TV Interventions: Artists, Activists and Alternative Media

Introduction: Artists as Theorists and Activists

Taking as its credo the title of the late Chuck Kleinhan's chapter within this collection, this chapter will examine some past strategies or arguments that have been invented and deployed by video artists and activists to subvert, reform or reshape television, in order to consider how this might inform and conceptualise radical media and/or media history. Partly intended as a modest contribution to the development of (critical) theory in the study of alternative media (see Sandoval and Fuchs 2010; Fuchs 2010; Andersson 2012; Mowbray 2015), this chapter will cite specific examples of TV intervention or media self-representation for their intrinsic significance but also to highlight the pitfalls and shortcomings of any rigid or limited ideological framework for conceptualising or promoting the diverse range of practices which fall under the rubric of 'alternative media'.[1] I would like to suggest that closer attention could be paid to the ideas and arguments of artists in the development of theory around alternative media, and this will be illustrated by a discussion about how video artists have quite naturally and readily assumed roles as theorists and/or activists, in developing arguments about the role that television could and should play in society.

I will emphasise the need to contextualise alternative media examples, by investigating the institutional and regulatory structure and frameworks which can shape and determine media practice on a number of levels. The chapter will conclude by considering whether Carey's models of communication as transmission and (as) ritual (2008, orig. 1989) might prove useful in conceptualising alternative media.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this chapter to give any sort of detailed account of the rich history of artist interventions on TV - from commissioned programmes on mainstream television to experiments that have positioned themselves in opposition to the medium - it is important to look both at the big 'picture' and the nature of the very distinction I have just referred to. Introducing their 2008 exhibition 'Broadcast Yourself' which took place as part of the AV Festival in Newcastle in February of that year, curators Kathy Rae Hoffman and Sarah Cook noted,

> In the 1970s and 1980s, artists approached television from two different perspectives: some wanted their video works broadcast, while others wanted to control how broadcasting functioned (reprinted in Cook and Huffman 2012, 3).

There has always been a continuum between these two 'poles' (of *enter* or *subvert*), with some video artists criticizing the way in which the medium operates, some suggesting or creating entirely different types of format for television, and others content to play with or critique its conventions or forms. In a recent interview with the present author, the video artist and media scholar David Garcia explained how the Amsterdam cable TV pirates of the 1980s, such as Rabotnik, had inspired him to consider the 'communicative possibilities' of television, rather than just seeing it as a possible outlet for video art (as video artists in the UK tended to regard Channel 4) (Garcia 2018). But at its most overtly political, early video art did question 'what it meant for 'the people' to be construed as an audience that received images and sounds via one-way broadcasts that delivered them into the hands of advertisers and disenfranchised the public sphere' (Kaizen 2016, 2).

As Kaizen notes, this was the exact subject of *Television Delivers People* by Richard Serra and Carlotta Faye Schoolman, which is widely available on YouTube and is included in the two-

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volume Video Data Bank anthology *Surveying The First Decade: Video Art and Alternative Media in the U.S.*~~.~~ First shown late at night on a commercial television station in Amarillo, Texas, in 1973, it undoubtedly came as quite a shock to the average viewer. The video is unsparing in its attack on the medium while remaining within it, evoking nicely the concept of 'working against the established institutions, whilst working in them' (Marcuse 1972, 55). Incorporating excerpts from academic texts critiquing~~denunciating~~ commercial television, the style and form of the video exemplifies the seduction of TV advertising which facilitates this 'delivery of people', with easy listening Muzak accompanying the scrolling white sentences.

> Commercial television delivers 20 million people a minute.
>
> In commercial broadcasting the viewer pays for the privilege of having himself sold.
>
> It is the consumer who is consumed.
>
> You are the product of t.v.
>
> You are delivered to the advertiser who is the customer.
>
> He consumes you.
>
> The viewer is not responsible for programming——
>
> You are the end product. (Serra and Schoolman 1973)~~(Serra and Schoolman 1973)~~

