

RENAME to: Participation and quality in open cultural production: some critical remarks on peer-production

This is a draft, work in progress, and I am currently rewriting it.

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Abstract

This paper explores the limits for participation in open, commons-based cultural production. By an ethnographic exploration of two cases - a Siberia-driven experiment to create a feature animation film of industry quality called 'Morevna project', and an Amsterdam-driven similarly ambitious projects with the code name 'Gooseberry' the paper discusses the tensions arising in their attempts to reconcile openness, quality and Internet mediated collaboration in their production process. As a consequence of these tensions, the paper argues that technologies and approaches considered as enablers of broader participation by media scholarship - open source technology; volunteerism; and Internet mediated collaboration, can for certain media forms - such as open-source animation film - act as thresholds for participation. The paper ultimately argues that certain media forms are easier to produce collaboratively - and therefore participatory - than others and points to the shortcomings of existing theories on user driven Internet-mediated cultural production arguing the need for their tighter adjustment to the specifics of different media forms.



Introduction

AIM to extend typology of crowdsourced art.

Fr Joakim: one of the aims of the entire paper; i.e. to suggest a new/ revised typology. There is of course a chance that somebody else has already done something similar (a revised participation framework, within this particular field), but still, you could always argue that you nevertheless contribute with something novel, since you have your unique “empirical data” (as I would say), i.e. your

For over a decade now networked online communication and the work of the free and open source software movement have been central in debates about the vast transformations going on in the field of cultural and economic production (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2009; Lessig, 2004). These debates have outlined a future of an increased user participation in media creation in a landscape of lowered

technical and distribution barriers where the possibilities provided by new technology and interconnectivity activate what Pierre Levy has called a 'collective intelligence' (Lévy, 1997, p. 236). Inspired largely by the paradigmatic cases of Wikipedia, and Linux, and numerous smaller collaboratively developed online projects, the future of the field of cultural production is mapped as building upon the increased agency and access of non-professionals to the media production sphere, as well as on the opening up of technologies for participation through open content models of sharing data and knowledge, and open source software. Scholarship from the fields of economy cultural studies and media and communication studies have developed a vast array of new terminology, such as 'commons-based peer production', 'social production' (Benkler, 2006), crowdsourcing (Howe, 2009), produsage (Bruns, 2008) to denote this transformation and the belief in more participatory, and active user driven media production.

The focus of this paper is to explore the way in which user participation is negotiated in the production process of one specific media form which has received surprisingly little attention in the context of these transformations and of open cultural production, namely open-source animation film production. What I call open-source animation film is animation film projects in which the main production technology consists entirely of free and open source software, the production processes is public, and which apply a model of sharing knowledge and production assets – artwork, music, animation, etc. - as digital cultural commons. Such projects started to emerge around 2007 and were presenting themselves with phrases such as "Elephant's Dream is the world's first open movie, made entirely with open source graphics software such as Blender, and with all production files freely available to use however you please, under a Creative Commons license"¹, or 'Chamba project is ...an effort to create a ... Free/Libre/Open Movie pooling in contributions from people around the world and funding artists directly'², or 'Morevna project is an effort to create full-feature anime movie using Open Source software only'³. While the number of such projects has been growing since, few of them have so far managed to get completed and released publicly. In the context of discussions of the power of the 'crowd (Howe, 2009)' and 'creative audiences' (Castells, 2009, p. 132) especially in connection to the use of open source software and collaborative media production, this could be regarded as unusual. By taking two examples of what I consider as, for the moment, the most mature and large scale productions of open-source

¹ orange.blender.org

² chambaproject.in/about

³ Morevnaproject.org

animations I therefore explore how technologies and approaches considered as enablers of broader participation and alternative – more democratic and participatory cultural production such as open source technology; volunteerism; and Internet mediated collaboration are understood and negotiated in the production processes of these films, in particular in relation to user participation.

