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Harnessing collaborative innovation for the evolution of public service media

Introduction:

Public service media (PSM) firms are having to innovate in order to keep pace with commercial rivals, new consumption patterns, and to ensure a presence alongside new forms of commercial media which are attractive to audiences and engagers. In a post-recessional economic climate the argument is made for an increase in research and development, risk-taking, and the exploration of new genres of content in order to maintain a dominant enough position in the canon of media offered to consumers. The suggestion is made to PSM firms that they might find ways of involving a wider constituency in conceptual or developmental activities.

The involvement of the public in the development of new forms of public service media in the UK are compared here, in two case studies. The first is a destination; 'Adventure Rock', a virtual world for children aged 7-11 produced by the BBC. 'Adventure Rock' was developed from an earlier virtual world developed for the Belgian public service broadcaster VRT by Larian Studios in Belgium. The second is a strategy; Channel 4iP, the new public service arm of the UK commercial broadcaster Channel 4, which states it is aiming to 're-invent public service media' through the commissioning of online tools which the public can use to self-educate or to make a difference in their local communities. Both 'Adventure Rock' and Channel 4iP challenge the established idea of public service media, and both aim to find new ways to educate, inform and entertain. The 'Adventure Rock' research project explored how users might become involved in the production process and Channel 4iP encourages both the public and creative media firms to pitch ideas in an open commissioning process.

The two-year users and producers study of 'Adventure Rock' (2007-2009) involved three months of creative workshops and exploration by 90 children from across the UK aged 7-11. The children were invited to keep media diaries and to imagine and articulate their own virtual worlds, resulting in thirteen tips for producers of virtual worlds for children, from children. In contrast the rationale and strategy behind www.4ip.org.uk will be explored and discussed through analysis of the commissioning process, a deconstruction of the progress of one

commission, and semi-structured interviews with producers, and with commissioners from Channel 4iP. The new channel is currently seeking “Rule-breaking, far-seeing producers and partners who share 4iP’s vision for re-inventing the way public service media is developed, commissioned, funded and delivered in the UK” (Channel 4iP, 2009). The paper specifically looks at these two models and asks how PSM firms and their publics might benefit from collaborative innovation practices. Findings indicate neither have completely achieved their stated aims however the fact that the PSM firms are beginning to explore new ways to engage participants in the development of new genres of programming is encouraging.

The paper orientates towards theories of participation; the term ‘participatory media’ is often used to denote online services which offer ways for users to create and communicate. For Jenkins participatory culture brings together media producers and consumers in a shared creative space, “participants who interactive with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands” (Jenkins, 2006:3). Far from not understanding the rules, however, there is a growing body of case law in many countries together with professional expertise in the management of participant behaviours and contributions. This expertise can be found in most PSM firms in Europe and beyond, however public engagement mostly remains peripheral to the media enterprise in PSM.

The idea of collaborative development may be “considerably harder than simple sharing, but the results can be more profound. New tools allow large groups to collaborate, by taking advantage of nonfinancial motivations and by allowing for wildly differing levels of contribution” (Shirky, 2008:108). The two case studies will assess some of the advantages and disadvantages of involving groups who may not have been previously involved in the development of public service media, audience engagers and the wider creative industries in the UK. Two contrasting approaches to involving constituents in research and development will also be reviewed and critiqued. The paper aims to provoke debate how to improve the ability of public service media firms to innovate through collaborative innovation practices in order to compete in a frugal post-recessional financial climate.

