

“All Together Now”

Abstract

It seems that we are on the cusp of a new dawn. A new era, where the combination of Open Innovation, Convergence Culture and Mass collaboration point to a new ‘shared’ economy and power. The internet and the web has allowed consumers to connect and network and thus they have become ever more powerful in a market place that is abundant with content and where marketers vie for their attention more than ever before. The media and brand designers are therefore charged with engaging audiences in many more creative ways, including crafting more emotional experiences in order to secure their loyalty. Conversely, audiences can now pick and choose when, how and what they engage with as well as contribute to the production of the content themselves. Audiences no longer just passively receive but are actively re-shaping, part-conceiving and in some cases part-funding media content. Now it seems, the audience is in the driving seat and the corporates and media companies must ‘play or pay’. However, for every evangelist of this new potential ‘utopia’ there are those that perceive this movement as a clever ploy by the corporates to obtain ‘free labour’ and (to use Foucault’s term) harness a new mode of ‘governmentality’ that herds this new inter-activity into pre-determined spaces. In a networked society what constitutes as value is changing and although the web has allowed the ‘independents’ to take back the reigns the majors are already attempting to close the corridors of freedom and opportunity for those who aren’t prepared to pay for rights of passage. The Internet has become a highly contested and debated space where on the one hand there has been a rush to protect IP and revenues and on the other a desire to re-mix, co-create and collaborate towards a new liberating culture. Are we all together now?

INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of this paper is the exploration and study of potential new forms of power that are emerging through the current phenomenon known as mass collaboration and convergence that potentially give the 'independents' an opportunity to 'do it themselves' or at least challenge the old forms of power as well as the increasingly concentrated and monopolization of media power currently in the hands of the 'few' corporates. In this contested space is there really an opportunity to 'meet in the middle' and share the rewards or will the hegemony of old subsist?

The basis of my argument is as follows; has the move from a so called generation of mass produced media towards a collaboration of the masses heralded a new paradigm, a new power that challenges the hegemony of the corporate media companies or is it just a new opportunity for exploitation of free labour and a necessary evil that needs to be incorporated in order to maintain and increase revenue? Has the web heralded a new era of co-creation or a new exploitation? Perhaps Howard Rheingold asks a similar question more succinctly in his book Smart Mobs: -

“The most important question about this new wrinkle in power/knowledge is whether it sets the stage for counter power that would surprise Adorno, Horkheimer, and Baudrillard, or whether it is yet another simulacrum, a simulation of counter-power that really doesn't change who has all the chips”¹

There are those that believe that this new phenomenon is just a new marketing tool that re-calibrates the corporates control over the consumer. Other commentators such as Charles Leadbeater, Henry Jenkins and Manuel Castells to name a few, are more confident that mass collaboration might possibly be the dawn of a new utopia. Of course, these

¹ Rheingold, H. - 'Smart Mobs - The Next Social Revolution.' , Perseus Publishing, 2002.

are emerging new structures and disciplines so much of the research into these new paradigms is speculative and often polarised between visions of a 'new utopia' and a new hegemony but undoubtedly the media landscape is beginning to take a new shape.

In the course of this paper and investigation, I will look at the key elements of this 'new movement' namely; 'open Innovation', Mass Collaboration / participatory culture and convergence culture. Although these ideas have much wider implications for the whole of society I will focus my attention where possible on the Media and specifically the Film and Music industries. Do these categories constitute a new paradigm that heralds a new form of power sharing or is the media industry only dependent on an active and committed consumer because they simply re-appropriate the notion of mass collaboration as cheap marketing? The boundaries between producers and consumers are beginning to overlap creating a growing contestation over the new rules that will define this new emerging space. The audience is a more actively involved consumer than ever before and the proliferation of media content mean that alongside the liberating benefits of new technologies that the Corporates are now having to define new ways of engaging audiences lest they go elsewhere or simply create their own entertainment. Companies that can engage and reward their audiences might possibly benefit the most, whilst those that continue to exploit their consumers may have little time left.

OPEN FOR PIRACY?