The first case in focus bears the code name 'Morevna' project (www.morevnaproject.org). It was launched in 2008 by an individual based in the city of Gorno-Altaysk, a remote town in Southern Siberia in Russia, who had the ambition to create a feature-length animation film in anim  style by using only free and open source technology and by releasing all assets (graphics, artwork, animation, software), and the final animation film as digital cultural commons under an open license. In the course of 4 years the project experimented with different models of what could be seen as alternative, open cultural production to realise this goal. Starting with a brief period of an in-house studio based work in Siberia, moving through an entirely online, public and collaborative approach for about 3 years, it finally resorted to a model of mixing crowdsourcing and closed, in-house production. After four years the project managed to accomplish only its first milestone – to produce a 4-minute demo of what the feature-length film would look like with the purpose to demonstrate the abilities of the team, the technology, and to seek funding. In 2014 another equally ambitious project was launched by the Amsterdam based studio for open 3D projects – Blender Institute. The project with code name 'Gooseberry' (gooseberry.blender.org) was a continuation of earlier⁴ successful experiments by the same studio to develop animation shorts entirely through open-source software and by sharing online all assets and film as commons to the general public for common use and reuse. Starting with the initial idea to create the film through distributed collaboration with the help of twelve independent, remotely located studios, 'Gooseberry' was forced to cut down on these ambitions due to lack of enough financial resources, and embarked on the production of a 13-min demo 'pilot', similarly to Morevna, with the aim to seek additional funding⁵.

The article is organised as follows. I start with a brief literature review on participation in open cultural production summarizing also the recent increase of critical voices, though pointing out the

⁴ Such as *Elephant's Dream* (2007), *Big Buck Bunny* and two more shorts.

⁵ At the time of writing this article the pilot is still in progress of making, but it nevertheless provides enough material to discuss the participatory dimension.

lack of critique oriented towards the limits of certain media forms, such as forms that combine technology and art. From there I build upon Ioanna Literat's (2012) typology on mediated participatory art which I argue is appropriate to use for analysing open-source animation film production and extend it with Löwgren and Reimer's concept of 'collaborative media' (2013) connecting in this way participation in art with participation in technology development. This is necessary in order to account for the peculiarity of the animation form which merges both technology and art representing a form of "techno-art" or "techno-poetics" (Lamarre, 2009, 43), in which the apparatus used plays a central role as a determining force of animation that enables or disables certain possibilities for visual expression and work with the moving image. After a brief presentation of the method for material collection I proceed to discuss three main thresholds for participation and areas of tension in the two cases, and discuss them in the light of their enabling, but also 'disabling' participation sides. Wrapping up the discussion, I suggest the existence of a dependency between the media form which is being produced, the degree of openness of its production model and the production time.

Cultures of participation and open cultural production

Scholars have argued that there is a natural affinity between the non-hierarchical, open protocols and flexible identities of social movement actors and the global structure and participatory ethos of the internet as a communication technology (Curran, Freedman and Fenton, 2012; Fenton, 2006; Salter, 2003) – Askanius, 2012, 43

Joakim: studies that have emphasised certain factors as conducive to the emergence of participation culture(s), but still failed to come up with more sophisticated distinctions between different types of new media forms. There you have your "gap", and your contribution to previous research.

Many have argued that we are witnessing a rapid growth of participatory cultures that stretch over the political, cultural and economic spheres making possible a social change towards greater plurality of voices and creative practices coming from 'below' (Bailey et al, 2008; Coyer, 2007; Delwiche & Henderson, 2013; Lievrouw, 2011). Web 2.0, produsage, crowdsourcing, open-source, commons-based peer production, creative audiences are just some of the vast array of new terms and concepts that scholarly discourse has produced in order to theorize the exponential growth of

practices which reconcile community, collaboration and the Internet. In the same year as the term Web 2.0 was coined, Henry Jenkins defined participatory culture through the 'relatively low barriers to artistic expression [...] strong support for creating and sharing one's creations' and where 'members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connections with one another'" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 9)⁶. Thus, participatory culture has become related to the formation of alternative approaches to cultural production which represent non-alienating and democratic, empowering forms of expression of individual creativity. This view has been continuously connected to ideas of lowered thresholds for participation in media creation and voluntarism. The roots to the latter could be traced at least to Chris Atton's typology (Atton, 2002) over what constitutes alternative media from the early 2000s when he suggested the "de-professionalisation" of media production as a feature and a characteristic of the production of alternative and activist media, an assumption which since then has remained unchallenged and has been subsequently attributed to most forms of what could be seen as alternative media and open cultural production practices, including free and open-source software production (Weber, 2004) and commons-based cultural production such as in the case of Wikipedia (Lievrouw, 2011, p. 177-213). The trend towards de-professionalisation has also been marked by new concepts to describe user agency such as 'pro-Ams' (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004) meaning skilled amateurs who act out of the capacity and commitment of professionals, or 'producers' (Bruns, 2008) where non-professionals and 'the people formerly known as the audience' (Rosen, 2006) are regarded as having taken over the role of media producers. In the same time, the discourse arguing for the lowering of the thresholds for participation in media creation has been associated to the availability of Internet-based distributed forms of media production and the increased possibilities for building own infrastructures and technical solutions through open source software (Löwgren & Reimer, 2013, 6). As Bruns has suggested, participation in purely online communities is limited only by 'users' network access, available time, and relevant expertise...which constitute nontrivial barriers, but are nonetheless more easily overcome by greater numbers of participants' (Bruns, 2012). Altogether these transformations have allowed people to build their own networks of communication and media leading to a process of 'mass self-communication' (Castells, 2009, page).

