

USING WEB 2.0 TO SUPPORT THE INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCTION PROCESS

Laurence Hauttekeete*, Katrien Berte*, Peter Mechant*, Steve Paulussen*,
Evelien De Waele-De Guchtenaere* & Erik Mannens**
*Ghent University, IBBT-MICT, **Ghent University, IBBT-MMLab

An extensive application of network technologies enables us to access more and better communication tools and, in the specific case of the production of audiovisual media, a better and cheaper production and distribution apparatus. In particular, creative and cultural industries are confronted with many new opportunities created by the Web, or more specifically Web 2.0, mainly as a change for the whole process of content production. New digital cultural practices arise, with new business models and high levels of consumer participation.

Mabillot explains how for the culture industries Web 2.0 may become very important for independent content producers to escape from the traditional formatting, production and distribution processes(40). In this perspective, the value chain is being redesigned and the consumer plays an important role in value creation. Consequently, the independent film industry has to deal with the challenges posed by new technologies if it wishes to present high quality products and become competitive on a complex cultural market. This will also allow talented filmmakers to focus solely or merely on artistic and content related objectives.

Nevertheless, the daily practice shows that it is still difficult for the independent film industry to finance, produce and exploit their products. It is mainly the distribution process which benefits from a renewed range of digital platforms. Financing motion picture or documentary, finding cast and crew and

pre/post production are still the most challenging aspects.

In an attempt to challenge the traditional linear pattern of filmmaking and to check the usefulness of the Web 2.0 paradigm in this industry, this article aims to test several important parameters of an ideal digital model for independent filmmaking, presented as a concept of virtual cooperation. To understand the practical impact of the new model, we conducted several interviews with producers, scriptwriters and directors in Flanders to assess their needs and expectations towards the use of digital technologies in their (art) work and the potential to adopt this kind of digital environment.

2.0 cultural industries?

Digital technologies create many opportunities for the different range of contributors to the cultural field. Professional cultural content producers and the audience are confronted with new challenges and new user experiences. The archiving, presentation, communication, distribution and creation of cultural material can take many forms, allowing a completely innovative and creative process of art production. However, the extent to which the creative opportunities opened up by new technologies are being exploited in the cultural production process also depends on the willingness of both the content producers and the audience to adopt new ways of processing cultural material (Berte, Hauttekeete & Nulens) Put in endnote and give page no².

The professional meets the audience

There are a variety of advantages and disadvantages to this new mode of delivery. On the one hand, the professional content producer is clearly affected by the digitalisation of the art world. Digital technologies offer opportunities to create new forms of artwork and provide an experimental platform where artists can interact with the audience. Extended collaboration with other artists from all over the world has never been easier. The artist can create a community of cultural neighbours, art enthusiasts or artists with similar cultural preferences, and receive immediate feedback on their work. In addition, artists can also reap economic benefits from digital technologies characterised by revenue generated from 'the long tail', which is a web 2.0 specific business model in which revenue can be generated by selling content online to niche audiences, a practice which would be unprofitable in the 'real world' **Put in endnote and give page no?**. In essence, the distribution of online content does not require any physical carriers. As a consequence, digital technologies can distribute a vast amount of niche content to a targeted audience with negligible distribution costs. In this case, the aggregated revenue derived from the sales of niche content is considerably higher than revenue derived from the sales of a single mass product (Anderson) **Put in endnote and give page no?**. Combined, these smaller groups of niche audiences thus result in a world wide mass audience.

By contrast, digital technologies might at the same time pose a real threat and present serious challenges for professionals. The audience now expects professionals to be more and more present online and to share their work, which could create a digital divide between those professionals who have

access to new technologies and those who do not. However, access is not the only problem, given that there also needs to be a willingness to adopt these new technologies and to become familiar with the skills needed to use several digital devices. These elements play a crucial role in the equal development of the cultural sector (Lennhart & Horrigan 24; Marsch 14; Van Dijk 7). What's more, the presence of artwork on different media platforms requires special treatment regarding legal issues to protect the rights of the original content producer.