Henry Chesbrough believes that there has been a paradigm shift from 'closed' to 'open' innovation.² Not all the smart people work for your company he argues and therefore corporations must look beyond their own gates and utilize and incorporate the talents of non-company workers as well as forge alliances with other, sometimes competing, organizations. Although, he is primarily referring to R&D and the technology industries the same philosophy is beginning to be applied across many sectors of the economy. In fact technology is one of the key common denominators that is enabling this to happen on such grand scales. Internal ideas can be marketed through external channels and vice versa and those companies that will prosper he suggests, will be active buyers as well as sellers of IP. However, there are also tensions around this new innovation and in particular concerning the notion of Control and how much or how little companies are prepared to relinquish. Hollywood has been forging alliances for years – in a network of partnerships that has included Directors, scriptwriters, actors, special effects, etc However, I would argue that they have yet to be truly 'open'. Yes, they have looked to build networks of participants in order to build their franchises (of which more later), but they have also remained protectionist and have continued to exploit talent with an eye on relinquishing the least amount of control possible. Disney, for example has managed to exploit and re-appropriate works of fairy tales such as the Brothers Grimm and redeployed techniques for their own ends such as synchronised sound as far back as 1928 (thanks to a pioneering technique used first in the Jazz singer) and yet they have ironically become one of the most ardent users of IP protection laws ever since.³ Prohibition rules that stifle

² Chesbrough, H. – 'Open Innovation – The new imperative for creating and profiting from technology', Harvard Business School Press, 2003.

³ Lessig, L – 'Free Culture', Penguin, 2004.

innovation can be the death of creativity and Disney are one of the many corporates who are being disingenuous with their employment of patents and Digital management rights, which are often detrimental to the input of pro-sumers as well as potentially undermining their own future growth. The notion of 'open innovation' has gained credence to the extent that some Corporations are being described as prohibitionist (Jenkins; 'convergence culture') or 'Patent trolls' (Matt Mason; 'Pirates dilemma') because of their over use of IP protection. Jack Valenti famously represented the Hollywood studios in his attempt to thwart the distribution of VCR's – he lost the case and ironically Video distribution became a significant revenue stream for the studios and Film industry worldwide. More recently, along with other colleagues, he has been trying to contain the development of P2P (person to person) file sharing as well as Digital innovations that potentially threaten to undermine their control. Chesbrough believes that companies need to realise the benefits of open innovation and should manage their IP in order to also "profit from your rivals use".⁴ The Film industry among others can learn from other industries that have been very successful at employing such methods. The company Gold Corp Inc. one of the most successful Gold mining companies in the world was at one point struggling to find gold reserves at its mine in Red Lake Ontario Canada. It's former chairman Rob McKewan became so frustrated with the internal geologists team's lack of progress that he decided to do something that was until that time quite unprecedented. With a lure of \$500k prize money (and the chance for intellectual prowess) he published all of the company's data regarding the exploration resulting in professional 'outsiders' identifying drilling sites that culminated in making it one of the richest gold mines in the world. Companies are being advised to collaborate or die and in order to do this they must be prepared to share some

⁴ Chesbrough, H – 'Open Innovation'.

of their data. The key seems to be, to strike a balance between protected 'critical' IP and IP that is shared and openness creates trust which encourages engagement, loyalty and co-creation but many companies are struggling with the balance between control, open integration and self-organization. In their book 'Wikinomics' Tapscott and Williams discuss the 'prosumer dilemma' that highlights one of the tensions around the notion of control vis-à-vis open collaboration – “ a company that gives it's customers free reign to hack risks cannibalizing it's business model and losing control of it's platform”.⁵ But the greater risk is actually to lose the audience completely. Companies must learn to incorporate a more actively involved customer into their business models without diluting their brand; in fact it should infuse and become part of the brand. Media content is changing in the way it's produced, consumed and distributed primarily because of technology and the fragmentation of audiences. Getting audience engagement is harder and more critical than ever and the more potent way to achieve this certainly on-line, is to get the audience actively involved and therefore build trust, loyalty and emotional attachment. In order for this to happen properly media companies must find ways of sharing their knowledge and data in a mutually rewarding fashion. There are those companies that continue to send cease and desist letters to those content 'pro-sumers' (those that are actively re-shaping the content) who re-mix, re-appropriate and ultimately provide free promotion but the short sightedness of many companies, sees only an infringement of copyright. Others recognise the importance of pro-consumerism as a tool to engage audiences and maybe cleverly re-applying Foucault's notion of Governmentality for their own ends in a marketplace that can't overlook this growing phenomenon. In 'Studies in Governmentality' Foucault states that the principal role of the government is to protect the