On the other hand, critique of open and participatory cultural production has been largely centred

⁶ For a historical overview on the emergence of discourses on participatory culture, see Delwiche & Henderson (2013) as well as Carpentier (2011).

over discussing the degree to which these new agents in media production can be seen as active or passive (Bolin, 2012; Ross, 2014) and whether they are actually challenging the institutions of media production through their alternative production models or simply being exploited (Fier-Blaess & Fuchs, 2014; van Dijck, 2009). The latter aspect has been noticed in the emergence of the practices of 'co-creation' where media companies collaborate with online communities making them produce exchange value and constituting what some have labelled a 'co-creative capitalism' (Arvidsson, 2008; Cova et al, 2011; Roig et al, 2014). These practices mark the strengthened and continued existence of a long lasting relationship between the production processes of the industry and its attempts to exploit participatory authorship (Deuze et al, 2007). Other critique has been directed towards the main qualities through which open cultural production, and in particular commons-based peer-production has been described – flat hierarchies, self-organisation and participants' self-selection of tasks (Benkler, 2006) suggesting that it represents an idealised form of organisation (Berry, 2008) that underestimates the needs for coordination, charismatic leadership (O'neil, 2013) and which ultimately tends to resemble and re-enact bureaucratic mechanisms rather than neutralising them (Kreiss et al, 2011).

The above discussions can thus be summarized as debates around the ontology and characteristics of the agency in the transformed media and cultural production landscape - moving between a possible new communism and capitalist exploitation, sharing and appropriation. Surprisingly little focus has been paid though on a critical discussion of some of the main elements that are seen as the drivers and enablers of participation - technology, Internet, volunteers. In addition, little has been said in terms of discussing problems and limitations to participation in relation to the specifics of producing particular media forms that blur the relationship between art and technology in such an Internet mediated landscape.

Towards a more critical discussion of participation

Extend participation not as structure, but also in relation to format (short/fragmented or long).

A starting point in opening up for a more critical look at participation around media forms can be taken from Chris Kelty's appeal to think of participation as a 'plural thing', allowing to speak of different 'cultures of participation'(Kelty, 2013, p. 29) which should be explored through the

rectification of distinctions, instead of favouring generalisations:

“participating” in Facebook is not the same thing as participating in a Free Software project , to say nothing of participating in the democratic governance of a state. If there are indeed different “participatory cultures” then the work of explaining their differences must be done by thinking concretely about the practices, tools, ideologies and technologies that make them up.

(Kelty, 2013, p. 23)

The exponential growth of new terminology marking the transformations in the field of cultural production that have been considered as participatory can therefore be seen as having the tendency to over-generalise and in this way obscure the variety and organisational sociologies of alternative practices of cultural production, not least open-source software and commons based such (Coleman, 2013). Paradoxically, the proliferation of the new terminology has not contributed to a greater understanding of the relation between the different terms (Kelty, 2013). As Couldry & Jenkins have reminded, when we speak of participation it is important to be aware of what sort of participation we speak of, and participation in what (2014). They continue suggesting that new participatory practices and cultures do not emerge out of nowhere, and if admitting that they are not organisational utopias, they should be regarded as sites 'of struggle where things are being gained and lost on the ground, as players at all levels are advocating for their own interests' (ibid). Thus, as Kelty points out, 'no matter how “open” a platform is, participation will reach a limit circumscribing power and its distribution' (Kelty, 2013). Along with the importance to discuss power in relation to open cultural production, I see as important to discuss the specifics of the different media forms which affect, shape and limit the participation.