On the other hand, the internet and other types of digital technologies are expected to have a significant impact on the way the public participates in culture. Cultural participation is a vast concept that includes many types of activities. In general, a distinction is made between finding information, consumption (interpretation and experience) and the creation of arts. Mutanen (n. pag.) reports four ways of categorizing the relationship between the public and a professional cultural content producer: reactive or proactive consumption and public or private production. The relationship between both is reactive when the public simply consumes art passively e.g. by watching or listening. The consumption becomes proactive when for example a visitor actively looks up information before going to the movies. The public can also participate more actively by creating an artwork. When he or she creates an artefact for use only in a private context this action is referred to as private production. The production becomes public when the creator decides to share his or her creation with a larger audience as a 'prosumer'. This audience can also interact and change the object. According to Deuze (63), such user participation can be considered as a principal component of e-culture.

Enterprise 2.0

Of course, digital information technologies and the Internet have caused an exponential growth of data available in our society (Lyman and Varian n. pag.). People can be overwhelmed by information (the so-called information overload) and are no longer able to find the information they want amidst all the data being produced, a status which is often referred to as the information paradox (Thorp xix).

E-tools or collaborative platforms address these problems as they center on information sharing, searching, collecting and management. They make information easily and continuously accessible and unlock the experiences and knowledge of others. E-tools also overcome time and space differences and enable social networking. Thus, e-collaboration systems or software for supporting communication, coordination and cooperation processes in groups, have become the backbone infrastructure to support group work in a globalised world.

The research field concerned with the understanding of group or team processes and the design, creation and evaluation of technological systems supporting group interaction has been ascribed several different terms. 'Computer-Supported Collaborative Work' (CSCW), 'groupware', 'social software' and 'Enterprise 2.0' are amongst the better known. CSCW-tools create 'working spaces' that aggregate communication, scheduling, sharing and product spaces (Hinze-Hoare 1) and enable computer-assisted coordinated activity carried out by groups of collaborating individuals (Baecker et al. vii). Groupware is characterized by the 'non-separation or non-isolation of users from each-other' (Koch and Gross, n. pag.) and by making the user aware that he is part of a group, while most other software seeks to hide and protect users from each other (Lynch,

Snyder and Vogel, 159-162). Tom Coates defines *social software* as 'software which supports, extends, or derives added value from, human social behavior - message-boards, musical taste-sharing, photo-sharing, instant messaging, mailing lists, social networking' (Coates, n. pag.). This is software based on supporting the desire of individuals to affiliate (me-centricity), which can be contrasted with CSCW or groupware that places people into groups defined organizationally or functionally (we-centricity).

The phrase *Enterprise 2.0* was introduced by Andrew McAfee of the Harvard Business School. Initially defined in 2006 as 'the use of emergent social software platforms within companies, or between companies and their partners or customers' (McAfee, n. pag.), it has kept its core meaning. McAfee coined a mnemonic to easily remember the key aspects of Enterprise 2.0 called SLATES. SLATES describes the combined use of effective enterprise search (S), using links (L) to connect information together, providing low-barrier tools for public authorship (A), tags (T) to let users create structure, extensions (E) to provide intelligent content suggestions, and signals (S) to let users know when information has been published or updated.

E-tools in the film business

Mabillot describes how, on the basis of enterprise 2.0, film-lovers could be integrated into the process of value creation, thereby bringing individuals together in cultural communities. Moreover, each stage of the traditional linear film production process could have its digital equivalent. As Mabillot (47) states:

Some consumers of cultural goods play an active role in the discovery of new talent (...), the creation of new works (user generated content), their financing (...), their production (thanks to new film

cameras), their promotion (via blogs, comments, etc.), their distribution (via BitTorrent for example) and their sale.

In what follows, we give a short overview of electronic tools referring to four important stages in the film production process, i.e. financing, networking & relation management, promotion and distribution of motion pictures, that are already available online for public use.