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In a sense much early video art was not just reminiscent of the media critique of the Frankfurt School, but was instead ~~like~~ a~~n~~ material~~actual~~ embodiment of the ideas of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. ~~,~~ It~~in~~ pointed~~ing~~ to the way in which filmmaking could challenge~~d~~ the fundamental assumptions of bourgeois culture which located work as productive and relegated art to leisure and consumption (Johnston 1976)~~, and~~ Another key influence was Hans Magnus Enzensberger's essay 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media'

which ~~, in~~ critiqued~~ing~~ the unidirectional flow and the undemocratic, unaccountable structure(s) of the media industries (Enzensberger 1970). In some ways these 'TV interventions' anticipated the future work of tactical media practitioners like Critical Art Ensemble, who sought to 'demonstrate that what is taken as privileged discourse is merely a construction that conceals power and self-interest', and who developed participatory events to 'demonstrate the critique through an experiential process' (quoted in Kluitenberg 2011, 37).

David Hall's *This is a Television Receiver*, one of the few pieces of video art created to be broadcast on British TV around this time (in 1976) had another Brechtian aim or effect – to break the imaginary relationship between the performer/text/screen and the viewer. Whereas the majority of video artists considered television to be an entirely inadequate medium for the transmission of video art, some were keen to work with~~,~~ and within~~, with~~ the medium. It can be emphasised that Hall's work should be considered as 'television' – what is experienced in an auditorium or gallery today is a video record of a work originally beamed unannounced into peoples' homes. Furthermore, the piece was designed specifically to shatter the illusion of television as a window onto the world, through the visual feedback and image loss involved in filming off the screen. As Mark Wilcox observed,

> In *This is a Television Receiver* the well known TV newsreader, Richard Baker, delivers a didactic text which exposes the illusion that a human being is talking to us. We learn from him, for instance, that his voice is emitting not from his lips but from a loudspeaker in the TV set. This address is repeated and each time the image and sound are re-recorded and degenerated his face and voice become more grotesquely distorted. This figure of authority is reduced to what, in essence, he is –

> a series of pulsating patterns of light on the surface of a glass screen…The illusion of transparency is shattered. This is deconstruction in its primary, irreducible form; only by remembering these important lessons have artists subsequently been able to venture out of the enclosure of self-reflexivity and into the perilous world of representation and narrative (1984).

Such TV interventions by artists like David Hall and Tamara Krikorian - which were designed to interrupt, dematerialise or demystify the flow of television programming - were commissioned by or developed in close cooperation with, broadcasters. As Mike Stubbs has noted, they were 'perhaps historically the most radical in terms of disruption to audience expectation and viewing patterns … This was a time when a few creative broadcasters had not got totally consumed by revenue targets and artists wanted to experiment with the medium' (Stubbs 1999, 70–71).

Although early video artists have often been characterized as having a 'radical political agenda' (Dowling n.d.), historical examples of overtly oppositional work like *Television Delivers People* are nevertheless fairly rare. A recent account by Kaizen has argued that,

> The change brought about by the artists who developed early video art was undertaken less as an act of iconoclasm than as one of radical revision and is best characterised as a 'soft revolution'. Rather than destroy either commercial television or the art gallery, these artists set out to recast institutions related to both in a different mould. (2016, 2)

This would seem to chime with Armstrong's broad appraisal of video *activists* - that, as pioneers of a new medium lacking a politically radical tradition (i.e. unlike film), they 'saw

media as means of bringing people together', instead of 'tools with which one class would overthrow another' (1981, 70).

Whilst Kaizen's focus is on early video art as it developed in the United States – which benefitted from the support of public television stations WGBH, WNET and KQED - it is interesting to consider whether the same is true of early video art in the UK, in terms of seeking and pursuing a radical revision/reform of television. It would be a mistake to think that television in the UK – both public service and commercial - was completely unaffected by the ideas and work of video artists. It would also be a mistake to overlook the fact that there was a great degree of crossover between art and activism, and that there were significant transnational influences or exchanges in this area. Interviewed in 2013, the late John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, a video pioneer as well as a prime mover within the British counterculture of the 1960s, spoke about how his trips to the United States to research a book entitled *Video and Community Development* inspired him to conduct experiments with radical television.

