and advertisements. In this way art mobs receive new content compared with the initial flash mob forms. Due to the new borderless communications and global mobile networks, flash mobbing became a good opportunity for achieving different goals and conveying special messages, but it is also made for commercial use. Thus, different roles and functions of cultural heritage are shown and cultural symbols are presented through flash mob actions. Also, national memory signs are activated through this practice. The research continues my previous studies on the topic. In this survey further questions arise. In what way is cultural heritage shown in flash mob actions? How does it happen in three different Slavic-speaking countries? Which are the chosen music and dance symbols in flash mobs and what do their messages look like? The main focus of my research is flash mob impact on dissemination and evaluation of cultural heritage through various actions.

KEYWORDS: flash mob, art mob, music, dance, heritage, dissemination, evaluation

Flash mob and art mob: peculiarities

Flash mob is among the newly coined practices which have flourished in urban spaces since the beginning of the 21st century. This is one of the new phenomena of pop culture. Its wide dissemination is due to many reasons, but one of them is the opportunity of connections on the Internet and instant media communication. The first flash mob happened in New York on 17th June 2003. The event was organized by Bill Wasik – a cultural critic who has also done other flash mobs. The novelties, styles and practices have changed and disappeared quickly in our contemporaneity, but my media searches show that flash mob is still popular in many places around the world and is used for different aims. Examples on YouTube only from 2022 confirm that flash mob is alive and globally performed. In a few minutes I found more than 300 samples titled flash mob on this media platform which have been recorded in the same year and performed in many countries all over the world. They are made by people with very different backgrounds and ages, ideas and purposes. Thus, flash mobbing allows them to

express themselves in many ways. The vast interest also shows that the practice has potential and is suited for the contemporary sharing of expressions, social and political positions, commercial usage, etc.

The information on flash mob in encyclopaedias and dictionaries is still very scarce. The Cambridge Encyclopedia mentions that flash mob is performed by “a group of people who arrange, by email or mobile phone, to come together in a place at the same time, do something funny or silly, and then leave” (Cambridge Encyclopedia, n.d.). The concept in the Oxford Dictionaries is explained as “a large public gathering at which people perform an unusual or seemingly random act and then disperse, typically organized by means of the Internet or social media” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Another definition of a flash mob is: “a pre-planned mass action in which a large group of people suddenly appears in a public place; within a few minutes, people with a serious look perform pre-arranged actions of absurd content and then at the same time quickly disperse in different directions” (Dictionary.ru, n.d.). The Internet Dobry słownik adds to these meanings: “flash mob is a type of public entertainment event in which a group of people who stay, pass or gather in a certain place unexpectedly find themselves participants in a short performance (for example, a dance) or action that is recorded and later published on the Internet” (Czesak et al., n.d.).

The phenomenon has been described in several articles and books that show aspects of the flash mob. Often the analyses are from sociological and psychological point of view. The study of Thomas Töppel about the flash mob movements experienced in the city of London is important in this new research area (Töppel, 2014). It is based on interviews with participants and audiences of the flash mobs organized by him as well as on the opinion of the general public about flash mob events. This study confirms the transformations in flash mob movements and their commercialization. Rebecca Walker points to flash mob as a “new category of performance art” that fits in with many artistic, social and even political actions (Walker, 2013).

I have already written on the meaning of flash mob and its peculiarities in my previous studies (Vlaeva, 2020), but here I will summarize some of them. Most important is that flash mob is an unexpected act which is a surprise for the random audience. Flashmobbers (flash mob participants) do funny things that break the routines in public, sometimes crowded places. Flash mobs have been organized in public spaces by new media and technical means, but not always as art mob cases. They are recorded and disseminated through the media which guarantees huge popularity. Social media play an important role in organizing as well as informing about flash mob actions. They have the capacity to involve and guide the actions of many participants very fast through communication on the Internet. The full act is for a short time like a flash, often with an effect of a shock for the people present around it, who witness or participate in unusual acts. It starts suddenly and finishes in the same way. The surprise of the event is also important. The flash effect, shock and strong emotional impact are sought after by the performers. Thus, the flash mob seeks and achieves maximum effect in minimum time with the help of surprise. The media effect is also accomplished after the recording of the events and their sharing on media platforms.