Financial support

Several online initiatives are launched seeking alternative funding and financial resources directly from (future) audiences. Indeed, revenue can be generated by the so-called 'long tail' concept. The concept of microcomissioning, a practice where audiences can contribute to the production process of a movie by donating a small amount of money such as 1, 5, 10 or even 20 euros, is one of the most commonly used techniques to boost the production budget. This concept originated in the music industry where several bands wanted to prove the redundancy of the major labels by gathering their own funds, produce and release their own records with help of their fans. The most famous example of a platform supporting this type of independent music production is Sellaband (<http://www.sellaband.com>). Each artist has its own webpage with a biography, a number of pictures, videos and several songs. In order to record a full album, an artist should raise 50,000 dollars. Fans can buy a share in the profits by donating 10 dollars or more. An artist therefore needs to convince at least 5,000 fans to invest in his or her music. The profits of the album are shared with these contributors. A similar initiative, Bravenewfilms (<http://bravenewfilms.org>), is an initiative from director Robert Greenwald, which originated as a political rebellion against the American

establishment. The website claims to depend on the support of only 2000 members for the production of a short film. The current status and the number of contributing members is listed on a thermometer, the amount remaining is listed together with an estimation of the production kick off. Several other sites of independent film producers copied these microcomissioning initiatives.

Networking & relation management

In addition to fund raising, it is also important to work with the right group of people. In each phase of the film production process, the access to an extensive network is crucial. Film producers can therefore use network sites to promote their idea, to search for cast and crew and to distribute their work. Several general well-known sites are Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace. In addition to these sites, several movie specific initiatives have originated such as Film Community (<http://www.filmcommunity.com>), D-Word (<http://www.d-word.com>) and the Wasp Factory (<http://www.waspfactory.nl>).

Promotion

As promotion is closely related to distribution, most film-specific sites focus on both phases. An important site which only focuses on creating awareness with regard to new independent films is <http://www.shootingpeople.org>. There are also several initiatives available for actors to promote themselves e.g. <http://www.gogetfamous.com>

Distribution

Most online movie production initiatives can be found in this category as digital technologies offer a wide range of opportunities for content distribution on different platforms. The internet offers producers a unique platform combining direct marketing techniques

as well as instant buying. Inspiring sites with regard to this topic are <http://www.scottkirsner.com>, <http://www.onlinefilm.org>, <http://www.docsonline.tv> and <http://www.docutube.com>

Picturing an ideal digital model for independent film making

As noted above, numerous new e-collaboration systems related to the film business have appeared. However, a targeted and all-embracing web based platform for the independent film production process is still missing.

In Flanders, the film production sector is becoming slowly but surely more and more successful.ⁱ A new but rather small group of young filmmakers started to boost the box office for Flemish productions presenting both artistic and commercially oriented movies. Their success is not limited to a local level, debuting Flemish talent have their films premiered at renowned festivals and several movies received international awards. However, this new generation only incorporates a fragment of the creative and technical potential at hand. The Flemish film industry lacks the financial resources and the global network to fully exploit this potential.

As we do not have large production companies producing blockbuster hits, the Flemish movie industry can be mainly considered as an 'independent film sector' which is largely dependent on government funding and on financing by major distributors or broadcasters which are also rather limited in a small country like Belgium. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between these two types of investors. The intention to broadcast the motion picture by a major local television station or in our local theatres carries a lot of weight during the application procedure for government funding while broadcasters and other distributors regard this public

investment as a qualitative criterion in their own decision process. Additionally, both broadcasters and governmental funds can make demands on duration, style and approach of the content therefore endangering the independency of the maker. The production is relatively expensive and time consuming, especially when envisaging an international project. In reality, a project starts when 85% of the financing is in place. The remaining 15% one hopes to recuperate during the distribution of the film.

An extensive application of network technologies could enable us to access more and better communication tools and a better and cheaper production and distribution apparatus. Therefore, this article aims to test several important parameters of a digital model for independent film making, presented as a concept of virtual cooperation. With virtual cooperation, we refer to the development of an online platform for independent productions whereby different aspects such as co-creation, financing, and networking, are taken into account.

In Flanders, a project is being initiated for the testing of such a platform, wherein different film experts, together with universities, study the possibilities of Web 2.0 for the independent film sector. To attain this goal, the project (called Independent Films in Progress (IFIP)ⁱⁱ) starts from an ideal digital model of virtual cooperation, which we will describe briefly. It comprises of a platform for the independent film sector which functions as a virtual cooperation supporting the development of independent productions from the idea phase until the release date. This platform could support independent producers by means of a transparent and accessible application, for every film project, and the commissioning process, whereby potential end users would be

able to take a share in the project thereby creating a real virtual cooperation, and whereby the different project types and genres would be mapped, and, as well as possible, they will be aimed at a specific target audience. This set up would allow the filmmaker the possibility to expand an alternative network of companies (B2B) and end users (B2C), proactively seeking the necessary budget production means and appropriate distribution channels as to realise the initial artistic and content objectives without a lot of concessions.

