Ele Jansen – ele.jansen@unsw.edu.au
PhD Candidate Media Anthropology
University of New South Wales, Sydney

LITERARY REVIEW AND THEORETIC REFLECTION –
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TITLE

Co-creative Practice in Participatory Narratives:
Examining How Practice Enables And Limits Collective Storytelling

OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Since the last decade of the 20th century, social media[1] and affordable digital technology lead to a steadily growing DIY culture (Manovich 2008: 33, Lash 2007). This democratization of production through the many-to-many nature of the www affects how stories are told and perceived, most notably through a culture of sharing, remixing and commenting (Amerika, 2011). In this context, multichannel narratives – which are characterized by locally dispersed authors who share, create, and circulate content across diverse media platforms (Jenkins 2006) – have become popular among the industry and audience alike. Films and TV show convey complex stories that operate on a multitude of

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[1] The shift from new media to social media, or web 2.0 (coined by Tim O'Reilly), occurred around 2004 when technical, economical, and social developments ushered mass contribution and collaboration on the internet (Manovich 2008: 33).

levels, employ plots within another plot and extend to other media. In order to play and dig deeper, the audience can follow the story and contribute to it through different media. Websites, mobile apps, locative media, or pervasive games offer content that enriches characters and story universe (cf. Dena 2009, Jenkins 2006, Rose 2011, Handler Miller 2008, Bernardo 2011, Gomez 2010, Montola/Stenros/Waern 2009).[2]

This literary review on participatory storytelling is a result of refining key themes that unite my case studies and their theoretic foundation. Bridging media studies and anthropology opens two crucial pathways to answering how media practices change narrative form and interaction. By drawing on scholarly expertise in both disciplines, I can map the field in quite some diversity. Depending on the knowledge I gain during fieldwork, I can then choose and combine suitable theoretic concepts, which ideally inform one another. For my specific case study, three aspects are predominant. The first is media practice (i). Examining phenomena of new media production is complex, mainly since the realm of mobile technology lacks 'spatial, social, and temporal boundaries', which 'makes it difficult to maintain distinct social contexts' (Boyd 2011: 23:20). Looking at practice in its various forms is a way of subsuming those aspects under one roof, which determines the interplay of all the different parameters within. The second aspect is participatory storytelling (ii). As mobile technologies become more and more pervasive in everyday life, so does media consumption and production. In this surrounding, storytelling across various channels including various actors becomes dispersed and something new entirely. The third aspect is how this ubiquitous virtual platform inspires playful narratives (iii). In order to self-publish and co-create, professionals and amateurs interact, collaborate, and employ different media devices interchangeably, developing multimodal literacy that diverts from linear text consumption. Such narratives might feature new forms and lead to different ways of interaction, of which new media practice is the very source.

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[2] Examples for such projects are Charles Leadbeater's collaborative textbook 'We think', Matt Hanson's collaborative film project 'A Swarm of Angels', Daniel Solis' storytelling game 'Do: Pilgrims of The Flying Temple', Gebrueder Beetz's media event 'Farewell, Comrades', Katerina Cicek's participatory film 'Out My Window', and in an inverted sense Danis Rose's hypertext version of James Joyce's 'Finnegan's Wake'. These examples show different cases of new possibilities in non-linear storytelling. Rose took one author's work – Joyce's dense but linear narrative – and transferred it into a form that appropriates the narrative's simultaneity and complexity in a non-linear fashion. Leadbeater published parts of his unfinished manuscript online and included the comments and hints of thousands of readers. Hanson invited a community to have a say in script developments of which only basic framing parameters were given. Solis designed a game world, in which participants can immerse, but also create in order to continue the story. Gebrueder Beetz created a transmedia experience on the decline of the USSR including film, books, exhibitions, interactive media, and TV events. Lastly, Cicek engaged a worldwide audience to contribute their own film sequences to a non-linear online narrative.

i: PRACTICE/PERFORMANCE

The last decade has seen intensified debates on practices across digital media drawing on multiple modes of technology, interaction, and production. Academics in Anthropology and Sociology have researched mainly three perspectives that embrace the field of media practice: media in everyday life, media and the body, and media production (cf. Postill 2010: 3). These areas are overlapping and stretch over different levels of society, including media-related (Couldry 2010) or media-oriented (Hobart 2010) practices of both individuals and organizations. Media anthropologists who theorize practice and use it methodologically draw on a vast body of knowledge on social practice by cultural theorists. From the 1960s onwards, there has been a renewed turn towards researching practice, partly fuelled by American neopragmatists, such as William Quine, Clifford Geertz, Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty and George Herbert Mead[3]. This move gathered pace during the 1970s and 1980s when theorists tried to connect practice as a social phenomenon as well as individual actions in order to liberate agency from structuralist constraints (cf. Postill 2010: 6/7). Within this pragmatic[4] framework, practice theory is understood as partly overcoming dichotomies and disciplinary divides (Postill 2010: 12), providing a way out of the agency-structure struggle that is seen as a divide between material or institutional structures and agency of subjects and objects. Sherry Ortner used the term 'theories of practice' to describe this trend in research (Ortner 1984: 126). Key thinkers are (first generation) Gilles Deleuze*, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel De Certeau, Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and (second generation) Sherry Ortner, Theodore Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina and Eike von Savigny, Bruno Latour, John Law, Luc Boltanski, Michel Callon, Barry Barnes, Ann Swidler, and Isabelle Stengers.* Furthermore, the last decade saw a turn towards media practices, a *s*pring-off strand promoted by the works of Hughes-Freeland (1998), Coman and Rothenbuhler (2005), Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin (2002), Askew and Wilk (2002) stress the dominance of practice in combination with media.[5] In order to understand the practice of participatory storytelling, I will outline a theoretic basis of social practice and then move on to the specific case of media practices.

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[3] The 20th century pragmatism referred back to earlier works of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and European influences such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Francis Bacon.
[4] Philosophical pragmatists include Peirce, Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Quine, Foucault, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Bourdieu (Hobart 2010: 69-70).
[5] Other notable researchers within media practice are Nick Couldry, John Postill, Glorianna Davenport, Debra Spitulnik, Elizabeth Bird, Sarah Pink, Elisenda Ardévol, Danah Boyd, Bernie Hogan, William Dutton.