As suggested above, open-source animation film production carries the dimensions of participation, technology and art. Recognizing the difficulty in discussing what 'participatory art' (Carpentier, 2011, p. 53) could be, I find fruitful to use as a base for analysis of the negotiations of the participatory dimensions of open-source animation film production Ioanna Literat's typology of participation in crowdsourced, or mediated art (Literat, 2012). She suggests that participation in technology mediated art can be classified by dividing it in three broader types: receptive, executory and structural participation. Receptive participation, she argues, requires the lowest degree of creative engagement and refers to the process whereby the viewer or audience receives a finished artistic product. Executory participation is in turn task-oriented and takes place in predefined artistic

projects, representing an analogue of entering contract by agreeing to its specific terms and conditions (Literat, 2012). Lastly she suggests that, structural participation means that participants in the artistic project have a say in the conceptual and artistic design of the project allowing to demonstrate a structural agency. Putting this in relation to open, Internet mediated cultural production it is relevant to bring up also the concept of 'collaborative media' developed by Löwgren and Reimer (2013) who argue that collaboration is a relative concept related to distinct media forms – where some forms are more suitable for collaboration than others, and 'at those occasions when they are put to use collaboratively they become collaborative media' (Löwgren & Reimer, 2013, p. 15). They see the distinctions between different media forms as representations of different 'forms of practice' (ibid) that contain the specifics of what they can make possible.

Method

The empirical material on which this paper is based consists of data collected through a 'multi-sited' (Marcus, 1995) ethnographic approach where understanding of cultures is built through 'tracing the changing nature, and use of things in different contexts' (Marcus, 1995). This has involved tracing documents and relevant data in online, as well as offline settings; performing face-to-face and Internet-mediated qualitative interviews with 26 individuals - participants in Morevna and Gooseberry projects in different ways; as well as conducting participatory observation in online settings, and in-situ among the producers of the two animation films. When speaking of ethnography, I have adopted the view from media studies research that short but regular periods of immersion in geographically dispersed cultures can be equally fruitful as long, continuous observations (Bolin, 1998, p. 26). I was immersed in different ways over a period of 7 months in the production of Gooseberry, and for about a year in the production of the other, Morevna. Since both Goosebeery and Morevna have active public production blogs where progress from work has been reported on weekly basis, these blogs represented a starting point of a first round of analysis. The blogs have been open for comments, and served as a focal point to communicate and share under open licenses artwork and technology in the course of the film production. The blogs also served as history books that allow to trace the evolution of of the projects over time – a documentation of art which through the exhibition of itself also helps produce the art (Karlholm, 2011) and allowed for tracing the shifts in production organisation and planning which have ultimately been influencing participation.

Infrastructuring, skills and knowledge

Initially, Morevna project adopted rather literally the dominating production approach of free and open source software by opening up the process of animation film production to a broader number of participants through a set of online collaboration software, a public production blog and adopting a copyleft model of sharing data. Due to the geographical location and lack of local capacity which contrasted with the high ambitions of the project, the Morevna project producer regarded this model as a way to attract contributors, and therefore stimulate and encourage participation in the project production:

This was one of the ways...To put online all materials in some way, in some form, where everything can get updated, and anyone can enter and join at any production point – that was the idea.

The use of open source software in Morevna was also further motivated economically:

You can not say – here you have the material, it is free and anyone who wants can participate, but please buy first this software for 250 USD and then also this and that....

(producer, Morevna)

This can be regarded as an attempt to organise the production in ways similar to what Benkler (2006, p. 62) has defined as 'commons based peer-production' where any individual is allowed to join the project at any point of time, out of individual competences, and self-assigning a task, and could be seen as encouraging structural participation in Literat's terms. However, several years after its start the project was forced to rethink its approach for several reasons.

Firstly, at the time of the project start the open-source tools for 2D graphics processing and animation were largely underdeveloped. This forced the producer of Morevna to dedicate more than 3 years to develop the main production tool - Synfig- and the graphics community around it - in order to make possible at least the realisation of the first milestone in the project – the 4-min short demo. Despite that the choice of open source tools represented a technology which allowed the Morevna project to start production at all, and has been beneficial in the sense of putting the producers in control of the tools they use and need for making the animation film bypassing in this way intermediaries and creating dependencies on the industry, this choice has also turned out problematic. While the tools have been developed in the course of the film production process in relation to the current production needs and requirements for features representing a process of

'infrastructuring' (to do: fix this weird encoding problem) (Björkvinsson, 2002) that puts an accent on 'infrastructure' (Karasti & Syrjänen, 2004), it represented for a prolonged time a significant threshold for participation due to the lack of mechanisms for transferring and communicating further the knowledge on how to use the tools. As Björkvinsson suggests, infrastructuring does not work democratically per se and access to tools 'means very little if it is not paired with access to skilled and knowledgeable people and organizations' (2014, REF). Despite that the tools were open source and anyone could examine them and learn how to use them, the time and effort needed to do this by a trial-and-error method would have been significant. When artists decide to use very different from conventional approaches to making artwork 'they have to devote time that might otherwise be spent making art to making its material precursors' (Becker, 1982, p. 76), and subsequently train their own personnel who could work with the technology and teach on what they need to know (ibid, p. 81). Thus, the time dedicated to the development of technology (Synfig Studio) as part of Morevna project turned to be a time of developing knowledge and technology in order to make possible the film creation. Until quite late in the production mechanisms for transfer of technical knowledge have been almost completely absent in Morevna, if not considering the information put on the production blog, resulting in too few people who knew how to work with the tools:

