TV LIKE US

is a publication on community, media and art in the city edited by Hanna Harris with Suvi Kukkonen, Olli-Matti Nykänen and Jenni Tuovinen.

Reaktio is a publication series launched in December 2011 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of The Finnish Institute in London. The books in this series are reactions to contemporary critical issues, they pose questions and offer commentary. These books contain seeds for debate and provoke action; they are books to think with and books to act on. At the back of the book we have left space for you to make your own notes. What do you think?

—*Raija Koli*, Series Editor

To John 'Spoons' McQuirk
1931–2012

TV LIKE US

Colophon

Contents

TV LIKE US

is a publication on community, media and art in the city edited by Hanna Harris with Suvi Kukkonen, Olli-Matti Nykänen and Jenni Tuovinen. **Part One revisits the TV Swansong project by artists Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope.**

TV Swansong: Now We Are 10

TV Swansong (2002) was a Somewhere project curated by *Nina Pope* & *Karen Guthrie.*

With thoughts and projects by: Jordan Baseman, Graham Fagen, Rory Hamilton & Jon Rogers, Chris Helson, Nina Pope & Karen Guthrie, Giorgio Sadotti, Jessica Voorsanger and Zoe Walker & Neil Bromwich

"The air of an off-kilter telethon"
—*Dan Fox,* reviewing *TV Swansong* in *Frieze* 06/2002

Introduction

by *Sarah Cook* and *Kathy Rae Huffman*

Originally published in relation to the 2008 exhibition "Broadcast Yourself"
which included the project TV Swansong

Artists have often challenged the passive relationship viewers have with television by taking control of TV and the way it is both produced and consumed, questioning television's cultural influence and authority.

In the 1970s and 1980s, artists approached television from two different perspectives: some wanted their video works broadcast, while others wanted to control how broadcasting functioned. Van Gogh TV's *Piazza Virtuale* recognised that TV was a powerful influence, outside an individual's control. In response, they created their own interactive system, controlled by the audience, which was broadcast internationally. Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz also allowed audiences to broadcast themselves when they opened a *Hole in Space*, linking in live, life-size video and audio, passers-by on streets in NY and LA via the satellites used by television networks.

In the USA, TV was controlled by commercial interests, for advertising profit. Being on television meant collaborating with broadcasters. Provocatively, Doug Hall, Chip Lord and Jody Procter did this through their residency at KVII-TV (Channel 7) in Amarillo Texas; Bill Viola filmed the public who watched WGBH, Boston's Public Television station, and broadcast the footage on the same channel. In the UK, Ian Breakwell aired his *Continuous Diaries* in an irregular format at irregular times with the launch of the alternative Channel 4. Prior to these initiatives, one of the only possibilities for artists to broadcast their work was to become in effect a company (or partner with one) and purchase commercial time, as Chris Burden and Stan Douglas did.

The push to get oneself onto TV cooled in 1989, with the camcorder revolution. This new technology put broadcast quality production into the hands of artists and influenced what was seen on local cable TV well into the 1990s and led to what we now understand as narrow-casting—or limiting distribution of programmes to a niche audience (similarly to today's podcasts). Pat Naldi and Wendy Kirkup's project, *SEARCH* used the closed circuit TV network installed by Northumbria Police in the streets of Newcastle upon Tyne, and broadcast their performances in front of those cameras (which might only have been seen by a single security guard) to audiences of millions on Tyne Tees television. Filmmaker Miranda July started a video chain-letter, *Joanie4Jackie*, which redistrib-

uted short videos by woman artists via the post, cutting out the TV networks entirely, and prefiguring the possibilities of video file sharing now available online.

The web-browser, introduced in the mid 1990s, followed by greater access to higher speeds of connection to the Internet and affordable web cameras allowed artists to connect with each other and create their own broadcast networks, as the collaborative projects *56kTV* and *TV Swansong* demonstrate. Individual broadcasts of newsworthy televisual events became possible, like Guillermo Gómez-Peña's guerilla webcast performances *El Naftazteca: Cyber-Aztec* TV in 1995. Shaina Anand's CCTV projects in India demonstrate how artists continue to create their own systems to contest the fact that they have limited access to the technologies for television broadcast. How we individually understand television will continue to change as new digital technologies expand the distribution of audio/video work on the web.

On Wednesday the 20th March 2002 Somewhere (an art organisation led by Northern Art Prize winning artists Karen Guthrie & Nina Pope) presented the innovative broadcast *TV Swansong*—a homage to TV past, present and future—live on the Internet. The first project of its kind, *TV Swansong* brought 8 specially commissioned art works reflecting on the current state of flux in television by 11 UK artists live to the desktops of the world, and to special events at thirty UK & Ireland venues that offered free public web access for the day. The website documents all aspects of the project and includes archived streams of the project broadcast on that day.

Highlights of TV Swansong included:

--➤ In rural Oxfordshire, *Generic Sci-Fi Quarry* by Rory Hamilton & Jon Rogers (with former members of BBC Radiophonic Workshop) took place over three nights—a stunning quadrophonic sound and video projection extravaganza re-creating much-loved 1970s sci-fi special effects.

--➤ Giorgio Sadotti's *Virtual Bootleg*, where a live ballroom dancing event in the legendary Blackpool Tower was webcast via high-tech wireless cameras attached to the dancers.

--➤ For *The Act* artist Chris Helson focused on the 24hr rolling news phenomenon which dominates so much of the current cable TV, and flew out to a late-breaking news site only the day before the live web cast—Corihuayranchina in Peru, where a vast, newly discovered Inca city was being bought to the attention of world media. He undertook a gruelling 4-day trek in the wake of explorer Peter Frost to webcast his stunning material live to *TV Swansong* from the peak of Mount Victoria in Vilcabamba via a satellite phone.

*For the next part of the booklet, ten years later, Karen Guthrie revisits her
memories of the project with the help of some of the artists involved*

Now We Are 10: A Long(er) View on TV Swansong

by *Karen Guthrie*

Giorgio Sadotti, Virtual Bootleg

Shot within the iconic Blackpool Tower Ballroom, webcams attached to the bodies of four ballroom dancers webcast the experience in an atmospheric 4-way split screen.

Remaining one of the TVSS archive's most watchable pieces, Giorgio's disarmingly simple homage to pre-TV entertainment now forges a fascinating relationship with the present-day revival of the televised ballroom dance (*Strictly* et al). The queasy camera angles, frequent picture noise, and narcotic easy listening of the house band offer a bizarrely compelling spectacle a decade on, despite all the HD television on offer elsewhere. My enduring memory of organising this project was how hard it was to convince the management of the Tower—one of the UK's premier entertainment venues—to install the broadband we'd need, even though our project was prepared to cover all the costs. They just kept repeating *"But we're never, ever, going to use it once your filming's been done".*

`Chris Helson, The Act`

A response to the then nascent 'rolling news' phenomenon, Chris set himself the challenge to travel wherever the top story took him on the day. This resulted in an epic trip from Scotland to a remote archaeological site in Peru, a site chosen at the very last minute from footage on the BBC's 'top stories'. From the summit of the mountainous site, Chris was able to use a satellite phone to contribute to TVSS, but only several days after the live webcast. By actually walking to the site he eventually revealed the original BBC footage had shown a totally different ruin, confident that no viewer would ever actually see the new remote site.

Chris' meticulous preparations for this challenge set to himself had to cover the likelihood of last minute travel to almost any global location. So I recall a great volume of email about inoculations, visas, red tape, and risks. At the TVSS symposium, Chris cited over 500 project emails between us, and—interestingly—presented an article on the predicted quasi-magical qualities of the next generation of mobile phones —the 3G. On the live TVSS day itself, the torturous technical chaos of the webcast diverted Nina and I—a little—from our deep anxiety for Chris and his partner Sarah's safety, and (less so) for the feasibility of their live satellite call connecting to our servers. When finally at the end of an exhausting journey, Chris' heavy, oxygen-starved breath made it down the line, back in our studio we felt elated, the sense of an actual connection to a truly remote site was palpable and completely different from a televisual connection. A decade on, Chris adds, *"(Now) people saying 'I exist' is more important than anything else. Ten years ago I was concerned with what was significant, iconic, meaningful and banal in the story I followed. Now… being able to say 'I exist' out loud to everyone appears to be changing everything.*

The Arab spring happened not so much because of what people said on social networks but because they said anything".

Reviewing Chris' extensive TVSS material online, I am now thwarted by dead links which need to be fixed. But I also find a forgotten video shot by project manager Georgia Ward as Chris leaves London. Georgia—endearing and maternal—reassures Chris by telling him that it's good he's leaving for Peru from Paddington, since that's where TV icon Paddington Bear originated.
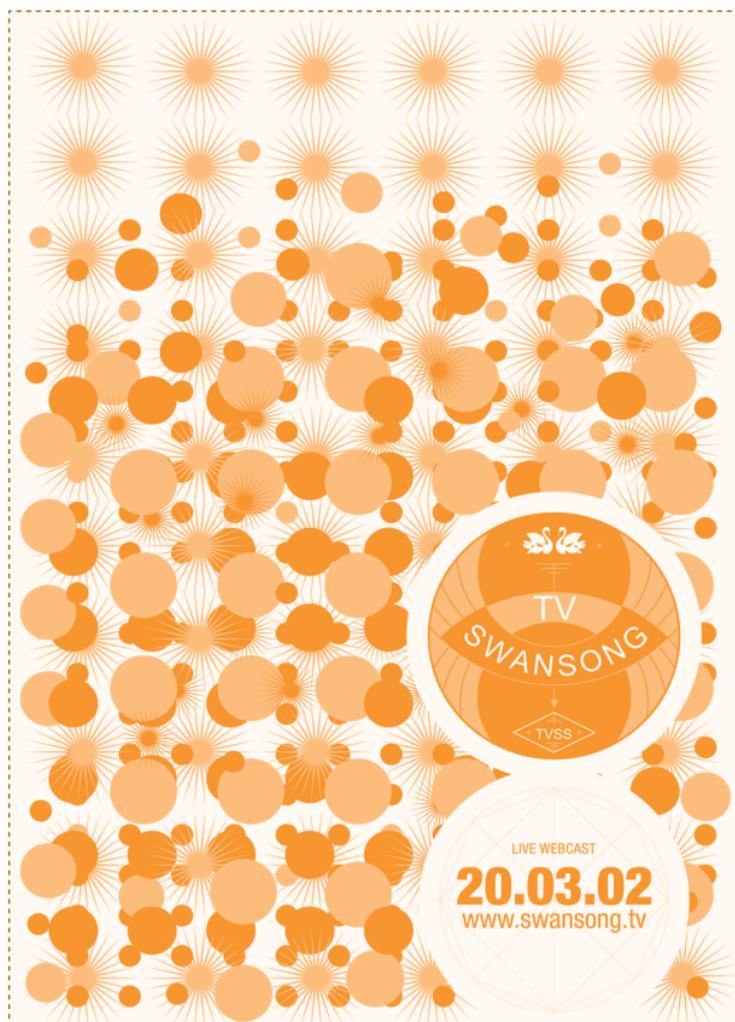
Jessica Voorsanger, Jessica Voorsanger meets SMart

TV-obsessive Jessica collaborated with hit BBC kids art show SMart, to create an art competition that resulted in a 'Kid's Turner Prize' held in the LCCA (Jessica's garden shed) which—like the real one—was presented by Matthew Collings. Except that he forgot to turn up. But he was great at the dress rehearsal, which you can see on the online archive.

Re-watching this in archive form I was struck by—and enjoyed in a rather icky way—Jessica's kidtastic presentation style, as it lurches from convincing 'presenter-speak' style to stumbled improv. I know that as a kid I would have found her American accent and colourful clothes totally cool.

Apart from Matthew Collings' priceless deadpan 'kid art' feature, including the immortal line "Is making art as nice as eating pies?" (I wish he'd ask that of a real Turner Prize winner), the highlight of Jessica's project for me was the convergence aspect, working with the BBC to run the art competition—on TV for real—and then bringing those winners into the live webcast. As a kid I was rather keen on such nationwide competitions, they seemed a rare chance to reach down (geographically, that is, from my homeland in Scotland) to the 'centre of the world'—London—where we all knew TV—and therefore What Really Mattered—was. I was a Blue Peter badge-winner, though the holy grail was of course the wish fulfillment of *Jim'll Fix It*. We could only dream of that.

Ten years on Jessica says *"I didn't agree with the original concept that TV was having a 'swansong' and that it was on its way out. But I am amazed to see how quickly the world adapts to the 'new'. My watching (research!) habits are now completely centered on my laptop with DVDs and the iPlayer!".*

Jordan Baseman, The Last Broadcast

A disrupted and frenzied monologue based on those of the seminal 1970s movie Network, in which a crazed newscaster announces his intention to commit suicide on-air.

"There's a global depression coming our way," warns Jordan's protagonist, amidst his diatribe against global culture. Jordan Baseman, one of the most senior of the TVSS artists, was always the recipient of a gentle but distinctly awed respect in the group. His gentle American accent and rather inscrutable, old-fashioned politesse helped. Once—during a group update meeting at our London Delfina Studio—I remember him playing a clip of test footage in which the actor's speech was (without warning) played backwards, unintelligibly. No one—absolutely no one—asked Jordan why. After a reflective pause, the meeting moved swiftly on. When asked to reflect on TVSS after a decade, Jordan sent this: *"I hate television. I hate it as much as peanuts. But I can't stop eating peanuts"* (Orson Welles, or so Jordan says).
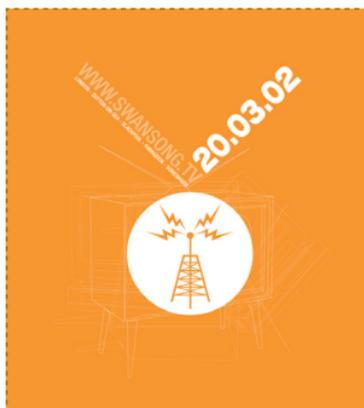
Graham Fagen, Radio Roselle

A live (or was it?) pirate radio web-cam of rogue DJ The Owner of Broadcasting playing out a selection of reggae and Scottish folk songs from the mid-Atlantic.

Graham and I both grew up in 'Burns country' in Ayrshire, amidst an endemic reverence for the poet. Re-watching *The Owner of Broadcasting* at work is a delight. He drinks a lot and seems to be enjoying himself. But how anyone was meant to believe he was on a ship when the telltale Glasgow tenement flat fireplace and alcove are in full view, is anyone's guess. But no matter, as our long-suffering project manager Georgia Ward said, "I like to think that The Owner of Broadcasting still continues to broadcast his tunes from Radio Roselle, somewhere in the mid Atlantic." This project was to turn out to be the first in a widely exhibited body of work by Graham about Burns and the connected histories of his political songs (such as *The Slaves Lament*) with Jamaica and Scotland. Reviewing our emails from a decade ago, we both identify the confusion of the music industry as to how to license this DJ set-cum-artwork we were proposing; the baffled replies from record label officialdom predicted the present-day meltdown of downloadable and online music distribution: *"As for copyright on the web, they say it's all vague." (Email from Graham, July 2001)*

Karen Guthrie & Nina Pope, Pope & Guthrie's Recommended Dose

As the Patientline hybrid TV set/ web browser/phone infiltrated the bedsides of hospital patients, we delivered to them this 'mockumentary' as suggested content for their new station. Collaborating with a comedy writing duo, the film infiltrated two very different hospital radio stations 'to comic effect', as they say.

It's not easy to write about one's own work, whether it's what you're doing now or ten years ago. This project remains a firm favourite of my partner Adam Sutherland, and certainly Nina's and my subsequent films have rounded off some of the anarchic rough-edges that this work celebrates: the hybrid of documentary, fiction and improvisation was—in hindsight—what lead to our 'defiantly unclassifiable' (or so said the Edinburgh International Film Festival) Bata-ville: *We are Not Afraid of the Future* (2005). Researching this crazed hospital satire, we met and (I suspect, mutually-influenced) TV producer Victoria Pile who went on to mastermind the brilliant hospital comedy *Green Wing*, and who hooked us up with comic writers Fay Rusling and Oriane Messina, who also later worked on *Green Wing*. Our own hospital satire made *Green Wing* look, shall we say, a little sober.

A forgotten email from one of the film's participants rose to the surface in my deep email dredge a decade on, healthily reminding me (once I'd stopped laughing) that not all of the hundreds of people we have worked with in our career came out the other end extolling our virtues:

Hello Nina & Karen,

I have been trying to get in touch with you for some time to talk to you about the video. It was a complete disaster for hospital broadcasting, you showed Royal Free and its volunteers to be complete morons and Whitechapel to be the Kings of Hospital Radio… Your efforts have (sic) been reported to the Hospital Broadcasting Association at Executive Committee level (sic) who were also very concerned about this going to air.

Yours,
A Representative for Hospital Broadcasting Association,
London Region.
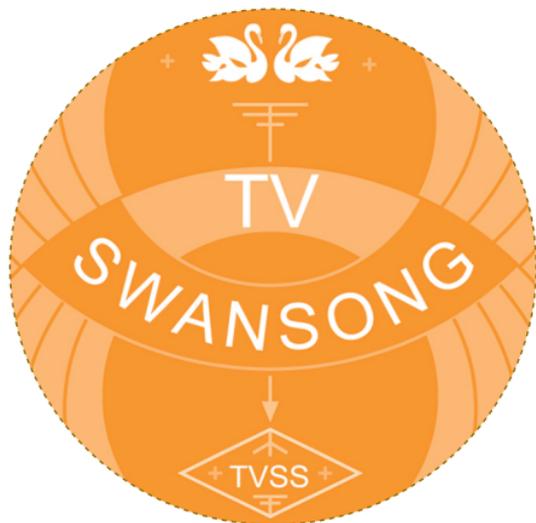
Zoe Walker & Neil Bromwich, In Search of a Small
Planet

An animation within a film within a stage show: A poetic portrait of the artists' love affair with TV and with each other, set amidst an anarchic live stage-show from Neil's hometown youth club.

Re-watching this piece after a decade I find myself reading it as much as a love letter between the two artists, as the accomplished film that it remains to this day. I am touched by the parallel fairy tales within the piece—Neil and his *Dukes of Hazzard* re-enactment and Zoe in her childhood bedroom with her sewing machine and dreams of *The Clangers*. One of the watershed moments in this project's evolution was when we finally made contact with Oliver Postgate, the revered originator of some of the most fondly-remembered TV shows of our childhoods: *The Clangers*; *Bagpuss*; *Ivor the Engine*. Rereading the old email exchange makes me laugh out loud—it's full of the kind of confusion and problematic (n)etiquette of early email, especially that written by and to the elderly (Postgate was by then in his late 70s). The upshot was a haughty refusal from

Postgate to even entertain the thought of a collaboration with Neil and Zoe, citing that 'his characters' were 'his property' and his alone. We can only dream of what may have resulted had he been more expansive. I wonder why we didn't get in touch with the makers of *The Dukes of Hazzard*?

Rory Hamilton & Jon Rogers, Generic Sci-Fi Quarry

An ambitious live public performance in an Oxfordshire Quarry, presenting a haunting fusion of digital projection and music made by former members of the revered BBC Radiophonic Workshop in a tribute to classic 1970s scifi TV.