Such an ideal digital platform, whether one describes it as a CSCW, Groupware, Social software or Enterprise2.0-tool, would enable virtual cooperation in the film production process by supporting the development of independent productions and offering producers the possibility to submit ideas or actual project results. The platform should consist of four important web based modules: (1) a social network section; (2) a knowledge repository unlocked by wiki software; (3) a collaboration section in the form of a project- and process management tool and (4) a promotion and marketing section. We discuss each section briefly.

Social network sites (SNS) are increasingly attracting the attention of academic and industry researchers. Social networking sites are defined by Boyd en Ellison as web-based services allowing users to construct a profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of 'friends', and view or browse their list of connections and those made by others (Boyd and Ellison, n. pag.) The knowledge repository would be accessible through a wiki, a collaborative website. Wikis are relatively easy to use, which partly accounts for their proliferation nowadays. Content on a wiki can be edited by anyone who has access to it. Wikis can be used as a knowledge and information source and as a method for virtual collaboration.

Indeed, wikis enable sharing conversations and information and allowing learners to engage in learning with others. Wiki features include easy editing, versioning capabilities, and article discussions (Wagner 265). Incorporating a Wiki in the independent film process would allow an easy exchange of ideas and first comments, thereby creating a continuous feedback channel for all the actors involved.

Video or audiovisual content is everywhere. It is moving from TV to PC and mobile phones. It is appearing on an increasing number of websites and social networking sites. However, with the existence of more video and channels to broadcast these videos also means greater complexity. The collaboration section of the ideal platform aims to look for efficient solutions to resolve the increased complexity of video production, handling and distribution. The collaboration section will be developed in the form of a project and process management tool.

Finally, the promotion and marketing section will provide information and tools on how to promote and engage people for an independent film project. The field of advertising and marketing is changing: companies and organizations increasingly adopt a user centric viewpoint instead of a classic top-down approach (Kotler and Keller 10; Poiesz and Frambach 229), thus word of mouse (the online version of word of mouth) and viral marketing are gaining importance. Moreover, Jaffe points to the 'neutrality' of the internet and to the high level of attention online (Jaffe 117-18) **Put in endnote.**

Research design

The liveability of such an all-embracing web based platform depends largely on its functionalities and the perception of different actors. Each actor must be able

to translate or transpose his/her specific role to this new working model, in order to ensure a user-friendly and valuable application. Moreover, the development of this kind of platform may allow a widening or deepening of actor roles, because of the interaction of collaborations with other actors. For this reason, the needs and expectations of each actor must be carefully scrutinized.

In order to assess different parameters of this type of idealized digital model for independent film production, we conducted 17 semi-structured expert interviews with Flemish producers, scriptwriters and directors. The experts were selected on the basis of different criteria such as film genre, success stories and seniority, in order to ensure a diverse as possible view on the film sector. We investigated the requirements and ambitions of the interviewees regarding their use of digital communication technologies in their (art) work and we assessed their potential adoption of this kind of digital environment. The interviews took place in 2008 in the period August 7 - September 18 and the interview guide mainly focussed on four themes, i.e. financing, networking, promotion and distribution. In general, we also gathered some information about the current problems in the film production process, their faith in the introduction of new communication technologies in the filmmaking process, and the global attitude towards the construction of a web platform. In what follows, we will summarize the main findings of these interviews, based on the transcripts.

Main results

This section will structure the main findings according to the classification of e-tools in the film business, as previously discussed: financial support, networking & relation management, promotion and distribution.

Money makes the world go round

During the interviews with producers, scriptwriters and directors, three aspects of film financing catch the eye: the description of traditional financing channels, the belief or disbelief in microcommissioning, and the lack of information and knowledge about financing channels for independent film production.

