

Panel 2: Cross-Media Dialogue in Neoliberal Korea

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Webtoon Platform and Media Ecology in Korea and Beyond

One of the rapidly growing media fields in twenty-first-century Korea is webcomics. Webtoon (*wept'un*), which was coined in Korea to refer to webcomics, has been developed not only as an artistic form of comics optimized for screens in the digital era but also as a system of cultural production, distribution, consumption, and participation. It has developed utilizing various potentials that the digital platform offers, such as open solicitation, (partial) free web/mobile distribution, active communication between readers and producers through comment and recommendation systems, profit from advertisement and page viewing, transmedia production, and the incorporation of multiple media functions. Webtoon as a new cultural medium is thus inseparable from its platform and is organically tied to its distinctive platform ecology, which is different from those that other (global) mega platforms create. In this paper, I discuss the ways media platforms on which the webtoon occupies a central place function and the ways webtoon's relationship with those platforms affect the fields of other art forms.