⁵ Tapscott and Williams - 'wikinomics', Atlantic books, 2007.

principality and only protect the artist as far as it serves the economy. Governments use the Law to conspire tactics and methods that “govern men and things” and construct their own versions of the ‘truth’ and falsity in order to control and contain and ensure that the “greatest possible quantity of wealth is produced”.⁶ Charles Leadbeater in his book ‘We think’ is much more sanguine when he says;

“the most exciting business models of the future will be the hybrids that blend elements of the company and the community, of commerce and collaboration: open in some respects, closed in others; giving some content away and charging for some services; serving people as consumers and encouraging them, when it is relevant, to become participants” (p91).⁷

These new emerging structures are still evolving and are fraught with contradictions and incompatibilities with old methods of media production. In order to innovate many organizations will need to radically revue relationships with customers and consumers. Some are genuinely seizing this opportunity on sincere terms whilst others identify a further opportunity for exploitation of ‘free labour’.⁸ It seems that there is an agreement that this new phenomenon may be here to stay but a disagreement over what this ‘participatory culture’ might look like - i.e. there are those that want to ingratiate themselves with the co-creators or pro-sumers and those who try to close down any unauthorised participation with cease and desist letters. As Joseph Schumpeter the famous Economist noted, at the heart of any new innovation are tensions and disruptions but it seems the terms of this new collaborationist culture are still to be

⁶ Burchell, G. (ed)- ‘The Foucault Effect: studies in Governmentality’, University of Chicago (1991).

⁷ Leadbeater, C.- ‘We Think’, profile books ltd, 2008.

⁸ Tiziana Terranova’s term for the exploitation of a non-paid ‘active consumer’.

clarified if all parties are to benefit. Ironically, some Consumers seem to be even happier to pay more for something they have co-created and it is this sense of loyalty and ownership that Brand Marketeers are keen to exploit. But shouldn't the producer –consumer be rewarded for what they have helped to create? Clay Shirky notes a “tension between citizen desire for openness and governmental desire for control” and voices a concern that attempts to close ‘net neutrality’ would enable for example, ISP’s (Internet Service Providers) to ultimately filter what you see and even veto your access to data.⁹ However, the rise of mass collaboration and peer-to-peer networks is becoming a potent force with it’s own power to veto, de-select, change channels and even co-create elsewhere. Some active consumers who contribute to content creation may initially be happy to still pay for this content provided they get some other return like recognition or a growing reputation but this kind of exchange still remains unbalanced and inevitably will change.

The concentration of media power is still a concern but the independents now have a significant opportunity to challenge methods such as Hollywood’s multi-platform and cross –fertilization model themselves thanks to the internet – allowing users to re-mix your content is free pr and emotionally engaging and the independents have a key advantage – they have less IP to lose and less at stake and are therefore making headway first whereas larger and less agile companies can often ill afford to take chances on ground breaking new concepts.

Tapscott and Williams advocate “ hybrid models where participants share and appropriate and apportion value and money to individuals / teams dependent on their contribution”.¹⁰ They suggest that all content producers

⁹ Shirkey, C. – ‘Here comes Everybody’, penguin books, 2008.

¹⁰ Tapscott, and Williams – ‘Wikinomics’.

should make all their content re-configurable, modular and editable and supply the tools that make it easy to manipulate or upload content. As has been already mentioned, companies have literally struck gold with an 'open' policy and pharmaceutical companies are also accelerating medical break-throughs by employing open paradigms. The music and Film industries are currently experiencing a crisis where revenues are significantly down and where their ability to engage the audience is significantly challenged like never before. Evolving 'open paradigm' business models maybe one of the solutions.

Artists and Collaborationists can actually thrive as long as they gain Trust and Loyalty from their 'Fans', followers or Consumers and this is a two-way relationship. The band Radiohead famously released their Album 'in rainbows' in October 2007 via the internet and allowed the consumer to decide the price of purchase - the average price paid was four pounds, netting the band considerably more than if they'd released it conventionally via a record company. Some film-makers are actually making more money by giving their film away to download for free as it appears to drive demand for legitimate product as well as free promotion. The animator Nina Paley distributed her film 'Sita sings the Blues' on a creative commons licence, allowing Festival programmers freedom to play her film for free and creative's to re-mix the film- this 'promotion' increased sales of legitimately paid for copies of the film as well as increased revenues from film festivals and downloads. These 'freemium' business models are analogous to an (often) loss leading theatrical Film release that traditionally drives DVD sales. Many movies often make little revenue from cinema box office but instead this drives sales of consumerables and merchandise as well as promotes increased revenue from DVD sales and other platform releases. The notion of offering a free element in the production and distribution of a suite of products is a