One of TVSS's most complex projects from an organisational point of view, the event was also a 'crossover' success, attracting a vast crowd for the live event. Sadly in archive form this project suffers more than most, without the physical thrall of the massive sound system and vast projections. The performance was both retro and cutting edge, the visuals using heavy pixilation but still creating optical illusion against the backdrop of the quarry's 'walls', and the sounds alluding to Blake's 7 as much as to the Chemical Brothers. The *Generic Sci-Fi Quarry* legacy has been its contribution to an impressive revival of the work of members of the Radiophonic Workshop, who continue to collaborate and perform.
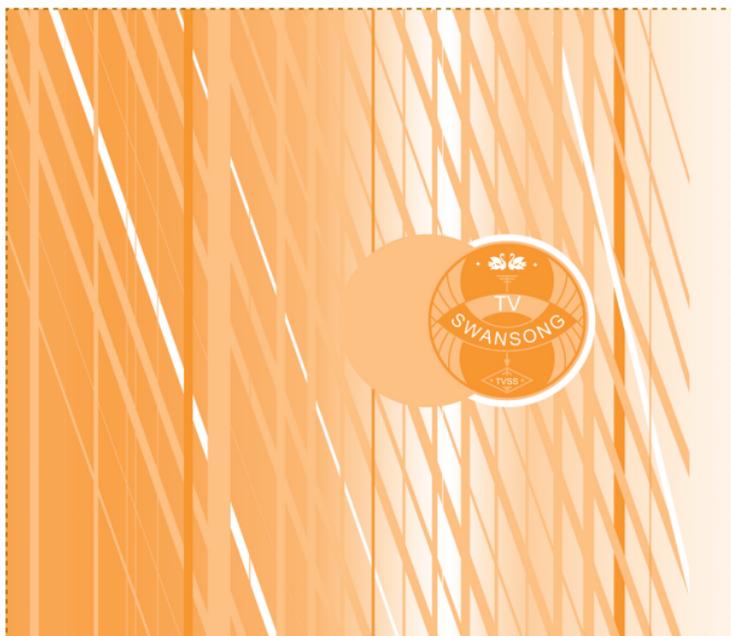
Notes:

TV LIKE US

is a publication on community, media and art in the city edited by Hanna Harris with Suvi Kukkonen, Olli-Matti Nykänen and Jenni Tuovinen. Part One revisits the TV Swansong project by artists Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope. **Part Two introduces contemporary cases of community TV and open media in Finland, Britain and Ireland.**

Part Two—Cases/Places

NOVEMBER 2, 1936
—An Introduction

by *Hanna Harris*

Precisely 75 years ago today, as I write this introduction on a dark November day in London, the BBC broadcast its first ever television programme. In 1936, there were an estimated 400 TV sets in the UK. What emerged was a globally admired public broadcasting service. Important aspects of the development of television in Britain were, on the one hand, fostering relationships with different localities across the country and, on the other, allowing for experimentation and artistic diversity. By the 1980s, British TV accommodated a number of acclaimed local and regional content producers. Furthermore, the golden era of British television saw a number of programmes commissioned in which artists worked with, or against, the medium and its conventions.

By the time this book comes out, Britain will have switched to digital TV. To mark the occasion, David Hall, one of the artists who pioneered television experiments with his *Disruptions* series, has placed 1001 TV sets in a London gallery. All are tuned to one of the UK's five analogue channels, and by mid-April when the switchover is complete, they will be a shimmering sea of grainy screens and white noise. Aptly titled *End Piece*, Hall's work reflects the end of an era. Amid the current technological and social changes, it is indeed debatable whether 'television'—as a medium or socio-cultural institution—still has the kind of relevance it once did. The Internet and TV are increasingly converging, while the flexibility of various distribution systems continues to blur the lines between live and archived programming. This publication brings together artists, researchers and technologists working with community TV in Finland, the United Kingdom and Ireland to reflect on the relationship between community, art and media. The publication is a follow-up to two community and artists' TV projects in which the Finnish Institute has recently been involved.

In early 2010, we initiated a residency exchange and a workshop for the acclaimed Liverpool-based community Internet television tenantspin (operated within FACT, the UK's leading centre for digital culture) and the more recent Helsinki-based M2HZ (run by the m-cult centre for new media culture). A team of residents and filmmakers from both channels travelled to work in the Anfield and Kontula neighbourhoods of Liverpool and Helsinki. As a result of their explorations of themes such as loneliness and citizenship in urban environments, they produced films to be screened in public spaces as part of the multi-city European Media Facades Festival 2010.

In June 2011, the Finnish Institute and FACT invited an international expert group working with community media to meet in Liverpool to discuss existing models, future policies and artists' practices. They concluded that, from artists' films to interactive council meetings, from documenting regeneration to promoting digital access, local and community television is fast becoming a key player in the changing broadcasting sector. Community TV helps to build citizenship, tell stories and give people a voice through DIY participation. The arts and culture sector has a crucial role in this process. The contributions to this book bring together and expand upon the discussions that took

place during the 2010 residency exchange and the 2011 expert meeting. The writers represent different perspectives on the topic: they are artists who have worked with or against broadcast television, arts professionals who have commissioned televisual work, community activists, technology developers and researchers. Some writers have chosen to focus on the conceptual challenges of the changing television environment; others give very practical accounts of running and developing community TV stations. What all the writers share, with some reservations, is that this thing called 'television' still holds a potent grip on our collective imaginations.

TV and Citizenship

The starting point for all the contributions has been the relationship between place and community in a televisual environment that is desperate to generate belonging. The terminological considerations are timely as the UK government has been busy re-examining its position with regard to 'local TV', an area that it sees as having commercial potential. Rather than focussing on geographical boundaries, contributors to this publication tend to speak of community media. As Patrick Fox writes in his article on tenantspin's more than 10-year existence, the channel has become "a place to create communal moments around an idea or subject". It has been important to recognise "its position as an incubator for ideas, mobilising thinking, solving and highlighting problems and engaging groups within creative thinking processes," he continues. Community is not, however, an easy given. While many of the writers agree that 'real and diverse' voices are essential in today's media, "being 'given a voice' is not the same as 'having a voice'", as Laura Sillars notes.

In order for a media outlet to become a place for such sharing, sustained forms of community engagement are needed. "Large sums of money were spent on the project in its pilot phase. The project partners allowed the project to incubate, find its feet, to make mistakes and grow. The project was allowed to do this by being free of any overarching agenda and being directed by participants with a bottom-up approach. Tenantspin did not have to cure all of Liverpool's ills or engage with every high-rise tenant across Liverpool," says Fox about tenantspin.

Through training and development, many of the community TV

stations described in this book have become mentors for groups to form arguments and present discussions fairly. At its best, community TV creates, or as some argue 'curates', the community and enhances digital literacy, and thus advances active citizenship, freedom of speech, or "what it is to be human" as Professor Andy Miah writes. "It is through comparing the multitude of different representations and stories now available to us that we learn," artist and community activist Mark Saunders notes. Finally, as Saunders continues, "there needs to be more debate that makes explicit and exposes who the 'community' is behind all media production".

The Art of TV

Such 'explicit exposures' have often come from artists working with or around the medium of television. A number of pioneering artists have experimented with TV by disrupting the seemingly impenetrable flow of televisual images or by making visible the underlying production structures. "As a child I was entranced by the spectacle of TV. When I came into contact with the *TV Interruptions* by artists such as Hall and Krikorian, it changed the way I saw the world, it interrupted the entire spectacle, the flow of entertainment and the expectations of the audience. This inspired me to not only to want to present my work on television because I liked watching it, but also because I wanted to reach and disrupt broad and diverse audiences. My own video experiments referenced TV," writes Mike Stubbs, filmmaker and director of FACT, in his personal reflection on TV.

While it is beyond the scope of this publication to elaborate in detail on the rich history of artist TV from commissioned artists' programmes in the context of mainstream TV to experiments that have positioned themselves in opposition to TV, some crucial points emerge. The book opens with a specially commissioned look back at *TV Swansong* (TVSS), a cross-platform TV project from 2002, conceived by artists Karen Pope and Nina Guthrie, which involved contributions from several other artists. TVSS was a reflection on the changes that TV was facing back in the early 2000s or, as its title suggests, on the medium's end. "The most successful moments in *TV Swansong* were those that hooked into the idea that television can be at its most powerful when it breaks down and the cracks that skirt the edges of its smooth conti-

nuities appear," wrote Dan Fox in his review of TV Swansong in *Frieze* magazine (Frieze 07/06/02). Ten years on, Karen Guthrie and curator Sarah Cook spoke for this publication to a number of artists involved in TVSS and to a global community of creative practitioners about artist TV today. As the position of TV in society keeps changing, artists find themselves again asking, as they did with TVSS in the aftermath of the coming of age of the Internet, what is the socio-cultural importance of this medium, which has for the past decades held such a powerful position in our cultures.

Today, some feel that TV is no longer a medium that requires actively taking a position, be it within, for or against. Rather, its conventions become the stuff of play. Younger artist groups who work around the concept of TV, such as London-based Auto Italia and Lucky PDF, seem to thrive on a nostalgic appreciation of TV shows created in front of a live audience, staging such live 'broadcasts' at art fairs and in galleries. The participation and sharing take place in the 'liveness' of the 'studio'. Simultaneously, many recognise that recent initiatives such as *The Space*—a partnership between Arts Council England and the BBC to create "an experimental digital-arts media service and commissioning programme that could help to transform the way people connect with, and experience, arts and culture"—raise problematic questions as to where artists stand in relation to the future of broadcasting. In a recent issue of *Art Monthly* (AM 352), the writer Colin Perry notes that television has once more become a fashionable subject within artistic practice and discourse, but reminds us that: "It is vital to recall how deeply problematic the medium remains, and why it was the target of activist artists in the first place."

Reflecting on his experiences with 1980s TV activism, Mike Stubbs says: "In my current role, I am attempting to address the materiality of the media institution in order to push its boundaries, to build resources with communities of creative people wanting to ask questions and create social change." Tenantspin founders, the Danish artist group Superflex consider themselves a "prime example of artists as vanguards of technology", as they say in an interview with Minna Tarkka for this publication. "But it's not the technology that Superflex were after, but the possibility to create participatory forms of culture using the tools at hand."

Making TV in Public

Finally, a number of contributions to this book focus on the practicalities of producing community TV today. They all share the belief that community media matters in today's changing media landscape, and that TV—despite its shortcomings and shifting position in a media environment that no longer centres solely around the televisual medium—still holds an important place in reimagining communities and their voices. Ciaran Moore from Dublin Community TV argues for scalable, adaptable and accountable production methods that help to incubate small production teams. There is a need for open access to platforms and Electronic Programme Guides (EPGs) to allow open formats and other tools of community television to reach their full potential.

Community TV also exists in an active relationship with the city, through street studios and distribution, and viewing platforms located in public spaces. "To be able to influence society, community TV channels need to actively create possibilities for viewing the programmes in spaces where viewers can discuss and reflect on their reactions to the seen content," says Emmi Vainio of M2HZ.

Antennas of Change

Artistic Director of Site Gallery in Sheffield Laura Sillars closes this publication with an eloquent reflection on the contentious relationship between art, community and media. Savouring her timely words, I find myself going back to the places and people of Liverpool. One sunny day in 2011, our team visited Liverpool's Anfield neighbourhood. On the one hand, the area bathes in the global recognition created by Liverpool Football Club's legendary Anfield stadium. It welcomes devoted fans with the words "You'll Never Walk Alone" perched above its main entrance. On the other hand, the stadium is surrounded by rows of boarded-up houses and myriad social problems. Demolition sites mark on-going regeneration efforts. With sustained support from Arena Housing, Anfield is also one of the key neighbourhoods where tenantspin operates. As part of the 2010 tenantspin/M2HZ exchange, and with the help of filmmaker Alex Harrison, four Anfield residents wrote and filmed the short film *Four Bricks.* This is a short, poetic, visually powerful piece about how the four interact with their surround-

ings. Following our visit to Anfield, we meet two of the *Four Bricks* writers and the tenantspin team to talk about the exchange and the making of the film, and about what being part of tenantspin means to them. While the residents' film crew sat talking about their story and what they wanted to do with the film, Anfield houses were being demolished outside. The storyline stems from their experiences, as the group talked about identity, change and nomadism. "It is our story, our own writing," says one of the film's writers, tenantspin member and Anfield resident Alan Kelly.

"With the Anfield film a lot of the images that came out were sort of nostalgia and memory, and a bit of reality and a bit of displacement and change," explains filmmaker Alex Harrison. At one point, the group did an exercise in which they all brought an item that spoke to them about how they felt about their neighbourhood. "The first thing that stood out really was a brick and the idea of what the brick represents, when the place is really changing. There's loads of different ways you can interpret it, like the thought of the weight and the idea of a new generation in a changing community," Harrison continues. In the last shot of the film everyone walks off in a different direction. "They're actually walking to the direction where they live. It wasn't even a staged thing, people just went back to the houses where they live", says film director Harrison.

As I watch the film and listen to two elderly Anfield residents who have been involved with tenantspin since its very beginning, I get a sense that I am witnessing something profound about how communities and places enter into dialogue. "Anybody could voice their opinion. If tenantspin hadn't been there, the voices and memories would have been lost. Thousands of people can write letters, but only five of them would have been published. With tenantspin we can have 60 or 70 people at one go in a webcast and they can voice their opinions about all sort of things," enthuses the now deceased Anfield resident John McQuirk.

Tenantspin, having grown out of the artist group Superflex's original Superchannel intervention, has firmly rooted itself in the Liverpudlian soil and collective imagination. Through sustained investment and the courage of all the parties involved, it has grown to nurture an idea of citizenship. "Superflex provided the technological touch paper, which, once lit, proved so inspiring to the group involved that it

has remained ablaze all these years," as Patrick Fox writes in this book.

The experiments and projects explored in this book are part of that cultural, technological and social touch paper, which continues today to spark a re-imagining of television. It's flame has deeply touched people like Allan and John—and will hopefully do so for another 75 years. What we refer to as TV continues to mutate at the intersection of community, media and art. Welcome to explore TV like us.

Hanna Harris is a curator, producer and researcher with an educational background in urban studies and new media arts and design. Since October 2008, she has directed the Arts & Culture Programme at the Finnish Institute in London. Prior to working at the Finnish Institute, Hanna held production and concept design roles at festivals and in television, including ISEA2004 (International Symposium on Electronic Arts), where she produced public programmes in Helsinki and on a Baltic cruise ferry. Since 2005, she has worked as an urban researcher at the Universities of Helsinki, Milano-Bicocca, Cambridge and Sheffield on a PhD about street television practices.

PERSONAL MEDIA ON THE MATERIAL OF MEDIA

by *Mike Stubbs*

Emerging models of narrow cast and community media begin with broadcast television itself. It is the curiosity of artists and technicians who have built networks to distribute content across greater distances, innovate and hack the devices and systems of communication who have always been at the forefront of the relation between media and the constitution of publics.

I want to talk about the trajectory of this relationship between media and community from broadcast television to contemporary distributed forms through *my own experience*. I start in childhood with my family and early TV watching habits, move through a period working as an artist producer committed to using media to enact and enable political change, to arrive at my current role as someone who oversees a large media organisation facilitating community collaboration, art production and experiments in public broadcasting.

Early Media Art History

Such was the dominance of mainstream media that by the 1970s most people formed their worldview by watching the 'box' or the 'tube'. We were playground critics, consumed the same limited programmes from a small number of networks and watched as much inappropriate material we could get our eyes on. The close relationship between government and broadcast was determined by a small number of people, primarily upper class in editorial or producer positions, and at certain points individuals such as Mary Whitehouse campaigned to protect our moral standards by attempting to introduce reactionary forms of censorship, through the 'Clean-Up TV' pressure group, established in 1964. The ability to control what media was broadcast and viewed existed, pornography would be viewed in booths, not freely available on the Internet.

At that time, understanding media was essential with the fast rise of the phenomena. Marshall McLuhan saw beyond TV as a carrier of contaminating content, whilst Marxist theory, de-constructed consumerism, challenged power structures and the 'dominant media'. Both independent film and community media emerged. Television was a powerful persuader and emerging theorists, independent filmmakers, activists and artists would inevitably disrupt, enter and experiment with this important field of communication and publication. Naturally as a televisual culture became prevalent, it too would also become a material of which to make art both with and from. In addition to experimental filmmakers' interest in structure and the material in itself, video artists quickly referenced TV and saw television as a meaningful site for the display of their work.

Nam June Paik, considered to be the first video artist and the

godfather of new media, experimented with video synthesizers, performance and television, bringing together new sets of knowledge and technologies. His work not only referenced the new televisual era through the sculptural values of the set, but also exploited the potential of the globalised network itself.

In *Good Morning, Mr Orwell* (1984) Paik, a natural collaborator and improviser connected artists of different disciplines together, including John Cage and Charlotte Moorman, through video transmission networks across the globe. These networked video performances involved improvisation in different spaces, creating a perverse and durational multi-cast live broadcast, which at once interfered with and challenged main-stream media. What also distinguished this from other experiments in live television broadcasts, such as the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, or the Eurovision Song Contest, was the notion of equal weighting between the originating transmissions. These events were a collaborative jam, not a broadcast of a virtuoso and its message. They were, like much of Paik's work, irreverent and haptic.

Pioneering experiments with technology and the hands on hacking of basic electronics could only function to de-mystify high technology as part of an emerging DIY culture. In addition to being an artist producer, Nam June Paik was also visionary in his early adoption of the term 'Information Superhighway'. It is important to understand the role of this seminal artist in thinking through and making work that engaged with the first stages of a global phenomenon, a phenomenon that would transform nearly every aspect of our contemporary world.

On this side of the Atlantic, artists such as Tamara Krikorian and David Hall had been strongly influenced by Paik, and developed a distinctly British take on TV. My favorite example being, *This is a TV Receiver*, by David Hall (1976), which featured BBC newsreader Richard Baker describing the material nature of the image re-filmed off the screen to create video feedback and image loss, not unlike Alvin Luciers audio work *I am sitting in a room*. This work was 'inserted' into an eight pm slot on BBC 2 following on from the 1973 series *TV Interruptions* featuring more of Halls works, produced by Anna Ridley.

These works and others of this nature have been influential in my trajectory as an artist and media producer.

My History with TV

Radio Rentals was the company that installed our first set, circa 1964, recalling the place of radio as the precursor to television in family life at that time. In wartime Britain my father would huddle around the radio with family to get the latest information, news and entertainment. The television was another such box through which communities were drawn together in collective watching and engagement. Technologies of communication were central to my family life, both in terms of early adoption and participation in building technologies and in terms of a mass-mediatised existence common to many post-war suburban families.

My parents had moved to one of Britain's first utopian new towns where my father, having escaped the shipyard in Barrow in Furness where his father had worked, went to work at British Rubber. There he worked on one of the first electron microscopes used for pioneering research into synthetic materials. Later, at Unilever he would work on the mass production of enzymes that would become biological washing powder, the freeze drying process that would lead to the frozen pea and artificial flavours. The family were asked to blind-test foodstuffs, such as strawberry yoghurt. No disclaimers were necessary then—synthetic foods in a synthetic town.

My father had been an early advocate of technology, having served in the RAF and later with employment as a scientific technician. Post-war leisure time, I saw him take up amateur photography and ham radio, activities which epitomised a new culture of DIY and hobbyism. In the late nineties these and other similar activities would be rediscovered by hackers becoming a fashionable lifestyle choice.

My mother was also an early adopter. She adopted birth control, rock and roll, alcohol, marketing and TV—a *tube* that would introduce a wonderful new world, including the cigarettes that would eventually kill her, to our council estate in Welwyn Garden City. TV was also an experiment for my mother in child distraction. I was the four-year-old guinea pig and perhaps the first victim of bad parenting through TV nannying. During the 1960s, trade test transmissions were looped moving image films for TV engineers to tune in fresh televisions, alongside the static test-card, for the purpose of checking signal strength and aligning the guns of the cathode ray tube. My favorite transmission

was of the famous car race, the Mille Miglia, which I watched over and over again, apparently fascinated with the spectacle. This fascination is something humorously deconstructed by video artist William Wegman in his work *Dog Duet* (1975), which functions to remind us of how humans, like animals, are stimulated and fascinated by movement and shape. The combination of this phenomena, combined with storytelling, is what lead to television being so successful as a form of communication and entertainment.

Opinion on the psychological affects of TV on children has shifted significantly over the last 30 years. The attention of many studies that would suggest children suffer from shorter attention spans if they watch too much TV under the age of five, however… [Author gets up to make a cup of tea.] These early experiences of being part of a televisual culture influenced my own artistic production. As child I was entranced by the spectacle of TV. When I came into contact with the *TV Interruptions* by artists such as Hall and Krikorian, it changed the way I saw the world, it interrupted the entire spectacle, the flow of entertainment and expectations of the audience. This inspired me to not only want to present my work on television because I liked watching it, but also because I wanted to reach and disrupt broad and diverse audiences. My own video experiments referenced TV. *Cooking With Katie* (1980) mimicked one of the first TV adverts for *Oxo* meat stock cubes. Katie was a female figure of married perfection. I crudely imitated her blissful image, disturbingly attempting to communicate with the viewer through with lips torn and then elastorplasted together in front a TV showing *Pans People*, the dancing girls from *Top of the Pops*. This was of course strongly influenced by the feminist video art Martha Rosler and her work *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1973). In *Waiter There's a Fly on my Wall* (1982) I lugged a U'matic porta-pack, umbilicalled to a heavy 'portable' 3 tube camera around Harwood House following my Mum and Dad pretending they owned it, in what might be considered an early video art mockumentary.