A specific type of flash mob is art mob which works with the means of art. This phenomenon is not analysed in depth, but is registered as a practice. It is affirmed as a good vehicle for promotion and dissemination of music and dance as well as for demonstration of ideas and advertisements. In this way art mobs receive new content compared to the initial flash mob forms. For example, art mob must be organized in advance like other art performances. The numbers of art mobbers may also be smaller due to the specific skills and training required. Rehearsals are important before the flash mob in public spaces because the result must be an impressive art product (possibly with aesthetic value). Thus, its influence will be stronger. Also, its demonstrations proclaim or promote exact messages in many cases. In my study the concept of flash mob will be used for art mobs as its variant which is a practice in cyberspace.

The aim of the study

I will mention here impressive illustrations of flash mobs as fandom acts declaring adoration of somebody – typical reason for organizing many flash events. Very often these actions are examples how fans admire famous people (for example pop and rock stars or their songs as well as composers and their works). Such an example is the impressive flash mob in Krakow dedicated to the legendary Freddy Mercury (FilmBox Polska, 2021). It is one of the most convincing performances of Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody” by another vocalist (Michał Szpak) and a very attractive way of homage to the rock star, performed in the city centre of Krakow. Other already conventional worldwide models popularise institutions – some of them are related to the arts. There are many examples. I will mention only a few. They show some ways of flash mobbing that represent different institutions. Among others are: flashmob of the Polish Radio Orchestra in Warsaw performing Chopin music (Polskie Radio, 2019); opera flashmob by Sofia National Opera dedicated to Richard Wagner’s 200th Anniversary and performance of “Der Ring des Nibelungen” in Sofia (Sofia National Opera and Ballet, 2013); RAF/Royal Air Force Flash mob in London for the Queen’s 90th Birthday (RankRise, 2016); New Year flash mob made by the Orchestra of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia staged at Moscow’s Vnukovo airport (Roads L, 2018). Sometimes art mob could be a commodity that has to surprise: for a birthday, to make a marriage proposal, or to show something like a theatrical act, such as, for example, the newlyweds’ misunderstanding and quarrels in the gorgeous art mob in the city of Kazan. It is titled “Wedding near the walls of the Kremlin in Kazan” in a YouTube video (Luchshii Flesh Moby, 2013). Specific local practices impress in regionally or nationally announced events alongside them. What do they look like? Do they express something special? Are there correlations to the local culture and history?

The medium of this research is the Internet, a new source of field work that has the necessary resources. My study is based on about 300 documented flash mobs. Most of them can be accepted as art mobs. These video materials are selected mainly from YouTube, but also from Dzen.ru and other media platforms. The video

recordings have been presenting this practice for the past ten years– since 2011. The research shows that there are fewer flash mob videos from the recent years, maybe because of the COVID-19 situation and restrictions on public events around the world. I have chosen examples from Bulgaria, Russia and Poland as well as from Bulgarian and Russian activities abroad. The main keywords and their combinations for searching were flash mob, folk (folklore/narodny) flash mob, Bulgaria, Russia, Poland. The concept ‘art mob’ did not work well in my search. Videos titled in this way were few and some of them did not fit the meaning described above. More than half of the materials that I have found online have been made in Russia.

In my field work on the Internet, I also found that sometimes there are misunderstandings as to what flash mob is. More often in such a case, for example in Russian or ex-Soviet context, teenagers would play a concert, make a spectacle, perform at home, organise a parade or procession, instead of flash mob. For that reason, I did not use these “flash mobs” for research because they do not present the practice, or maybe have new understandings of the phenomenon.

Different roles and functions of cultural heritage have been shown through the flash mob. I try to find cultural symbols which are presented through flash mob actions. Also, my aim is to analyse national memory signs activated through this practice. The research continues my previous studies on the topic. In this survey some new questions arise. In what ways has cultural heritage shown itself in flash mob actions? How does it happen in three Slavic-speaking countries with different cultural histories? How does music heritage give rise to ideas for flash mobbing? Thus, the main focus of my research is flash mob impact on dissemination and evaluation of cultural heritage through various actions.

Flash mob peculiarities according to the Internet samples

In general, the analysed videos of flash mobs confirmed my previous conclusions and added some new ones. I will try to summarise them in groups.