Social Practice

Schatzki (2001) classifies first generation practice research into philosophical (Wittgenstein, Taylor), cultural (Foucault, Lyotard), science/technology (Latour, Rouse, Pickering), and social theory (Bourdieu, Giddens). Wittgenstein and Taylor stress that practices 'underlie subjects and objects' and highlight the conditions of intelligibility and non-propositional knowledge. Foucault and Lyotard turned from a structuralist view of language, semiotics, or abstract discourse towards seeing it as a discursive activity (cf. Schatzki 2001: 1, Foucault 1976, 1980 and Lyotard 1984, 1988). Rouse and Pickering contextualize practice within science reconsidering 'human dichotomies between human and nonhuman entities' (Schatzki 2001: 1). Pickering calls for a posthuman social theory that entails the reciprocity of subject and object, human and material (Pickering 2001: 164). Bourdieu and Giddens tried to overcome oppositions between action and structure by questioning individual actions and their meaning for the social. The influential work of Bourdieu, who, by focusing on embodied capacities, such as skills and tacit understanding, broke with a tradition of sociologists and philosophers, who stressed mental activities, such as beliefs and purposes[6] (cf. Schatzki 2001: 7). Bourdieu contributed to practices in everyday life on both an individual (embodied habitus, doxa, hexis) and systemic level (field theory). In his research 'On Television and Journalism', he renders a field as a domain of practice in which different agents collaborate and compete (Bourdieu 1998). Therein, media professionals constitute a social arena that affects other fields of society through its cultural (re)production (Bourdieu 1998, Couldry 2003: 655, Postill 2010: 15). A similar theory was modeled by Niklas Luhmann, who locates systems within social reality, such as the media, economy, or politics (Luhmann 2000). This model is criticized for rendering systems as being self-contained (autopoietic) and for neglecting ideological contingencies (Domingues 2000). Bourdieu, on the contrary, insists that social processes have consequences[7] (cf. Couldry 2003: 654-5). That is why Bourdieu's model is better suited for my research with respect to technologically oriented ideological motifs and practical compatibility of different media.

In Bourdieu's wake, Schatzki renders the 'social field of practices' as a complex global phenomenon consisting of subfields, in which actions can only be understood within the specific practical context. The

[6] Which can indeed also be explained by the plain 'doing' of practices that ensures reflexivity and purpose (cf. Greenhalgh 2010: 308).
[7] Bourdieu also criticizes George Herbert Mead and other symbolic interactionists for failing to entail context, ideology, or fields of practice, and their relative location in social space (cf. Postill 2010: 16).

> social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around a shared practical understanding. The 'skilled body' is a fundamental notion for practical fields, for it is where activity and mind as well as individual and society meet (Schatzki 2001: 3).

In this sense, practice spans different fields and relates the individual with the institutional, acknowledging the reciprocity/interdependency.[8] Ann Swidler for example suggests how certain practices anchor or constrain other cultural practices (Swidler 2001: 74). Transferring her thought to media, this means that industry, ideology, or technology frame individual practices by collective forces that the individual cannot or finds hard to overcome. However, these hierarchies are not fixed. While some practices are habitual, others are not. 'Some […] practices seem able to create and then anchor new constitutive rules' (ibid.: 90). This notion includes hierarchisation of practices, which gains complexity when, in my case, linear techniques are mixed and matched with hypertext and plot-driven stories are revamped by recipients. Swidler's insight goes back to what Bourdieu describes as habitus: a human condition of subconscious structured dispositions that are constituted in practice, based on past experience. This incorporated habitus is seen as the driving force through which social structures are produced and reproduced (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus (hexis and doxa[9]) seen as deeply internalized and largely unconscious acts seems to limit the use of this concept for research on creative or innovative practice. However, Bourdieu recognizes 'a capacity for invention and improvisation' within an agent's practice (Bourdieu 1990a: 13). This is central to my research, because new technologies are a breeding ground for habitual disruption and innovation. Andreas Reckwitz (2002) stresses the importance of embodied and mental routines and that crises can bring about significant changes in practices. These can be seen as innovative or creative breaks (cf. Butler 1997: 207/208; Goffman 1959, Bell 2008: 180).

In performance studies, the break of repetitive actions has been discussed extensively. Judith Butler claims that Bourdieu does not consider the performative force resulting from breaking repetitive conventions (iterability), thereby creating new contexts and create non-conventional forms (Butler 1997: 207/208). In other words, by repetition

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[8] More recent media-related work on Bourdieu has been published by Moeran 2002, Benson and Neveu 2005, Peterson 2003, de Nooy 2003.
[9] For Bourdieu *habitus* is the influential surrounding including ideology (i.e. concepts and values) and physical (i.e. architectures) that determines the individual's behaviour. Doxa denotes the state by which 'the natural and social world appears as self-evident' (Bourdieu 1977: 164) The embodiment of habitus is what Bourdieu calls hexis. It refers to how individuals act mostly subconsciously, including gestures, type of movements, looking, sitting, etc. (ibid.)

and imitation we develop habits, which we can break and change our actions that then turn into new habits (e.g. if we encounter obstacles or find ways to improve/innovate)[10]. Much in congruence with the idea of iterability, Goffman describes how the flow of interaction is regularly disrupted, which leads to a *corrective interchange* of challenge and acceptance until the equilibrium is re-established (Carlson 2004: 34). He isolates sequences of interaction, which he calls *strips of experience*. The strip gets coherence and meaning from context and is altered through *fabrication* and *keying*. The concept of keying means the process in which a strip of experience is placed in a new context, which gives it a different meaning (Carlson 2004: 220). Dealing with disruption can either undermine or challenge traditions, as a re-enforcement of existing traditions, or to explore new patterns creatively (Carlson 2004: 12-13). Within media production practice, creative keying can result in both, a new way or a new outcome of storytelling. With respect to non-linear storytelling, Stiegler's cinematic consciousness comes to mind and his statement that we are generally capable of changing our conscious constitution by routinizing new habitual practices (Stiegler 2011: 36). My research will address this question by observing cutting edge media production in close-up, scrutinizing causes and effects of dealing with unknown terrain and complex possibilities that are ungraspable in a linear fashion.