> I was very interested in what was happening in California, in particular in San Francisco. There was a place called the National Centre for Experiments in Television, or NCET, which was run by a man and woman called Bryce and Rita Howard. And he was into getting people, mainly from cable TV companies, to come and experiment in an open-ended way…I was completely overwhelmed by seeing what they could do with video…I felt really inspired by Bryce Howard, and when we came back to England, in 1970 I think it was, through my contacts we made some sort of liaison with some people running a studio at the BBC. And they said to us why don't you come and make some experimental programming.[2]

This led to *Videospace* (1970), an experimental happening that took place in a small BBC TV studio, combining different formats of film (Super 8 and 16mm), black and white (2 inch) video, and live studio action (including a light show, dancer, musicians and spoken dialogue). This was mixed in real-time and involved around 10-15 people connected to Hoppy's experimental television workshop TVX (see Dickson 2012, 129). Whilst it was not ultimately broadcast, it did lead to the commissioning of two short 'promos' (long predating the invention of the term/form), which used similar techniques (see also Webb-Ingall 2015).

Hoppy and his close collaborator Sue Hall (who together founded the video editing facility Fantasy Factory in 1973) were amongst those working in independent film and video invited to a 'Consultation with Independent Producers' about the future fourth UK TV channel (to eventually be established in 1982 as Channel 4) at the headquarters of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (the IBA, the regulator for commercial radio and television), in Brompton Road, London, on 26 September 1979. Such invitations were in recognition of the tireless campaigning on the part of these filmmakers and producers, under the aegis of the London-based Independent Filmmakers Association (IFA) and various lobby groups (such as The Channel Four Group), for a fourth television channel that would be genuinely independent and which would provide a platform for new voices, experimental work and minority interests. At this IBA consultation the film and video artist Malcolm Le Grice expressed their collective commitment to new forms of television:

> This group of [independent] film and video makers, people who are concerned with the possibility of a new Channel, are not simply concerned with the concept of producing material which fits into a slot or into a preconceived notion of a television presentation, but they are concerned with whole methods of production within

> television and film and, in particular, with the relationship between the production and the audience. I think we are breaking down some of the alienation between the producer and the consumer…I want to suggest that we have money set aside by the IBA for a foundation, which is in a sense like a research and development sector of television broadcasting…[3]

Following this consultation, a letter was sent from the IFA to the IBA, proposing that a foundation should be established to provide Research and Development funds for new programmes and broadcasting modes and concepts rather than commercial 'seed money' for small entrepreneurs'.[4] This would 'set up a series of experimental workshops in every region'.[5] Although the IBA as a whole was undoubtedly wary of the IFA's radicalism, one or two senior executives were sympathetic and receptive to some of its arguments. Reporting on the 'Public Meeting on TV4', held at the ICA shortly afterwards (on 17th December 1979, organized by Time Out and The Channel Four Group), an unnamed senior executive noted,

> The point put by [Simon] Hartog [a filmmaker who, with Le Grice, had co-founded the London Film-makers' Co-op in the '60s] was echoed several times: that whilst British TV is the best in the world in an overall way, it is certainly not the best in encouraging experimental material: and as it would be impossible to expect a Controller to be good at choosing all types of programmes, there must be a small part of the Channel set aside (money and people) which is committed to helping this type of programming. It is my impression that the gap between the majority of talented, independently-minded producers and ourselves is not as large as either they or some of us here would imagine. For political reasons, I think we should continue to meet them – both at Chairman level and at staff level.[6]

Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department was later established (in 1981) as exactly this 'small part of the channel' with the greatest responsibility to uphold Channel 4's remit to innovate and experiment, and this was achieved partly by its funding of a network of film and video workshops throughout the country. During the early '80s the Department acted as patron to the burgeoning independent video sector. Recent scholarly work has illuminated the role of the IFA – which in some ways was the voice of the workshop movement - as an agent of change between filmmakers and state, in terms of national film and broadcasting policy (Perry 2016). However, what is far less well known is that apparently Jeremy Isaacs, Channel 4's first Chief Executive had originally been induced to establish the Department not so much due to the campaigning work of the IFA – as important as this was – but by his fascination at encountering an article in *Broadcast* written by the British film producer Keith Griffiths about the US public broadcaster WNET/13, which had set up an experimental television lab in New York in 1972 (see Buchan 2011, 24). Isaacs wondered if the nascent Channel 4 could do a similar thing.