Place. Usually, flash mobs interrupt the routines in the central urban pedestrian areas. They are organized in places that are important and comfortable for gatherings and entertainment, rest and recreation, for doing something (routine or festive). Most often main streets and squares are the spaces for flash mobbing. They have the function of a crossroads where many people pass and gather. The large audience in the crowded area is appropriate for start and end of the common actions of many people with strong impact and reflection. Thus, the squares in Krakow, Ruse, Plovdiv, Kazan, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Venice, main streets in Sofia, Warsaw, Krasnoyarsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Vienna, gardens and parks in Perm, Moscow, Stara Zagora, London and many others are place for flash mobs in the videos I research. Flash mobbers also choose important commercial areas (mall, shop, market) as well as transport hubs (airport, railway station, metro station, city buses). Thus, they confirm that these areas of contemporary towns are central spaces with many functions to bring people together, communicate, exchange information,

etc., where main events, including new ones, have taken place. They are the new forums¹ for the contemporary social life which suits the regionally decentralised space of big cities and urban agglomerations. For this reason, in the hustle and bustle of the cities, important ideas and information are announced, promoted and disseminated, or what is organised is just fun. Other places like a museum, opera house, university or school, municipality or bank, are assigned the same function. This fact means that the crowded public areas and buildings are a medium for transmission of messages and even escapism (looking for fun and fantasy reality). They have the function of contemporary crossroads and areas for direct communication. Here I will mention a flash mob which is specific for the Russian heritage and emotional memory. This is an event performed in the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War, often referred to as the Victory Museum at Poklonnaya Gora in Moscow. The flash mob is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015. It is performed by the choir of the Academic Song and Dance Ensemble of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. The song of the flash mob “The day of victory” (Den’ pobedy) has been among the favourites of this genre in Russia for many generations (70-letie Velikoy Pobedy, 2015). It is possible to arrange the flash mob in some spatial dimensions – for example in the street/square, on the balcony and the roofs of buildings, inside and outside of a building – at the same time. This type of complex spatial disposition allows musicians and dancers to achieve a polyphonic result combining different music and dance layers. Sometimes the space of flash mobbing is extreme. Russian roofers² in St. Petersburg chose an unusual place and action for their flash mob. It was the roof of the building opposite the famous architectural Zinger tower in the city centre. They simultaneously lit flares and dispersed before the arrival of the police (Izvestiya, 2020). Roofing flash mobs in youth culture are perceived as dangerous entertainment outside their community, but it is the self-assertion that enhances the extreme feelings and emotional charge of the flash mobbers.

Duration. An important peculiarity of the flash mob is its short duration. Flash actions have to surprise. For this reason, flash mobbers must act very fast. They should start unexpectedly and end in the same way as if nothing had happened. “Jazz it” flash mob in the Warsaw example (26 June 2014) on the Muppet Show music theme was made very professionally and attractively, with a complex script and perfect performance that lasted for about 5 minutes. It was made by Szymanowski Young Power Big Band (Jakub Józefowicz, 2014) that aims to draw attention to jazz and future jazz events. The slogan that unites the participants and can unite the random audience is “Let’s jazz it together”. Participants in flash mobs do something for a very short time. The shock to the people who witness the event is part of the rules of the flash mobbing, and this effect depends to some extent on the speed of the action. Flash mob is a product of both the pop culture

¹ Forum “1. (for something) a place where people can exchange opinions and ideas on a particular issue; a meeting organized for this purpose; 2. (in ancient Rome) a public place where meetings were held” (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, n.d.).

² Roofers – participants in roofing which is “the act of climbing atop roofs, usually illegally, as a pastime” (Urban Dictionary, n.d.).

and the new technologies. This explains why the time duration standards typical for stage and recording products in mass culture are used. Usually, the length of the event is a few minutes – time suitable for a song, dance or theatrical sketch. This duration is adopted in practice as the most appropriate unit measure for an event in pop culture. The standard is about 3 to 5 minutes. Most of the researched flash mobs have such a duration. A new type is what I describe as the *diffuse flash mob* – spread over a wide territory among large number of participants, continuously or simultaneously. They perform short flash mobs in different places and each of them fits in a set of some hours or days. Such a type is possible thanks to the widespread organised flash mob movements, organisations and their initiatives. One of the examples that illustrates this kind of flash mobbing is titled “Fleshmob po-russki – 2”. “Sibirskiy khorovod (Russian style flash mob from Siberia)” (BalkonTV. Gammarek, 2013). This dance action was organised in 9 towns in Siberia³ from 3 to 12 June 2013 in short actions. The first edition was in 2012 and it has been continued in the following years. 2280 participants took part in the diffuse flash mob on 12 June 2013, but their total number during all the days was 3000. Another new form accepted as a new type of flash mob based on the act duration was practised in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022). It was made at home (as *home flash mob*) by more than 80 participants, recorded and after that put online (Moskovskie sezony, 2020).