When the project just started, the big problem was to find the dedicated artists capable to draw in anime style...there was total deficit of specialists working in Synfig and it was a first problem that we considered for animation project ... I didn't know are [sic] there any people around willing to learn Synfig and how much time this learning can take. (producer, Morevna)

The lack of knowledge on tools was not the only obstacle limiting participation. The immaturity of tools posed the problem of how to actually making use of the freedom of independent creation and moulding own tools which open source technology could enable.

There are many ways to do animation. ... But the problem gets to the functionality of the open source software. If you know how to do it on proprietary software, you switch to open source software and you realize that there is simply no such functionality, this workflow. So then you need to either invent some

compromise...you are in a way trying to do the same thing, but through a compromise between the functionality, the possibility to improve all this, and your own capabilities.

(producer, Morevna)

The quote above suggests that acknowledging the possibilities provided by technology, and in particular – open source software which enables media users to create their own infrastructures is not enough to enable participation. There is a need for constantly improved and applied mechanisms of knowledge and skill transfer in order for technology to not become a hindrance for participation – as it has remained for large portions of time in the case of Morevna. In the same time the model of open source software development represents a challenge for creating such mechanisms – documentation is hard to maintain and update as the software changes all the time, and the resources that projects have available tend to be directed in technology development instead of documenting such. In the case of Morevna, however, this has been even a bigger constraint because it has put a limit not only for potential developers to need time to learn the software to contribute but also for potential artists to join the production.

This problem is something which Gooseberry and generally the Blender community have also been facing despite having substantially more experience in open-source animation film development:

if you have only the software, you have nothing. It's about the art, the documentation, it's about the community of developers, it's about the developer's documentation, it's about the development infrastructure.

(Gooseberry participant, 2014)

While this quote reflects the multitude of interdependencies between the different components in an animation film production, it also highlights the complexity and problems related to using open source tools in open-source animation film development. The process of knowledge transfer is important also in the light of the effort needed to master the production tools. As the Gooseberry director pointed out:

...mastering a software like AfterEffects for compositing took 5 years of work. Everyday work...3D softwares are even worse in that. It can actually take 10 years to actually master one.

Interviewer: And if its open source? Does it take even longer?

M: Well...no, it doesn't matter if its open software or not. It's just those softwares take years to master. Because it is very very complex thing, especially 3D software like modelling. It's one part of the 3D process.... it's an entire job.

(Director, Gooseberry)

The above quote reflects the complexity and significance of the choice of specific tool and technology in animation which in turn suggests that any such tool or choice must be connected to mechanisms for knowledge transfer in order for it to be a possible alternative for artists and users participating in actual production. It also suggests that with respect to animation film production, technology does not represent a low technical barrier and even when it is based on open source software, it does not provide greater possibilities for participation, as it requires narrow specialisation and skillset.

Reconciling quality and participation

Providing access and participation of non-professionals is at the core of the ideology of alternative and community media (Carpentier, 2011, p. 341). This participation has however been increasingly connected to the problem of lowering the quality of media production and the undermining of the role of professionals in media production (Engholm, 2010; Keen, 2007). In contrast to this though, both Morevna and Gooseberry were determined to achieve industry quality of their production and having been aiming at high production values.

On one hand we wanted to produce animation using low human and financial resources, and on the other hand ... we wanted to get a quality comparable to real anim .

(producer, Morevna project, interview 2014)

This statement is quite similar to what the producer and director of Gooseberry also suggested:

'Game of Thrones...is high production value, it looks good, and it's extremely efficiently produced... what we do is not that...different. The only thing we really do differently and we are going to do it radically is sharing.

(producer, Gooseberry, interview 2014)

The mentioning of Game of Thrones and 'real anime' reveals the intentions of both projects to use their alternative production model based on openness as a way to achieve industry comparable quality and not be regarded as amateur production:

...Pixar projects take 4 to 5 years internally and thousands of people. Blender Institute [sic] did Sintel in 6 months with like, 8 people. So it is very difficult to compare those two because it's not the same means at all. And expense, and budget. A Pixar movie is 200 million dollars. Per movie.

Julia: But is the ambition to be comparable?

M: Yeah! To me it is. And we can.