Media Practice

Returning to media-oriented studies, practice gained considerable prominence since the late 1990s. Many of these theorists draw on Bourdieu's notion of practice, however the works of De Certeau, Giddens, Schatzki, Warde and Deleuze prove fruitful to the media field as has been shown in a 2010 essay collection by Braeuchler and Postill (2010). Since 2004, Nick Couldry calls for a paradigm shift in media anthropology, turning towards practice theory, which is suitable to overcome 'old impasses around media effects, political economy and audience research, enabling them to take up instead the study of open ended range of practices focused directly or indirectly on media' (Postill 2010: 20, Couldry 2004, 2010). Marc Hobart reiterates that notions of structure and system are outdated and media-related practices are not confined to power-related media organisations. He stresses that complex forms of social articulation have much potential for individual change, acknowledging the power of media institutions in this process (Hobart 2010: 55). Elizabeth Bird, however, does not demise structure and recalls Ortner favouring a practice approach that unites structural constraints and the power of audience agency. Her outlook

[10] Performance is mimesis (imitation), poiesis (making) and kinesis (breaking) (Bell 2008: 180).

on practice is more how media shape everyday practices, which explains Bird's stress on the importance of cultural practices in general (Bird 2010: 87).

Alongside Bird, many scholars locate media on center stage of nowaday's cultural practices (cf. Lash 2001, 2007, Castells 1996, Völker 2007, Jenkins 2006, Nightingale and Dwyer 2007, Clark 2003, Levy 1997, Friedman 2005). Elisenda Ardévol contends that today virtually everybody 'is' media, stressing everyday appropriation of mobile technologies by means of which their users often become media producers themselves (Ardévol 2010: 265). Such assumptions involve ubiquity and availability of media, which is underlined by Thomas L. Friedman's book 'The World Is Flat'. In his opinion, this flattening is a product of media convergence and globalization. *Flat* in this context refers to a map of a mediatized world, in which access to information is equal everywhere (Friedman 2005). This view was widely criticized, among others, by Richard Florida, who contrasted 'The World Is Spiky', showing that in general western countries and metropolitan cities are in fact mediatised, whereas large rural parts of the world are not. Such a divide is due to economic factors that push media in cities faster than in less populated areas (Florida 2005). In this respect, individual media practice is connected to structural limitations to access.[11] Thus, practice can be assumed to vary largely in different media fields across the world; the www opening pockets for individuals to access foreign media fields, thereby transcending certain structural constraints but still moving within other limitations.

This is relevant to my case study because cross-medial collaboration facilitates worldwide contribution, which has effects on collective practice and storytelling. These differences in global media accessibility raise questions to whether media use is experienced as a luxury or necessity. This, of course, has great influence on how media technology is used individually. On a local level, Anthony Giddens[12] (1984) stresses the connection between agency and structure by saying that individuals cannot be separated from everyday contexts that are constituted by their very own actions (Giddens 1984: 116-117). In alignment with Haegerstrand, Giddens understands that people's days are structured by routines according to *stations*, such as schools, workplaces, shops, that we stop by regularly (ibid.: 135). These stations structure individual's lives into habitual time and space frames. In media studies this has been taken up in order to explain routinization of media practice. This notion of *stations* might be interesting for my research in terms of how differently media are included in everyday life. Examples would be how mobile media is carried along to produce footage or document mundane life in order to contribute to a

[11] Stressing this point, Scott Lash contends that media organisations hold power of access to technology by broadband and exclusive code/algorithms (Lash 2007: 71).
[12] Giddens argues similar to Bourdieu, but theoretically and not empirically informed.

narrative, or how publishing online is/becomes a daily habit. In his *structuration theory,* Giddens overcomes the academic divide of structure and practice by showing that 'principles of order could both produce and be reproduced at the level of practice itself' (Couldry 2010: 45). Placing practice on a meta-level, does however not mean that order, hierarchy, and power become meaningless (cf. Swidler 2001). Transferring this to my case study helps assessing negotiations, power relations, and order between collaborating production parties without the necessity to draw on conscious ideologies, however allowing they exist. Like Bourdieu, Giddens speaks of largely habitual practices that create routines.

In addition, De Certeau's notion of strategy and tactics might prove fruitful as a basis for exploring border-crossing media practices. Lev Manovich (2008: 33) takes De Certeau's 'Practice of everyday life' and transfers it to media life. Strategies and tactics are reversed, he claims, when recipients become producers and their tactics inform strategies implemented by professionals/institutions. Institutions responding to users is often referred to as democratization of production (ibid.: 43) through the many-to-many nature of the www. This very feature opened up digitized outlets for remix, which, according to Manovich, is inherent to human tactics (e.g. the customization of personal interfaces, or trend of commentary or enhancing videos). This shift from mass consumption (old media) to mass production (new media)[13] took a leap with the arrival of web 2.0, the social web, in which recipient-production reached larger scale importance. Having said that, we are still speaking about a relatively small group of contributors. In 2007 only 0.5 – 1.5 % of users of most popular social media sites (youtube, Wikipedia, flickr) contributed their own content. Cathy Greenhalgh's work on changes in analogue and digital film-making focuses on collaboration on a film production set applying De Certeau's notions on tactics and strategies (Greenhalgh 2010: 303). Exemplifying a filming location as a spatial constraint and operating actions as a temporal limitation, space is marked as strategy and time as tactics (ibid.: 312). Analogous to De Certeau's everyday practices that are guided by externalities but leave room for personal timing and expansion, Greenhalgh makes an argument for empowerment and ownership through practice (tactics) within the industry's structures (strategies) (ibid.). Thereby, she stresses the collaborative dynamics of embodied practices that are 'accrued in situated places and temporal moments' and emerge bottom-up 'to assume cultural form' (ibid. 321). Greenhalgh's findings resonate with most of the above-mentioned authors, calling for the integration of individual practice

[13] Or mass innovation as Charles Leadbeater contends in his 2009 text book 'We Think: Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production'.

in relation to structures that can be manifold, including institutional, natural, or ideological. And it pays tribute to media being both a production process as well as a symbolic system (cf. Couldry 2003: 672).