Performers. Most often the participants in art mobs are professionals from art institutions, which means that musical, dance and theatrical products must be at a high level of performance. Orchestras, choirs, opera institutions, dance groups, folk ensembles, military bands, rock and pop musicians, singers and instrumentalists are performers who make many and various flash mobs. Usually, flash mobbing promotes their institutional affiliation or art events. Among the video examples of art institution that I chose as influential is “Flash mob / Nabucco / 30 lat w Teatrze Wielkim w Łodzi / 30 years in Teatr Wielki in Łódź” (Teatr Wielki Łódź, 2017). The choir of the Łódź opera singing “Va pensiero” performed a flash mob. In such a way (as an advertisement) they invite the audience in the opera house to the celebrations of the 30th anniversary performance of Verdi’s “Nabucco” on the Łódź stage. The same well-known music of Verdi has been a basis for another flash mob. It was performed simultaneously by the choirs of six opera theatres in six Bulgarian towns on the eve of the 1st October – the World Music Day (Zhivata voda na Bulgaria, 2017). Artists are also involved in other advertisement campaigns. For this reason, they present a product, person, group, society, event or service. In other cases, flash mobs are made by professionals who lead their disciples (students from art schools, art groups, music and dance lovers). Thus, three hundred residents of Yakutia, led by master musicians, took part in a flash mob in Yakutsk. They played the instrument khomus (accepted as an important national symbol) on the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Yakut Autonomous Republic (IA SakhaNews, 2022). In some flash events, random people from the audience get involved in art mob activities that give them

³ Irkutsk, Abakan, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Kemerovo, Kyzyl, Tomsk, Gorno-Altaiisk.

excitement, a sense of community and maybe an effect of art psychotherapy. The result is a mixed action between art workers and other people who are at the place of flash mobbing. Leaders and persons who organize flash mobs search for like-minded people through social media where the action instructions are placed. Thus, nets of flash mobbers have organised, and they produce even a kind of *flash mob tours* or *diffuse flash mobs*. Originally flash mob had been part of underground practice, but recently it has been commercialised by some flash mobbers. Performers' groups realize that art mob could be a well-paid commodity and they organise flash mobs for birthdays, marriage proposals, anniversaries, and fests. In this way flash mobbing is used for commercial purposes and has become a job for some of the performers, not just entertainment and a way of producing pranks and nonsense. Thus, flash mobs are involved in cultural industries.

Flash mob activity. Initially, flash mobs look for and organise some unexpected actions. A pillow fight in a public place; freezing the motion of a large number of participants; strange movements, actions and words; carrying some surrealistic objects; drawing in strange way, are some of the other actions. All of them seem ridiculous, stupid, funny or provocative if compared to the everyday life of the place where they are carried out. Sometimes the results of flash mobbing have to be seen from a bird's eye view, as in the cases when hundreds or thousands of people participate in a dance or action; figures are made of cars or flash mobbers; or giant national flags are carried by a lot of people. Musical, dance and theatrical performances were identified as opportunities for flash entertainment and promotion of many things in search of an unusual and memorable experience. The means of art change some ways of producing flash mobs. A type of flash mob – art mob – is born. Music and dance performance are at the core of art mobs. Playing instruments, singing and dancing become the most popular flash mob events. The means of art make flash actions more attractive and acceptable for many people. Maybe for this reason many more shared videos on the Internet show music and dance flash mobs. Half of my selected and researched videos confirm this statement.

Purpose. The goals of flash mobs have varied in the two decades of their existence. They start as an impulsive action for fun or provocation, entertainment for everybody in the chosen place or a person. Later this practice was transformed into some kind of protest, but also presenting exciting flash shows with artistic means and demonstration of sport skills. Flash mob as an advertisement of a cultural or other product brings popularity. It serves to celebrate important festivals, national and religious holy days and historical dates. The most important national celebration for Bulgarians is the 24th of May – the Day of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Bulgarian Alphabet, Education and Culture. Many flash mobs in Bulgaria and abroad have been dedicated to the fest in recent years. The Bulgarian diaspora in London organises the event dancing traditional horo (dance in a chain) in different locations there. Among the picturesque examples is the flash mob made in the area around the King's Cross Station London 2017 (Iva Tsacheva, 2017). Flash mobs are used to surprise in personal events like birthdays, marriage proposals or weddings, proms, anniversaries. Their strong impact on a large audience is realised by the business world and they become a commodity. Thus, some of them serve to promote various things. Presentations of an idea or