In 1985 I was fortunate to spend a week on a documentary workshop with Don Pennebaker at Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff. Pennebaker was famous for getting up close and intimate with his subjects in films such as *Don't Look Back* and *Montery Pop*. He was an innovator, hacking a 16mm film camera to include a sound recording head

and thereby inventing a very small truly portable film camera that enabled film makers to capture moving images in a way that was a forerunner to investigative cinematic journalism and played an essential role in the democratisation of media. The advent of affordable and mobile devices enabled documentarists to get behind the scenes and be flies on the wall, community activists to tell their own stories, and experimentalists to muck about or make art. The small portable camera also enabled individuals to go out on their own taking on every role in the production, using the camera like a pencil without the compromises involved in multi-people shoots.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s I was a practitioner caught between two paradigms. On the one hand I was a video artist, having graduated from the Cardiff Art School and the Royal College of Art, where my mentors were Malcom Le Grice, Stuart Marshall and Peter Gidal. These practitioners extolled the virtues of structural materialism and deconstruction of the mainstream media. On the other hand, I was a socially and politically motivated media producer wanting to use popular media challenge the status quo and argue for social justice.

I explored both these avenues of production within the context of two different organisations, Chapter Community Video Workshop and Chapter Independent Film Workshop. Chapter Community Video Workshop worked with local communities on issues such as housing, poverty, Roma education and trade unionism. This is where I gained extracurricular access to video equipment (half inch black and white portapack) to make a scratch video. Chapter Independent Film Workshop was where I learned to make 16mm films. This was the period when Jean-Luc Goddard had his entire back catalogue screened at Chapter Cinema to healthy audiences at every screening. Structural materialism called on filmmakers to reject narrative structures and treat film as a medium of illusion, to deny representation and deconstruct 'grand narratives'. For example, Goddard's final film made in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin as part of the Dziga Vertov Group, *Letter to Jane* (1972), is a cinematic essay deconstructing a single photograph of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. Although Chapter Film and Video Workshops shared a single roof I was always amazed at the separation and lack of communication between two practices that shared similar ideological roots, that both aimed to challenge received realities and

bring about political change through the moving image. My interest was in bringing these two traditions together—to take a deconstructive approach to socially motivated storytelling. This later translated into taking what might be understood as a 'structuralist' approach to the media institution. In my current role, I am attempting to address the materiality of the media institution in order to push its boundaries, to build resources with communities of creative people wanting to ask questions and create social change.

Community Media History

I come to my current role as director of FACT, not only as a creative producer, but also from a long history of involvement in media institutions and festivals that brought together the two key strands of media activism and experimental art. Video festivals emerging in the late eighties, such as the Independent Video Festival at Southhill Park, Bracknell or Video Positive Festival in Liverpool, presented broad programmes of practice that straddled political documentary and video art. Workshops at these festivals acted as hubs providing tools of production and knowledge exchange. Platform Films and many others would emerge from this cross over culture—taking a lead on the Miner Campaign Tapes, a series made of titles such as *Its not Just Tea and Sandwiches.*

Experiments were not exclusively the terrain of production but alternative models of distribution were emerging and pioneered as the TV industry continued like a juggernaut. For example, *Despite TV* shared premises with a socialist bookshop and video rental outlet in Roman Road, Tower Hamlets. They released on VHS, *Despite the Sun*, a documentary questioning Rupert Murdoch's destruction of the unionised printing industry through the introduction of mechanised printing works in Wapping. This bookshop, video production house, and distribution centre was historically a meeting place for social activists and an alternative space for grass roots practice and self-publishing. Electronic distribution, be it initially analogue, was a natural evolution.

Network 1 was a travelling video library that I curated, which rotated between Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, Projects UK/Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle and the Midland Group, Nottingham. It included a very mixed selection of tapes and films, such as a collection of early

Derek Jarman combined with community media work such *What They Telling Us It's Illegal For* made by youth from Birmingham investigating why home audio tape copying was illegal, bringing focus to bear on the issues of media rights protection and piracy, prefiguring the debate that the existence of Napster would precipitate in the digital realm.

This current of independent production was granted more institutional leverage, when in 1983 Sianel Pedwyr and Channel 4 were formed. Part of their deal meant that 15% of advertising revenues were to paid into a fund to encourage independent production, and as part of that package funds were available for community and independent workshops to gain access to new production facilities. Video workshop went for an upgrade from Umatic to Beta sp and the film workshop, flatbed editing tables (Steenbecks). The new funds were accessible to emerging producers and enabled a major leap forward for independent production, with a proliferation of low budget shorts, features, documentaries and more experimental work. In Wales this also contributed to a resurgence in the Welsh Language movement, as production had to be in primarily Welsh and also presented new opportunities for fledgling technicians to break through the closed shop of the ACTT (Association of Cinematic and Television Technicians).

Prior to this, access to equipment was prohibitively expensive and without a union card for the ACTT you simply could not work professionally in film or video. I gained my union card through Chapter Film Workshop and started earning a living increasingly camera assistant jobbing for HTV and BBC Wales having failed to get a BBC traineeship. At that time TV still had a sense of regionality and although organised by large companies still represented the views of different voices. ITV when it was introduced had over 11 companies supply regional content, Anglia, Granada and London Weekend, being some. This was a period when ideology had traction. I was a member of Artists against Apartheid making and anti-apartheid video *Greetings from the Cape of Good Hope*, 1983. Greenham Common became a site for a persistent anti-nuclear campaign attracting significant numbers of female activists to occupy the perimeters of the airbase. Alongside documentary and community information films, artists would lend more poetic support, notably *In our Hands Greenham*, by Tina Keane (1985).

In 1984, Margaret Thatcher went to war with the unions, deter-

mined to introduce privatisation following a failed skirmish in 1981. This is best remembered through the dispute with the NUM, National Union of Mineworkers. An ugly two-year strike led to the destruction of communities and villages in South Wales and mass unemployment and hardship, leaving only 3 of the 350 pits operational. The nature of the engineering and maintenance meant that neglected the pits would flood and be left useless. The BBC was reputedly under pressure to conform to government pressure in their reportage and subsequently members of the ACTT such as myself volunteered in filming these events after the NUM prevented the BBC in covering the events, to form *the Miners Campaign Tapes.*

While this was a difficult period for all forms of political activism in the UK, mass privatisation and the concurrent breakup of large state run media and industries was the precursor to the contemporary distributed media landscape.

Into the Now

The key question that I now find myself confronting is how, given the break down of these larger institutional, one-to-many forms of communication, how can we still be political with the material and structure of our media? How does ideology function as a practice in the contemporary media landscape? With the mass production of micro-electronics in the global economy the tools of production have been increasingly put in the hands of the worker and by this mechanism the masses have gained access to the channels of self-representation. [Author goes off to make another cup of tea.]

So as the world's geo-political axis has shifted to a meta-capitalist framework it has opened up the *potential for more extensive social and political connections between a wide range of communities and places. The fascination now is the real-time negotiation of these relationships, communication, exchange and action. It is through comparing the multitude of different representations and stories now available to us that we learn.* However, while the fast and easy access to these narratives has opened up an entirely new field of action we must not forget that there is still ideology embedded in the material of our communication. This new personalised media landscape is never an unmediated access to 'reality'. While the techno-utopian dream may for some seem to have

been realised, I think that the task is in fact now to engage politics in new ways appropriate to the new forms.

Mediated images of social unrest, change and reconstruction have become normalised, as part of televisual spectacle in the West, tracking early radio broadcasts of war breaking out, walls tumbling, monuments toppling. However, what we have seen recently across the Middle East appears different. Multiple feeds of documentation and citizen journalism have merged with the communication between revolutionaries and dissidents, strongly suggesting that message is the medium and the medium is the action. But we must still remember that forming groups on Facebook in Egypt should not be confused with protest itself. They function faster and more immediately than older forms but they still only function in congress with the actions of bodies in the street.

It is the nature of the connection between new media forms and the individuals who act that interests me the most. In my role as the director of a media institution, I am interested in understanding how to make use of the closer and more immediate connection between individuals that personal media creates. How is it possible to work with the material of interpersonal relationships and social structures through media? On the one hand FACT itself is a community meeting space and hub for interpersonal and interdisciplinary exchange, on the other hand it is also a structure for exhibitions and within which longer terms experiments can be carried out. Two examples of art experiments with political media that have taken place at FACT are tenantspin and Ahmed Basiony's *30 Days Running on the Spot* installation.

Tenantspin, a partnership between FACT and Arena Housing originated out of an artists initiative Superchannel by Superflex, is

one good local example of alternative modes of local engagement and activism across what has now become perhaps Britain's longest running community TV station. One of the key aspects in the success of this programme is its long running duration. With the increasing speed of media distribution and reception, there is a concurrent tendency to expect instant results in every connected domain, social, political and interpersonal. Rather, I believe what we need is sustained forms of community engagement enacted in new ways through media. In this

respect tenantspin is a valuable model of self determined media for social change, meshing art, community and communication.

Ahmed Basiony was one of the few contemporary artists in Egypt who was consistently experimenting with the tools of digital media as a primary medium. One of his works, *Thirty Days Running in the Place* (2010) reveals Basiony jogging daily for one hour whilst wearing a suit of electronic sensors that picked up how far he ran and how much sweat he produced. Visualised by a computer and projected onto a large screen, the data formed an abstract portrait of a body not just in motion but changing physiologically under the influence of exercise. The piece is all the more poignant as it contains the last echoes of Basiony's life in the form of the data he collected: the artist was killed during the Egyptian uprising just a few months later. At FACT, the work was presented alongside documentary footage filmed by the artist in Cairo's Tahrir square in the lead up to his murder. The footage from the square, it is believed, formed part of a second performance that the artist had prepared to present, before his death. The intimacy of these haphazard images, coupled with the physiological apparatus from *30 Days Running in the Place* (2010), evidences the artist's belief in art functioning as a primal mechanisation of the self. Dually, it function as a dissident view from the dominant representation of the state-run mass media—encouraging Egyptian audiences to halt their 'suspension of disbelief'.

The challenge that exists for me in running FACT, is how to be responsive to the political exigencies of current events from the micro-personal to the macro-global scale as well as carrying out long term interventions that have deep level ramifications within the immediate community. I continue to be fascinated with forms that enact interruptions in dominant representations, such as Basiony's work, as well as enabling popular access to alternative narratives. I am still always trying to do things differently, dating from my use of video in the early eighties to my work with the media of the institution itself today. I still need to push and question the parametres of the medium. This is not always an easy task when confronted with policy precedents that lay out a instrumentalised approach to arts and culture. We need to be pedagogical in our approach to the policy makers. *We need to teach them that art is innovation, that we are the realtime experiment.*

"Like McLuhan says, we are antenna for changing society. But not only antenna—we also have output capacity, capacity to humanitise technology. My job is to see how establishment is working and to look for little holes where I can get my fingers in and tear away walls. And also try not to get too corrupt."
—Nam June Paik

Mike Stubbs is the Director of FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, the UK's leading organisation for the commissioning and presentation of film, video and new media art forms. Jointly appointed in May 2007 by John Moores Liverpool University he is Professor of Art, Media and Curating. He is currently leading a new capital development, Ropewalks Square, forming a creative and digital hub for the city of Liverpool around FACT. Mike established the ROOT, Burning Bush and AND festivals and has commissioned and produced moving-image based exhibition programmes and artworks, including: White Noise, Stanley Kubrick, Pixar for ACMI, Australian Centre for Moving Image and SkInterfaces, Pipilotti Rist and Hsieh Teching, as part of Liverpool's European Capital of Culture 2008, the Liverpool Biennial and the FACT programme. An award-winning and respected moving image artist in his own right, Mike Stubbs' work encompasses film, video, installation and performance. He has won more than a dozen major international awards including first prizes at the Oberhausen and Locarno Film Festivals, and in 1999 was invited to present a video retrospective of his work at the Tate Gallery, London. In 2002 he won a Banff Fleck Fellowship.

INTERVIEW: SUPERFLEX

by *Minna Tarkka*

The Danish artists' collective Superflex have made international news and prompted a number of lawsuits with their projects that disrupt spaces of economic power and copyright regimes.

The Helsinki-based m-cult centre for new media culture interviewed Bjørnstjerne Christiansen and Rasmus Nielsen of Superflex during their visit to Helsinki in April 2011 during the IHME Days contemporary art event, at which Superflex had been commissioned to show their urban media intervention *Modern Times Forever.* Besides discussing the IHME Project and one of the group's earlier projects— the classic open-source initiative *Free Beer*—we particularly wanted to know more about Superchannel—the web television project initiated by Superflex in 1999.

Superchannel and its work with the Liverpool-based community television tenantspin has been an important model for m-cult in its creation of its open M2HZ channel in Helsinki since 2005. M-cult has also recently worked with tenantspin on artist-led workshops with communities in Kontula, Helsinki, and Anfield, Liverpool.

So how did Superchannel start and evolve? And why did such a successful project suddenly end in 2007?

Bjørnstjerne Christiansen: At the very beginning, we were annoyed by television and the power of television. When the Internet came about in the 1990s, it was interesting to see that we could be part of defining how this should be approached. We had this idea that you could take the metaphor of a TV channel and add it to this new medium, which today sounds very banal—but this was the last millennium. So we had this idea of starting a TV channel, but on the Net, and to do it with people who are not usually involved in producing media. The idea, from the beginning, was very much about how you could take the power of television and enable people, creating a tool that would let them produce their own content. The idea of having one billion TV channels instead of five big ones, and see what that would do to the world.

It started out very experimental, like a lot of projects we have done, in a gallery context in Copenhagen. We chose the name the Superchannel because it sounded very TV-like. We opened the gallery and everybody could come in and participate in producing TV, interact with people in the studio, chat, and things like that. All this is quite banal today, but at that point it was very new and there was a radio-amateur feeling about it. It broke down a lot, the Net was so unstable. But it worked very well. There was a huge number of people interested in doing things. Incredible, funny things happened during the month when we had this open studio where people could just come in from the street. After that, we decided to go a step further and develop a system that would enable multi-users to use it so that we could have one channel there and one channel here—and they would all broadcast through the system we had constructed. The American programmer Sean Treadway was important in this. He knew the technical stuff, the programming part; he had a very strong feel for that.

We then moved [in 1999] to open the first Superchannel outside the gallery context. Tenantspin was set up in a tower block in Liverpool. The channel was run by the old people who lived in the tower block. The idea was to give the power of media to people who are not used to dealing with media; a sort of merging of producer and user. It was, of course, in the beginning, very new, because a lot of the producers had no computer experience. But very soon they said that they now looked at TV in a different way than before, watching normal TV. It proved to us that there was something important going on. By producing media

Liverpool residents making TV. Photo: Superflex

Superchannel Studio. Photo: Superflex

you also understand media. And you thereby also distribute some of the incredible power that lies in TV.

Over the span of seven years, we made 30 or 40 channels in lots of different settings and situations. But tenantspin was the first and probably the best. Superchannel was a groundbreaking project. It presented a working platform for online video more than five years before YouTube, and is thus a prime example of artists as vanguards of technology. But it's not the technology that Superflex were after, but the possibility of creating participatory forms of culture using the tools at hand. As online video became mainstream, this socially grounded aspect was left out of the picture. Social media today is a mass pop culture with its global brands—resembling fast-food chains for communication, which increasingly work as platforms for personalized marketing and self-promotion. The level of participant ownership and engagement is far from what has been achieved at tenantspin, where actual collaboration and dialogue between artists and community members is emphasised.

Rasmus Nielsen: Tenantspin was the most interesting and the most successful one in terms of the amount of production and of how we wanted to see the tools. But we also tested Superchannel in lots of different settings. It was a way of bringing people together, even though they're not in the same space. But it was also important for us all to get rid of the idea of the viewer. We talk about the user, who also becomes the participant. It was important to challenge the way media was produced in that situation.

The funny and fascinating thing was that the producers thought there would be millions watching. That was the dream and fantasy created around the Internet at that time—and it's still the impression for many people. One guy, a reggae promoter, had a weekly show. He was incredible, acted like he had millions of viewers, responding to them out there, living in this fantasy bubble. That I found interesting. I am a bit disappointed in how Internet TV has developed. Because I think that YouTube is still more about the producer and viewer. I don't see the user so much. It is pretty much on-demand. And that was what we tried to avoid or challenge. How could we have viewers change the show. We were sitting talking and someone said, "No, it's a lie. I think it's wrong", and we had to react to it.

We ran the studio in Copenhagen for five years. It was quite demanding. We worked to get everyone involved in production to relate very closely to the channel. When it worked we produced some very good examples. Like the group with a specific, serious disease: we had a talk in the studio with some people who have the disease, and outside there were curious family members of those with the disease, and all of sudden there was a real exchange going on.

Then the IT bubble became enormous and a lot of people contacted us. We had discussions with big broadband companies and everyone wanted to have a New Super Channel. But how to land a deal with them? In giving them the tools you may not be able to be as open as you want to be. Two-three years of turning it into a business while trying to preserve a certain level of autonomy...

And you need a lot of money. We used a lot of our own money to keep it running, because at the time bandwidth was incredibly expensive. Finally [in 2007] we decided that we should not continue running Superchannel, because we were becoming sort of IT businessmen or administrators. As Superflex we prefer to build models and examples that others can look up and, of course, we have to go the whole way. It takes three, four, five years, and we do that, too. But we need our space to move about, to take the next step. So it just faded out, and we have all taken on the idea, and probably some people have looked a little bit at what we did. And that is the best way. Making sample tools, models and taking them into a different context.

The full video interview, with Finnish subtitles, can be viewed at:
www.m2hz.net/jaksot/avoin-media-superflex

Minna Tarkka is curator, producer and director of m-cult centre for new media culture in Helsinki.

Q&A: ADNAN HADZI

How can broadcasting systems be reconfigured into participative media? How can media systems be used to provide access to closed circuits? These are the questions explored by Adnan Hadzi and his collaborators. Adnan is finalising a practice-based PhD entitled *FLOSSTV— Free, Libra, Open Source Software (FLOSS)* within participatory 'TV hacking' Media and Arts Practices at Goldsmiths College, London. His research focuses on the influence of digitalisation and the new forms of media and arts production, as well as the author's rights in relation to collective authorship. The practical outcome of his research is *Deptford.TV*, an online database drawing on and documenting the current process of urban change in Deptford, South East London. Adnan is also part of the artist group !Mediengruppe Bitnik. The group's artistic practice focuses on media systems, medialised realities and live media feeds, which they manipulate and reproduce to give the viewer a novel and refined understanding of their mechanisms. Here we talk to Adnan about communities, power and experimenting with TV.

What do you understand by community media? How and by whom is it produced?

I like to refer to the Critical Art Ensemble's notion of "electronic civil disobedience" (1996). Community is a discriminatory term, a label, used for minority communities; it is too loaded. This leaves out the power you can assert with media. I don't see the power in community. There is a political dilemma with 'community media': it becomes about power vs. community media, about empowering vs. taking the power away. That's why I prefer to use the term 'participatory media', although, recently, this term has become loaded too, especially with the recent discussions around 'social networks'. You can allow mainstream media to be there, too.

2 *You have been hacking contemporary TV cultures with Deptford. TV. What kind of media and TV are being created with it?*

Deptford.TV is research into media and communication. It is practice-based experimentation, not a community media project. It's about getting lost in collectives. Deptford.TV started in 2005 with the notion of urban change. The community-media angle was strong from the beginning. We started with a group of MA documentary students at Goldsmiths and began documenting urban change. We did this by creating and developing database filmmaking. Soon, there was a shift to art practice and participatory media through methods such as video sniffing. Deptford.TV serves as an open and collaborative platform for artists and filmmakers to store, share and re-edit the documentation of the urban change taking place in South East London. Deptford.TV is hosted by Deckspace, which is like a hack space with subscription fees for members. Deckspace has an open wireless network, hosts servers, and experiments with network activities. As it is very difficult to host these activities within the institutional context of universities, one often needs to step out in order to undertake this research.

The open and collaborative aspect of the project is of particular importance as it manifests in two ways: a) audiences can become producers by submitting their own footage; and b) audiences interact with each other through the database. Deptford.TV makes use of licences such as the Free Art Licence, the Creative Commons SA-BY licence, and the GNU General Public licence to allow and enhance this politics of sharing. Deptford.TV is accessible publically, but you need

to come to the workshops to be allowed into the database and to get to play around with the database and clips. Deptford.TV is research into arts production that engages with those who are interested. It aims to develop methods to enable this. The process is similar to the development of free and open-source software. It is about thinking around collectives and collaboration. Up until now, the focus has been on post-production methods. There is potential to focus on distribution: immediate file sharing and live TV. Recently we produced *Ali Kebab Live on Air.* We experimented by broadcasting live CCTV footage from a local kebab shop. The same material, shown in Linz at the 2011 Linux Wochen Linz, was also shown on monitors in a gallery 200 metres away from the shop.