common theme within open innovation and many artists are utilizing this method in order to attract attention. This process is similar to those employed by Open software models such as the operating system Linux – the operating systems is free but the support is charged for. For content builders, obscurity is a far greater concern than piracy – in fact many encourage piracy of their work, as they understand that often this can lead to a wider and greater profile and paradoxically also to greater sales revenue. For the corporates, there seems to be a rally call to collaborate or die as they compete for consumer's loyalty and trust. However, unless there is a new 'model of reciprocity' that rewards the prosumer as well as the organization then many creators are at liberty to go elsewhere or even do it themselves. New film-makers are taking their lead from musicians and 'open paradigms' to capture and engage their audiences directly and forsaking the traditional route of a third party production house or distributor. They are taking advantage of the global networks and utilizing the power of convergence to create what has been called trans-media stories that play across multiple platforms and mediums.

DO YOU CONVERGE?

Content producers are no longer just writing or commissioning stories but are now building 'worlds' that live across many different platforms. These inter-connected elements of the core story often share a core identity but also are unique assets in themselves. The often quoted example is the film franchise "The Matrix" which was not only a Film but a comic strip, an alternate reality game (Arg), a book, etc and this has set the precedent for many other 'brands' that have spread the flow of their content across multi-media platforms. Audiences are thus offered multiple entry points to the story concept and therefore multiple ways to engage, re-mix and pro-sume. Screenwriters are now the architects of worlds and create the foundations for licensed goods and not just stories. However, the relationships between producers and consumers of content have now become blurry and with this has emerged a complex politics that questions where the line is drawn between 'free labour' and the sharing of rewards. Baudrillard has suggested that consumers are so mesmerised by hyper-real worlds that stimulate their desire for consumption and pacify their resistance that they have forgotten that their environment is no longer real.¹¹ It is clear that this does not apply to all consumers – many are actually creating these worlds and are fully engaged in content co-creation. The virtual on-line world 'Second Life' maybe a case in point here – inhabited by over 1.5 million active virtual gamers, it is estimated that only 1% of the 'construction' is actually done by the producers whilst the bulk of the creativity is produced by the users themselves. Brands and international communities all have a presence in second life which has seen anything from 'performances' from major pop groups, Film promotions from major studios

¹¹ Baudrillard, J. 'Simulacra and simulacrum', University of Michigan Press, 1994.

to the first on-line virtual real-estate millionaire being created as well as the first cases of 'adultery' with on-line 'avatars' being cited in divorce cases.¹²

The concentration of media power is now spread across many platforms and is undeniably problematic. The vertical integration of controlling interests across Film, TV, games, newspapers, music, etc by conglomerates like Warner Brothers is an example at one end of the spectrum how consumers may fit into Baudrillard's category – their content is spread across media platforms like a sprawling and sometimes hypnotising net. The Globalization of the 'Brand' has become the key target for the industry and convergence culture is providing the key conduit. Paul Grainge in his book 'Brand Hollywood' articulates how Warner Bros. has used this method to startling effect on the Film franchise Lord of the Rings – a networked fan base gathered around the film resulting in over 500 million hits on the website before the film was even released and these fans disseminated publicity for the film faster and more cost effectively than the studio could.¹³ These fans become trust agents for the brand and their emotional investment is later channelled into consumption as the brand is carried across platforms and territories in a synergy of media formats, merchandising tie-ins and licensing agreements that have seen the Lord of the Rings 'brand' amass Billions in revenue. Grainge says that film is "now less important as a discrete commodity than as a brand platform that can be transfigured across industries and cultural fields" and extending the film / commodities life span.¹⁴ Jenkins echoes this when he says, "everything about the structure of the modern entertainment industry was designed with this single idea in mind – the construction and enhancement of entertainment

¹² Guardian on-line article "second life affair leads to real life divorce", November 2008.

¹³ Grainge, P. – 'Brand Hollywood', Routledge, 2008.