a statement about something also find a place and work well in the commercial world. Many examples show how art mobs are used as an act that unites and serves to frame a common area. Currently, its function as a commodity that someone orders and pays for takes flash mobbing in a different direction. People order flash mobs for personal events (a birthday, marriage proposal, surprising entertainment). Art institutions promote their activities by organising flash mobs. World famous labels, banks and corporations advertise their work and goods through flash mob actions. In the Bulgarian context Investbank organised a flashmob in Sofia with the participation of instrumental ensemble of “101 Kaba Gaidi” (type of bagpipes)⁴. The idea of the event is related to the motto of this bank, presented in the slogan: “Along with modern ambitions, do not forget Bulgarian traditions”. Also, it has to be seen as an advertisement for the bank’s politics. (Investbank Bulgaria, 2018). These live and mobile advertisements add opportunities in a compulsive way of suggesting something or somebody and creating positive images. Such is the case of shared flash mob for Vladimir Putin’s birthday in 2022. It is made by the House of Peoples of Russia. The text of the video says that representatives of 20 nationalities of the Russian Federation are participating in the event under the title “We are with you” (TASS, 2022).

Music. The choice of music for a flash mob should be appropriate for the event and its purpose, but very impressive. This conclusion is confirmed by the most memorable of the studied examples. The signal function of sound and music in general is used in all cultures and times. This tradition continues to be applied to pop culture events, including flash mobs. It must be such a kind that will stop and impress most of the random people where the flash event has happened. Thus, the flash mob will achieve the best result and reflection. Different kinds of music style, type, genre and form as well as performers can be heard in art mobs. They depend on many factors and characteristics, but should meet the flashmob standard in the time duration of a few minutes. Pop, rock and jazz, composers’ and folk music, spiritual, patriotic and music for entertainment find their place in flash mobbing according to the case. Thus, the music in flash mobs can be of any type, but be short in duration and very bright.

Cultural signs and symbols in flash mobs

People who organize art mobs also choose the type of music accepted as a cultural or national symbol. Usually, these symbols present cultural heritage which is thought as representative for a region, country or community. Among the reasons is a desire to show and share important values and traditions. In the case of Bulgaria, folk music is presented very often as standing for what is national (35 of 99 of the researched Bulgarian flash mobs). For that reason, folk performances are connected to the main festivities – national, spiritual, historical, political.

⁴ Kaba gaida/gayda (singular; kaba gaidi – plural) is a Bulgarian low-pitched type of bagpipe. 101 kaba gaidi is a specific and attractive instrumental group which is part of the modernized folk tradition in Bulgaria created in the middle of the 20th century.

For example, flash mobs on the occasion of the St. St. Cyril and Methodius fest on 24 May, already mentioned earlier, are of such kind. This day of Bulgarian alphabet and culture has been celebrated since the middle of the 19th century. The tradition continues to the present and flash mobs dedicated to the fest are based on Bulgarian folk music and dance. The dance in circle or in a chain called the *horo* is among the signs of shared commonness that unite and affirm identity. As Gergana Panova-Tekath wrote, dance is “an articulating form in the existence of a group culture” and embodies the role of society “which strives for eternity, unity and stability and resists temporality” (Panova, 2004). Many examples of flash mobs in Bulgaria and abroad use the *horo*, declaring in this way their Bulgarian common tradition. The purposes are different: national holidays (Koleda/Christmas, Gergyovden/St. George’s Day, 3rd March); an anniversary of institutions (130-year of foundation of the Bulgarian State Railways); promotion of art institution activities (“Nashentsi” Bulgarian Dance Club, “Bulgarian fire” Dance Group); fests organised by the Bulgarian diaspora in London, Odessa, Larnaca, San Francisco (“Dance with Us” Dance Club and Bulgarian Folklore Dance Club “Trakia” in London, “Activ” Bulgarian Youth Club in Ukraine), etc. The so called *neravnodelni razmeri* in Bulgarian music theory (uneven, unequal metres-and-rhythms, irregular metric cycles) in the folk melody organization also are accepted as a symbol of Bulgarian identity (BNT Ruse, 2013). The national flag is another symbol. Often it is a prop at flash events or is the main thing in flash mobbing. For example, participants in an impressive flash mob in Vladivostok create a huge Russian flag (Pishun Anton, 2013).