(3) *Why is what you refer to as participatory media needed?*
It's about reclaiming TV. It's about decentralising TV in order to offer the next generation of media a less centralised notion of politics. The Internet is becoming more centralised. If TV becomes less centralised, one could argue that it will be more difficult for those parties interested in centralising the Internet to do so.

First, there is the political aim. Reclaiming TV is about the redistribution of wealth. I'm a big fan of sharing wealth—for me, knowledge production signifies wealth. We should have a big redistribution system going on. The digital networks are a good starting point for this. In the light of the digital divide, TV can mean access for all. Second, there is a cultural aim. I talk about post-mortem. We are locking culture away. Where is the benefit for society, for future generations? For us being able to philosophise about life and what is important? Marshall McLuhan predicted this, and it hardly materialised, but maybe the time for bottom-up TV is now, the time for reclaiming your TV. Nevertheless, when looking into McLuhan, one should not forget Raymond Williams' criticism of McLuhan's techno-deterministic approach to media systems.

(4) *What are the future platforms and practices of participatory media?*
Open wireless networks might have a future. Operating on 'many to many' principles, they are more powerful than having a community TV station. We should focus more on use and on small entities that can network each other. Currently, however, the community aspect

cannot go any further because it is not allowed to; we are still under a centrally controlled service system. Under the British Digital Economy Act, open networks can potentially become heavily censored. We are witnessing a similar moment everywhere in Europe.

(5) *What actions should be taken now?*
For Deptford.TV, it has become more and more a reflection on culture. The open wireless network needs to be defended. If we are banned from using intellectual properties of the past, future generations will not have our culture. This is also why I am interested in database filmmaking. We need to move back to thinking about distribution. Using the model of Deptford.TV, I could imagine setting up something like Stratford TV based on a wireless network around Stratford and Hackney in East London, and having the tenants 'ranting' about the Olympics. Wouldn't that be cool!

www.deptford.tv

NEW ADVENTURES ONLINE
Case tenantspin, Liverpool
by *Patrick Fox*

In 1993, a non-departmental public body called the Housing Action Trust (HAT) was initiated to assess high-rise living in Liverpool. There were six Housing Action Trusts set up nationally tasked with redeveloping some of the poorest council housing estates in Britain's inner-city suburbs.

The Liverpool HAT programme ran over a 13-year period and its remit was to secure the redevelopment and/or refurbishment of 67 tower blocks dotted across Liverpool. In essence they were required to look at the structural viability of the blocks as well as the make-up of the communities within them. A question raised frequently throughout the programme of work was whether or not high-rise living remained a viable and sustainable living option, particularly for older generations. The answer seemed to be a resounding no—only 11 tower blocks remain out of the original 67, 56 were demolished. Those that remained were located within more affluent areas of Liverpool, as the cost of re-housing and new building schemes proved far too expensive due to the cost and availability of land.

The 11 blocks that survived underwent an ambitious refurbishment programme while residents of the remaining 56 were re-housed in two storey new build houses across the city. Large-scale displacement followed, not only for the communities being re-housed in new homes but also for the communities living through change programmes. With a very strong Community Development team armed with a passionate belief in engaging creative projects, HAT worked with around 4,000 elderly tenants during its 12-year existence—a high-rise population that had moved up in the air during the 1960s as young married couples and grown old together in under-managed properties. Liverpool HAT's Community Development Manager Paul Kelly outlined the essential ingredients for successful community regeneration projects:

> *"We placed tenant participation practices at the heart of our work. From Board level down to a local level, tenants were at the heart of the decision-making process, and support for grass roots community groups was a central theme. All areas of the HAT's remit, including development, housing management, economic development, care, support and community development were monitored and reviewed with tenants."*

New technology was one way of making sure this high-level consultation occurred. During the 1999 Better Government for Older People Conference, the then Minister for Social Security, Jeff Roker stated:

"New technology can play a major part in improving the quality of life for older people providing access to vital information including mobility, transport, health and friendship."

One such project supported by Liverpool HAT was tenantspin. In 1999, Foundation for Art & Creative Technology (FACT), piloted an Internet TV project with citywide high-rise tenants and the Liverpool Housing Action Trust. Danish artist collective Superflex provided the conceptual starting point and the technical infrastructure for a new DIY broadcasting technology—Internet television. This experiment was

one of the first of its kind, and pre-dated all of the current Internet phenomenon we routinely interface with today, and most notably the social networking sites that have exploded in the last decade.

The project began in a shared room in Coronation Court, Liverpool's oldest tower block, which has since been demolished. A group of interested residents trained in broadcasting and filmmaking techniques and began to produce television shows about issues relevant to them. These were then broadcast online. It had some successes and failures but, crucially, the experiment inspired a group of tenants to explore sustaining the project, and from that pilot grew a programme. The project took the name tenantspin because of the tenant authorship of content. Today, tenantspin continues as a collaboration between FACT, the HAT successor landlord Arena Housing and some of the original tenants plus a host of new ones.

Experiments in Engagement

Originally founded in 1988, FACT's mission was to inspire and promote the artistic significance of film, video and new media, believing in collaboration and the ability of individuals and communities to express themselves creatively. FACT and HAT worked on numerous projects together of which tenantspin is the longest running and most successful. Danish artist collective Superflex provided the technological touch paper, which, once lit, proved so inspiring to the group, that it has remained a blaze all these years.

Superflex experimented with technology and in particular the social elements of the Internet—again predating the term social media

Tenantspin is a 12-year-old community media programme that has achieved international recognition and acclaim. The project operates as a community driven Internet TV channel co-managed by FACT (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology), Arena Housing Association (a Northwest based housing Association) and Liverpool residents.

Operating under the premise that creativity and innovation can help address important issues such as community cohesion and civic participation, the project encourages residents across Merseyside to partake in democratic and cultural processes. It thus creates a social value structure where creativity is seen as an alternative value system for people who are living their lives outside of working environments (elderly people, young people, young parents, people who are unable to work and long term unemployed).

Tenantspin began as a one off project against the backdrop of a very specific issue in late 1990s Liverpool: What happens when you break up Liverpool's tower block community and relocate thousands of pensioners into new houses and schemes? A group of dedicated residents worked with Danish artist collective Superflex to develop a framework through which to represent their views in relation to this subject. The project was a success and quickly grew beyond the 'tower block agenda' to become a very powerful platform within social housing circles and cultural agendas. Tenantspin continues today, mobilizing groups of people around a variety of social issues and using the Internet and creativity as a vehicle for change.

In an ever-changing social, political and economic environment, tenantspin has—critically—been able to maintain its particular purpose and relevance, embracing new technologies and pro-actively responding to the changing needs of its partners, tenant collaborators and audiences. Pre-dating the social media explosion of the mid to late 2000s, the project is a key example of the lasting power of community media within a variety of contexts.

www.tenantspin.org
www.fact.co.uk
www.arena-housing.com

and such ubiquitous platforms as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. The content hosted on the Internet in 1999 was generated by a much smaller group of people than today. Superflex challenged this fact, pushing the notion that anyone could generate as well as consume interesting information, and that the Internet as a platform supported notions of community voice and collective consciousness. The censorship and regulation debate was also very crucial at this time and remains so today. In much the same way that theorists such as Jürgen Habermas have argued that mass media killed the notion of a genuine public sphere, governmental bodies and particular interest groups were concerned about the lack of regulation within the World Wide Web. Essentially, the Internet did not exist in one particular place and therefore was difficult to police, and Superflex were keen to push what they considered to be the democratisation of this emerging medium.

This experimentation had a very clear backdrop: Liverpool. The city, with its rich history of trade unionism and protest, was the perfect playground. The late 1990s in Liverpool saw the displacement of large groups of elderly people, moving to different parts of the city and negotiating different living environments; they were moving from familiarity and the relative security of living high up in the air. What Superflex proposed was to create a constant in this turmoil, something that would remain a fixture in the lives of these residents despite geographical changes, a space where debate, discussion, support and shared experience would continue—a virtual space. Beginning as a one-off project with a group of around 15 high-rise tenants, the project inspired those involved to push the idea further and to expand upon it. This desire was backed financially by HAT and facilitated by FACT.

Large sums of money were spent on the project in its pilot phase. The project partners allowed the project to incubate, find its feet; to make mistakes and grow. The project was allowed to do this by being free of any overarching agenda and being directed by participants with a bottom up approach. Tenantspin did not have to cure all of Liverpool's ills or engage with every high-rise tenant across Liverpool. There was no set of objectives apart from an authentic and un-moderated voice; the focus was more on personal development and engagement and themes being decided upon by the volunteers. Training programmes for residents commenced with filmmaking, web-streaming, photography. They

offered individuals the chance to acquire tools that they could then use to express themselves, by empowering not directing.

In its simplest form, tenantspin became Liverpool's first Internet television channel with content generated by residents for residents. Subjects tackled varied but included rent arrears, the housing crisis and global warming. The films/broadcasts were also being disseminated to a global audience via the online platform develop by Superflex, thus opening up those very locally based debates to a much more of a meta narrative and global audience. This opportunity inspired the residents—they felt empowered, connected and suddenly their issues became public. Again, when we consider what Habermas described as the public sphere, "a space of critical discussion, open to all, where private people came together to form a public reason", tenantspin was in essence an opportunity for this to occur.

Superflex independently continued experimentating with Internet platforms and set up the Superchannel project and tenantspin became the first of many channels across the world within the Superchannel model. The different Superchannels had varying remits and backgrounds but were mobilised around shared themes with an open-ended audience. That particular project came to an end in 2006, so tenantspin has now outlived its parent. Up until the cessation of the Superchannel project, tenantspin streamed and hosted all of its video content through a server located in Denmark and provided by Superflex free of charge. With the completion of the Superchannel project, tenantspin had to find new ways of broadcasting and archiving the content it was creating. This change gave rise to tenantspin 2.0, and allowed the project to take advantage of emergent social media developments. The Internet had caught up with the ambition tenantspin had shown in the late 1990s, and suddenly the idea of communities of interest and crowd sourcing became commonplace.

Shared Issues on the Block

In tenantspin's early days, the content centered a lot around the discussion and notion of 'home' and the fact that many of the individuals did not want to be moved into new accommodation and separated from their neighbours. Ultimately decisions on demolition were already forgone conclusions, but tenantspin did provide continuity

through the change and a platform on which individuals could be vocal without censorship about their concerns. Through training and development tenantspin became a mentor for groups in developing more kinds of politicised skills, how to form arguments, how to create balance and represent discussions fairly.

The project became an output for a lot of the discussions taking place at the time. For the participants, the global potential was key, tenantspin members remarking that "it was one thing having a discussion in a closed meeting room and another thing having it broadcast live on the Internet with god knows who watching". Along these lines, tenantspin had many crucial victories that continued to inspire the groups driving the project.

During one particular live web broadcast, a senior figure in a responsible organisation was being interviewed by tenants when he publically admitted an oversight of his which he later tried to retract. However by that stage the interview existed in the public realm and on a format that meant it was accountable and the slip could not be put down to poor minute taking—community media had shown its power and there was no turning back. This was an important victory and the sense of empowerment this offered was immense. If we think of today's society and the scrutiny that public figures are under due to saturation of media, this seems almost obvious, however this occurred at a time when the idea of 'ordinary people' being publishers of content seemed a long way away.

This incident saw tenantspin become a respected platform not only within the community but also crucially amongst key decision makers. Tenantspin began to widen its commentary engaging with experts and leading thinkers on a range of subjects. It was also around this time that people like Will Self and Lord David Puttnam were guests on the tenantspin couch, largely due to the pulling power of HAT and FACT but also the high level support the project received from both organisations' senior staff.

At this point the project had been broadcasting from different locations; the HAT offices in the dockland Cunard Building, tower blocks across the city and the FACT building in the heart of Liverpool city centre. So while events occurred in very specific spaces across Liverpool, the connection was always to a much wider audience—those

online participating via a chat room or those that would find content within the archive at a later date and comment as such.

By 2003, there were eleven tower blocks remaining, six of which were located in the south part of Liverpool. The land value in that area had become so expensive that it proved a better option to refurbish those particular blocks rather than demolish. For a period of time, these blocks became a real focus of tenantspin activity, largely because of the sheer volume of tenants within those blocks who wanted to drive the project—it became a powerful lobby group. As a platform, tenantspin became a huge influence on the plans for the area, and again a stage on which to disseminate information and discuss in an open manner. Through tenantspin those active communities lobbied for the construction of a Community Centre, which was to be built at the same time as the refurbishment programme work. Through much negotiation, the proposal was passed and the community succeeded in its desire to build a centre. Within that centre tenantspin secured a purpose-built studio space—a major recognition of the project status with that particular community.

City-wide Campaigning

The HAT had a finite contract and began to wind down in 2004. New Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) within the city then began to bid for stock transfer, replacing the HAT as managers of the newly created and refurbished properties. The housing stock was split amongst a number of RSL's with the south Liverpool blocks coming with a particular clause, a condition which meant that any landlord taking on this particular area would also be required to support tenantspin in numerous ways, the most significant of which the creation of a new full-time post, a landlord staff member who would work with residents and FACT to co-ordinate the projects efforts.

The successful Landlord applicant was an association called Arena Housing Association, an organisation that manages around 15,000 properties across the North West. To date Arena Housing Association have invested in the hundreds of thousands and continue today as project partners. Their partnership with FACT also once again challenged the remit of tenantspin as the tower block agenda had come to a close and much more diverse ages ranges and ethnicities populated

Stills from Four Bricks. Photos: Alex Harrison, tenantspin.

the Arena stock. Following these changes, tenantspin too became much more widely focussed in its remit, now working citywide with adults of all ages.

This shift also coincided with the wind up of the Superchannel project. This period around 2006 proved a transformative time for the project and large amounts of change took place. It was also around this time that the project began to solidify its core principles and recognise its position as an incubator for ideas, mobilising thinking, solving and highlighting problems and engaging groups within creative thinking processes. Arena Housing through funding arrangements directly employed one staff member and indirectly a further two. Staff are based at FACT and work with the wider creative team there to develop opportunities for the wider community, while tenantspin continues to be creatively driven by the tenant volunteers.

For Arena Housing Association, tenantspin became an opportunity for the personal development of residents but also, as Arena Housing Association Chief Executive Brian Cronin states, "a critical arm sitting outside the organisation", not regulated in terms of content creation. The project exists as a feedback tool and direct link to the issues of their tenants. Arena Housing also operate within the national Housing Corporation RESPECT Campaign which means that not only do they have a responsibility to their tenants but also the wider community and must tackle wider social problems in the hope of creating more sustainable communities. Again, this widened the remit of tenantspin, and the project became a popular platform for wider social campaigns hosted by self-organised groups.

Three Operational Strands

Fast-forward to the present, and tenantspin continues to successfully operate within three different operational strands: one is to commission artists, local, national and international through FACT to work with communities to produce new works in a collaborative context. A second strand of the tenantspin programme is the more traditional training programme. This strand runs throughout the year and is designed to enable those volunteering to acquire skills they can put to active use in their localities. The training programmes cover everything from blogging to web casting, public speaking to filmmaking.

They are open to adults and free to attend, the idea being that tenantspin can facilitate an army of content creators who will generate, debate and discuss issues relevant to their own lives and city, providing an antidote or indeed a companion to mainstream media. This training crucially offers a framework in which to collaborate but is never directive in terms of the content being generated.

A third strand of programming very much harks back to the original format of tenantspin, the webcast. This strand resembles the public sphere Habermas described closest. The online broadcast acts as the heart of tenantspin and its original ambition to act as a public sphere, a place to create communal moments around an idea or subject. Over 1000 hours of critical debate have been created by tenantspin over the years, covering subjects such as faith, housing, gun crime, advances in medical technology etc. The webcast format has also welcomed some notable guests such as the late Anthony Minghella, Alexei Sayle and Will Self.

The Revolution will be Webcast

Tenantspin has been critically referenced and sited internationally as an early example of social media that pre-dates the explosion of web 2.0 in the early part of the 21st century. The impact of tenantspin on the wider cultural sector comes in the form of challenging mass participation, audience development, community engagement methods and using technology to further these important areas of work within the sector.

For FACT as a cultural institution, tenantspin represents a brand and the face of the organisation's community engagement programme. The project and framework is a continuous experiment in cultural engagement. It represents a new way of working for organisations, creating and facilitating the interaction between real located communities and online communities. The training component of the project is also interesting as it provides a framework or set of tools with which individuals can creatively explore, and ultimately engage with the work of FACT on a much more involved level. Through tenantspin, FACT's Community Programme becomes less about an offer, and more an invitation to collaborate and produce. The tenantspin project through the nurturing of FACT has become a mode of participation in

wider conversations, and this demonstrates an interesting shift in how cultural organisations approach outreach work.

While the project itself provides an interesting model and framework of work, some of the more recent experiments and commissions undertaken by tenantspin have further pushed the boundaries of democratising technology and established a critical way of engaging with media that resonates well beyond functional tools, but indeed contributes to ways of thinking.

Tenantspin is a key example of contemporary community media, owing as much to the history of community television as it does to activism and the rise of the Internet. The coming together of these three areas and twelve years of proven need with no end in sight clearly demonstrates that real and diverse voices are essential in today's media, and that the local and global can intertwine seamlessly through the mechanisms we have available today.

Patrick Fox is Executive Director of Create Ireland. Until 2011, he was the Collaborations & Engagement Programme Manager at FACT, leading Liverpool's Community Programme, tenantspin amongst other projects. Patrick holds a BSC in Multimedia and a Masters in Cultural Leadership with a focus on the impacts of social media and Web 2.0 on the cultural sector. Patrick is also a board Director of AXIS, a UK based organisation tasked with the need to support and assist the development of the visual arts. Patrick has commissioned leading international artists to work in a collaborative setting, both in a gallery and public setting as well strategically developing partnerships across various sectors including health, housing and the creative industries. Patrick is currently interested in exploring the impacts of Web 2.0 principles on the cultural sector and alternative platforms on which artists can showcase works.

Q&A: ANDY MIAH

Professor Andy Miah is Director of the Creative Futures Research Centre and Chair of Ethics and Emerging Technologies in the Faculty of Business & Creative Industries at the University of the West of Scotland. He is Global Director for the Centre for Policy and Emerging Technologies, Fellow of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies and Fellow of FACT, Liverpool. Currently Miah is leading the #media2012 citizen journalism project, a grassroots international network focused on alternative news reporting around the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

1 *What do you understand by community media? How and by whom is it produced?*

I employ a very generous definition of community media. My minimal condition is that it should involve the creation of media artefacts that make a difference to how people conduct their lives in a way that transcends leisure or entertainment. If we begin here, then we need not start with a division that is about professionalism, economics or even ideology. Indeed, each of these dimensions has become more complicated in the last five years. As social media and digital technology have changed what it means to be do media production. This minimal condition also means that we can start off by deriving common ground for collaboration between different types of media producer and perhaps rethink the role of media in society.

2 *Why is community media needed? What does it bring to local cultures, communities and places?*

There are two primary reasons for why community media is necessary. The first is that it emerges out of a lack in other forms of media production, which are perceived to fail in their social responsibilities to communicate information, or because they are governed by a political agenda that undermines the value of their content. However, I think the more persuasive reason for why community media is necessary is that the production of media artefacts *creates* communities. The desire to share opinions and knowledge is a powerful motivation that explains why community media exists. It's an integral part of how we define citizenship, freedom of speech and what it is to be human.

3 *What are the future platforms and practices of community media?*

Future media has promised to change community media for quite some time. In the 1990s, Web 1.0 gave rise to new media producers and brought waves of debate about convergence between media forms. In the 2000s, Web 2.0 brought about a collapse of the consumer and producer. People could now create and share media content in a previously unimaginable way. Each of these shifts did not completely alter the way in which community media operated, but it empowered many people to do more than was possible to achieve previously. The media of the 2010s is defined by *mobility* and practices of community media are shifting towards delivering content for people on the move, in miniature, and even in 3D. At the same time, media artists are working with scientists to develop biomedia technology, a way of integrating media within our biology using biochips. These innovations will change all media experiences and may completely reconfigure the relationship between community media and global media organisations.