In this section I gave an overview of related theory on embodied practices within social and media fields. The works I chose do not cover the entire body of academic work on performance and practice. However, they represent the most relevant publications to my research. I have demonstrated that a methodological focus on practice allows making statements on collaborative media production with respect to how temporal and spatial constraints are overcome or made compatible in terms of tactics and strategy on both an individual and institutional level. Hence, I am following Bourdieu's appeal that 'only an internal analysis of the embodied practices of media professionals and their relationships to each other can open up an understanding of the way the social is constituted in the contemporary world' (cf. Postill on Rao 2010: 16).

ii: PARTICIPATORY STORYTELLING

Storytelling is universal to human cultures, yet the way stories are told change with technological developments. The invention of the printing press, for example, helped distributing more written stories in addition to spoken ones. The invention of moving images led to filmic storytelling that includes sound and image recordings. Cinematic storytelling has been described as seventh art – an art that combines all others (Canudo 1923) – while still being linear in its structure. TV then gave rise to disrupted narratives, known as sitcoms (Rose 2011: no pagination). However, storytelling remained largely linear. The overall architecture of stories differs from one medium to another and can be seen as malleable form. These ideal types overlap and reassemble as sources for a multimodal story: Letter-based print storytelling fuses with print or digital images; TV episodes share a few traits with cinematic storytelling; fiction film uses non-fiction elements and vice versa, documentaries use dramatic elements to tell a story (Ellis 1982: 66). Such remixing of modes has reached new complexity with the advent of interactive media. These are multimodal and can be text, audio, video, animation, or all of it juxtaposed and hyperlinked, which makes the world wide web non-linear, interdisciplinary, interactive, and thus performative. The www opens backchannels that were only rudimentarily existent with hitherto used media. Digital media facilitates 'many-to-many' communication and allows for participant involvement. Warde and Schatzki observe the dispersal of practices within fields of media production (cf. Schatzki 1996, Warde 2005).

Digital media enhanced the proliferation of practices from professionals to lay producers, which finds evidence in the fast growth of open content platforms like vimeo, flickr, and youtube (Manovich 2008: 33). This 'lean-forward' character of the internet is different to the 'lean-back' character of other media that scarcely allow participation (cf. Nielsen 1994, Ardévol 2010: 263, Marshall 2004: 26-27).

Theorizing practice that uses different media is captured in different terminology, the most frequent of which are cross-media[14] (Hayes 2006), transmedia (Jenkins 2006, Dena 2008a), intermedia (Brosius 2002), distributed media[15] (Davenport 1998), and 360degree media. With most theoreticians, an understanding of such cross-sited media use goes beyond just the plain use of all available media channels. The way online interactive drama and multiplatform storytelling is as much creation as use. Thus academics call for more research on how new combinations of using film, play, music, and social media add to the way stories are told (Dena 2009: 2). Christy Dena suggests *polymorphic fictions* as a suitable term for such articulations, others just stick with *superfictions*, *cross-sited narratives* (Hill 2001 and Ruppel 2006 quoted in Dena 2009: 16), or the more established *transmedia storytelling* (Jenkins 2006). The latter term fits the context of this thesis because it refers to practice and goes beyond authorial control unlike *distributed narratives* (Walker 2004 quoted in Dena 2009: 16). According to Jenkins, transmedia storytelling is characterized by locally dispersed authors who share, create, and distribute content across diverse media platforms (cf. Jenkins 2006). Through a mix of technologies, modalities, and user-producers, co-development, co-creation, and co-ownership become an integral part of media productions across different platforms.

The idea of multi-author narratives has been theorized differently in recent years[16]. A substantial characteristic is that the audience swaps roles with the producers and become recipient-producers as they co-create a narrative by editing, choosing, and adding to a complex story that merges the virtual and the real (cf. Jenkins 2006, Dena 2010). 'In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best – so that the story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its

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[14] Ruppel proposes the term 'cross-sited narratives' in particular for the use of various media channels (quoted in Dena 2010: 190).
[15] Walker-Rettberg renders stories that are not self-contained as 'distributed narratives' that are distributed in time, space and across authors. This includes that no author has control over the narrative (quoted in Dena 2010: 190).
[16] Other authors have stressed the transmedial for research on multiplayer gaming (Juul 2001 and Eskelinen 2005)

world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction'[17] (Jenkins 2006: 95-96).

From a practical/industry perspective, transmedia speaks of how companies combine movies with websites, games, books, and mobile technologies, including services such as twitter and facebook or mobile technologies, such as smartphones, DLSR cameras, GPS, QR or RFID codes and the (many more) likes. Jeff Gomez suggests a practitioner view.

> Transmedia narrative is the technique of conveying messages, concepts and themes to a mass audience through systemic and concerted use of multiple media platforms. The implementation is designed to engage audience members individually, […] reinforcing personal participation in the narrative. […] In more advanced incarnations, audience members may even interact with the characters themselves, through use of web-based avatars, video games or alternate reality experiences. […] (Gomez 2010)

Christy Dena pertains that storytelling is an inappropriate term when talking about franchised transmedia productions, such as blockbusters that engage the audience (2010: 192). In cases of multi-author productions, even with one main author who sets the base, the audience takes part in creatively shaping the continuation of the story. For instance, presuming a thriller episode has been written, directed, filmed, edited to a point where one sequel was screened. It ends with a cliffhanger, leaving the crime open, asking the audience to engage online and find clues to continue the plot. In this case, the audience takes part in developing the story, thus we can speak of storytelling. This experience is intensified when game elements are included, i.e. ARGs (alternate reality games), LARPs (live action role plays) or scavenger hunts. To distinguish *narrative* from *storytelling*, storytelling contains a plot and an active element, a practice (Giannetti 1988: 300), whereas narrative is a Gesamtkunstwerk (cf. Richard Wagner) or Gesamtdatenwerk (cf. Ascott 2003: 226), a denotation for different historical, social, or political trajectories (cf. Lyotard's grand narrative and Aarseth 2004). Thus, in relation to my case study, I will use storytelling as the practice of creating narratives in a crossmedia context that allows audience participation (story hacking) over space and time.

[17] Cf. Donald Normans' notion of *affordances* (1988). With respect to the design of everyday things, Norman coined the word *affordances* to denote a specific embodied function that certain objects have, i.e. a chair's affordance is sitting, but not cooking. With respect to digital objects, affordances are visual elements that suggest what users can do with them. In this context, the concept has been criticised since media artefacts seem to be too unspecific and versatile to manifest a specific affordance accordingly (Zillien 2009: 163).