Participation, Impact and Sustainability

Having demonstrated the way in which video artists have both successfully critiqued the closed and unreceptive structures of television, and achieved some traction in pressing for an opening up of the medium to new ideas and approaches, the remainder of the chapter will look at the potential and actual challenges and problems that can be involved when alternative media seek to engage with or utilize institutional or commercial structures of distribution and exhibition. In doing so I will briefly summarise some recent trends in the debate around the definition and evaluation of alternative media. In particular I would like

to critique what I regard to be a polemical and usefully synoptic but nonetheless problematic and dogmatic contribution to this debate – Fuchs and Sandoval's article 'Towards a Critical Theory of Alternative Media' (2010).

One simple way of summarising the thrust of the article is that the authors appear to wish to develop a theory of alternative media which essentially 'dethrones' participation as its *sine qua non*. John Downing has observed that radical media (his preferred cognate term) need not necessarily be participatory (media) (cited in Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 147). Seemingly taking this to also mean that participatory media are therefore not typically radical, Sandoval and Fuchs drive a wedge through this 'gap', explicitly prioritising communicative potential (establishing an alternative micro-public sphere) and critical content (e.g. reporting about oppression) over the realization of participatory production processes. This is in stark contrast to the position traditionally taken by community video activists, for example, who have typically tended to prioritise process over product, dialogue over rhetoric, and participation over professionalism. This debate – essentially about whether participation is a good in itself (Atton 2010, 217) - has echoed through the history of radical film and video culture.

Participatory media approaches can give voice and representation to those who need it most, but to the extent that they reject professional organization they 'often suffer from a lack of resources, which makes it difficult to gain public visibility' (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, p. 143). Alternative or community media projects have sometimes been criticized for a lack of professionalization, particularly a neglect of distribution, marketing and promotion, which has sometimes meant remaining in an 'alternative ghetto' (Landry et al. 1985, 95, 101). Other issues cohere around the issue of amateurism and sustainability - scholars often claim

that the horizontal organization and short-term nature of 'tactical media', for example, limit their impact and reach. But Fuchs and Sandoval go so far as to state the following about small-scale alternative media projects:

> In many cases, they will remain an expression of lifestyle politics that please and console their producers or even become ideologies that forestall collective political struggles because these producers find no time for political activism and consider their individual product as a sufficient statement. But a statement that does not reach the masses is not a significant statement at all, only an individual outcry that remains unheard and hence ineffective. (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, p. 143)

The issue here (aside from the dismissal of lifestyle politics as not constituting *real* political activism) is that Sandoval and Fuchs are so concerned with critiquing these producers for the pleasures that they take in their projects, that they entirely ignore the importance of the social conditions and relations of production and reception, resulting in an ahistorical notion of converting 'the masses' to the cause. In some ways this is symptomatic of a broader trend within the field of alternative media studies – what Uzelman has termed a 'determinism of technique', whereby 'particular techniques are assumed to have effects (generally positive) independent of the social relations in which they are embedded or the purposes to which they are directed'. (2011, 29).

Another issue with Sandoval and Fuchs' rather programmatic approach to defining and evaluating alternative media (as 'critical media') is their apparent faith in the ability of media projects to readily gain access and utilize professional and institutional structures (e.g. of ownership, production, exhibition etc.) without impediment. Whilst they briefly discuss the fact that resorting to commercial or institutional mechanisms of financing might

involve compromise, they do not consider issues of artistic control, editorial freedom, censorship and regulation.[7]

In certain circumstances, an over-reliance on institutional structures (e.g. of distribution and exhibition) can negatively impact upon the sustainability of alternative media if and when shifts in governmental policy and the larger media ecology endanger ~~(flow within)~~ these structures. Elsewhere (Franklin 2014)[8] I have discussed the mini-~~-~~moral panic which developed in the years following the release of the Channel 4 documentary *Framed Youth: Revenge of the Teenage Perverts* (released 1983, transmitted in 1986), a collaborative video made by a group of young gay men and lesbians learning and sharing video skills with the support of Albany and Oval Video Workshops. *Framed Youth*, which was utilized by social workers and lecturers, and widely distributed amongst gay youth groups, was upheld as an example of 'gay lib propaganda' prior to the enactment of Section 28 legislation (prohibiting the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local authorities) by the Thatcher government. If it had been made just a few years later, *Framed Youth* would certainly not have received the funding it did from the Greater London Council (which was itself abolished in 1986) and would have certainly fallen victim to reactionary shifts in cultural and educational policy implemented by the Thatcher government.