4 *What actions should be taken now?*

While the expansion of media technology has narrowed the digital divide, there remains a growing *digital literacy* divide that community media organisations can help to address. At the same time, we now operate within an *attention economy* where the biggest challenge for media outlets is the short window of opportunity through

which to capture peoples interests. It is said that the average life of any social media artefact is 3hrs, after which it is highly unlikely to trend or capture much interest. In part, this has changed the role of community media organisations where an increasingly important part of their job is to curate the media output of community members, rather than provide a media production service for a community. We need to help people do that better.

www.media2012.org.uk
@andymiah

COMMUNITY MEDIA
Platform, Producer and Partner for the Arts

by *Tamar Millen*

Community media is a fast growing sector and includes community radio and television broadcasters, community based independent filmmakers, and Internet, digital and social media groups. Community owned and controlled with a commitment to social gain, community media organisations are in an unequalled position.

Successfully interacting with communities that do not have a strong engagement with mainstream arts provision, the organisations are often located in the heart of the communities they work in. Their output is produced by and for particular communities whether these are geographical, cultural, ethnic, generational or virtual communities. They give access to voices in the community, which encourages diversity, creativity, engagement and participation by people not traditionally involved in the arts.

Culturally the arts and community media exhibit complementary features which suggest a natural connection, they both provide accessible forms that bring people together in a shared environment to explore the world around them and present to an audience the important aspects of the human experience in modern day life. The open, transparent and community focused nature and organisational structure of this sector has a very close fit in terms of the existing approach of many arts organisations particularly those with a not for profit community orientated focus.

When asked to write about the Community Media Association project and contemporary practices in arts broadcasting within the community media sector in England, my first thought was whether a written approach could really be suitable, swiftly followed by the worry that I couldn't do the practices justice in such a few words. After thinking and writing for a while I think I have managed to capture in this overview, the feel of emerging practice and current community media and arts collaborations. While also acknowledging that there is so much more happening than can be detailed in one chapter, and importantly so much more to come in the current changing media landscape.

The Project

"Community media as platform, producer and partner for the arts" was coined as a phrase during the development phase of a two year project led by the Community Media Association (CMA) in partnership with Arts Council England (ACE) and Voluntary Arts Network (VAN), this project as a direct activity ran from August 2009–August 2011. The phrase encapsulates the pragmatic approach to an ambitious programme that was designed to bring the two sectors together so that they could meet, begin to exchange ideas and develop ways of

future collaboration. Our work over the last two years has been primarily about highlighting and promoting the extraordinary work done by our membership in arts broadcasting and how this work if supported and promoted goes towards developing ways of thinking. New approaches focused less on arts reportage and 'what's on', and more on arts broadcasting and broadcasting arts.

Research commissioned by ACE and carried out by CapeUK in 2006 and published in 2008* demonstrated that much was beginning to take place in terms of arts broadcasting across the community radio sector in the UK and recommended that support in promoting this would be of huge benefit to both arts organisations who knew little about the community media sector and for community media organisations who wanted to extend their arts programming and broadcast.

*www.arts.commedia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/The-Arts-Community-Radio.pdf

Out of this report grew the ambitious programme that was run by the Community Media Association in partnership with Arts Council England, and Voluntary Arts Network which raised the profile of the community media sector within the arts sector, and highlighted to community broadcasters the creative and engagement potential in working collaboratively with the arts, addressing opportunities for community media organisations to work as platform, producer and partner for the arts.

The main aspects of the programme included 1) a set of regional road shows, 2) four commissioned partnerships between arts and community media organisations, 3) the development, maintenance and population of an online showcase of collaborative work and 4) continued promotion of the benefits of collaboration by the three partners. The aim of the road shows was to bring the sectors together regionally across England. These full day events set the scene for both arts and media organisations illustrating what community media is and how it fits with the arts, to meet, to question each other and to see and hear first hand demonstrations of existing arts broadcasting partnerships and projects and hopefully be inspired by what they heard and saw.

Connect was a series of small commissions that funded partnership approaches to arts and community media projects. The idea

The *Community Media Association* is the UK representative body for the community broadcasting sector and is committed to promoting access to the media for people and communities. It aims to enable people to establish and develop community based communications media for empowerment, cultural and creative expression, information and entertainment. We believe as a representative body that we can help consolidate and build on the sector's existing arts offer by supporting individual organisations, building the case for support to national and regional bodies and promoting the work on behalf of these communities.

Working for its membership and as a representative body, part of the longer-term wider Community Media Association remit is to provide a forum for sector development and recognition, campaigning and advocating on the members behalf and offering membership services. As such the CMA has been at the forefront of lobbying for accessible media policy in the UK since 1983. We worked to develop the existing landscape for community radio (there are now more than 200 licensed full time community radio stations across the UK), and currently hold the secretariat for United for Local Television. As one of the founding members of ULTV, CMA has been working towards the development of local TV for many years, and will continue to advocate for publically accessible TV spectrum during this exciting time. The CMA has also been at the forefront in providing real time online services for both radio and television organisations so that they can reach wider audiences than their on air licences allow them.

Voluntary Arts Network works with policy makers, funders and politicians to improve the environment for everyone participating in the arts, they provide information and training to those who participate in the voluntary arts sector. This includes over 300 national and regional umbrella bodies, and through them, their member groups of local voluntary arts practitioners. Voluntary arts groups vary enormously but there are three common needs that apply to many of them: to raise the profile of the relevant art form; to attract new audiences; and to seek new members. VAN recognised that through this partnership the beginnings of flourishing collaborations could be realised, and that

voluntary art groups have much to gain in each of these areas from collaborating with community media organisations.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England, distributing public money from the Government and the National Lottery. Arts Council England works to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives. They support a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art, and carnival to crafts. Arts Council England in November 2010 published its ten-year framework *Achieving Great Art For Everyone*.

This framework outlined five goals. Goal one "Talent and Artistic Excellence are Thriving and Celebrated" also links with the innovation, development and creativity that can occur when art joins forces with community media. Goal two of this Framework, "More People Experience and Are Inspired by the Arts" very much fits with the accessibility that Community Media can offer and the targeted reach it can bring to Audience Development. Arts Council England recognized the strengths that Community Media can bring to developing art forms and the way in which it can enable artists to reach new audiences.

www.arts.commedia.org.uk
www.commedia.org.uk
www.unitedforlocaltv.com
www.voluntaryarts.org
www.artscouncil.org.uk

was to seed and stimulate collaborative approaches to creative programming. The commissions had criteria that specified each project must be concerned with excellence and innovation in arts practice, reaching new audiences and innovation in approaches to new technologies. The online showcase was a new section of the CMA website* dedicated solely to arts activity.

> *www.arts.commedia.org.uk

It presented examples of good practice and case studies of work developed as well as events due to take place. An important aspect is the ability of arts organisations and members of the CMA to upload their own content, providing an online space that is continually populated and has a sense of shared ownership. Throughout the project the three strategic partners continued to advocate at a national and membership level for continued partnership working and opportunities for collaboration. Promoting the work of the sector in the arts this advocacy runs cross promotion of events and opportunities across the sectors through to developing resources such as the VAN briefing for voluntary arts groups.*

> *www.arts.commedia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Briefing-140-Community-media-as-platform-for-the-voluntary-arts-and-crafts.pdf

Platform, Producer, Partner for the arts

Each of the following subsections outlines the ways in which we identified the work of all partner organisations within the framework of platform, producer and partner; and then goes on to demonstrate practical applications of organisations working in these ways through case study examples.

Platform
- ➤ Introduces new and established art work to community media audiences
- ➤ Supports artists to anchor their activities into local communities
- ➤ Makes connections between arts, audiences and communities
- ➤ Enhances engagement in the arts

-----➤   Increases attendances at arts events

Many organisations operate as 'virtual arts centres' with audiences exceeding those of many live art venues. Those organisations operating in rural areas offer access to arts activity that would be unavailable in their absence. In some places the physical location and the social reach of an organisation enable it to function as a cultural hub connecting artists, organisations and audience.

> An example of the virtual arts centre is the work of *Resonance 104.4* fm broadcasting in central London. They have created an audience of over 200,000 from scratch, produced 35,000 hours of ground-breaking work and engaged hundreds of volunteers who contribute dozens of hours to the project every week.

Community media organisations promote involvement dialogue and self-representation by people often marginalised by mainstream channels. The trusted voice of the organisation can be an important element brokering relationships between the communities and mainstream arts establishments, breaking down the 'it's not for me' barriers. This is aided by the fact that often local dialects and languages are encouraged and used across all programming, for example; Bradford Community Broadcasting and Bristol Community FM provide coverage in over 20 languages. Bringing arts into a familiar environment through established media such as TV and radio provides an opportunity to become familiar with the art form this is further enhanced when the media platform itself is a trusted community voice. This has worked for some organisations in increasing the attendance at their live events and exhibitions.

> *South Asian Arts-uk* (SAA-uk) is a Leeds-based organisation that exists to promote engagement with traditional and contemporary South Asian arts. Believing South Asian culture to be integral to the UK's cultural diversity and that they deserve to be championed SAA-uk deliver a diverse range of programmes and participatory activities for children, young people and their respective families through education pro-

grammes, concerts and investing in South Asian arts development. Working with Fever FM in Leeds SAA-uk runs a weekly hour long radio show *Raag Fever Radio.* SAA-uk established the show on Fever FM to reach audiences they found traditionally challenging to engage with their work. Mainly the older generation of the South Asian communities (Pakistani, Sikh, Bengali and Bangladeshi) and the very young members of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community, who were very unlikely to explore beyond their local area. Through the show *Raag Fever Radio*, SAA-uk has been able to inform and educate it's listeners about Indian classical and contemporary music. Broadcasting for a year now, the show has encouraged attendance by the listeners at live classical music concerts. Produced and hosted by young volunteers for SAA-uk from the Sikh community. The *Raag Fever Radio* show has had a positive impact for the volunteers themselves, they have developed a deeper knowledge of the music that they themselves learn and play and their confidence and pride in themselves and their music has grown. SAA-uk has achieved all this through its passion for its art form and for the audience they serve. The organisation is now looking to open out the opportunity to a broad mix of South Asian young people, with a structured training programme if funding can be found.

Producer
- ⮕ Foster the creation and development of innovative artwork and art forms
- ⮕ Enrich existing programming with new approaches
- ⮕ Strengthen the programming schedules reflecting local creativity
- ⮕ Provide a new dimension to local arts projects
- ⮕ Enable existing participants, audiences and volunteers in the community media sector to get involved in creative and artistic production

Community media provides an accessible space for existing or new ideas to be tested and nurtured; without the editorial and commer-

cial constraints that exist elsewhere in the broadcast sector. This provides the creative and artistic freedom to explore the potential of the mediums; such as developing and exploring audio art works, new sound worlds and innovative moving image work, and expanding innovative approaches to drama, storytelling and creative writing. In addition to the creative approach to content, the community media sector is also experienced at combining this with new technology adding value to the audience experience, with most community radio stations streaming their broadcasts live, using Web 2.0 and social media tools and providing on demand and podcasting options to their listeners, which in turn offer up archives of material that can be accessed by the audiences.

Many community media practitioners are committed to achieving artistic excellence in their programming and content development; in particular those organisations which are artist led or have been established in a broader context of arts and cultural provision. Often volunteers and community contributors presenting and contributing to content and production are experts in their fields. When producing creative or artistic content for broadcast whether on the Internet, as moving image or for radio community media organisations have encouraged and developed innovative participatory approaches to ensuring that the inclusive and community nature of their organisations is reflected in their practice.

> *Rural Media Company* is a community filmmaking organisation based in Hereford. Their film *Crafta Webb* is just one example of the ways that they work with the rural communities to bring arts and film production together. For this particular production the company worked with over 120 people from the communities of Bredwardine, Staunton on Wye and Letton over a two-year period. The community worked in groups to research the story of *Crafta Webb*, a 'lost' village once home to 60 people. From the research findings a fictional narrative was developed and worked up into a script again by participants. After research and writing the project was developed. The filming took place over eight days. Members of the community worked side by side with professionals to create a film in which they had an enormous stake.

The partnership between ALL FM and Manchester Literature Festival as part of the *Connect* commissions exemplified many of the ways in which these collaborations become producers of something bigger than the sum of its parts.

The Poems on the Road project:

-----➤ Commissioned 5 new poems that celebrate the A6 corridor area of Manchester

-----➤ Provided training in radio production skills for 6 local people and create an opportunity for them to play an integral role in the creation of new art works

-----➤ Brought the work of the commissioned poets to the attention of a large audience (approx 200,000) through the broadcast and dissemination of their work through radio and online channels.

-----➤ Encouraged ALL FM audiences to develop their own creative responses to their environment and get involved in local writing and performance activities

The final pieces were broadcast in the prime time schedule breakfast and drive time shows with an omnibus edition of all five pieces later that week. The following excerpt is about the production of the poem by Martin de Mello:

> Production trainees Cathy and Gareth jump in the car and we are at the scrap yard in a matter of minutes. Here, dwarfed by huge enclosures of crushed cars and recycled building materials, we make our way to the small caravan serving lunches, Olive's Cabin. It is strikingly domestic in this almost lunar landscape. Nearly immediately, Martin de Mello cycles up. He has found this place on nightly wanderings and come back to check it out. He hasn't lived in Levenshulme long but long enough to have adopted this café and discovered the fishing lake with willows and swans that hides behind the diggers and the piles of dust. We are the only guests; the site workers choosing to take their sandwiches away with them. We slide into plastic seats to examine the menu and get our first glimpse of what

he has written about. There really is a spoon being used as the radio's aerial. The radio, of course, has to be all but silenced. A Madonna hit whispers over our cheese omelettes and, with the energetic sound of wrecking in the background, Cathy and Gareth point ALL FM's substantial mics first at Martin, then at the plates we are eating from. We obligingly make cutting, scraping and clattering noises for adding to the piece later. The two of them work closely, conferring on quality, collecting multiple readings of the poem and a short poet interview. Our hosts, Olive and friend, watch with interest from the confines of the kitchen area, leaning on a glass counter full of cakes and a large bowl of trifle, popping back to stir eggs and chips on a stove that looks homely, though clearly beyond camping grade. Having a poem to be broadcast on the radio can only be good for trade, they conclude. We discuss taking trifle to go, grab further ambient sound from the wrecking machines by going in for a close up and finish the outside broadcast with a quick trip to see the swans before piling back into the car and letting Martin race us to the studios for the editing.*

*Dr Ann Light www.arts.commedia.org.uk/case-studies/connect-arts-and-community-media-partnerships/

Partner
- ----➤ Connect diverse audiences to the arts activity in their area
- ----➤ Act as a trusted voice relaying engagement and participatory opportunities
- ----➤ Put the needs and aspirations of the local community at the centre stage of arts activity
- ----➤ Broker connections and build long lasting relationships between local communities and arts groups
- ----➤ Encourage participation in arts activity in local areas and beyond
- ----➤ Work with arts organisations to enhance their digital offer

New technologies and convergence between traditional print and broadcast media place the community media sector at the core of a rapidly developing creative environment. This new terrain where

consumers are producers; and the older confines of audience, producer and participant are blurred, is not a new landscape for community media organisations that have always had communal and active participation at the heart of their process. This makes them ideal partners for other groups wishing to understand and operate successfully in this new environment.

> The *'Shut Up And Listen!' Radio Show* is an exciting show that promotes music made by learning disabled musicians, from around the world, and a perfect example of the way that community media can connect audiences and encourage participation in the arts. Currently it is a show that broadcasts on Radio Reverb in Brighton, yet it has ambition to grow towards a national and international audience. The show itself is run produced, presented and designed by a committee of learning disabled artists from around the Brighton and Hove area. They bill the show as the only place on the radio to hear music made by artists with a learning disability.

Often working in a cross platform environment to develop, broadcast and adapt their content, the community media sector has a high level of skill and knowledge around the digitisation of content. They are experienced in editing and producing content for broadcast online and on air. This approach to content in a digital environment has a coherent fit with the way in which many arts organisations are engaging with new technologies. Finding ways to present their content across a number of formats and work with these formats to engage audiences, present work, encourage participation and develop appropriate mechanisms for archiving content. This common approach to dissemination of creative content would suggest mutual beneficial partnerships across the sectors are a future possibility.

The Connect collaboration between Two Valleys Radio and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival aimed both to develop new audiences and also to stimulate and present innovative new work that used social media as a creative stimulus rather than a marketing tool. This resulted in their *Musical Hangman* game which created a whole new artwork and experience, a recording of which can be listened to in

full on the Two Valleys Radio website*:

We are tuned to Two Valleys Radio. There is a short explanation of how to play *Musical Hangman* (entering words into the website until a fit is found) and then the talking stops ...and nothing else replaces it. The silence persists for what seems like a long time. At different keyboards in the Colne and Holme Valleys, enthusiasts, musicians, relations and friends tap nine-word sentences in answer to the question that has just been posed: Who should you always listen to? The silence goes on until one of the words typed corresponds with a word in the sentence that the project has chosen. This is the trigger for the improvisation to start. None of the students know which of them will begin because no one knows which word the audience will first guess. When the first match comes, it is met with a sound of torn paper. Rhythmic but hardly harmonic, the sound punctuates the silence by adding emphasis to it. It is only as the second and third musician come in, as further words are correctly identified, that the radio begins to 'play'. The students have worked on their group improvisation—and paper ripping and crumpling—skills with Brighton composer Claudia Molitor and they are the only ones with any idea of what might transpire as the rest of the sentence is guessed. Eventually, though, one of the listeners has produced *Always listen to your mother* and *Two Valleys Radio* and all nine musicians are tearing paper and working in concert to produce an unrepeatable fragment prompted by the interaction of listeners over the Internet. A second sentence produces further uncertainty, but greater insight into the process. This time, each correct word brings an instrument into play. Each instrument is a student's chosen one, but there's been no system to it and they strum and pick at them to make strange sounds. Last, in a final round of guessing, they *play* their instruments as correct words form. But even now the music is not tuneful and it is the feat of listening from the performers—to hear each other as they join in; to make their contributions blend—that is the delight of the

event, as their concentrated collaboration mirrors the collective playing of the *Musical Hangman* game.*

*Dr Ann Light www.arts.commedia.org.uk/case-studies/connect-arts-and-community-media-partnerships/

Next Steps

The organisations and work outlined in this chapter only scratch the surface of much of the experimental, exciting and innovative work that is developing in this area. Delving deeper into the creations and approaches of these types of collaborations can only support the call to work towards strengthening the ties between arts organisations and community media broadcasters in order to increase people's opportunities for making and experiencing arts within a participatory media and broadcast environment, including radio, television and the Internet. The next step in the development of these flourishing partnerships will be to focus on increasing the quality and quantity of the arts broadcasting and also address through partnership and collaboration ways in which arts organisations respond to emergent broadcasting platforms and audiences.

Tamar Millen is an advocate of the power of collaborative approaches to community, media and arts. Having worked in DIY media since the late 1990s, where the roles of artist, producer and consumer are increasingly blurred she believes close collaboration between the arts and community media will increase the quality and quantity of arts broadcasting and also address ways in which arts organisations respond to emergent broadcasting platforms and audiences. Currently Arts Co-ordinator for the Community Media Association based in Sheffield UK.

STADI.TV
A Channel for All Citizens

by *Teppo Hudson* and *Jenni Niemiaho*

The most important change in the media sector in recent years is the huge increase in the amount of information produced. When the supply of media content becomes greater than demand, the value of content approaches zero. We are moving towards a time when there will be unlimited access to content.

The need to organise this information overload will most likely give rise to new ways of filtering content. Filtering is not a new phenomenon; news agencies have been doing this since the advent of printed media. The difference is that, now, everyone can be their own small news agency and bring together the most interesting content that they can find. Content is global and there is an infinite amount of it, enabling easy cross-referencing and so on.

Media is, however, simultaneously fragmenting into niches. These niches will create strong community ties, a sense of belonging and the enjoyment of sharing similar ideas. Besides being a cultural phenomenon, this feeling of belonging to a community can be seen in the idea of the hyperlocal. Media that focuses on cities, on neighbourhoods, or even on certain streets, is most likely to attract the interest of local people, regardless of their cultural interests. The locals are a part of a community that is not bound by culture, but by a physical location.

One City, One Channel

Stadi.TV is a project that develops and studies best practices for multiplatform community TV for the Helsinki region. It is a multichannel audiovisual service that focuses on enabling users to develop their audiovisual skills, to upload their own video footage from and about Helsinki, and to watch hyperlocal content. The word 'stadi' is slang, and means Helsinki, the Finnish capital.