As shown, this kind of dispersed storytelling includes practices, technologies as well as several modes and themes. Although no story is truly monomodal – considering that even spoken stories are underlined by gesture, facial expressions, pace, rhythm, background sounds, and written text by rhythm and style (cf. Page 2010: 1) – multimodality occurs to different degrees. As introduced earlier, film has the reputation of being multimodal in featuring sound, image, and movement within one medium. Possibilities of employing multimodality in the www with respect to my case study involves cognition and interaction using all senses: seeing (images, text), hearing (transmitted and real world sounds), touching (devices to access the virtual, real world game situations), smelling (real world game situations), tasting (real world game situations) as well as understanding (cognition and interaction) and creativity (solving problems, contributing artefacts). This accords with Kress and Leeuwen (2001: 20), who see multimodality as a type of practice, in which the

> use of several different semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined – they may for instance reinforce each other, fulfil complementary roles, […] or be hierarchical ordered (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 20).

Using the concept of multimodality also allows to look at multimedia literacy. As Jay Lemke explains

> You can never make meaning with language alone. There must always be a visual or vocal realization of linguistic signs that also carries a non-linguistic meaning. […] All semiotics is multimedia semiotics, and all literacy is multimedia literacy (Lemke 1998: 283).

Literacy in different media is basic to decipher crossmedia narrative; knowing how to use them practically enables participation. Lemke's and Kress/van Leeuwen's perspective on multimodal literacy was extended by Dena. For her concept of polymorphic fictions, Dena refers to fictions that 'are expressed across multiple platforms' (2010: 185) in order to distinguish between media employed to produce narratives and media used to receive them. Furthermore, she stresses to include other semiotic resources, such as physical locations, that add to the creation of polymorphic fictions. She calls these *articulations* that include 'objects, processes, actions, environments, and media that have the potential to communicate in some way' (Dena 2010: 186).

Objects Have Agency

The notion that objects have agency arches from Dena's artefacts to Ipsen's idea that

meaning does not reside in structures or media artefacts but in the sign-making (Ipsen 2010). He says that media, like signs, share the quality of being meaningless unless meaning is ascribed through usage and practice. Umberto Eco contends that the arrangement of photos creates a 'syntagmatic concatenation imbued with argumentative effect' (Eco in Pinney 1997: 150, Eco 1982: 38) In other words, objects act as media. In line with this logic, Kress and van Leeuwen describe the practice of the multimodal:

> Speech and writing tell the world; depiction shows the world. In the one, the order of the world is that given by the author; in the other, the order of the world is yet to be designed (fully and/or definitively) by the viewer. These are not only different positionings in the world and to the world, with different epistemological positions and commitments, they also bestow different powers on the makers and remakers of representations. (Kress 2005: 16)

Alfred Gell asserts that 'indexes motivate patients to make abductions about social agency' (Gell 1998: 16). Thus, objects have the capacity to engage when the recipient puts them in a meaningful context. Christiane Brosius refers to *intervisuality* when 'meaning emerges from the dynamic interplay of aesthetic and symbolic spaces and social practices'. She assumes that 'images, like people, have a biography and develop in specific socio-cultural contexts; and that (audio-)visual milieus constantly overlap and inform each other' (Brosius 2002: 270). Film-makers have always made use of objects in films that act as symbols and trigger the viewer to add meaning to the plot. Examples of this are widely known symbols, such as brands or crucifixes, or more cryptic ones that need to be deciphered in combination with the story, such as the recurring red roses in American Beauty or black horses in The Fall.

In dispersed participatory narratives such objects can be activated to carry a meaning, however, there are two major differences to symbolic objects in films. First, a multitude of content contributors can activate diverse interpretations, add new symbols and meanings, and override others. Second, recipients enter and exit the narrative at different locations (virtual and real) and times and see different contributions, which means to some extent they get to see a different narrative. However, even if the audience receives the same story in the same space-time continuum, their interpretation will be different due to their individually unique culturation. Individuality and social context also determine the way personal objects and memories find their way into a collective narrative. The use of private devices as mobile phones, in everyday or game situations, introduces the individual to the collective – the private to the public – when material is published online. A connection is made between lived experience and fictional image

Ele Jansen – ele.jansen@unsw.edu.au
PhD Candidate Media Anthropology
University of New South Wales, Sydney

creation (cf. David 2010: 89). Thus, representations and interaction do always result from the social, but is also capable of changing it (cf. Kress 2005: 6). If this is so, then collective storytelling that draws on various authors from various backgrounds challenges traditional notions of oeuvre and authorship with respect to form and management of contingencies.

Authorship And Oeuvre in Peer Narratives

To begin with linear film, *auteur theory* assumes that a film reflects solely the director's creative work, disregarding the involvement of other parties, such as novelists, screenwriters, cinematographers and other actors in the industrial production process. Film historian Aljean Harmetz argues that auteur theory 'collapses against the reality of the studio system' (Harmetz 1993: 29). Nonetheless, the artistic director owns some authority over diverse elements of film-making; producers, financiers and collaborators have negotiable influence on the director's decisions (ibid.)[18]. Depending on the nature of the film team's hierarchies and collaboration, stories are to a more or lesser extent single or multi-authored. In co-creative production, a further distinction can be made when speaking about a confined team with allocated roles (as in traditional film-making) or a dispersed film-collective that is open to anybody. Deviating from the structure of practice that underlies such author-driven storytelling leads to the question if collective hypertextual practice results in the same kind of story. Michael Toolan argues that collaborative writing does not create narrative art because there is no single author that controls composition and form, which are essential to literary and art narration (cf. Kundera 2007: 154).

> 'convention-bound ideal of narrative art needs to appear permanent stable, with a determinately sequenced experienced content, under notionally full authorial control; such constraining delimitations are the basis of artistic form'. (Toolan 2010: 127)

As such narrative art cannot be interactive for it will at no point be fixed, nor a completed object, nor experienced by the same viewers. Following this logic, the dynamics in collective storytelling eclipse dramatic structure. So solve this, Toolan suggests a concept that Hoey (2001) called *discoursive colony* (Toolan 2010: 135). Such a colony contains many narratives and other forms. Hoey provided a model that includes narratives into a larger concept, however, more research is needed to classify such collaborative story

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[18] Wong Kar-Wai's In the Mood for Love(2000) was made by a director without a script, but I know of no example of films made without a director.

development. Authorial control is a characteristic that has limited relevance to a discoursive colony due to its many authors. Issues of authority and control have also been mentioned by Luttrell and Chalfen (2010: 198). Collaboration includes, for example, acceptance of authorial control or negotiation of collaborative relationships under different circumstances. Timothy Diamond stresses the importance of a *narrative of relationship* between producers and recipient-producers, which is 'not something distinct from the work but integral to how it got accomplished.' (Diamond in Frank 1997: 151).