(fieldwork, August 2014)

The strive for creating films with comparable to industry quality has forced the producers to think creatively, apply smart solutions, efficiency and sharing in the production processes. The combination of artistry, the work framed in the boundaries of specific aesthetics and tradition of visual expression (anime and 3D realism) together with the aim to achieve high production values comparable to the industry have forced both projects to enforce power structures and hierarchies that limit and even can exclude participation:

...the whole belief is that there is no dictatorship, there is no authority, everyone can do it. But! The facts are there is always someone in charge..Movie making is totally dictatorship thing, process. It has to be if you ask everyone what they like, what they want to make as movie, well you will have as many movies as people you ask. So how do you make one out of those?

(director, Gooseberry, Interview 2014)

This quote suggests that openness of the production did not equate to participation in the production. Despite the openness of technology, as well an open model of content and knowledge sharing, the artistic part of the animation production process was under the control of the film director who had very concrete goals and ambitions in terms of what quality and artistic expression was aimed at producing. This approach resembles therefore more receptive and tokenistic types of participation, rather than structural from Literat's topology.

Similar to the Gooseberry's director concerns have been shared by the director of Morevna project:

Film is a matter of taste. So it is about the taste of the director....someone needs to take decisions on taste – and this can not be a machine, right? [...] the idea that anyone can participate is nonsense because there is filtering... first by the director, and second by knowledge. To make animation you already need to have some knowledge....to be able to do timing, to draw well, right? Some skill....you need to have some skill in order to be useful and to correspond to some minimum level of quality which is again determined by the director

(producer, Morevna project, 2014).

This makes evident that despite that both projects call themselves 'open', their artistic goals reduce the possibilities for participation. As Carpentier has points out, a strong position of the artist as the creator of an artwork impacts the degree of participation that it is allowed for (Carpentier, 2011, p. 56). It furthermore illustrates the tension brought up by the techno-art form of animation – while open-source technologies carry the potential of participation that may be enacted or not, the artistic dimension simultaneously restricts it. In this sense, the openness of the projects could be seen more in the light of a public sharing of a process – a performance of film-making in public and partly crowdsourced production of film, but far from more idealised or ideology based models of participation in media creation.

In the same time, volunteer external participation is not completely excluded in either Morevna or Gooseberry. However, it is negotiated through the term of quality, and as one of the producers in Gooseberry suggested, external to the production people could comment on things, files, or tasks, 'Not to actively involve them' (the subscribers), 'but if they want, they could' (involve themselves). However, inclusion of contributions would happen only if it proves to be better than the internally produced one: 'we can add it, or ignore it'; 'we only pick up work form the community if it is better than ours', 'there is no commitment from our side' (fieldnotes, December 2014).

This suggests that the core of the production attempts to remain independent, but external contributions by the community are not excluded and could potentially speed up the production, provided they correspond to the quality goals of the production. It does not create though relationships of obligation or reciprocity between the production, and the community, and there is an active process of filtering that occurs.

Production times and place

The idea of enabling broader participation in Morevna in the first years of the production through allowing 'anyone [to] enter and join at any production point (K. Dmitriev, Producer) can in the light of the above be seen as contradictory. Nevertheless, at least in the first years of the project the producer was trying to keep the options open for anyone to approach him and join the production. However, the struggles with getting participants who know how to work with open-source graphics

and animation tools and who can produce animation that corresponds to the high artistic goals of the producers have ultimately led to a great limitation in the type of collaborators who would approach and join the productions, mostly professional free-lancing animators or graphic artists in the beginning of their careers as they were the only ones to respond to the skill and taste thresholds. A problem for Morevna project has though been the over reliance on volunteers who would join the production online.

The problem of animation is that nobody can see the end result until the very last moment. The end result is in the head of the director, until the very last moment. And the road to the end result is very very long.

This 'very very long' road speaks of the time that the production process consumes and the dedication required to have for a long period of time. In Morevna, the reliance of volunteers has been problematic for three main reasons: people who have the competence would not stay long, it has been hard to foresee when they will join the production; and whether the moment in which they come is the moment when their skills are actually needed. The inability to manage these complexities in the beginning of the project has gradually led to discrepancies in style, and lack of continuity. Thus, while technically anyone could participate, in practice the aesthetic requirements of both the producer and the production frame of animation film have led the producer to the realisation of the limits to volunteerism:

Morevna Project is a such kind of thing that cannot be done 'on spare time basis'. The question was brought to the table 'Is Morevna Project ever going to be finished?' (Morevna production blog)

The quote above is from the reflections on the 4th anniversary of the project and has marked the shift to a model of crowdsourcing and in-house production model, much more limited for participation than in the first years.