Sandoval and Fuchs are, however, right to suggest that independence from commercial mechanisms is desirable but not always feasible, and to highlight the difficulties in funding and sustaining effective counter-institutions. This can be illustrated through reference to filmmaker Miranda July's Joanie 4 Jackie project (1995 - 2000). In 1995 July was a film school dropout inspired by the Riot Grrrl DIY punk movement who felt that aspirant female filmmakers were not achieving anything like the exposure and 'intra-scene' visibility that

musicians were. To redress this July solicited videos from female filmmakers which she then compiled into video mixtapes or chain letters. This 'video as fanzine' or 'xerox television' approach built up a community of likeminded video-makers through the development of an alternative circuit of distribution and exhibition ostensibly not reliant on extant structures and commercial operators.

July's project is an ideal example to demonstrate that, despite its momentous impact on media consumption, YouTube did not invent video sharing as a social or sociotechnical practice. Furthermore, it is important to remember that, despite the huge amounts of user-generated content uploaded to YouTube, only a tiny percentage of user can be considered active contributors of content, and these active uploaders are not demographically representative in terms of gender and age (see Dijck 2013). Quickly realizing that her own nascent community of video-makers was student-centred and lacking in diversity, July actually took steps to 'reach out' and widen the audience and demographic that she reached through the project:

> I wondered about all the other women: what kind of movies would they make? What sort of stories were completely absent? These were the movies that I wanted to be influenced by, these missing movies (July, quoted in Schilling 2017).

Armed with a tape recorder and camera, July set off to interview women on the street, in order to compile their envisioned movies into a poster called The Missing Movie Report, and invite other people to make reports from their towns.

> Did it have to exist to be influential? I didn't think so (July, ibid.).

Whilst I am keen to posit the value of grassroots networks of distribution and exhibition such as that developed by Miranda July with Joanie 4 Jackie, cultural production never occurs in a vacuum. Even non-broadcast projects cannot be completely autonomous or impervious to the commercial sector. Mary Celeste Kearney has written about how Miranda July is one of the few participants in the punk feminist media community who has drawn attention to her connections to the capitalist sector of cultural production, and the deals and compromises that she has made in order to raise awareness of Joanie 4 Jackie.

> Though July originally reproduced the chain letters herself on used video cassettes purchased at second-hand stores, she now relies on commercial video duplication services to mass-produce copies of the tapes, which has sometimes resulted in attempted censorship of the films she distributes. (Kearney 2006, 81)

We must look beyond sustainability as the measure of a counter-institution, however, and also explore the influence that a counter-institution can have on 'the mainstream'. For example, while the UK film and video workshop movement (and IFA) failed to create a lasting alternative infrastructure or 'parallel industry' in the hostile funding climate of the 1980s, it arguably succeeded in bringing questions of access, equal opportunities, audience and distribution into the arena of funding and development (see Franklin 2013).

There is also a possible and plausible argument that a degree of financial precarity means that (non-profit) alternative media outfits have no choice but to develop effective strategies for grassroots funding and for attracting volunteers. In an interview with the present author (2013) Tony Dowmunt reflected,

> I think there was a way in which Channel 4, although it was enormously beneficial in lots of ways also actually acclimatised a lot of us to being funded properly. I always

> find it interesting to contrast it with the States, where organizations like Deep Dish and Paper Tiger TV have kept going for decades, but never been properly funded, so they sort of develop that technique of being able to survive on zero funding by just using voluntary labour…we lost the knack of that, because of being funded by the GLC [Greater London Council] and Channel 4, and all that.