Stressing collaboration by opening the storytelling arena to multiple authors means accelerating contingencies. Contingency has been researched with respect to symbolic interactionism by Talcott Parsons (1968, cf. Domingues 2000: 468-9) and Niklas Luhmann (1984). *Double contingency* refers to interaction that leaves two parties with options according to their needs as they are expressed and satisfied. This dyad communication has been much debated according to hierarchy and power structure (cf. 'Hobbesian problem of order', Parsons 1968, Luhmann 1984). However, in order to transfer the model from two to many interacting agents, the notion of order is hardly scalable. According to research that uses on Luhman's contingency on groups,

> [...] scalable order appears only [...] if agents generate expectation-expectations based on the activity of other agents and if there is a mechanism of 'information proliferation'. (cf. Dittrich/Kron/Banzhaf 2003: 1)

In other words, in grouped situations individuals would act according to 'normative cultural standards' to solve contingencies (Parsons 1968). This notion is crucial to my research in terms of handling disruptions at the verge of innovation. On the contrary, Domingues stipulates to recognize the unpredictability of contingency that triggers creative reactions by social actors (2000: 469). Contingencies occur in practice and performance and are closely related to breaks of iterability, which can be seen as a seat of creation, learning, and innovation (Derrida, Butler). Talking about collaborative practices of groups that are locally and temporally scattered, contingency multiplies. The multiplicity and permanent emergence of causes, decisions, and consequences is hardly predictable, let alone manageable. Here, looking at joint storytelling within such heterogeneous and dispersed collectives can give insight if or under which circumstances habitual practices forbid instant innovation or not.

Collaboration, Knowledge, And Learning

Unlike the literacy involved in creating and experiencing multimedia within a single platform, co-creative artefacts or stories require different knowledge and abilities (cf. Dena 2009: 5). It includes creating a screenplay that turns into a film, a game, webcasts, that leaves room for unexpected turns and contributions from outside, uses algorithms that pick players' geo- and demographic data, and involves aesthetic design and architectures. Such broad range production demands so many different skills and contexts that collaboration is necessary within a broadened nuclear production team and with recipient-producers.

> Knowing in practice on a film set requires an understanding of how to negotiate artificial worlds and working realities, an 'aesthetic understanding' of organisation (Strati 1999); an ability to engage the senses. It means to reflect on action (Schoen 1983) whilst incorporating constant change (Greenhalgh 2010: 312)

Working across different technologies in film-making involves coordination that 'requires team memory and overlapping knowledge among individual […] members' (Greenhalgh 2010: 308). Since 'Practical knowledge is precariously held by freelancers in the film industry and is passed on from project to project, outside organizations' (Greenhalgh 308), the dominant way of learning is by doing (ibid: 312) and observing. And since much of digital creative practice evolves bottom-up, learning becomes a reciprocal act[19]. A strand of this discussion can be found in *communities of practice*[20] (Wenger 1998: 49). According to Wenger, communities of practice are groups of people, who employ common practices and language, share information, insight, experience, tools, goals about an area of common interest. These shared activities create similar beliefs and value systems among the group. In such collaborative (locally united or dispersed) set-ups, practices include

> the explicit and the tacit […] what is said and unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed […] the language, the tools, the documents, the images, the symbols, the well-defined roles, the specified criteria, the codified procedures, the regulations, and the contracts […] explicit for a variety of purposes […] implicit relations, the tacit conventions, the subtle cues, the untold rules of thumb, the recognizable intuitions, the specific perceptions, the well-tuned sensitivities, the embodied understandings, the underlying

[19] The motivation can lie in the belief in the value of collective creation and/or go back to behavioural patterns that Mauss explained as gift exchange (Mauss 1913 in Lévi-Strauss 1987).
[20] The Community of Practice Approach (CPA) was developed by organizational theorists Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (Lave and Wenger 1991) based on symbolic-interactionist theory.

> assumptions, the shared worldviews […] Things have to be done, relationships worked out, processes invented, situations interpreted, artefacts produced, conflicts resolved. [It] involves […] an embodied, delicate, active, social, negotiated, complex process of participation. (Wenger 1998: 49)

Such communities of practice are social entities that host competence, facilitate practical learning, and display conflict and cooperation among collectives (cf. Bueger 2009: no pagination). Alan Warde (2005) makes acute observations in that no practice is hermetically sealed, which is especially true for digital practices, where copy/paste and creative remixing are easier and therefore more common than before (Warde 2005: 141). Thus, the phenomenon that people copy from what they see on TV (cf. Postill 2006, Hobart 2002, Spitulnik 1996) is translated into people copying what they learn from professional productions via tutorials that are available online. Here we have an example of hobby/playful learning to use media (see also Kuecklich 2005).

All in all, collaborative hypertextual storytelling requires multimodal literacy to make meaning of objects and dynamics. The experience of multimodal narratives is determined by reciprocal learning, levels of knowledge, and cooperation among community members. Observing production dynamics helps understanding shifting notions of authorship and oeuvre in participatory storytelling. It also gives insight into how narrative collectives handle shifting interpretations, knowledge, and contingencies.

iii: PLAYFUL NARRATIVE

A narrative is defined by at least two chronologically aligned events that create meaning by the way of telling. It consists of different modes and elements, which can be dramatic or not, can be written language and signs, spoken word, or a series of events (Page 2010). Jean-Francois Lyotard speaks of *grand narrative,* which depicts the nature of historical narratives of church, state, science as holding together society (cf. Frank 1997: 139). As such, a narrative is distinctly different from a story, although sharing some traits. On a meta-level, a narrative mediates discourses and practices, in which discourses are more stable structures of meaning, and practices the more contingent everyday counterpart (cf. Bueger 2009: no pagination). De Certeau opts for a linguistic reading of narrative while Joseph Rouse understands it as ‘a way of comprehending the temporality of one’s own actions in their very enactment’ (1996: 27). According to Iver Neumann (2002: 635-636), narratives thus do three things. First, they relate words and things and define relations to other elements. Second, they use and relate objects and concepts. Third, they are constituted by practices. In this logic, Rouse and Neumann see benefit in analyzing narratives in relation to practice.