Often the purpose of music in common celebrations is to unite – community, nation, state, emotionally created group of people, people with common history, tradition and heritage, etc. For this reason, symbols from the cultural heritage are used. In the Russian case of flash mobs, the typical and the most popular memory signs are connected with the Second World War called *Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voina* (Great Patriotic War) in Russia and the ex-Soviet Union. Forty-five of the researched 180 Russian flash mobs are dedicated to the victory in this war. These memory signs from the point of view of music are some famous songs that received popularity even outside Russia. Among them are “Katyusha”, “Smuglyanka”. “Den’ pobedy” (Day of Victory), “Kalinka”. For example, I found more than 60 flash mobs on the base of “Katyusha”. Usually, this music sounds in flash mobs dedicated to the Day of Victory – 9 May or in flash actions which have to declare a united community. This kind of flash mobs is documented in many towns in Russia (Mikhylovsk, Kolomna, Novorossiysk, Peterburg, Penza, Novokuznetsk, Moscow, Novosibirsk) and abroad (Toronto, Hamburg, Athens, Roma). Professional groups or amateurs sing the above-mentioned songs with pleasure and motivate the people around to perform together with them. The places also vary (the Red Square in Moscow, the centre of Athens, city malls, railway stations, bank) and performers as well (mostly choirs). Maybe the choice of these songs depends on the common emotional historical memory and heritage. They already exist in flash mobs as symbols that unite, commemorate, express pride and maybe nostalgia for a heroic past (Muzlit MGOSGI,2015).

Other symbols of cultural heritage are seen in the folklore and spiritual traditions. Fests of folk and spiritual calendar give ideas for organizing flash

mobs: Maslenitsa (carnival before Lent) and Pascha (Easter) in Russia (Ivan Makachev, 2014), Kolędowanie (Christmas Carolling) in Poland (Ewa Blaut, 2014), Gergyovden (St. George's Day) and Paneurhythmy in Bulgaria (Association VidyaProject Plovdiv, 2019). Specific music and dances become a basis for these art mobs using traditional and modernized samples. The aim of them is to continue or to revive traditions. "The goal is to raise the spirit of the people" and to rebirth old songs, as the organizers of the Maslenitsa flash mob write under the recorded video mentioned above. The case of Paneurhythmy also presents a tradition that is a rebirth in the last decades. This is a system developed by the Bulgarian esoteric philosopher Peter Dunoff⁵ that combines music and physical exercises, achieving through them inner harmony and cosmic balance.

Conclusions

The new borderless communications, global mobile networks, and performing arts flash mobbing provide a good opportunity for achieving different goals, conveying special messages and presenting cultural heritage. Each culture produces its own specific regional and national memory symbols from its traditions and important historical events. They are used in the cultural industries and find a place in the mass culture. Flash mobs and especially art mobs also act on the base of these signs. Thus, they are disseminated and transmitted in a new space and context. In this way the art mob has an impact on the selection of symbols that are important and work well, as well as on dissemination of cultural heritage.

The effect of the flash mob (art mob) is entertainment, excitement and pleasure, but also emotional recharge, a sense of breaking free from routine and conventional actions. It is an opportunity to make an impression on other people and help self-assertion. As a collective action it is a good way for involvement in a community and an opportunity to be united with a large group. The standard way is to choose pop music hits for flash mobbing which are trendy. Many young people do this, but it is not the only way according to the analysed video recordings.

Other flash mobbers rely on signs and practices of the cultural heritage and national memory. Using cultural symbols in flash mobs such as traditional dances, popular songs related to historical events, musical instruments with the status of a national sign, music and dance repertoire of important folk customs, works of national composers etc. is an opportunity for their dissemination, widespread promotion and evaluation by many people. Thus, pride in the common historical heritage, reverence for tradition and cultural achievements, nostalgia for the glorious common past, are expressed. The growth of cultural industries and the important place of the performing arts in them helps in commodification of the flash mob (art mob). This is yet another reason for evaluation and usage of cultural heritage as a commodity and its commercial use in flash mobbing.

⁵Peter Dunoff (spiritual name Beinsa Douno) – Bulgarian spiritual teacher, philosopher, founder of the religious movement of esoteric Christianity at the end of the 19th century, known as a leader of the Universal White Brotherhood.

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