Traditional financing channels

Most of the interviewees agree: Flanders is a difficult region to get funding for a cinematic production or project. Film production is still a rather linear process in which the search for sufficient capital remains a real challenge. In this quest for funding, filmmakers rely heavily on the traditional financing channels and the personal network, whereby coincidence and luck play a very important role. Moreover, the budgets for film in Europe are not comparable to those of American productions and talent must be paid for. As one director of fiction states: 'If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys'. Nevertheless, the audience expects the same quality.

There are several ways to finance a movie. The most mentioned traditional financing channel in the interviews is, unfortunately, a reliance on self-financing, often used to pre-finance a film and to prepare the required film application forms. Further channels which can be addressed are institutionalized funds, which deal with rather small budgets compared to the number of production companies, directors and available talent on the film market. Governmental institutions do, however, offer more indirect funding through the organization of different kinds of workshops concerning filmmaking skills. Thirdly, private partners may also be interested in getting a profit share, sponsorship or tax shelter. In Flanders, the system of tax shelter is clearly being favored over sponsoring. Nonetheless, out of sheer

necessity, independent moviemakers in Flanders are often forced to engage in international co-production, which always leads to complex situations on different aspects (content, organization, management, and so on).

Microcommissioning?

The newly developed collaborative working platform for independent filmmaking plans to integrate a new funding model, i.e. microcommissioning. The interviewees, however, all agreed that they distrust this model of financing, for several reasons. First, microcommissioning will require a real revolution in people's minds, particularly in a country like Belgium with a very small film market. Certainly, asking people to invest in an idea, is not that easy. Furthermore, questions arise about intellectual property rights. What is the 'reward' for someone who invests in the movie: a DVD, a cinema ticket, a backstage pass, a share of the (possible) profit, or the opportunity to have your say? Obviously, the latter is not acceptable to most filmmakers, as there is potential that the investor will interfere with the content, thereby becoming a de facto co-producer. Lastly, the business and working model of microcommissioning is difficult: closing deals and contracts with every contributor is an administrative nightmare and tax laws differ from country to country.

To sum up, the respondents were very skeptical about this type of financing. Nonetheless, some interviewees do see some potential in microcommissioning, but only when it is connected to projects with some kind of personal, political, social or ecological engagement. And, of course, the reputation of the filmmaker plays an important role (e.g. Robert Greenwald).

The making of... film

The respondents all agree that a collaborative working tool for filmmaking can be of added value in clearly presenting the guidelines when it comes to funding. To be more precise, filmmakers often feel lost in the abundance of funding application forms and types of organizations. They do not know who to address when starting a film project, they need more information about tax shelters, or they are unaware of the different players who could be relevant. As a consequence, the independent film industry needs a good description of the potential financing channels, both in a national and international context. Moreover, this type of information must be dynamic, in order to be able to adapt itself to an ever changing regulatory landscape. The filmmakers also stated that they would find it useful to be supplied with tips and tricks about the multiple factors involved in filmmaking.

To conclude, filmmakers are looking for some kind of manual which takes them by the hand in their search for funding. As one producer describes:

[there should be a] web page which explains very basically how a movie is made, from the beginning to the end. Like a kind of genealogical tree, with several branches, and by clicking on these branches it gives you a clear overview of the information needed. (Interview 1).

Meet & Greet

Getting introduced to the world of filmmaking certainly demands some active networking. The results demonstrate that personal contact is still the most preferred way of getting in touch. Nowadays, the boom of new communication technologies also offers several opportunities for social networking. Notwithstanding that several e-mails remain rather unseen or

get 'classified' in the recycle bin, several interviewees indicated that e-mail is still the most popular 'digital' way to get in touch with someone. In the following paragraphs, we describe how other digital means such as community platforms and databases are used.

Social software and communities for networking

Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace are just some of the social networking tools that are available on the internet. The interviews proved that every participant is quite familiar with these tools. However, we discovered both proponents and opponents when it comes to using them in a filmmaking context.

The advocates believe that pages with personal profiles have a clear added value on the level of background information. Concretely, if one wishes to delve into someone's past, this can be easily done. Furthermore, word-of-mouth advertising is very important for the promotion of films and social networking software tools actually offer some kind of online variant in lots of growing communities. Even the preparatory exchange of information about scripts or casting can happen within the more private sphere of an online community.