Immersion And Interactivity

As stated before, the www is inherently participatory. In this surrounding, a new type of narrative shows. It is non-linear, participatory and immersive (Rosen 2010: no pagination). David Shields (2010) lists key components of participatory narratives, which are randomness, spontaneity, and emotional urgency; participation and involvement; anthropological autobiography; a thirst for authenticity coupled with a love of artifice. Shields also points out a 'blurring (to the point of invisibility) of any distinction between fiction and nonfiction: the lure and blur of the real' (Shields 2010). Bourdieu commented on the blur of real and fiction:

> One thing leads to another, and ultimately television, which claims to record reality, creates it instead. We are getting closer and closer to the point where the social world is primarily described - and in a sense prescribed - by television. (Bourdieu 1998, quoted in Couldry 2003: 655)

In French, Bourdieu uses the compound decrit-prescrit to capture the symbolic power and hybrid nature of institutionalised media that generate an extract-reality of the social world. Following this logic, new media can be described as the carrier of the dynamic virtual reproduction of social reality. This digital aesthetic juxtaposes, shifts, and transfers; it makes the audience solve a narrative that exists of temporally and spatially scattered fragments. Making the audience develop or solve a narrative is crucially different to traditional film-making. It involves playful investigation and co-creation. This tendency is supported by many new media scholars, including Lisbeth Klastrup, who states:

> My intuition is that we will see in the future will be a number of hybrid phenomena which contain elements of what we traditionally used to define either as a game or a story, but which are also themselves altering the very notion of these concepts, and of what a game or a narrative can be (Klastrup 2003: 18).

What Klastrup refers to here is the possibility of reconstituting via different media what is native to human nature: play and storytelling. Seeing those combined in transmedia participation is not altering concepts, but transferring to new media what is already existent in the social life. Robert Rosen sees the change in film-making over the last decade as trend-setting and in sync with pervasive gaming experiences (Rosen 2010: no pagination). Rosen compares his generation of viewers as having a cinematic perception

predisposed to appreciate coherent stories with slow cuts and a linear, part-to-part storyline that unfolds chronologically. *Digital sensibilities*, in turn, are selective and hyperlinked information as it is presented in the www. Hence, digital natives are said to enjoy loose story lines that allow interpretative leaps and playful engagement. These techniques resonate, according to Rosen, with lifestyles in contemporary media culture. Such preferences might be mirrored in the popularity of movies with scattered storylines, such as Inception, Danny Boyd's Rock'n'Rolla, Lost, Magnolia, or Eternal Sunshine of The Spotless Mind. The riddled plots of these films trigger engaged viewing, in terms of cognitive, emotional, and intellectual processing of information. Thereby, the audience immerses deeper into the story by co-performance (Rosen 2010, Green and Lowry 2009: 141).

This logic is opposed by Toolan, who suggests that immersion and interactivity are mutually exclusive (Toolan 2010: 134-139). Toolan argues with Ryan (2004) that interactive narratives cannot be immersive, because of their plural nature (Toolan 2010: 138-9). Instead of getting deeper and deeper into a linear story, hypertextual metafiction can only be contemplated from an external point of view (cf. Ryan 1994 quoted in Toolan 2010: 139). Toolan's argument lacks precision in differentiating hypertextuality and interactivity. Nonetheless, hypertextuality, too, is rendered counter-immersive by Nicholas Carr. In the lines of Seneca's quote 'To be everywhere is to be nowhere', Carr puts forth that hypertextuality supports distraction. He claims that such constant interruption turns us into scattered and superficial thinkers, whereas a linear thread leads to immersion and deep thought (Carr 2010). Neuroscientist Eric Kandel underlines that only when we pay deep attention to a new piece of information are we able to associate it 'meaningfully and systematically with knowledge already well established in memory' (quoted from Carr 2010: 123). In order to avoid a total dichotomization of linear and hypertextual, a point can be made that they are indeed overlapping and integrative on the web. Leaving interaction aside, the following thought-experiment exemplifies how immersion precedes reflection and creation. Assuming we start reading hypertext with linear immersion (entering a text), we then encounter potential disruption or self-chosen new content that is added to our reading (hyperlink), the content of which we then associate with our first reading and potentially transform into a new insight or creation. Following our own chosen hyperlinked path creates a highly individual narrative that can be immersive all along. On the contrary, the logic of interaction and immersion is a different story. In agreement with Toolan and Ryan that interaction forbids immersion into content, immersion in interactive storytelling occurs on the level of play, contingency, and engagement. One refers to

immersive consumption, the other to immersive practice. In other words, *browsing* is an adequate term for distracted uses of media, while *playing* acknowledges the deep engagement and dedicated use of new media (Marshall 2004: 26-27 quoted in Ardévol 2010: 263). The division into browsing and playing[21] relates to the central argument in the discussion of convergent media (TV and web) (cf. Jenkins 2006).

One major distinction of different media usage was made by Jakob Nielsen in the 1990s. He divided audiences in either having an attitude of *leaning back* to watch TV and *leaning forward* to use the web (Nielsen 1994). The idea behind lean-forward media is that people are engaged when they use the web. They are in scanning mode, actively looking for content whereas lean-back mode people are more passive, watching TV, reading a book or flipping through a magazine. Approaching media use as playing instead of browsing or viewing pays tribute to new media being lean-forward technology. Thus, instead of an author-driven narrative, web stories become to some extent user-driven narratives[22]. Seeing Toolan's dramatic narrative as entertainment (lean-back, film, TV) and participatory narrative as play (lean-forward, web, games, apps), we can say that in a way co-narratives facilitate a great deal of immersion through the very interactivity that Toolan dismisses as being counter-immersive. To recall, Toolan argues that interactivity forbids immersion, which tallies with Nielsen. However, in participatory practice interaction can be seen as creative immersion. This point is important for it is a motivating factor for co-creation on the web. This creative immersion subscribes to game and play. As a consequence, narrative art (linear-closed storytelling according to Toolan) becomes a narrative game (dynamic-open hypertext, cf. Dena 2009). Ardévol has approached media practices considering play in popular and professional media production (Ardévol 2010). She sees new media as a 'set of interconnected practices – entailing the playful use of digital technologies' and calls for more exploration on 'how people's media practice mix with institutionalized media practices and how they contribute to define cultural production' (Ardévol 2010: 265). This will be addressed in my research by observing how professional and lay producers collaborate within a creative media project. Referring to Turner's idea that play is transcendent, Ardévol highlights that players overcome constraints by transforming game rules (Turner 1986: 167 quoted in Ardévol 2010: 268,