Stadi.TV is a new concept in the Finnish media sector, bringing together editorial TV and user-generated content. Compared with traditional TV, Stadi.TV focuses on open publishing and educating citizens. Its relevance comes from being able to bundle distribution resources together for small organisations, hence creating a more interesting—and most importantly—a subjective media landscape. Stadi.TV can be seen online, on TV or via a mobile phone. Its programming springs from city residents' interests and observations. The unifying theme is the city: Stadi.TV is a channel for the people of Helsinki, by the people of Helsinki. Stadi.TV is aiming to turn Helsinki into one of the most active and dynamic cities in local media production and consumption. The aim is to foster grassroots communication and to provide better information for the public sector and residents alike. The goal is to find a productive balance between media content produced by profession-

als, semi-professionals and amateurs. Currently, Stadi.TV has two focus areas. The first is to develop multiplatform distribution on cable, the web, mobile devices and urban screens. The second important focus area is to increase skills and capabilities for video production by organising various workshops for communities, organisations and corporations. This will go on throughout 2012 to accompany Helsinki World Design Capital 2012.

TV for and by All

Stadi.TV has a solid background in established initiatives, such as: DINA-TV run by Arcada University of Applied Sciences; the M2HZ channel developed by m-cult centre for media culture; the Helsinki Host City service produced by Forum Virium Helsinki for the 2007 Eurovision Song Contest held in Helsinki; and Finnish Mobile TV, another Forum Virium Helsinki project. Forum Virium Helsinki is the executive pro-

ducer of Stadi.TV. Arcada operates the cable broadcasts, and the workshops are organised by m-cult. The Stadi.TV team meets with dozens of organisations every month and tries to uncover an enthusiasm for communicating through video. If an organisation is interested, Stadi.TV helps it identify appropriate content and resources. The key is low-resource production, focusing on short-form, fast-turnaround, story-focused production. In other words, no large production teams with state-of-the-art technical gadgets are needed, but only a single, motivated video-blogger with a high-quality smartphone. Training is another important aspect. Stadi.TV wants to encourage urban communities, event producers and the City of Helsinki to use the channel for their communication and marketing. Interested groups can either open up their own sub-channel directly on the website, or take part in a media workshop providing the basic tools and training in content production. User-generated content and programmes are at the core of what Stadi.TV* is aiming to be: a channel for all citizens.

*Stadi.TV is funded by the City of Helsinki's Innovation fund and the participating organisations.

Watch Stadi.TV online: www.stadi.tv and watch Stadi.TV on television in Finland:

Welho cable TV, channel 71. In the future, Stadi.TV will also be shown on urban screens around Helsinki.

Teppo Hudson is the producer of Stadi.TV and a strategist and business-development professional with a focus on digital media. He is an active start-up entrepreneur with an interest in developing future services for bloggers and in understanding community-based media. Teppo is also on the board of directors of Fishare ltd and Publishzer ltd in Helsinki.

Jenni Niemiaho is the production manager of Stadi.TV and a media-production professional with an extensive knowledge of business processes. She is interested in service design and user-driven development of services. She actively follows and contributes to research in collective expertise.

Q&A: JARMO 'ELUKKA' ESKELINEN

Jarmo 'Elukka' Eskelinen is the founding director of Forum Virium Helsinki, an organisation that develops new digital services in collaboration with companies, the City of Helsinki, and other public-sector organisations. Jarmo has extensive experience in media, cultural production and architecture. As Executive Director of Media Centre Lume,

Forum Virium Helsinki is the executive producer of Stadi.TV

he was in charge of the centre's commercial operations and productions in film, TV and new media. Prior to this, Jarmo worked as Program Manager of the Helsinki 2000 Cultural Capital project. As CEO of PopZoo Promotion, he was in charge of developing and implementing the Huvila concert-tent concept for the Helsinki Festival. Before entering the field of culture and media, Jarmo worked at several architecture offices.

1 *What do you understand by community media? How and by whom is it produced?*

Community media is locally produced content—existing communities and interest groups or organisations produce it. Stadi.TV is the channel in Helsinki that gives these communities a voice in the media field. With Stadi.TV, we are aiming to produce our own material within a very diverse field. There are communities that are capable of producing media by themselves; there are communities that can be coached, and then we have interesting city events that can be documented through the local channel, Stadi.TV. Then there is also editorial content, so it is really mixed.

2 *Why is community media needed? What does it bring to local cultures, communities and places?*

The need for community media is basically the same as has, for example, been the driving force behind community newspapers. Of course, you can still use local papers or the Internet to produce content dealing with local issues, but it is very hard to get noticed in the current vast media landscape if you only use narrow channels in which media created by communities easily gets lost and goes unnoticed. All community media platforms create a sense of ownership of the city, and a sense of doing things together. These are the two driving reasons why local platforms are needed. Stadi.TV also links local platforms to wider media platforms, so that they are not separate, isolated pockets.

The key thing in Stadi.TV's activities is not so much the digital online space and platform, but the role it plays in communities, for example, activating communities through video workshops and courses. So old-fashioned community building and coaching are still crucial elements in community-based media. Another element is that Stadi.TV has access to a cable television channel, so traditional television also has a role in Stadi.TV, making it an online cable platform.

3 *What kind of feedback has Stadi.TV received? How does it stand out from other community-media projects in Finland?*

The scope of the project and its diversity as a platform separates Stadi.TV from other Finnish community and locally-based platforms and channels, most of which are based on a single interest or

activity, such as snowboarding etc. The main users of the channel, the communities, are often quite surprised to realise that making programmes is not nearly as hard as they had thought.

(4) *What will be the future platforms and practices of community media?*

In the future, platforms emphasising social aspects of community media and audio-visual community-media platforms will merge more. At the same time, another slightly contradictory trend will also develop, in which broadcast content is of higher quality and more viewer-friendly. These two factors have different goals, and rarely meet in the same platform. Multiple-media platforms will be further developed, including mobile, online and cable access, which will combine different aspects and interests in community-produced media. These different approaches serve different audiences. Another important issue is transparency, which is one important factor in Stadi.TV's operations. For example, people are able to see what goes on behind decision-making processes and get background information on how the city and local council make decisions. This gives them more opportunities to observe and influence the process. This is one important aspect that community media, such as Stadi.TV, can offer citizens.

(5) *How do you see urban screens being a platform for community media?*

Urban screens are a very interesting media. However, it is important to understand that urban screens are a different platform with its own characteristics, different from TV or the Internet. For example, not all Stadi.TV material and programmes will work on urban screens; there is no point in adding this content to urban screens just for the sake of it. Urban screens must be understood as a platform with its own special features, and different from an online platform. For example, using sounds on urban screens is difficult. So showing regular TV programming on urban screens usually just creates visual noise.

The cityscape is a challenging environment and it is important to rethink what kind of material works on urban screens. There are two concepts that are in the planning stage and which are worth exploring with regard to urban screens. One is the 'urban flow' concept, a

visual interface to city information, and the other is data visualisation. These more artistic, visual concepts, showing more abstract content, can work well on urban screens and have an impact on the surrounding city space. The urban screen is a new platform made possible by new technology, so it needs a new kind of programming and a rethink about what works on it, just like traditional TV and the Internet previously.

(6) *What actions should be taken now?*

There is a need to increase platform connectivity so that the content and different platforms can be linked together more easily. This is crucial for platform/content development. It is important to ensure that open sources and platforms are linkable to other sites. Another important task is to activate and support local communities so that they are able and have the courage to produce content and publish material for wider audiences. A third aspect is mixing different models and audiences/groups so that they exist and are accessible on the same page. This is a crucial stage for the development of community media platforms. Also, funding should not only come from public sources, but use a mix of different sources.

In order to be successful it is crucial to get the critical mass together—to get the right content together with the right viewers, all on the same platform. This is something that still needs a lot of work at Stadi.TV, too. It is crucial for any platform's success.

www.forumvirium.fi

OPEN FORMATS

Case Dublin Community Television

by *Ciaran Moore*

In the We're At project Dublin Community Television (DCTV) attempted to develop a production format and guide that would be released as a Creative Commons document and set of video and graphics assets. This was combined with a community managed digital TV & broadcast studio to develop a scalable form of community television with explicitly open and accountable ownership and control.

We propose that the development of Open Formats can support community television that is scalable, adaptable and accountable to those who make, feature in and watch it.

Background

As a licensed TV station DCTV can make funding applications to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland Sound and Vision scheme. This scheme funds TV projects which are submitted by commercial, public service and community broadcasters or by production groups who have a commitment to broadcast from a licensed broadcaster. Sound and Vision is funded by an allocation of 7% of the Irish TV license fee, which amounts to c.€14M per year. While community broadcasting is only one sector with access to this fund, it has resulted in significant resources being available for the production of TV programmes. However, the funding is restricted to production costs on specified projects. This has been an on-going issue in community media which has training and outreach activities which are not funded and become underdeveloped.

Given the constraints of the Sound and Vision scheme, DCTV has been careful to develop a mode of production that remains true to the ethos of community television while availing of the resources from the scheme. Over the course of 15 discrete projects, attempts have been made to work with a variety of communities and include capacity building, community editorial control, and other objectives in the projects. Each project included a community partner and some, such as *The Storyteller* series, evolved over time into community development projects involving partners in set design, school liaison, promotion and distribution etc.

Some projects were designed with specific strategic objectives of the station in mind. A key priority was the development of a community TV studio facility. For this reason the *Community in a Studio* project was developed where DCTV worked with 12 different community organisations to produce different studio magazine series. With the support of a social finance source DCTV used this project as the anchor tenant in 2009 to develop a large studio facility with a multi-camera digital switcher and other equipment. It was in this studio, based in a 1200m warehouse that DCTV was using with the support of the Digital Hub that the sets for *The Storyteller* series, representing the 5 different

cultures of the 5 different storytellers were built by students at a local Adult Education College under the supervision of the set designer.

While these and other projects were very successful both in engaging with large numbers of volunteers and in producing some innovative and honest community media, the station identified two significant issues with the production model in mid 2010. While the large studio facility worked well on larger projects or as a training venue, its size itself and inaccessibility made it unsuitable for more ad hoc productions and required a certain level of experience and training to use. The project based nature of the Sound and Vision funding as a production model also worked against teams being maintained and skills developed on an ongoing basis. This led to a high turnover of volunteers and a much lower output of television than either the personnel or the facilities were capable of.

For these reasons DCTV identified two parallel initiatives that would help overcome these issues. The studio equipment consisting of lights, remote controlled cameras, sound desk, switchers and other equipment was removed from the large warehouse in the Digital Hub area outside the city centre and installed in a much smaller shopfront unit in Temple Bar. This new studio was in the midst of Dublin's cultural quarter, right beside City Hall and the local authority offices and within easy walking distance of a large number of community and cultural partners of the station. Business level broadband was installed in the new space offering the capacity for live television as well as much faster turnaround times to broadcast.

Secondly, the station focused on the development of a particular format of television production based around the new studio. This was an 'as live' studio production model which it was hoped would be designed to support growing numbers of people to produce community television. The section below outlines the element of the 'Open Format' show DCTV designed and is followed by brief reflections on how it worked.

The *We're At* Project: People, Brand and Production Bible

In November 2010 DCTV submitted applications round 10 of the Sound and Vision scheme. The station identified a theme of 'Culture and Entertainment Programmes' as it sought to expand its scheduling

Dublin Community Television (DCTV) is the licensed community content provider for the city and county of Dublin and has operated a 24-hour a day cable channel since 2007, with a reach of 500,000 homes. A members co-operative, DCTV was awarded a 10-year license by the Irish Broadcasting Regulator in 2006. The station is entirely self funded with a mix of members fees, sponsorship, production and training contracts. It does not carry advertising.

As a licensed broadcaster DCTV is eligible to apply for funding under the Irish Governments Broadcasting Funding scheme which is made up of 7% of the television license fee. More than €2 million funding for the sector has been secured to make hundreds of hours of programming with thousands of people from around the city.

A key objective of the station has been to develop community television capacity in the city and partnerships have been pursued with youth groups, community development organisations as well as other community media groups including the six licensed community radio stations in Dublin. The most visible output of this work is the city centre shopfront studio in Temple Bar where live television and radio is broadcasted and a huge range of groups receive training and produce media.

With offices in the Liberties area of the south inner city and partners in many communities around Dublin, community television has responded to the developing unemployment crisis by developing training projects for young unemployed people in media literacy and production skills. These have been supported by the national training agency Fás and local development companies and provide a model for labour activation. DCTV is also entering the second series of Dole TV, a weekly TV series produced by and for unemployed people. The series combines information on social welfare entitlements and job seeking with hip hop music, political comedy and satire and viewer submitted animations.

DCTV has ambitious plans for an all island channel on Digital Terrestrial Television which is only now being rolled out in Ireland. This will be a partnership with Northern Visions in Belfast and will be the only TV channel that is an all island initiative.

www.dctv.ie

and production into new areas. One of the projects submitted was a partnership with 4 cultural festivals in May and June 2011, Temple Bar Cultural Trust and the local authority, Dublin City Council. The show was to be named *Festival TV*. This application was successful and DCTV received support of €65,000 to make 16 x 20 minute programmes, covering the 4 festivals organised by the partners.

At this point the decision was made to adopt an 'Open Format' approach to production, to develop a format and brand that could be re-used after the project and to produce a production bible detailing all of the necessary knowledge to produce an episode of the show which would be released under creative commons. A 3-person team started working on the show with three distinct areas of responsibility:

One member of the crew liaised with the festivals, booked dates and developed the 'identity'. The show was renamed to *We're At*, as in *We're At the Dublin Dance Festival* or *We're At the Writers Festival*. This brand was designed to allow re-use, and all associated products such as logos, straplines, title sequences etc. were built to be released for later re-use and adaption. This was helped by the DCTV policy of striving to release all content under a creative commons license but it was the first time that the production design for a show had happened with the component parts designed for re-use and remixing.

Another crew member produced the production bible outlining things such as the preparation and ingest of location clips for use in studio, basic guides on how to set the equipment in the studio for an episode of *We're At* through to how to export and upload to make it ready for broadcast and web distribution.* This production bible was again written in such a way that it could be released as a stand-alone guide to how to make an episode of *We're At* or how to take that format and adapt it for other uses.

> *While episodes were filmed 'as live' and initial episodes had a stenagrapher in place to enable live subtitling, all 16 episodes were broadcast as pre-recorded material, although generally the first broadcast was either the evening of recording or the following day

The final member of the crew supported the recruitment and preparation of four festival teams, each of which would produce four episodes about their chosen festival. A mix of existing and new DCTV

volunteers with volunteers from each of the festival, the ability of a team of volunteers to take the format and produce the shows was to be the core test of the Openness of the Format. An initial call out for volunteers saw 85 people apply with 40 turning up to two induction sessions. A mix of skills and interests meant balanced teams could be created who then produced the shows under quite a tight time frame.

Over six weeks in May and June 2011 the four teams, supported at each step, used the *We're At* brand and production bible to produce 16 x 20 minute shows. Every show met its deadline, was broadcast in compliance with the contract with the funder (which, as well as thematic and quality requirements including stipulations such as every programme must be subtitled). Each show used the exact same format of 5 segments—three studio pieces with two pre-recorded videos breaking these up. However, the teams worked within these to develop their own styles and content—the Writers festival team had an illustrator drawing cartoons on a whiteboard during a show, the dance team had live performances in the studio. The iterative nature of the project, with teams learning from the groups before them and also learning during their four show run was evident in the content produced as participants learned the limits and potential of the format. Each show was also cut into shorter web sized clips and these were uploaded on an ongoing basis generating thousands of hits from both the partner festivals and social media promotion by participants in the project.

Openness and Results

An Open Systems approach to any project is designed to meet certain objectives based around the process of the project. When DCTV started to make the 16 episodes of *We're At*, a primary consideration was the contract to produce the episodes with the primary funder, the BAI, and the commitments made to partners on the project. The station needed to ensure that any specific production process had to be in compliance with these commitments. By adopting an Open Format approach to television production a number of other objectives were introduced:

The Network

By recruiting a large pool of volunteers and handing over editorial control of the individual programmes to these people the series

contributed significantly to the development of a network of community media makers who had experience of working together successfully. The iterative nature of the process and the open and accountable structure of the projects supported team building. There was an effort to support peer review and to encourage mixing between teams—both formally on shoots and informally. The Open Format provided a common resource base, brief and environment for each team while allowing creativity and skills to be developed. A key outcome has been a number of small production teams that have sprang up based around this network and have undertaken different projects, sometimes in conjunction with other DCTV volunteers. While this could take place after a commercial TV production with a comparable number of people working on it, the formation of new teams was hugely increased by the availability of an Open TV Format that these teams could organise around.

The Identity

When the title sequence and other design work was being undertaken for the series, a key decision was the change of name from *Festival TV* to *We're At*. The ability to easily re-use the assets created in a meaningful manner was built into the brief. *We're At* can be used for any live coverage—from arts and culture festivals to political demonstrations, seminars or press conferences. The assets were created in Final Cut pro and After Effects with the ability to drop an image file in to personalise for a specific show. All elements of the design were released as Creative Commons under an attribution, non-commercial derivatives allowed license. Generally, DCTV uses a non-derivatives version of the Creative Commons license for finished programmes. Partly this is to remain in compliance with the permission that is sought from filming subjects. But the title sequence, theme music and other elements of the *We're At* format were produced with a much wider, more open license in mind. They are available in both rendered and elements form on request for re-use and adaptation and versions have been produced for a number of projects.

The Guide

The 50-page manual for producing a *We're At* show is currently the standard guide distributed to people who want to know how to use

the DCTV studio. Through a series of steps, all of the tasks and equipment involved in the production of a short magazine programme in the DCTV Shopfront Studio are outlined. The guide has been used both to produce more than 20 *We're At* episodes and to support most other productions in the Shopfront Studio since June 2011. A key objective in the short term will be to find a guide maintainer who will ensure this document remains available but up to date as new technology is introduced to the Shopfront Studio or media makers develop new techniques that should be documented. The Shopfront Studio itself is also developing the systems required to manage a community resource. As these have an impact on the knowledge producers need, new forms and procedure will appear in the Guide.

The Bookings

DCTV opened the Shopfront Studio facility at the end of January 2011. As with the previous studio in the Digital Hub area of the city, about a mile to the west there was a core number of days booked from BAI projects and some use from the City Council Community department and a youth training project DCTV worked with. The new studio was designed to support a wider range of groups and abilities, with shortened production cycles and the ability to come in for a one-day training session and produce material for broadcast at the end of the day. It was also a partnership with community radio which saw both a cross fertilisation of presenters and technician with Dublin's vibrant community radio sector and experiments with putting radio programmes on television.

Conclusion

Funding from the Sound and Vision scheme has been an extremely significant element of the resources available to community television in Ireland since its establishment after the 2001 Broadcasting Act in Ireland. DCTV is very proud of the television that has been produced from projects on this fund and of the numbers of people and range of organisations that have participated in media making projects. DCTV has always acknowledged that while Sound and Vision was not designed for nor does it fully fit with a community approach to media making, it has funded many important community television projects.

Shopfront Studio. Photo: DCTV

The development of an Open Format within a Sound and Vision project is a reflection of a philosophy of media making rather than a use of funds. All TV productions of the structure of *Festival TV* are formulaic, they all produce assets and documentation in the same manner as this project did. The difference is not so much in whether resources were allocated to the production of this 'Process and Design Capital' but to the use of these assets once the initial project was over. In keeping with the philosophy of the station but also being mindful of the specific purposes of the funding available to the station, it is the release of this Creative Capital in the commons that is the innovation, not what the money was spent on.

In some ways Irish community television has no choice but to look at production models such as open source and peer-to-peer production. The reduction in cost and ubiquity of capture and streaming devices mean that citizens have access to production resources in a fundamentally different way. There is no shortage of cameras or edit suites. The large numbers unemployed and underemployed in Ireland possess skills and motivations that are available to community television—but the production of tens of hours of television per week on a commercial or even state funded basis looks unsustainable. By allowing programmes to be developed, tested, adapted, by removing the barriers to production so that an open guide and resource kit is available to create 20 minutes of television in a couple of days training, community television has the potential to avail of the opportunities presented. As mass media becomes something different, it must devise strategies to scale up to meet the requirements of platform and device convergence.

If an organisation is to be fully open and accountable to stakeholders in a period of rapid change it must have a culture of honesty and striving to improve that is trusted by those stakeholders. Mistakes will always be made and innovations unrecognised in the heat of frontline operations. DCTV has been fortunate enough to be able to access a small evaluation grant annually under the Community Broadcaster Support Scheme. In 2011 this will focus on the volunteering experience on *We're At* allowing the station to assess how *We're At* worked. This report will be made available to members of the co-op and will inform the development of other projects such as *We're At* and the Open Format itself.