However, these social networking tools also have some disadvantages. Most of the interviewees report how many of the social networking accounts are not at all up-to-date, because people do not always have the time, the inclination or the manpower to add more recent information. As one director of documentaries told us:

At the moment, there is a trend to encourage everyone to constantly update the profile of their social networking account, but I really hate it! I don't feel like doing this, so then I have to ask an assistant

to do it. I want to make movies instead of wasting time constantly updating MySpace profiles and other stuff like that. (Interview 2)

Another often mentioned disadvantage is the complexity of social networking spaces, since not all functionalities are simple to use. One producer of documentaries even states: '[e]very time I go to Facebook, I hope my computer stored my password, because I forget it'. (Interview 3)

In general, tools such as Facebook or MySpace are well-known, but are often considered to be rather static or 'dead' pages, especially when consulting them in a professional context. Again, the respondents referred to the fact that the world of filmmaking is a people's business, where practices such as 'due diligence' are common and pitching sessions of approximately two days are necessary to get acquainted. Furthermore, the respondents particularly noticed that the use of social networking tools are very suitable for young people, who grew up in the internet era and for whom it is not really time intensive to make small updates.

Integrated and up-to-date databases

In the interviews we discovered a clear call for an integrated and up-to-date database that bundles all the relevant contact information for the world of moviemaking in a dynamic way. The respondents admitted that there are already a lot of databases, but they are not yet satisfied with their current functioning. After all, most of the existing databases have a rather static nature, as a website with contact information and no other functionalities. In addition, the respondents complained about the large degree of fragmentation when it comes to databases. Moreover, each database also has its own characteristics or metadata that are being used to describe an item or person in

the database. The question arises how to combine all these metadata models and which metadata models are the most suited or needed. Another problem could be the integration of heterogeneous data, originating from different sources (professional and/or user-generated). The integration and optimization of databases thus becomes extremely difficult, but nevertheless desirable.

A well-functioning database must offer a variety of contact information, which covers all of the ground, has a user-friendly interface, and includes details about the actors and crew involved in the filmmaking process. The interviewees were keen that it would be an attractive and interactive database, which can be easily browsed with the possibility that it would have links to social networking profiles of the members. Of major importance to the interviewees is some kind of quality control, in order to prevent the inclusion of incorrect information and to guarantee professionalism. Finally, one respondent remarked that the creation of a good database must involve integration into a European network, to facilitate work beyond boundaries.

How to get famous?

We asked the respondents about the most frequently used promotional channels and the possible services new communication technologies could offer.

The promotion of a film happens chiefly at festivals or television markets, of course this is quite expensive. Therefore, many filmmakers also offer trailers of three to five minutes on a promotional website (created in-house or with some help from an advertising company), on YouTube or Google Video. Given that the customer, in particular the younger viewers, nowadays are used to a high degree of

interactivity, their expectations are high. Examples of such interactivity could be: the coupling of the film story with some kind of (mobile) game, the creation of discussion groups, blogs about the shoot, and so on. To sum up, the public is no longer satisfied with static information, but expects an internet story in multi-platform packaging.

Most of the interviewees are convinced that an independent platform for filmmaking should offer some room for visibility and promotion, in particular by means of trailers. Teasers with brief plot summaries should be innovative and challenging. On the one hand, advocates assert that summaries need to be protected in advance, in order to avoid ideas being stolen, e.g. via a non-disclosure agreement or watermarking using restricted areas. Creating a platform with restricted areas will moreover allow some tracking, so as to ensure even more security. From a bottom-up perspective, one respondent even put forward the idea that trailers should be very creative, giving enough room for the public or other interested parties to speculate on the full story. On the other hand, there are others who are more skeptical about the use of scripts or synopsis on a website. They fear manipulation, risks regarding intellectual property, and that they will lose control over the content.

Film release B2B and B2C

There are some opportunities to get independent movies screened at festivals. However, not every movie attains this goal. The respondents agree that the internet offers great opportunities as alternative distribution channels: the distribution chain changes, the concept of the cinematic experience is being redefined, and the role of the distributor is fading. Gradually, it opens up the opportunity for more direct contact between the creators and the users.