While these tensions have been experimentally discovered by Morevna, for Gooseberry they have been much more clear. Already from the beginning participation from volunteers has been sought to take place just for the outsourcing of secondary tasks. This was also justified by the strive for quality:

You can not get a good quality with crowdsourcing. We try to do something of the quality of Pixar and Dreamworks, and you can not get this with crowdsourcing. How do you do it? And we want this quality. (Gooseberry producer, fieldnotes from Amsterdam).

Also, contrary to the assumption that the participation of many leads to quality and improved results

through the so called 'Linus' law' that says 'given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow' (Raymond, 2001) – principles that tend to be valid for Wikipedia and Linux , in open-source animation film production the optimal work process has been regarded as best with small teams:

small teams are more efficient at big things, that's the benefit always.

The more people you add, the more difficult it gets.

(Gooseberry participant,, 2014).

Thus, Internet-based volunteers and high volumes of online contributions could be seen as a threshold instead of an enabler in relation to producing the animation film genre. The director of Gooseberry has, similarly to Morevna, illustrated the tediousness, complexity and time required to produce an animation film as follows:

... it's complicated in animation because ... if you think of the same thing like – I have 6 friends that are CG artists and I want to make a feature film – well, you can't do it in 3 weeks (laughs). ... Three years would be minimum for 6 persons and even then - I do not think you can actually make 90 minutes. So...just because of render times, and just – the process of making CG is very very complex and slow. And you need, lots, thousands of people to work on a feature film.

(Gooseberry participant, 2014).

Lastly, it has been mentioned the lack of technical infrastructure allowing such type of very complex collaboration process too:

We don't have the tools yet. We try to make those tools, because I think if someone in Argentina develops a 3D model and sends it through the Internet, so we can work on it and send it back, or share it - we need some very very specific tools to actually keep track of this. In a movie production, a feature film especially you need hundreds of thousands of assets, 3D files. And if you want to keep track of all of those, and if the people who work on this can go up to 500 person, every time they will do a change – in the tree, in a character, the size – it will take years. So, how do you keep track of this? How me as a director knows who have done what, what can I change, and so on – those kind of things. You need a very very specific tool. Otherwise it's totally impossible to do it. And those tools are part of the Gooseberry project. ” (ibid.)

(Gooseberry participant, 2014).

The volume and complexity of work to produce the animation film has therefore been much greater than any open, peer-to-peer collaboration through the Internet can allow for.

All this suggests that even though Wikipedia, Linux and the cases presented here are all in the domain of open cultural production, they differ substantially in what type of projects and media

forms they represent. While Wikipedia for example is not sensitive to the sequence of contributions and production time, animation requires continuous and consecutive building up which makes it in practice much more complex for anyone to join at any point in time. In the same time, place based interactions and collaboration have been gradually favoured in both productions to online such:

“...the fact that Nicolay (the main artist) happened to be nearby, reachable by phone, that he spoke Russian – all this was very important. Because I really did not imagine from the beginning the volume of the work....So, I do not imagine how we could do the same volume of work through ... the Internet. With the different time-zones, email communication...We would have not managed to get these results in this time.

(Morevna producer, interview 2014)

Similar concerns are expressed by Gooseberry's director:

I am here every day. And, all day long....because I have to. Especially for the start of the project...

Julia: So this is not made remotely?

M: No. But, you can, but it's not convenient, I think. Especially in these early steps. You have to discuss a lot, you have to make connections between artists, to know what they like so that they know what you like , so that you can agree on things, and disagree on some other. And rule out things or try new things. And to be sure that this is a relationship that you have to build.

(Gooseberry participant, 2014).

Internet-based collaboration has been thus considered to be cumbersome, at least for certain stages of the production. Moreover – the excerpts above underline the need for creating a relationship with the participants in the projects - something which Wikipedia or Linux may feature, but is not a requirement for either project to progress. For film production, and especially – animation film that takes long time to produce, such relationship appears to be a requirement. In the light of this, in certain moments of the production the Internet may represent a hindrance rather than enabler for participation and collaboration.

Conclusion: Towards shorter but participatory media formats

MAKE new topology of length of media formats – and map degrees of participation.