¹⁴ IBID.

franchises”.¹⁵ However, he also believes the internet has spawned an anti-dote to this potential monopolization of the media industries and suggests that the distributed networks and socialization tools of the web have enabled a new return to ‘folklore’ ethos where everyone is now a potential participant. The ‘independents’ undeniably now have an opportunity to forge more control and the web has pushed the hitherto hidden layer of consumer participation to the forefront forcing the media industries to sit up and take note but if the brands don’t respect the integrity of the consumer then the emotional links are broken and the audience moves elsewhere. Brands and marketers, whilst identifying the power of the consumers ‘experience’ are struggling with the notion of ‘affective economics’, a form of analysis, which tries to capture and measure consumers emotional engagement with the product, in order and in part, to justify their advertising rates. The power of collective intelligence or mass collaboration becomes ever more potent in instances where peer to peer networks become reciprocal trust strong holds and can begin to influence content programming, advertising, etc as well as make or break ‘brands’. As Henry Jenkins says there is an,

“interplay / tension between top down force of corporate convergence and the bottom up force of grass roots convergence that is driving many of the changes we are now seeing in the media landscape”¹⁶

The web has provided many independents with the tools to build their own networks of fans and followers as well as seriously influence the form and shape of media production. There is a growing collective moral authority that challenges the hegemony of corporate cultural production, a new participatory power that the corporates are attempting to grasp and grapple with but one that is proving to be

¹⁵ Jenkins, H. - ‘Convergence culture’, New York University Press, 2006.

¹⁶ IBID.

increasingly illusive. Trust and reputation are now key and 'Fans' no longer need to accept the so called 'definitive' version of content as regulated and advised by the media industries and nor do they need to accept the erroneous policies that limit their interaction and engagement or make them question their sense of loyalty. Networked communities (thanks to the communications and computer tools) are challenging the corporates to re-think their relationship to the consumer and to understand that the process of content creation is more inter-related than ever before. Of course, this is still a much contested space and the Media industry is already responding in many ways to re-engage and re-shape their offering but the consumers, prosumers and independents are beginning to seize a new opportunity to rest some of the control back and even create new ways of building, financing and distributing content.

The acclaimed British Film-maker Peter Greenaway released his multi-media project 'The Tulse Luper Suitcases' back in 2003, which featured three related Films, two books and an on-line game. He has continued to tour the Film and 'exhibition' often accompanying the screening with personal DJ sets (or V-jaying as it is called when you play along with visuals). The Film has become a multi-media experience and event as well as a very effective self - promotional too. Lance Weiler, an emerging American film-maker, has been labelled by the magazine 'Wired' as "One of twenty-five people helping to re-invent entertainment and change the face of Hollywood." He calls himself a story 'architect' or trans-media storyteller and builds ARG's (alternate reality games) and events into his films from script stage. In one of his films 'Head Trauma' he staged it so that the audience received telephone calls, revealing clues that related to the film from key characters as they were on their way to the movie theatre. His screenings became multi-media experiences that included live music, interactive gaming and mobile interactivity. His film projects feature various layers of

interactivity with an emphasis on audience participation and effective use of technology and in essence can be seen as a meeting point for multi-media convergence and audience participation.

NEW PARTICIPATORY POWER?

Like many other emerging artists Lance Weiler encourages audience participation by involving them directly in the creation of the work and also by sharing and being open with information and knowledge. He has set up the 'Workbook project', which is an online forum and information resource centre for content creative's and organized a number of other initiatives that help fellow artists create their own work. His 'open' information policy includes tutorials as well as detailed information regarding the making of his films and social and media technology tools that help audiences to engage with his work as well as encouraging them to make their own.¹⁷ If the corporates aren't fully embracing this new phenomenon then many artists certainly are. Emerging media artists are harnessing the power of new developments such as open source technologies and building on-line fan communities themselves (aka 'Crowd sourcing') and furthermore some are also trying to circumnavigate potential erroneous IP laws by employing creative commons licences. The question is, are these pioneers simply doing the groundwork before the corporates swoop in and reclaim 'their' territory or is there really a new paradigm being created? John Howkins is fully aware of this paradox when he says: -

“ It was not the existing music industry, least of all one of the major five companies, that led the development of the Internet for music creation and distribution. The variety of ways it is possible to identify, capture,