Given the heavy emphasis that Sandoval and Fuchs place on the need for alternative media to reach broad audiences, it is also worth highlighting two things. Firstly, the scarcity of research into the audiences and reception of alternative media output should be noted (see Mowbray, 26), which surely makes it difficult to argue that participatory methods limit audience reach. Secondly, there are plenty of examples of alternative media which utilized participatory methods and which did reach very wide audiences, and not just via television broadcast. Besides *Framed Youth*, another preeminent example from the same period is the *Miners' Campaign Tapes* (1984), a series of short videos made by workshops such as Chapter and Birmingham Film and Video and widely distributed to document and support the struggle to halt the government programme of pit closures. It 'has been estimated that 4000 copies of the Miners' Campaign Tapes circulated in Britain on VHS at the time (Kelliher 2017: 604), and this does not account for 'pirated' copies that were subsequently made and shown domestically, e.g. in the South Wales Valleys.

Moreover, there are also potential issues and problems with a privileging of *reach* over other considerations such as participation, impact, quality or diversity of content. Garcia and van Oldenborgh have commented, for example, about the tendency of Amsterdam cable initiatives (like Park4DTV) to 'expand laterally, bringing more programmes to more people in more places, and in other media…rather than to focus more resources on the core activity

and achieve growth in 'depth' and quality', arguing 'that this could be seen as a failure to develop the main idea into something more durable' (2011, 100).

Historical or contemporary case studies that assess the relative success and impact of collaboratively made videos – more broadly, 'the counterhistory within documentary in which subjects have taken on forms of agency and editorial control in the process' (Rose 2014, 203) - are equally (and especially) useful for both media producers and media historians. For example, they give an opportunity to explore the question of whether the concept of DIY is problematic for documentary. A video like *Framed Youth* (which bears the unmistakeable imprint of post-punk aesthetics and energy) has a recognisably DIY approach, but DIY is typically associated with *individual* agency and creativity, which is less relevant to the kind of group or participatory production processes that were emblematic of *Framed Youth*. As Rose has observed, an awareness that a DIY approach to documentary making is not universally available 'prompts a questioning of the valorisation of the concept of DIY in the context of complex media production' (ibid.) Rose has instead proposed the concept of DIWO (Do-It-With-Others) as better suited to capturing the dynamics and aims of collaboratively made projects.

However, in adopting DIWO we should not lose sight of the importance of the role of artist as facilitator (or author as producer), acting as 'the safe conduit through which the rabble can be admitted to the broadcast media space' (Iles and Slater 2008, 38). The role of artist and facilitator is crucial even with work which is not broadcast. As Ted Purves has observed,

> [A] key factor of the Joanie 4 Jackie project is the way in which its structure and potential for success hinge on the presence of July as creative director/author of the overall concept. Her involvement and frequent presence as one of the filmmakers on

> the compilation tapes acts as a leveraging agent for the enterprise, ensuring that her own success and notoriety within the film and art world are, in a very real sense, redistributed to the more unknown or aspiring artists whose works are given a new level of consideration via association. (Purves 2005, 134)

As the Joanie 4 Jackie archive has recently been acquired by the Getty Research Institute, the individual works may now have a greater 'critical mass' in terms of cultural prestige. Certainly researchers will now be better placed to assess the extent to which these feminist films *are* 'an expression of lifestyle politics', and the extent to which this expression may actually be used as a tool of dissent or radical activism within this context. This would serve to counter or complement Fuchs' polemical warning about the tendency for small-scale, local alternative projects to 'develop into psychological self-help initiatives without political relevance that are more bourgeois individualist self-expressions than political change projects' (Fuchs 2010, 189).

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by attempting to untangle the complexities of some of these issues and debates by applying John Carey's theory of communication as culture (Carey 2008), which bifurcates communication into models of either transmission (seeking to influence or persuade through reach and dissemination) and ritual (which fosters community and interactivity, typically on a local scale). In their attempt to develop a theory of alternative media which 'dethrones' participation as its *sine qua non*, as I have previously noted, Sandoval and Fuchs strongly advocate the more didactic transmission model.