Joakim: “Under each heading (receptive, executory, and structural participation) you may include the things that facilitate and obstruct participation. Actually, I’m not sure what labels to use here,

but I think you see my point nevertheless. If you construct such a table, where you also contrast your cases to a case people would typically recognise (in general or from previous research), like (again) Wikipedia. In that way, readers would immediately get your point: certain factors (like time, tools, etc) that work to promote participation cultures in relation to some peer-based cultural productions, may in fact work as obstacles to participation cultures in relation to other peer-based cultural productions.”

that there is a relationship between participation and format in a new media culture. . And that
[2015-02-23 19:05:33] <konfeta> You can have an open project, and community participating in it,
only if it is adapted to Internet audience - so short time and concentration effort
[2015-02-23 19:05:37] <konfeta> because
[2015-02-23 19:06:05] <konfeta> it is a) faster and cheaper to make b) you can create a model for
funding this without paywalls
[2015-02-23 19:06:16] <konfeta> but by delivering often, and sharing open
[2015-02-23 19:06:23] <konfeta> but for often delivery - you need the format

It is all ultimately about the investment of time, and return of it. There is a desynchronisation between production times, and media formats consumed by media audiences (cf Kaun, 2015). : DEEVAD: “consuming a lot of micro high-quality media offer less possible frustration than reading a full book , or watching a full movie and discovering it a bad one, and feel frutrated to invest time on it”

As both cases show it has been extremely difficult to reconcile large-scale products with volunteerism, quality and Internet-based organisation of work. Both Morevna and Gooseberry have ultimately resorted to a model of rather controlled, studio-based production which has become open for participation in the moments when secondary artwork is needed – such as props, backgrounds or more mundane tasks organized through crowdsourcing, while the major part of the production is made by remunerated artists and developers in close geographical location to each other.

In this sense, participation in both Morevna and Gooseberry has been shifting in relation to time and the different phases of the productions, but also across layers – technical and artistic, the latter directly connected to quality. Certain parts of the production – such as the communication of the

production process and content sharing have been purely receptive participation in which the audience receives just a finished artistic product, but is allowed to comment and react to it. In other production moments - such as the crowdsourcing phases, participation has turned into executory where by deciding to participate, the contributors would accept the parameters of participation, but would have no structural agency to influence the framework or artistic direction of the project. Putting this in relation to media forms and the idea of 'collaborative media' by Löwgren & Reimer (2013), certain moments of both animation film productions can be seen as more online collaboration prone – and thus more open for participation than others. However, the subjective requirements for quality and the complexity of production of the animated form do put ultimately limits for broader participation. On one hand participation should not be seen as a singular framework which remains stable within a media production process but it shifts, and transforms between different degrees of participation. In the same way as we should speak of cultures of participation in plural (Kelty, 2013), we should see participatory structures also as fluctuating, and related to the media formats and their production frameworks. Animation attains its form in one particular moment which suggests that a continuous development in the way for example Wikipedia is done would bring it closer to a database of images, resources, people, etc. but it will not yield a film as such. Therefore, producing large scale, ambitious projects which require substantial coordination, time and effort can not naturally happen by means of self-organisation and 'mass self-communication' (Castells, 2009).

This points however to the significance of media formats in a changing mediascape where quality, brevity and frequency of production of new entertainment content function better for Internet audiences than longer, ambitious time-demanding productions. This conclusion is not new – Lev Manovich pointed out to the features of 'new media' such as indexicality, fragmentation and modularity already almost 15 years ago (REF). Surprisingly though, despite that his discussion of new media has been through the lens of animation production, there have not been empirical examples discussing from within open cultural production the transformation towards shorter entertainment media formats.

a different possibility – that What these cases suggest though is that a possible way to reconcile participation with quality, openness, and production time could be by shortening the format to adapt better to Internet audiences and to keep an independent core of the production while welcoming but not relying on external volunteer contributions which comply with the quality.

The differences between and variety of media forms pose constraints to the participatory potential of different media production practices. While this argument can be accused as being too deterministic, what I have tried to show in this article is that several of the main components which are considered as representing and creating the preconditions for the formation of 'participatory cultures' and alternative media production practices have instead acted as barriers for participation and collaboration in open-source animation film production. Finally, it can be concluded that the more open for participation a process, the more undefined time it would take to produce, and the longer the format of the media – the more centralised the production needs to be, and thus closer to participation.

The diversification of media in form and contents (Livingstone, 1999, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/391/1/N-media%26society1%281%29.pdf>) together with the convergent media channels for consuming such media has increased dramatically the choice of media to consume, leading to shorter but quantitatively more content. Thus, alternative models of cultural production

Conclusion: öppenhet, medieformer och teknologier are connected, and to involve internet audiences in production and consumption of such media one should adjust better to the shorter and faster for prod and consumption media formats.

spännande, och där tror jag du kan borra vidare och successivt komma allt längre i din analys.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

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