¹⁷ www.lanceweiler.com

retrieve and play someone else's owe very little to the music industry and almost everything to the Internet pioneers and their computer companies".¹⁸

As previously mentioned, it has often been traditional for corporates to exploit the ground-breaking work of pioneers – they have always had the greater resources to grow the business through greater advertising and distribution channels. The Internet now allows the 'independents' to develop these links and platforms themselves and furthermore, they are often better positioned to employ open policies with regards co-creation and 'sharing'. Leadbeater indicates it may be possible to find a line between containment, control and freedom by embracing a new paradigm of shared ideas " in the economy of things you are defined by what you own...in the economy of ideas you are defined by what you share: who you are linked to, who you network with and which ideas, pictures, video, links, comments you share".¹⁹

A new media power is definitely emerging and it seems to be the one that most respects and integrates the audiences that has the most to achieve. Furthermore, it is the lean and hungry pioneers as well as the 'pro-sumers' who are the most intrepid – innovating in the spaces where mainstream companies fear to tread and where they often can ill afford the expense of experimentation. However, they can afford to swiftly exploit and benefit from others R&D and often have the budget for expensive PR and advertising, which the pioneers invariably do not. Mat Mason gives further power to the new pioneers in this instance though in his book 'The Pirates Dilemma' – he says the advertising savvy audience is more sceptical than ever and once again indicates that personal engagement and authenticity is the "only way to

¹⁸ Howkins, J. – 'The creative Economy', penguin press, 2002.

¹⁹ Leadbeater, C. - 'We Think', profile books Ltd, 2008.

move the crowd".²⁰ A moral authority is emerging that demands respect as well as an authentic 'experience' with the brand, product or service. The fragmentation of the audience is causing immense problems for the media industry and restricting the consumer's ability to engage and contribute is not the answer. Patents may protect ideas but restrict the use of knowledge and dissemination of information. File sharing or 'pirating' can actually help increase legitimate sales and certainly provides a significant amount of free PR and marketing. According to Mason 'The pirates' are forcing the corporate decision makers to reconsider certain patents.²¹ As mentioned previously, Nina Paley, an independent Film Animator made her film 'Sita sings the Blues' under a creative commons licence, which enables the artist to stipulate whether the film can be re-mixed, copied or shown for 'free'. She elected to offer these rights to anyone, with a proviso that if there were any ensuing profits then those too would be shared. It transpired that the more she 'gave it away for free' the more legitimate sales and revenues she achieved from her own outlets. The music industry, similar to the film industry has long battled to curb the rise of the internet as a distribution model but eventually had to succumb to its power and now licensing music to the likes of iTunes etc is commonplace. The film industry historically trails behind the music industry in terms of development but even they are now having to consider DRM free content the same as the music industry has done. However, licensing is still a very contested space. Music artists like Trent Reznor from the band Nine Inch Nails are trail blazing new open paradigms, which are proving to be extremely successful. He encourages his fans to connect to him and to each other and even provides them with the software including a free iPhone application that allows them to track each other and

²⁰ Mason, M - 'The Pirates Dilemma'. Free Press, 2008.

²¹ Ibid.

communicate. His comprehensive website has forums, chat rooms, blogs, etc in order to optimise interaction with his music and fan base. Rather than remove all his music video's from YouTube (like many studios and record companies have done) he aggregates all the videos his fans have taken at his concerts and displays them for playing on his website. He releases much of his music for free on-line but offers his fans 'reasons to buy' - "deluxe" editions of his albums with added extras such as photo's, box sets, especially re-recorded material and even (for limited editions) signed copies. Using this combination of offerings, his album Ghosts I-IV brought in \$1.6 million in revenue in the first week.²²

Acronyms such as CWF (connect with Fans) and RtB (Reasons to buy) are becoming common parlance in these new business models that attempt to engage fans in a space that must compete with the concept that everything is 'free' in cyberspace. Reputation and trust is key and often fans / pro-sumers will only engage and co-create if they believe their input will be reciprocated. Lorna gold talks about the social nature of markets and networks where the "social capital has come to mean the whole image of cultural and social values such as trustworthiness, honesty, reliability..."²³ Consumers are more likely to offer their loyalty where they feel they can trust the co-creator, product or Company and are often eager to contribute artistically in order to gain recognition from trusted peer to peer networks but the relationship can be even more complicated as Rheingold states. He cites the "collective action dilemma" whereby networks and groups attempt to balance a self-interest versus a public and collaborative good.²⁴ This of course also applies to pro-sumers who are co-creating for mainstream companies as well as independents and can be a

²² Techdirt.com article on-line "The future of music business models" (Jan 2010)

²³ Gold,L. - 'The Sharing Economy', Ashgate publishing, 2004.