If DCTV had not spent 3 years producing studio-based community TV *We're At* would not have been possible. Both knowledge and the people who had worked with the station in that time were invaluable assets to go into a project such as this. The large number of creative, talented and skilled people who could respond to the call for volunteers was in one way an indictment of an economic system which does not offer employment to so many of our citizens; another was a testimony to the drive and commitment of the people who responded. Without the BAI Sound and Vision scheme the resources to cover so many performances and events within the 4 festivals would not have been there.

We would like to think that the Open Format approach to TV production, along with the accessibility and ease of use of the Shopfront Studio, means that the project can contribute to a rapidly developing community television sector and can provide pointers towards a different, more open and collective media. *Festival TV*, by becoming the Open Format *We're At*, gives clues to how a new type of media with new value systems can be produced. But it is important that this media is seen and is accessed. Broadcasting may be undergoing huge change but it is where the 'network effect' first hit home. If we believe that we can build a media and a public conversation that is not purely commercial, that has space for communities and citizens who choose to communicate for non-commercial reasons we will definitely need production models such as the Open Formats DCTV is attempting to devise.

But as ever this is only half the battle. Not only must this media be produced—it needs to be seen and to be universally accessible. It is only really television when it is on the screen in the living room and too often that platform is commercially ring-fenced or otherwise lacking in open, free, community media. We need open access to platforms and Electronic Programme Guides (EPGs) to allow open formats and other tools of community television reach their full potential.

Ciaran Moore has been the station manager of DCTV since the channel went on air in 2007. Prior to this he worked as a software developer but was active in a number of community organisations. He has an interest in co-operative organising, media and technology.

Q&A: MARK SAUNDERS

In 1982 Mark Saunders founded *Despite TV*. The group operated out of the Tower Hamlets Arts Project on Whitechapel Road East London. *Despite TV* produced video magazines concentrating on local issues which at the time included the transformation of Brick Lane from a National Front stronghold to the Bengali street we know today, and the London Docklands Development Agency's take over of the old docks to turn it into an annex of the City. Despite TV also covered the year long Wapping Dispute in its first single issue magazine Despite the Sun. Mark now runs *Spectacle*, an independent television production company specialising in documentary, community-led investigative journalism and participatory media. Spectacle programmes have been broadcast across Europe, Australia and Canada and have won international awards. Spectacle also distributes independent DVDs, provides facilities to independent producers and training workshops on production and community based media.

1 *What do you understand by community media? How and by whom is it produced?*

'Community media' is a vague and often abused term. I understand it to mean media that is produced by a community (normally geographic—a neighbourhood, but could be a community of interest.) It is about voice—having the community on screen does not make it community media—who is behind the camera and who makes editorial decisions is key. In practice, unless there is an existing community media facility, there will be an external intervention in the form of 'animators' or facilitators. The quality of this intervention determines how far the production can be defined as community media.

2 *Why is community media needed? What does it bring to local cultures, communities and places?*

Why is any voice needed? There is a lack of independent media, especially at a local level. We all live in a community whether we know it or not—typically those who make and control media—*the establishment community?*—think they do not. Community media is a public space. Its value is its effect on the ground (internal) and on reaching other (external) audiences such as similar communities, researchers and decision makers. Community media enriches discourse and builds community cohesion—it brings a diversity of (often unheard) voices to the debate.

3 *What are the future platforms and practices of community media?*

Community media needs to be made accessible in the same way as the 'old media' that still dominates. There are still technological obstacles to accessing audiences. 'Affordable' media still has a high entry level if you want to make high quality media. New technology brings new problems; how to back up and store digital media so it is not just ephemeral. The Internet can help make collective editorial decision making across geographic and even language boundaries.

4 *What actions should be taken now?*

There should be some form of grassroots based media production and edit facilities—possibly based in schools or libraries to maximise the use of those buildings. Funding for this should come

from a levy on TV and Advertising revenues along the model of the *Workshop Agreement* (a declaration from the early 1980s aiming to provide financial security and new audiences for independent video and film workshops). There needs to be more debate that makes explicit and exposes who the 'community' is behind all media production.

www.spectacle.co.uk

M2HZ
Open-Media Toolkit at m-cult
by *Minna Tarkka*

M2HZ is a Helsinki-based open television channel launched in 2005 by m-cult with a view to supporting new forms of urban and participatory media. The work on M2HZ has proved that it is possible to build up a media practice that is open throughout. The channel has become an environment in which a wealth of current media issues converge—a platform for bringing together artistic experimentation and citizen journalism, local communities and international networks.

The development process has combined experiment with highly concrete, practical work, and has produced a 'toolkit' for enabling participation in media. In order to make open media happen, there is a need for channels, tools and content, but also for new kinds of social, technical and creative practices. Thus, the toolkit brings together perspectives from media art, community media and open-source culture.

Open Channels and Platforms

One prerequisite for urban and community media is, needless to say, channels. This infrastructure is necessary for sharing the results with viewers, for providing an outlet for the push from non-mainstream media—and for creating a pull for new programmes and producers. M2HZ kicked off in 2005 at a workshop attended by dozens of representatives of media-art organisations and local cultural groups. This was at a time when both digital television and online video were entering the Finnish media landscape. The government's hopes that the new digital television would provide a platform for citizen engagement were fading, and the model of open, local channels—well established in other Nordic countries—had not been supported by media policy. YouTube was introduced—and increasing numbers of producers began to look at the potential of the Internet as a video platform.

In the background to this was the need to give a voice and visibility to experimental arts, grass-root organisations, ethnic minorities and local communities—groups that were almost totally unrepresented in mainstream radio or TV. M2HZ was inspired by the idea of combining the best practices of old and new community media—public-access television and web-based social media. The name M2HZ also reflects a focus on urban space as a media space, with its collision between the unit of surface measurement (m2) and the unit of frequency (Hz). The first transmission took place directly after the launch workshop, and was quickly followed by small-scale experiments, such as mobile video blogs from live events and a wiki video platform. The channel model was developed simultaneously. With the support of the Uusimaa regional fund, in 2008, the channel was ready to release regular weekly programming on the net and digital cable. Since 2010, this development has continued within Stadi.TV, a broader coalition of media providers, creating a community-based multi-channel television for all Helsinkians.

Participatory Media and Art Practice—Workshops and Experiments

M2HZ, like many previous experimental and community television channels, has its roots in media art. There is a strong common, but often neglected history of media art and media democracy. With his contemporaries, video-art pioneer Nam June Paik and some of the first cult channels, such as *Paper Tiger TV*, wanted to change television—not just into a creative platform for artists—but also into a participatory media for everyone to express their views. This was carried on by many net-art and open-source projects before social media went mainstream—*Superchannel* by the Danish Superflex group being a classic example. At m-cult the primary focus on participation has been very grounded and social—having seen so many participatory sites opened to everyone in vain, it was clear that the creation of a new channel practice had to engage directly with the people, and not just offer infrastructures. The primary environment for engagement is a regular offering of media workshops. The starting point for the workshops was also a very practical one: the demand for help with shooting and editing was bigger than we could cater for—and thus there was a great need for a transfer of do-it-yourself skills.

The m-cult guideline for the workshops is 'learning by doing'—and this mindset is shared by media artists and amateurs alike. For artists, it is about the experimental approach of playing with the forms, contents and contexts of audiovisual media, and for local groups it is about crossing the threshold into media production. Thus, workshop topics range from new production techniques for artists to citizen journalism for NGOs and residential groups. Among our favourites are workshops run with teenagers to produce mobile dance/parkour videos, and the lively animation sessions with pre-school kids.

Free, Open-Source Tools and Manuals

When discussing with potential programme-makers, we always run into the problem of resources. Even if the hardware and software are getting cheaper, the cost is still considerable—especially if the media producers are volunteers and only have their own time to invest. Free, open-source software has matured quickly, and already offers viable alternatives to the expensive licensed software used in profes-

sional media production. As tools, much of it is also simpler to use, and thus actually works better in amateur settings. Lack of documentation has, however, been a major obstacle to the take-up of these free tools. To help this, m-cult joined FLOSS Manuals, an international network for producing high-quality manuals on free, open-source tools and practices. The Finnish FLOSS Manuals site was launched in 2009, and most of its current 30 manuals directly support audiovisual production. The free tools are used in the Open Media workshops, which have succeeded in demystifying both media production and open source. In them we follow the M2HZ guideline borrowed from open-source development: 'publish early, publish often'—all the results of the workshops are published on the channel immediately they are finished.

Open Content, Open Publishing—and Open Data

One more challenge to community media remains: copyright imposes legal and cost barriers for producers. Luckily, Creative Commons licences now provide a standard legal way of using and remixing materials, while web-based music and sound repositories offer a wealth of material for use in M2HZ workshops and productions. But, in order to increase sharing and collaboration between producers, and to create new forms of televisual culture, it is important to develop open-video resources and practices for working with them.

The Kallio Archive project aims to come up with working models for this. The project combines several themes of interest to m-cult—open publishing, participatory media, metadata and locative media. It is a hyperlocal media platform, which documents the life and environment of the Kallio district, a Helsinki neighbourhood in rapid change—and the home base of both m-cult and many of M2HZ's collaborators. The Kallio project is intended to bring video to the landscape of open publishing exemplified by Wikipedia, and to present a model for other local-media archives. Its implementation on the Drupal-based web platform is designed to be compatible with the emerging standards of open data, the next tool to be added to the open-media toolbox.

See m2hz.net, m-cult.org/projects/kallio-archive and fi.flossmanuals.net

For Minna's bio see page 47

COMMUNITY MEDIA WORKSHOPS
Case M2HZ, Helsinki

by *Emmi Vainio*

Organising training and workshops is a common approach adopted by many community-media projects and public-access channels around the world; for example, Alex TV in Berlin and Salto in Amsterdam are both open platforms where citizens can publish content.

The tenantspin community channel in Liverpool provides training and organises workshops for local people*.

> *Interview with Anneke Plaß, Head of Communications, Alex TV, 3.6.2011, Berlin & http://www.alex-berlin.de; On different community media workshops see e.g. Günnel 2002; Laurenco 2007; Programme on tenantspin workshops, tenantspin presents, www.m2hz.net/ohjelmat/tenantspin-presents, and www.tenantspin.org.
>
> *See also article by Patrick Fox from page 52*

Similarly, one of the main aims of the Helsinki-based open channel M2HZ, developed since 2005 under the direction of m-cult centre for new media culture, is to facilitate self-motivated media-content production by different local communities. This requires not only providing a publishing platform or production equipment to those interested in producing media content, but also providing communities with practical support to help them start up and maintain the production process.

I have worked as a community media producer for M2HZ since 2008. My work involves planning and running M2HZ training courses, organised regularly since 2009. Over the past two years, M2HZ has run numerous workshops for various target groups*. In the future, the plan is to apply the skills gained in the workshops not only to work at M2HZ, but also to Helsinki's new TV platform Stadi.TV. In this article, I will use

the neighbourhood of Kontula, Helsinki, as a case study to describe the principles, procedures and goals of the M2HZ workshops, and ask how they support local communities and their open media channels.

> *E.g. 12 workshops in 2010 had over 120 participants. Tarkka 2011: 40-41.

The tenantspin and City Reporter Workshops

Kontula is a residential area in Eastern Helsinki. M2HZ has worked there actively since spring 2010. In May 2010, in cooperation with tenantspin (Liverpool, UK) M2HZ organised a four-day filmmaking workshop for the residents of Kontula, led by tenantspin's workshop leader and filmmaker Alex Harrison together with producer Laura Yates. In addition to seven participants from Kontula, two Liverpool residents

attended the workshop. The themes of the workshop were citizenship, normality and identity. Tenantspin had previously organised a similar workshop in Liverpool. Two new videos were produced during the May workshop: *Kontula News* and *Four Bricks*. I took part in the workshop and assisted the tenantspin trainers.

In Autumn 2010, M2HZ continued its work in Kontula by organising the *City Reporters* workshop. This was partly attended by the same people who took part in the tenantspin spring workshop; some new people interested in filmmaking came along, too. Six City Reporters met eight times between October and December, with each meeting lasting approximately two hours. The *City Reporters* workshop participants made four short films*, all dealing with topical issues relevant to the residents of Kontula and the local people's experiences of living in the neighbourhood. I was responsible for leading the workshop and Minna Tarkka, Director of m-cult centre for new media culture, was the producer. She also played a crucial role in planning the training.

*The programmes are available to watch online:
www.m2hz.net/ohjelmat/kaupunkireportterit

The starting point for both of the workshops was collaboration with the residents. Training programmes organised for local residents in Liverpool are at the core of tenantspin's activities. The M2HZ *City Reporters* programme is targeted at residents from many different neighbourhoods. *The central idea is to increase locally produced media content, support local culture and expand the opportunities for the people living in the area to participate.*

While the two workshops were different in their form and implementation, as was my own role in them, they were part of the same process. The same people attended the workshops, they were held in the same place and had many shared goals. Consequently, I will include observations from both workshops in this article. The tenantspin workshop sparked an interest in community media in Kontula and, hence, created a good basis for the *City Reporters* workshop that followed it.

Step I: Finding People, Time and Place

Participants were found for the workshop through the Symppis community centre in Kontula. Symppis is a meeting place

Kontula News. Photo: tenantspin

tenantspin participants. Photo: tenantspin

for people from low-income households suffering from various social problems, such as homelessness, substance dependence and social isolation. Symppis is open daily and offers clients help in coping with everyday life. The workshops were attended by permanent Symppis staff members, volunteers and people on work placements, as well as by clients who all either live in Kontula or otherwise spend a significant amount of time in the area. Thus, the geographical location and the activities undertaken and relationships established at Symppis were the connecting link between the participants. *Good team spirit is extremely important*, especially for the longer-running City Reporters workshop, since the participants need to be willing to commit to working together for an extended period of time. Sharing a neighbourhood is not enough to create cohesion; other factors such as personal interests, social status and age play a central role in creating a sense of belonging to a certain group*.

> *On the construction of the relationship between the media and the local community see e.g. Jankowski 2002: 35-37.

The collaboration with Symppis went well. *In my experience, the best way for forming participant groups is cooperation with local people and organisations who have a direct contact with the potential workshop participants.* For example, website advertising or fly posting has generally been less successful in generating interest*.

> *See also Günnel 2002.

The most efficient way to organise a workshop is to find a time and location that fit well into the participants' daily lives. Both workshops in Kontula took place at varying times between 9am and 5pm. The participants could, thus, easily find a suitable time to attend the workshop while still being able to meet their other daily commitments. Lack of time and scheduling problems have been recognised as factors that prevent people from taking part in longer-running workshops. Meeting times for the *City Reporters* workshop were scheduled according to the participants' wishes, which required a certain degree of flexibility from the workshop leader, too.

The workshop was held at Kontupiste, an information and cultural centre for local residents next to Symppis. The City of Helsinki

Cultural Office runs Kontupiste. It has good facilities for small-group work and a video projector. The computers at Kontupiste run on the Linux operating system and support open-source video editors. It is essential that it is easy for the participants to come to the workshop. Moreover, because the programmes produced focus on local issues and people, it is more convenient if the filming takes place close to the workshop. The M2HZ workshop equipment includes small mini DV cameras, tripods, microphones and two laptops for editing, which allow us to 'move' the workshop to different locations.

Step II: Planning a Programme

Leading a workshop is largely a matter of dialogue, interaction and listening; the participants' own experiences and opinions are the main concern. The brainstorming stage is an open process, in which everyone can comment on the issues raised for discussion. The participants spent half of the first day of the tenantspin workshop talking and getting to know each other, which significantly improved the team spirit within the group*. It is important that the workshop leader is able to establish a dialogue within the group and encourage everyone's participation. *Essentially, the role of the workshop leader is to provide an opportunity for new encounters.* The leader needs to be open to learning and to respect the local people's knowledge. The leader's professionalism, thus, lies in their ability to create a supportive atmosphere for learning.

> *Laura Yates and Alex Harrison describe the workshop process in the *tenantspin presents* programme: www.m2hz.net/ohjelmat/tenantspin-presents

The ideas and viewpoints used in the training programme are shaped according to the participants' interests and needs. In the tenantspin workshop, the topic of the film was freely defined within the themes of citizenship, identity and normality. In addition to dialogue, the planning stage included visits to locations in Kontula that were important to the participants. Drawing was used as a tool to aid the move from planning to actual filmmaking. The participants described their feelings about the topics discussed and visited various places. This shift from words to pictures helped in drafting the script.

In the *City Reporters* workshop the topics were not defined in advance. The only restriction was that the perspective had to be local: the videos were to focus on events and people in Kontula and the surrounding areas. All the participants proposed topics, which were discussed in the group in order to determine a possible perspective, plan the production process and define what elements the programme would include. After the initial planning stage, an action plan was made for the shooting; possible interviews were arranged and prepared for by drafting questions and researching background information. The group produced one programme at a time, and the topics changed and were developed further during the autumn period. Finally, the group settled on making a topical news piece on the fusion of Helsinki's municipal letting agencies, a portrait of an environmental activist from Kontula, a 'sitcom' on cleaning the communal garden of a housing cooperative, and an interview with a local band.

The planning stage is significant for three reasons. First, the participants can reflect on what they find most interesting and why. Second, a good plan makes the filming and editing stages easier and quicker. This applies not only to movies, but also to journalistic and documentary-style productions. Third, the plan facilitates a structure for the programme: a beginning, a discussion and an ending. *The workshop aims to produce a conclusion, which has communicative value for both the participants and the viewers, for whom the topic may be unfamiliar.*

The main challenge for the workshops is to adjust the plan and production to fit the agreed schedule. Viewing films that have been made with similar resources and in similar amounts of time, but with different structures and storylines, can help the planning process. Significantly more time could be allocated to planning, viewing various examples and brainstorming for ideas, but it is important to move on to the other production stages to maintain the participants' motivation. The main goal is to finish the films during the workshop, so that the participants will be able to familiarise themselves with the entire production process.

Step III: Shooting

Prior to both the tenantspin and *City Reporters* workshops,

participants were given a half-hour introduction to using a camera, tripod and microphone. The learning process continued during the shooting according to the 'learning by doing' principle. The participants received guidance in basic skills, such as turning the camera on, inserting the tape or memory card, switching auto adjust on, using the zoom and understanding how white balance and resolution affect film quality. Learning good microphone techniques included directing the microphone correctly, at a correct distance from the source, using headphones, understanding the significance of acoustic levels, even if the recording is made using auto settings, and testing the equipment before shooting. The participants absorb this considerable amount of information gradually. Auto settings are used initially, because many people find using new technology exciting, but also frightening. More than once, I have heard a participant say they feared that the camera or computer would explode if they accidently pressed the wrong button. *Thus, it is essential to reduce unnecessary fear of or prejudice about new technology. The participants can expand their knowledge once they have been able to start the filming.*

In addition to the technical aspects, the *City Reporters* workshop dealt with issues related to image sizes, angles, directions and recommendations for camera composition and movement, and factors that influence the choice of filming location. The whole group and the instructors were all present during the filming. Generally, it is advisable to reserve enough time for the workshop shootings, so that there is room for revision and testing. It is important that the workshop leader can amend their teaching techniques to suit the participants' skills and evaluate how much information they can take in at any one time. Moreover, the instructor needs to speak clearly and avoid using professional jargon. In addition to using the camera, shooting involves a number of other aspects: setting up the shooting, finding out about filming permits, prepping possible interviewees and preparing questions, and presenting in front of the camera. Everything requires practice and so shootings are challenging yet rewarding experiences for the workshop instructor, too.

The M2HZ workshops have produced programmes using both mobile phones and mini DV cameras, which was the case in Kontula. Microphones are chosen according to the situation. The quality of

the microphone is important, because good sound quality improves the overall viewing experience. In short, shooting is done using light equipment *because expensive technology does not guarantee high-quality content; it is the enthusiasm of the participants and effective planning that produce good results.*

Step IV: Editing and Post-Production

The editing stage is without exception an eye-opening learning experience for the participants, especially for those who have not witnessed film editing or sequencing before. The workshop instructor can easily show the participants on the editing table how different messages can be produced from the same material. Alex Harrison was in charge of the technical side of the editing stage in the tenantspin workshop, but the participants were able to comment on all the cutting decisions. This arrangement was essential due to the tight schedule. Furthermore, nine people is far too many to edit one film all at once. The *City Reporters* workshop participants edited their films themselves. They took turns in being in front of the camera and working at the editing table.

Even though editing a film can be laborious and time-consuming, especially for inexperienced amateur filmmakers, it is a crucial stage in the production process. The participants can maintain control over the content throughout the production process, when they are also able to influence the editing decisions*. *In my role as a workshop instructor, I aim to introduce good, established editing practices, while avoiding influencing the participants' views on what the finished product should look or sound like.* Editing is often the most technically demanding stage because it requires relatively good IT skills and the workshop instructor should be present during the entire process. The participants can be much more hesitant to take the initiative with editing by themselves than they are when recording video.