On the basis of our interviews, we can say that online distribution especially opens potential for the expansion of a business-to-business (B2B) context. Examples in Belgium already exist in the documentary market: CBA (Centre de l'Audiovisuel à Bruxelles) is a kind of video-on-demand platform or online shop which has documentaries available for purchase by professional users (movie sellers, theatres, DVD release). Online distribution might also be interesting for young people to enter the market, as a first introduction to the public. This can especially be interesting for the people who are part of the film project, but also to create business links or to attract sponsors. The rights issue could be solved by implementing a system of control and access rights: those who want to see a movie, get a code to watch it only once.

According to the respondents, the business-to-consumer (B2C) distribution by means of internet or other new communication technologies remains rather virgin territory. Nevertheless, using the internet as a performance channel for documentaries could create some new chances, in particular from an economic perspective. Differences could be made between viewing in high resolution and low resolution, coupled with different payment models. One respondent describes a case wherein the filmmaker splits up his documentary of fifteen minutes in five series of three minutes, suitable for online distribution.

Lastly, one major point of attention in this whole process of more online distribution remains the viewing quality of the distribution channel. Film is art, and a movie which becomes distributed with insufficient audio and video quality equals a bad movie. The online distribution channels must thus be able to offer the viewing public the quality they expect. Further research is required in this area.

Reflections

Internet and new communication technologies could have an added value in the independent film sector. Especially the Internet might be of use as an informative 'browsing place', a promotional tool, an opportunity to get in touch with other people, an alternative distribution channel, and so on. However, the question remains whether the introduction of these new technologies will entail a real revolution. Will the more classical linear film production process be replaced by a completely non-linear approach with a diversity of new media? Or, are most filmmakers still relying on the 'old economies' of film making?

Given the comments of the respondents on the proposed idealized digital platform and the introduction of new technologies, we can conclude that the interviewees are still waiting for further developments in this area. The 'old economies' of filmmaking still rule: the film production process remains rather linear, in which different windows (festivals/cinema, video, pay per view TV, etc) are being addressed in a specific order. At the same time, the respondents are well aware of the different initiatives that are taking place in the moviemaking industry, referring to some positive projects in the world of webcinema.

To conclude, the Flemish respondents are not yet completely convinced by the power of Web 2.0 in the filmmaking process and prefer to stay realistic and pragmatic. The current way of working is preferred over alternative methods. A true revolution will thus demand a change of mentality and a discussion between the different actors involved, in the quest for a new business model for qualitatively good film productions. Further research is required in order to map out the use of new technologies in the film landscape.

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Authors

Laurence Hauttekeete, Ghent University, IBBT-MICT
 Katrien Berte, Ghent University, IBBT-MICT
 Peter Mechant, Ghent University, IBBT-MICT
 Steve Paulussen, Ghent University, IBBT-MICT
 Evelien De Waele-De Guchtenaere, Ghent University, IBBT-MICT

Erik Mannens, Ghent University, IBBT-MMLab

Laurence Hauttekeete received her Ph.D in Communication Sciences from Ghent University, Belgium, in 2004. In her Ph.D she looks at tabloidisation tendencies in the Flemish press, the development of a measurement model. She joined MICT in 2005 as a senior researcher. Most of the projects she works upon are situated in a few domains: 'digitisation', 'culture and media', 'technology and youngsters/education', and 'ICT and government authorities'.

The fellow authors of the article are also working within IBBT-MICT and have all been involved in the IFIP project.

Erik Mannens is the project coordinator of the IFIP project. He received his Master's degree in engineering (1992) at KAHO Ghent and his Master's degree in computer science (1995) at K.U. Leuven University. Currently, he works at Multimedia Lab (IBBT), Department of Electronics and Information Systems. His major expertise is centered on broadcasting, iDTV and web development. He is involved in several projects as senior researcher.

Notes

ⁱ See year report of VAF:
http://www.vaf.be/uploads/media/VAF_jaarverslag_2008.pdf

ⁱⁱ IFIP stands for Independent Films in Progress
<http://www.ibbt.be/files/leaflets/IFIP-EN.pdf>