²⁴ Rheingold, H. - ' Smart Mobs', Perseus publishing, 2002.

complicated 'transaction' especially in instances where 'free labour' only begets recognition or helps co-creators to build a reputation with their peers.

In 'folklore' culture Jenkins suggests that there is no clear distinction between producers and consumers but in convergence culture, although similar, there are varying degrees of status, influence and interactivity.²⁵ Within mass collaboration reputation and reciprocation are essential ingredients for success. The transparency of the web often ensures that those who aren't contributing or pulling in the same direction get quickly found out. However, and as already suggested there is also more room for exploitation, especially where consumers are led to be productive because they have been seduced by the product or brand. For many fans, the act of contributing to something they love (some advertising marketers have coined the phrase 'Lovemarks' to denote a product that evokes such attention), and often for free, is symptomatic of the Gift economy concept that Marcel Mauss the French sociologist coined in his book *The Gift*.²⁶ However, he says the gift is never completely free, it either pre-empts a reciprocal exchange or the transaction already has an implicit return for example in instances where the consumer gains pleasure from being so explicitly associated with the product. In fact, it has been suggested that such an exchange is part of the attraction for some consumers who prefer the constraint of commerce to be absent and there is a rising power of 'collective action' especially within 'affinity groups' or those that share the same interests and common goals that place a greater emphasis on reputation and recognition. Clay Shirkey suggests that a 'network effect' occurs as groups grow larger and therefore become more valuable.²⁷ Among the millions of 'social' internet users the average number of 'friends' that

²⁵ Jenkins, H – 'Convergence Culture'.

²⁶ Mauss, M 'The Gift Economy'.

²⁷ Shirkey, C. – 'Here comes Everybody'.

any one person has is relatively low, however the value of the networked groups grows exponentially as membership increases allowing for multi-way conversations across various types of networked groups, pairings and sub-groups. The power of networked pro-sumers, co-creators and fans is potentially enormous but it's not just about technology but how "society adopts new behaviours" says Shirkey.²⁸ Internet users are now building their own systems of mass communication via blogs, sms, podcasts, etc and as Manuel Castells states the internet has spawned a move from one to one to many to many communication.²⁹ Over 3.5 billion phones were registered in 2008 and the ability to disseminate messages globally and in real-time is now literally at people's fingertips. The net is a copying and distribution machine and almost everybody who is connected to the web plays a part in the production and distribution cycle now. However, the potency of mass communication is also one of its weaknesses. The proliferation of tools to create and distribute means there is a rapidly growing amount of content on the net and although much of this now bypasses the traditional 'gate-keepers' it also bypasses and undermines traditional keepers of quality and value. If anyone can 'create', say some of the naysayers then what happens to the quality and therefore the value? The counter argument is that rather than conforming to the common denominator and producing homogenised works for a pre-conceived market, the mass collaboration of media content potentially drives the quality up. Essentially because of the chaotic and over-crowded content market, quality and value need to be higher in order to attract and engage audiences. New filters are required to sift for quality (indeed the audiences themselves do this through peer to peer recommendation, with the added caveat that their reputation is also implicated) and new 'funnels' or 'engagers'

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Castells, M. 'communication Power', Oxford University Press, 2009.

such as easy to use re-mix, co-create and re-distribute tools will drive audiences towards media content of value.

In a so called move from mass production to mass collaboration a new power dialectic has emerged that gives significantly more agency to the consumer and co-creators of media content. However, the economies of scale continue to dictate that wherever mainstream companies can exploit and mass-produce product they will still continue to do so. The scourge of Adorno and Horkheimers accusation of a mass produced homogenised 'product' still has potency but a new power shift means that this condition is more challenged than ever before³⁰. Artists will continue to derive new styles and new media experiences and some of these will be captured and re-gurgitated by the corporates but a growing number of media content will begin to thrive and prosper without them thanks to the potency of participatory culture.