*Compare Laurenco 2007: 97.

The M2HZ workshops try to use open-source software. This simplifies the production process and is the most cost-efficient solution. For example, the licence fees for many editing programmes used by professionals are high and they require powerful computers

to function properly. Linux-based software is free, easy to obtain and works well on smaller computers. In other words, using open-source software keeps facility costs low for the workshop organisers.

We have used the Ubuntu Studio operating system, Kino, OpenShot and Kdenlive video editors and the Audacity sound editor. There is, however, a dilemma related to the usability of open-source software: even though the programmes are versatile, they are slightly more unreliable and harder to use than, for example, Windows Movie Maker or Apple iMovie. Moreover, open-source operating systems are not commonly used and few participants will have an opportunity to download the applications for themselves after the workshop has finished. *The use of free, open-source editors and operating systems supports the evolution of an open, communal production culture.* These tools will become more popular only if people are taught to use them. Furthermore, users can give feedback to the software developers, enabling the users, at least in theory, to influence programme development without being able to write code themselves.

Freely available online resources, like music, are another central aspect of editing and compiling programmes in the open-media landscape. Creative Commons licensed music can be used in non-commercial productions without having to pay additional royalty fees or licences. These resources are available on many websites, which also offer sound effects, still pictures and video material. The original author's name, the name of the work and the licence for all material used has to be mentioned in the final credits. The workshop participants also learn how to add copyright information to their programme graphically. Including opening titles and closing credits gives even a short programme structure, while also providing additional information for viewers.

The use of open-source software in the workshops and programme production is closely linked with another m-cult project called FLOSS Manuals*.

*Available online: http://fi-new.flossmanuals.net

FLOSS Manuals is an international network that produces easy-to-understand manuals for open-source software. The manuals are released online on wiki websites that can be edited by users.

Clear documentation and manuals are rarely available for constantly changing open-source software. Consequently, using the software successfully requires regular update checks, updating manuals and localisation to different environments and purposes. FLOSS Manuals Finland has concentrated on software for media production, and the available repository of manuals supports the M2HZ workshop goals well.

Step V: Publishing and Distributing

Watching your own programme, as well as giving and receiving feedback, are rewarding learning experiences. The participants can be proud of their accomplishments, identify successful solutions to problems and issues that would require more attention. Due to the tight schedule, there is always room for improvement, but I believe this only enhances the learning process. The central guideline in open source software development—'publish early, publish often'—applies to community TV productions, too. *There should not be high barriers to publishing, so that beginners find it easy to publish their work and, thus, maintain the motivation to improve their skills.*

Learning about online publishing conventions is a core feature of the workshops, because the Internet is the main publishing platform for M2HZ productions. The workshop productions are published on the websites www.m2hz.net and www.stadi.tv. They are also broadcast on Stadi.TV's Finnish cable network, where they may be shown on more than one occasion. For the websites it is important to create metadata on the programmes. This includes author information, the name of the programme, as well as genre, tags that describe the content, location information, length and publishing date. This information makes it easier to find the programmes with different web searches and gives a brief description of the programme content. The workshop instructor will publish the programmes, but it is useful for the participants to have a basic understanding of the process.

The authors of the programmes can themselves define how they wish their programmes to be used and distributed. The authors retain copyright, but M2HZ and Stadi.TV have the right to broadcast the programmes and use them in their communication activities. The workshop participants can download their own programme, for example, to their personal websites, share it through social media, or

organise a screening for city decision-makers or their neighbours.

The possibility of publishing and broadcasting as widely as possible, through multiple distribution channels and as part of a larger unit is important for reaching a wide audience. If the workshop productions are only shown within the community, there is a danger that they will not be taken seriously*.

*Hannula 2009: 356–367.

Local community TV has the potential to be an effective tool of communication with local government or different citizen groups*.

*Compare Local Media Action Plan p. 10; Tarkka et.al. 2005: 56.

The tenantspin workshop productions were also shown on urban screens during the *Media Facades Festival.* The films were projected onto a wall in Kontula and shown on a large public screen in the centre of Liverpool. *Public screenings create a context for media encounters with new audiences. Media can also transform physical space and experience.* To be able to influence society, community TV channels need to actively create possibilities for viewing the programmes in spaces where viewers can discuss and reflect on their reactions to the seen content.

Step VI: After the Workshop

M2HZ is a platform for regular programme publishing and its work is not based on single workshops. Therefore, one aim is to encourage workshop participants to continue making videos and to get excited about the potential of local community media as a channel for self-expression, communication and for influencing society. The workshops have sparked interest among the participants, but regular programme production requires maintaining contact with the author community after the workshop, as well as holding occasional meetings and providing assistance. The most crucial aspect is for the community to feel that they have ownership of the channel and that it serves their interests and aims. Building and maintaining this kind of a relationship takes time and effort. Similar experiences can be gained in other M2HZ workshops, not only in Kontula.

Another issue is the lack of technical skills, as in the workshops participants have only limited time to go through all the relevant issues. If the participants do not have their own camera or editing tools, it can be challenging to maintain the skills learned. Taking this into account, open-source software is the cheapest alternative for setting up your own editing unit. Furthermore, community media centres, like Kontupiste in Kontula, can provide assistance in media production by, for example, acquiring or borrowing equipment for the residents. M2HZ also loans equipment for different projects.

Workshop participants can use the Open Media Production manual, produced by m-cult, as a reference point and for support in their own projects*. The manual includes guidance on the entire production process from planning to publishing. It is available free to read and download from the FLOSS Manuals Finland website. M2HZ is also planning to organise a follow-up workshop and a clinic, where the author community can discuss problems and brainstorm new ideas.

*Available online: http://fi.flossmanuals.net/index. php?book=avoin-mediatuotanto&chapter=index

Final step: Supporting Active Citizenship and Local Community

Strengthening the local communities' voice and agency, in other words their empowerment, is the central idea behind the M2HZ *City Reporters* and tenantspin workshops. The short film *Kontula News* focused on the local people's voice, their experiences and the way the media portray their living environment. The national media usually portray Kontula as a troubled area with a bad reputation, even though many residents enjoy living there and are proud of their neighbourhood. *Kontula News* is a series of still images, in which the workshop participants act as news reporters just about to begin their reportage, but fail to get started. The reporters stand still in front of the camera with a microphone in their hand in locations chosen by the participants. Workshop leader Alex Harrison describes the film as follows:

"We came up with the idea of communication and place, and the sense of how normality changes through how people see your identity and how you feel normal and other people see

you as normal. And we were talking about the communication side of things and places having a voice... [Like in the film] where nobody really says anything but they are on the verge of saying something, about having the background and the picture speaking for them... Because in the shots, too, everybody is standing alone in these locations, almost like there is nobody even behind the camera, just like they had found the camera, I suppose. And I think that is really quite representative of how people have explained they feel."*

*Interview available online: www.m2hz.net/ohjelmat/
tenantspin-presents

One of the programmes produced in the *City Reporters* workshop deals with the fusion of Helsinki municipal letting agencies into one big company, which was a hot topic among the residents in autumn 2010. There is a lot of council housing in Kontula. These flats have cheaper rent than, for example, recently built flats in new residential areas around the city. Tenants from different parts of Helsinki opposed the fusion, because they feared it would lead to an increase in rents due to the levelling of rent, maintenance and repair costs with all other city-owned rental flats. The fusion would also mean joining together different maintenance companies. In other words, property maintenance would be located further from the residents, and this could result in losing local knowledge of the condition of the properties and the residents living in them. Moreover, it was felt that a large company might weaken resident democracy and complicate citizens' possibilities for participation in the local decision-making process.

The Kontula *City Reporters* wanted to address this issue. The *City Reporters* interviewed a local resident activist who kept in touch with key decision-makers and collected names for a petition opposing the fusion. The programme also featured witty illustrations to accompany the interviews and a voiceover at the beginning to explain the background to the issue. The programme was broadcast in October 2010 and was re-run before the city council made its decision. Helsinki broadcasts all its city-council meetings live via Stadi.TV. Even though Helsinki City Council decided in favour of the fusion, the programme was a positive example of residents using open, public media to

convey their views on a locally important issue. The skills gained at the workshops can be used in various ways; ideally the community will use them to express their own views, influence decision-makers, or even to create social change on a larger scale. Learning new skills is, thus, related to the reality of the surrounding society*.

*Kellner 2002: 93–94; Hannula 2009: 358–359.

Similar ideas and teaching methods can be found in various pedagogical theories and critical collaborative methods. This field of study is large and diverse, but a common denominator is an interest in how the local community, citizenship and democracy are connected. Participation, i.e. active citizenship, is essential for democracy. *People need to feel part of a community before they are able to effectively participate in communal decision-making.* Active citizenship requires certain skills, knowledge and values, which are culturally relevant*.

*Niemelä 2009: 278–279; Kangaspunta 2006: 151–152.

Participation in TV and media production can offer tools to further this life-long learning process. Advancing active citizenship is an issue that requires more support in Finnish society, in which the culture of respecting governmental authority is still strong due the country's historical development. Authority figures and institutions hold power in society and there is a lack of appreciation of citizens' knowledge and skills*.

*Niemelä 2009: 280–281.

Active citizenship and participation are closely related to the concept of media literacy, which is increasingly required in today's society. Our daily communication is mediated through mass media, computers and global-market-driven politics and culture, which demand that citizens have a variety of skills to search for and critically analyse information, express themselves through different types of media, and participate in collective decision-making. *Producing media products strengthens the capacity to understand how media works and to critically analyse content, as well as improving relevant technical skills.* There is a deepening gap in society between those who, due to their technical equipment, skills and knowledge, have a possibility to

make use of information and media technologies, and those who have hardly any opportunities at all to benefit from them. Divisive factors include social status and education, gender and age. These factors also contribute to people's perceptions of their abilities to participate in public debate*.

*Kellner 2002: 90-92, 99; Günnel 2002: 342-343.

Community media workshops aim to address this issue in society by teaching media literacy and media and information-technology skills to new groups of people*.

*Compare Tarkka & al. 2002: 57.

Summary

Even though making a video programme is not rocket science, producing interesting content requires both imagination and technical skills. Organising a workshop is an efficient way to teach a group of people all at once. This is important for a small TV channel or publishing platform, because not all interested content providers can be trained individually. The workshops provide guidance on and practical experience of the production process, as well as a chance to develop one's own personal expression. Quality of the content is at the centre of the process, even though amateurs produce the programmes. The workshops also expand the channel's range of programming, because they encourage new enthusiastic content providers to begin media production. Thus, regularly organised workshops contribute to regular programme production.

Furthermore, the workshops provide an opportunity to participate for groups that would otherwise hesitate to get involved in TV production. In addition to technical skills, the workshop participants learn about self-expression, arguing their case, contributing to public debate, civic participation and how to form opinions. The workshop, thus, aims to encourage the participants to creatively apply the skills learned to their everyday lives. The purpose of community media is to actively provide resources for those who otherwise have fewer opportunities to participate in media. The workshops should be designed to suit participants who have no previous experience of video production or technical skills.

The workshop activities embody the core principles of community-media production: gathering diverse groups of people to work and learn together. Participating in the workshops is fun; it is an opportunity to meet new people, while simultaneously making the work of local TV channels more approachable. I believe that the workshops are precisely the place where the channel's work and the needs of the local people meet, thus opening up new possibilities for developing interesting high-quality media content.

Emmi Vainio is working as a community media producer at the Finnish centre for new media culture m-cult. She has studied radio and television studies in Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences specialising in collaborative production models and citizenship journalism.

References

Günnel, Traudel 2002. "Counteracting the Gap: Strategies for Teaching Media Competence". In Jankowski W. Nicholas (ed.), *Community Media in the Information Age. Perspectives and Prospects*. Hampton Press, Cresskill.

Hannula, Aino 2009. "Vapauttavat yhteisölliset käytännöt: Pula!-ooppera ja Camera Obscura -hanke". In Filander, Karin & Vanhalakka-Ruoho, Marjatta (eds.), *Yhteisöllisyys liikkeessä*. Kansanvalistusseura, Jyväskylä.

Jankowski, Nicholas W. 2002. "Creating Community with Media: History, Theories and Scientific Inestigations". In Lievrouw, Leah A. & Livingstone, Sonia (eds.), *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs*. Sage Publications, London.

Kangaspunta, Seppo 2006. *Yhteisöllinen Digi-TV. Digitaalisen television uusi yhteisölisyys, yhteisöllisyyden tuotteistaminen ja yhteisötelevision vaihtoehto*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Tampere, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. Tampere, Finland.

Kellner, Douglas 2002. "New Media and New Literacies: Reconstructing Education for New Millennium". In Lievrouw, Leah A. & Livingstone, Sonia (eds.), *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs*. Sage Publications, London.

Lourenco, Rogério Santana 2007. "Video-Identity: Images and Sounds of Citizenship Construction in Brazil". In Fuller, Linda K. (ed.), *Community media*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Niemelä, Seppo 2009. "Alamaisesta kansalaiseksi: kansalaisopinnot ja sivistyspedegogiikka". In Filander, Karin & Vanhalakka-Ruoho, Marjatta (eds.), *Yhteisöllisyys liikkeessä*. Kansanvalistusseura, Jyväskylä.

Reports

Local Media Action Plan (19 January 2011). Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Government of the United Kingdom.

Tarkka, Minna 2011. "FLOSS Manulas tukee avoimen lähdekoodin tuotantokulttuuria". In Heinonen, Saija et.al. (eds.), *Medios: osallistumisen ja tarinankerronnan työkaluja/tools for participation and storytelling.* Final report. Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki.

Tarkka, Minna & Hintikka, Kari A. & Salminen, Oili 2005. *Digi-tv kansalaisvaikuttamisen kanavana*. Preliminary assessment. ArviD-publications 05/2005. Ministry of Transport and Communications, Helsinki.

Internet sources

www.m-cult.org
www.m2hz.net
www.stadi.tv
www.alex-berlin.de
www.salto.nl
www.tenantspin.org
fi.flossmanuals.net
www.mediafacades.eu
www.kontu.la
www.kontulansymppis.blogspot.com

Interviews

Alex Harrison —filmmaker, tenantspin, Liverpool, England
Anneke Plaß —Head of Communications, Alex TV, Berlin, Germany
Laura Yates —Producer, tenantspin, Liverpool, England

P.S.

Causing Trouble: Six Variations on Community, Media and Art

by *Laura Sillars*

The following six positions represent the conflict in discussing the creative space discursively shaped by the words community, media and art:

Community Media Art

Media Art Community

Art Community Media

Media Community Art

Community Art Media

Art Media Community

At each inflection, the grammar or word order destabilises the values of the sentences, making them describe something less than subtly different. Reading the word 'media' through the lens of 'community' and as an adjective to 'art' shifts the initial, independent meaning of the words. Each of these words has its histories, some of which stretch back thousands of years. They are invested with variant political, social and economic values. And, as they shift from being nouns to adjectives, from solid forms to types, there is trouble.

Hagiographical histories reliant upon heroes tell only a fraction of the story. Inarguably, artists such as Suzanne Lacy, Steve Willats and Superflex (to pick at random a few of the most celebrated artist/ activists in this wide-spectrum field) have had enormous impact. Yet, at the level of art criticism, as the fierce debate between academics such as Claire Bishop and Grant Kester has identified, only a limited collective understanding exists about the operation and value of this work where process and product inexorably merge. So, the history of great men (and women) continues to be the dominating discourse in the art community media. The hundreds of nameless artists whose brand has not made it into the 'international art world' and whose creativity flows through this productive space are neglected by this mode of critique as active creative agents. For the art media community, whose market are collectors, curators, artists, gallerists, academics and students, shortcuts are required. Collaborative, messy, multi-authored artistic production does not make a story—or history. Narrative, like grammar, has its structures.

Through the lens of the media art community, the centrifugal political/artistic position that community media art represents is a radical alternative to Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* and Situationism's assault against cultural consumption. It is the art of the people, for the people. And yet, anyone who has ever been involved in anything loosely called community media art will know that this idealistic position is far from straightforward. Where there are people there is power. It is almost never evenly distributed. The distributers of the power often remain nameless behind the brand of the instigator artist and even if the so-called 'participants' are named does this mean that the media is 'of the people'? Much of the most interesting work in this field has been undertaken with people who for political reasons (immi-

gration/asylum seeking) seek to keep their identity hidden. These are temporary, transient communities seeking to stay out of history—at least for the time being. And being 'given a voice' is not the same as 'having a voice'.

The community art media takes a less cynical approach—it is the 'give a man a fish or teach him to fish' debate—and the link here to progressive development is deliberate. Yet it is hard not to want to know who is giving, who is getting and why. State funded culture in this work field finds funding and validation from the EU to UNESCO, from national and regional Western governments via a complex web of quangos to outsourcing from an array of civic agencies. For some grass roots purists, this is an anathema as it ensures straight (or even curving) lines between 'the people' and the 'the state'. The argument (in a very condensed form) is that creativity keeps people quiet.

In the 1970s, artists such as Nam June Paik developed the writings of Marshall McLuhan in art to inspire mainstream media to produce a new sort of community art form. June Paik was heralding a global communication of international collective understanding via TV. The Internet could potentially be seen to fulfill this utopian desire were it not for disproportionate access. Interestingly, Sadie Plant has written about access in her analysis on mobile phones in Africa where the majority of calls are missed calls. Phone calls are a huge expense—1 ring for coming, 2 rings for not coming etc.—a sort of post-modern Morse code has developed. Whether by default or design, Plant, as did June Paik, seeks a coalition between corporate and community technological development, pragmatically understanding that the two go hand in hand. Contemporary debates about privacy, data ownership, access to information and therefore political power are as current as ever. Nevertheless, writing in 2011, where people have not been kept quiet and have used the internationalising network building tools to enable the Arab Spring (at times supported by the NATO) or the London Riots (predicted by the Futurists), it feels as if we have reached a game-changing moment.

The power of social media has been harnessed for immediate impact (good, bad and indifferent) and while community media art is not social media communication, social media has enabled new forms of co-production. Despite the obvious problems of its production, own-

ership and management, it presents a new paradigm. An increasing artist/activist interest in alternative hardware and DIY communication network systems such as the independent city farmstead 'Internet' in Detroit represents the ongoing desire for accountable, transparent non-corporate constructions and community controlled communication.

When looking to the future then, it is fair to say that this field of activity remains conflicted and this looks likely to sustain. As a cultural producer, I have a heightened awareness of the flow of capital and cultural policy. Nevertheless, in this context of compromise, artists remain as the tinkerers, testers and producers of new sorts of civic engagement. And, the fact is that the creative space in which community media art is produced must remain unstable, uncomfortable and unclear in order to have power. It cannot stay still for long as communities change, media moves and art alters.

> Community Media Art
> Media Art Community
> Art Community Media
> Media Community Art
> Community Art Media
> Art Media Community

Laura Sillars is Artistic Director of Site Gallery, Sheffield and was previously Director of Programmes at FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology). Her interest in public engagement stemmed from leading Tate Liverpool's Public Programme from 2003. She is passionate about continuing to build strong contemporary arts programmes across the UK and recently set up All Points North, a collaborative initiative to support the development of contemporary art across the North. She has a special interest in video art and as a Clore Leadership Fellow she has worked with Artangel's Co-Director James Lingwood to produce a feature documentary in Detroit with artist Mike Kelley. Her next project is a new commission with Zoe Beloff bringing together found film footage and cartoons and turning the gallery into a 1950s film studio.

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

About Us

The Finnish Institute is a London-based private trust. Our mission is to identify emerging issues relevant to contemporary society and to act as catalyst for positive social change through partnerships. We encourage new and unexpected collaborations and support artistic interventions, research, the creative industries, foresight and social innovation in new, socially central areas. The Finnish Institute is one of the 17 Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes and is core-funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland. The Institute is a founding member of EUNIC—the London cluster of the European Union National Institutes for Culture.

Amidst the current technological and social changes, does television hold the kind of relevance it once did? TV LIKE US brings together artists, researchers and technologists working with community TV in Finland, Britain and Ireland to explore this question. The texts show that the thing called 'television' still holds a potent grip on our collective imaginations and that community TV is fast becoming a key player in the changing broadcasting landscape. Community television builds citizenship, tells stories and gives people a voice through DIY participation. From artist TV to open media platforms, TV LIKE US presents cases, methods and ideas behind this lively, local TV culture.

THE
FINNISH
   INSTITUTE
IN LONDON