To be sure, there are valid reasons to question and debate the relative importance of participation – for example, the widespread use of the term in the era of Web 2.0 participatory media has tended to mean it has lost a precise, meaningful definition~~connotation.~~ Can participatory media be truly alternative given this 'participatory turn' in mainstream media (i.e. the rise of convergence culture and the 'prosumer'), whereby many of the characteristics once ascribed to alternative media now have become part of everyday mainstream media consumption (Andersson 2012, 760)?[9] In the context of the 'communicative abundance' of digital culture, it is even more crucial to differentiate between superficial and intensive modes of participation (Mowbray 2015, 24; Carpentier 2011, *inter alia*). But in this context can we really regard participatory production processes as ensuring marginality and inefficiency, obstructing the clear communication of 'critical content' to a wide audience? Granted, radical media need not necessarily be participatory, but is participatory media always marginal? And what about projects which have moved from the margins to the mainstream?

The model of communication as ritual may help to counter the tendency towards what Hamilton has called a 'mediacentric' understanding of social change (2008, 252), which refers to the idea that what is needed to transform social relations are better texts (i.e. counter-information). Such positions 'not only assume that the answers to political problems have already been found and thus need only to be transmitted, they also underemphasize the importance of more democratic forms of education, research and experimentation' (Uzelman 2011, 27, citing Hamilton). To this end we can heed Sonia Livingstone's interpretation of Carey's model of communication as ritual as an intervention within media studies to foreground questions and issues of meaning, performance, tradition and interpretative community:

> This model focuses on the ways in which knowledge is socially generated from the activities and relations of an interpretative community (Schroeder 1994) rather than imposed from on high for the supposed benefit of an ignorant and needy mass (Livingstone 2002, 96).

By embracing the notion of communication as an effort to share and celebrate local cultural forms and expressions, rather than an attempt to command and dominate (see Howley 2010, *inter alia*), community media can be characterised by its adherence to the model of communication as ritual. But Carey's models of communication as transmission/ritual could prove to be a useful tool in theorizing and conceptualizing alternative media more widely, especially as it may obviate the problem of a vague and negatively defined term – e.g. that the 'norm' to which the 'alternative' is supposed to position itself against can easily become a straw man (Andersson 2012, 752). This chapter will hopefully have demonstrated that both models – of communication as transmission *and* ritual – are needed in radical film culture, and that there is a lot that we can learn from the radical, disruptive and convivial tactics and interventions of artists in an increasingly commercial media ecology.

Notes

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[1] For reasons of limited scope, I will not devote attention to the question of whether 'alternative media' is a problematic term, especially as that has been discussed widely in recent years (see, for example, the work cited above).

[2] John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, interviewed by Heinz Nigg and Andy Porter, June 2013. Transcribed by the present author. Video and transcript available at http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/interviews/58db835cf6aab40c5cfa3748 (accessed 14th June 2018).

[3] IBA File 3201/1 Vol. 2, 'ITV 2 Consultation – Independent Producers'. IBA/ITA Archive, Bournemouth University.

[4] Letter to Colin Shaw from Peter Wollen, 3rd October 1979. From IBA File 3201/1 Vol. 2, 'ITV 2 Consultation – Independent Producers'. IBA/ITA Archive, Bournemouth University.

[5] The proposal was made at the time in the aftermath of much discussion about the possibility of a~~the~~ fourth channel not regulated by the IBA but by an Open Broadcasting Authority (OBA), an independent 'Foundation'

which would operate as a publishing outlet for programme supplied by independent producers, individual ITV companies, and the Open University.

[6] 'Time Out/Channel Four Group Meeting, Monday 17 Dec', sent from STSO to DT. In IBA File 3200, Vol. 16, 'Second ITV Service'. ITA/IBA Archive, held at Bournemouth University.

[7] We can note, for example, that one of the aforementioned promos made by Hopkins and TVX for the BBC, Tell Me You Love Me, garnered a complaint from Mary Whitehouse due to its use of White Panther Party (a far-left anti-racist collective) imagery, which resulted in the Corporation terminating their contract with TVX (Dickson 2012, 129).

[8] ~~Some of these issues are also considered in a forthcoming article I have written entitled 'Precursor of Pride: The Pleasures and Politics of Framed Youth', which will be published later this year in a special issue of the Open Library of Humanities Journal, entitled *Pride Revisited* (edited by Catherine Grant and Diarmaid Kelliher).~~

[9] Furthermore, what happens when the kind of subcultural shock tactics and tactical media disruption that were once hallmarks of the New Left are utilized by the Alt-Right (Nagle 2017)?

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