³⁰ Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. - 'Dialectics of Enlightenment'

CONCLUSION

Jenkins believes there has been both a paradigm shift from media specific content, to content that exists on multi-platforms as well as a more complex relationship between “top down corporate media and bottom up participatory culture”.³¹ However the complexity does not stop there, as there is also a dichotomy between those mainstream companies that wish to exploit convergence and participatory culture in order to maximise sales and those consumers who are beginning to express a desire to be more fully acknowledged if not fiscally rewarded for their co-creation and inter-production of creative works. Groups such as the ‘Organization for transformative works’ are beginning to spring up in the name of protecting consumers and fans’ contributions to media content and there is a rising consensus that believes that this work will eventually lead to a new model of ‘shared’ revenue. Not surprisingly, this is creating tensions between the different factions on the creation and consumption chain and the complexity is further exacerbated by the percentage of consumers who either enjoy contributing without a commercial return as well as those who are the traditionally more passive consumers, who which simply to ‘receive’. A new generation of 18-25 year olds are nevertheless, increasingly active suggesting that generations to come will have significant more impact in the production and selection of media content as well as more of a desire for a sense of ownership. The traditional gate-keepers of media content are seized with anxiety and panic and in a rush to integrate and engage the emerging pro-sumers as fast as possible and often as Foucault has suggested only willing to initiate and ingratiate

³¹ Jenkins, H. ‘Convergence culture’.

them to the point where they serve the hegemonic principle. There are many compelling advantages for corporates to adopt an 'open paradigm' policy – from using 'free' models that aren't ultimately 'free' (but reward the consumers initially) to more genuine co-creation and sharing systems that reward the pro-sumers and significantly increase speed and efficiency of productivity. Perhaps the real concern for mainstream companies though is not loss of revenue but the total collapse of income streams in a potential model that see's media content becoming a 'peer to peer' network exchange of ideas and entertainment with the future mainstream companies grappling for scraps?

The media industry's current crisis is not quite so deep yet but it is clear that unless they adopt new 'open' strategies then their businesses will begin to suffer. Companies need to attract as well as reward the best participants before they go elsewhere. The rise of collective intelligence and peer-to-peer production combined with the extremely economical digital distribution channels provided by the Internet means their supremacy will seriously be challenged. The transition from mass production to mass collaboration heralds a new power shift that puts the audience and consumer firmly in the drivers seat. The corporates have responded powerfully with the development of convergence and media franchise models, which continue to engage audiences and provide significant revenue. However, if they continue to marginalise the benefits of consumer production and interaction then they run the risk of losing their audience in a virtual and real world that provides a proliferation of choices. Trust and reputation are key in the new media world and the ability of content creators to give away their content for free to view, re-mix and re-interpret is one of the powerful ways of engaging loyal followers and building audiences. They are able to monetise their content by offering either 'legitimate' and /or 'deluxe' versions of their content that consumers and fans who are becoming immersed in this symbiotic

relationship seem only too willing to purchase. The Internet also provides a certain level playing field where independents can also adopt convergence culture strategies and begin to emulate the corporate companies business models and build their own content that plays over multi-platforms and media. Lorna Gold infers that we maybe undergoing a shift from a market to a 'moral focus', which is also, become a consideration of foucauldian and neo-Marxist theorists who are beginning to accommodate the experiential and anthropological elements of culture in the analysis of ideology and power.³² Economic success is now partly predicated on the ability to build networks, where culture is now starting to shape the way the market performs in more ways than before and where there is a "new emphasis on the human dimension in transforming 'economic space' into 'social spaces'."³³ Castells believes that communication structures are key to shaping social movements and believes that there is a real possibility of new power structures evolving around mass collaboration, convergence and a sharing economy.³⁴ However, and as he also notes, the liberating communication tools of the web can also be used to contain and re-structure power. Castells says that the media exploits the two basic human emotions of Hope and Fear but perhaps it is now the Hope of the 'independent' pro-sumers and content producers versus the Corporations fear of the changing media landscape that will shape the future. A new 'model' is potentially on the horizon that may include elements of 'shared' resources and apportioned rewards both in terms of recognition and monetary value. There will of course be resistance on both sides – seismic changes in the production and economy are always disruptive but the media landscape is already changing shape and the power of mass collaboration

³² Gold, L. ' The Sharing Economy'.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Castells, M. – 'Communication power'.

combined with the Internet will ensure that it never looks the same again

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