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[21] Or 'viewsing' as a combination of both, as put forward by Dan Harries (2002: 17).
[22] Another aspect is that our attention span is much longer when consuming lean-back. At the same time, web-behaviour is said to be too fast-paced for close attention (Nielsen 2008). This explains why most long forms are produced for cinema and TV and less often for the web (unless it has interactive features). Although, this seems to be shifting with, for example, more and more film festivals screening online, which goes along with technologies, such as tablet PCs or the ipad, which constitute a convergence of lean-back and lean-forward use of linear and non-linear content.

cf. also John Huizinga 1949). In this context, remixing is an activity that turns fans from being viewers into players in the game, immersing through playful engagement that explains a 'fan's creative engagement and emotional attachment' (Hills 2002: 112 quoted in Ardévol 2010: 266). As such, narrative can be understood as truly performative, an evolving result of continuous collective performance. Moreover, performance is then seen as the embodied practice of employing technology (cf. Bernard Stiegler, Hannah Ahrendt's *homo faber*, *posthuman theory*) as opposed to embodying a narrative by singing or reciting (Toolan 2010: 127).

Play And Creativity

I believe a constructive theoretic background for the interplay of focus (immersion) and play can be found in the work of Michel Foucault in combination with notions on creativity by Sir Ken Robinson and the idea of innovation through mimicry and comparison by Scott Lash. Foucault explains disciplinary regulations of embodied practice in his work on discipline, power, and knowledge[23]. He pertains that in modern and postmodern society self-regulatory body practices are created through power dispositif throughout social spheres (Foucault 1979, 1980). According to education scholars like Sir Ken Robinson, the pervasive nature of social discipline possesses power to limit play, creativity, and divergent thinking (cf. Robinson 2010: Minute 10). Robinson sees creativity as the process of having original ideas that have value. Therein, divergent thinking is the capacity for creativity as in, for instance, thinking laterally, coming up with many interpretations and possibilities for a problem, or to think not only in linear or convergent ways, but to come up with multiple answers and ways. According to Robinson's longitudinal studies with kindergarten and school kids, creativity deteriorates through discipline and common school education (cf. Ken Robinson 2010: Minute 8). It would be interesting to consult further cognitive studies in order to dig deeper into the relation of discipline, focus, concentration, and associative, creative thinking in linear and hypertextual surroundings.

Apart from that, Scott Lash proposes a complementary approach to creativity. He contends that our modern strategy to deal with power is not to resist, but to exit through interactivity and invention (performing the exceptional) (Lash 2007: 60, 66-68). Thus, Lash sees great power in creative performance. He makes up two dichotomies; for one, when we encounter a phenomenon, we can deal with it in two ways (cf. contingency): imitate or compare (Lash 2007a: 191); second, up until the mid-1980s culture was seen as representation or simulacra, and from the mid-1990s culture was understood as inventive

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[23] Foucault's concept of discipline is closely related to Bourdieu's notion of habitus.

(ibid.: 192). He contends that in the second phase, we experience a combination of both, representation and invention. This paradox, I think, relates back to imitation and comparison, which can be seen as the practical counterparts of representation and invention (if we assume that invention is a result of exercising imitation and comparison). Lash's argument circles around recipient-producers. 'The narrative and representational social imaginary lies in the *reader* or *audience*, while the *player* engages the culture of things' (ibid.: 189, highlights in original). Whereas, in classical culture industry the audience 'stand in epistemological relation to the cultural entity (the 'text'), while in the global culture industry the user […] stands in an *ontological* relationship', hence becoming a player in the field. In this surrounding play becomes purposeful (ibid: 192-193). This stands in contrast to John Huizinga and Roger Callois, who both exclude purpose from play (Huizinga 1950, Callois 2001). Huizinga defines play as

> a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (Huizinga 1950: 13)

In fact, for most if not all play theorists, play refers to voluntary, enjoyable and 'intrinsically motivated activities' (cf. Garvey 1990). According to Stephen Nachmanovitch, play is the foundation of creativity in the arts, sciences and daily life (Nachmanovitch 1990). And Lash agrees with Huizinga that play is a primary condition of culture, which develops purposeless. However, he contends that global industry uses mimicry and play 'for the accumulation of capital'. This turn from representation to communication lends crescive ruling power to new media that forms within its production, which is greatly driven by recipient-producers (Lash 2007: 66-68). This rather lengthy train of thought and expansion to a global industrial level is crucial to understanding dynamics of collaboration and play online. Potential future monetary benefit must be factored in when discussing the self-publishing of creative entrepreneurs and their relation to the media industry.

To speak in Lash's words, new media communications exhibits power bottom-up. In co-creative production this is evident in recipient- and peer-production that inform professional and industrial proceedings. At this point in time, in some privileged environments, media convergence has become so pervasive that roles of lay and

professional production blur as well as lines between play and commerce, and between fiction and play. Practitioners as well as academics are debating whether to speak of a story, a narrative, a game, or a combination of these when approaching participatory media production (Klastrup 2003, Dena 2009).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Throughout my literature review on the practice of co-creative storytelling and playful narrative, I encountered several unanswered aspects alluding to developments in contemporary media production that need further investigation. I identified key words that touch and relate to various practices and situations within participatory production processes in a framework of overlapping fields. In terms of practice, these are technological possibilities, practicalities, and negotiations in professional as well as amateur productions. With respect to such storytelling we are looking at multimodal literacy, reciprocal learning and shifting notions of authorship and oeuvre. It also gives insight into how narrative collectives handle shifting interpretations, knowledge, and contingencies. Looking at playful approaches to create narratives, I will deal with dynamics of play and co-creativity, as well as with the logic of interactivity versus immersive consumption and immersive practice. The non-linear will be examined in terms of both production and reception. This includes, finding answers to how narrative, game, story can be categorized within collaborative multimedia practice.

The body of academic knowledge on new media practice (as reviewed here) mirrors a fast-paced shift from consuming media (and its content) to actively (co-) creating media content. It has been shown that the hybridity of new media technologies collapses contexts by dissolving spatial, social, and temporal boundaries, and that film-makers and media producers alike use this liberty to create unhinged, open-access narratives that challenge the predominance of cinematic plot-driven storytelling. My thesis will fill a part of a large gap in academic research on how and under which circumstances media practices are turning out to create innovation and why not in other cases.

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