Industry and academic commentary on collaborative innovation practices

The Internet has an established innovation culture most commonly typified by open systems such as the Open Source movement where technologists offer developments and solutions to code in order to create software which is free from the strategic objectives of commercial businesses. In addition group collaboration is also seen in, for example, ‘Wikipedia’ where users created the online multi-lingual encyclopedia by adding entries over time but also by collective and collaborative activity such as the creation of content or commenting and rating conten. Users support the service through donations facilitated via micropayments. The sportswear company Nike believe consumers wish to have

a creative input into the trainers they buy, they have adapted their production processes to allow customers to customise colours. Don Tapscott gives the following illustration to demonstrate how the 'Net Generation' has become involved in the production process, "Only months after Apple introduced its popular iPod player...amateur iPod users had created "Podzilla," a software utility that allows users to record at a much higher quality than a separate \$50 recording device" (Tapscott, 2009: 189). This kind of collective endeavour has become known as 'crowdsourcing' and it is a particular feature of social media which is used to facilitate the drawing together of 'wise crowds'.

The idea of mass innovation has been the subject of particular newspaper columnists, often through blog entries, over the last ten years. James Surowiecki discussed the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative innovation in *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many are Smarter Than the Few*. Although the idea of opening out innovation processes to the public is attractive, he admits crowdsourcing might be a utopian idea noting the main barriers to successful group or mass collaboration as being "cognition, coordination, and cooperation" (Surowiecki, 2004: xviii). Charles Leadbeater believes collaborative innovation (what he calls 'We-Think') "may well prosper for a while in some limited niches – computer games, social networking, marginal online communities – which will in time be devoured by traditional corporations" (Leadbeater, 2008: 23). Although pessimistic Leadbeater believes there is a growth in collaborative innovation practices; "Open and collaborative forms of organisation are emerging because they offer to resolve the tension between efficiency and innovation more effectively than the traditional corporation" (ibid:110). The suggestion that the traditional corporation may become outmoded if it does not adapt to an externally changing environment where ideas are exchanged in an accelerated fashion (via communication networks and collaborative creative practices) is also deconstructed by Tapscott and Williams.

the monolithic, self-contained, inwardly focussed corporation is dying. Regardless of the industry you compete in, or whether your firm is large or small, internal capabilities and a handful of b-web partnerships are not sufficient to meet the market's expectations for growth and innovation (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 290).

Tapscott and Williams believe a very large shift in orientation towards the public is necessary in order for businesses to become not just 'customer-focussed' but to completely integrate process of consumption with processes of production. In this way they may be able to react to changing market conditions. Freedman acknowledges that the internet has "facilitated new markets, new business models, new services and new models of production and consumption" (Freedman, 2008:171). With such large scale changes in production and consumption behaviours, and at a time when public services are undergoing cuts in funding or support it is useful and timely to explore alternative strategies to ensure the continued and vigorous continuance of PSM.

The MIT Centre for Digital Business and the National Science Foundation in the USA recently sponsored a year long research study on IT innovation and productivity. The resulting report concluded

...the Internet, so far, has not killed innovation. Rather, it has created an entire generation of individual innovators. Every day, YouTube delivers hundreds of millions of video streams, most of them generated by users. If history is any guide the Internet will encourage vast amounts of innovation. The real questions are “Who will the winners be?” and “What mechanisms will be used to compensate them?” (Brynjolfsson and Saunders, 2010:106).

Brynjolfsson and Saunders suggest the way technology enables us to “coordinate and amplify” the collective intelligence of many is a fruitful area of research, in particular understanding the “motivations, psychology, economics, and management” of such emerging models (ibid: 126). Gauntlett’s most recent area of study argues there has been a shift towards “a ‘making and doing culture’ (which rejects the elements of ‘sit back and be told’)” (Gauntlett, 2010:7). He is exploring how making and doing makes us more sociable and happier, and this may be one explanation for the growth in social media.

The collaborative pooling of knowledge using networked systems can be increasingly found in commercial but also in public services. Miller uses the example of Intellipedia to illustrate stigmergy “in which a contribution by one individual changes a group project in a way that stimulates contributions by others” (Miller, 2010: 138). Stigmergy is found in the collaborative behaviour of colonies of ants and termites who indirectly collaborate for the greater good of the total community, for example by repairing the fabric of the communal dwelling or indicating new sources of food. The sixteen intelligence agencies of the United States intelligence community began experimenting with the same aggregation platform as ‘Wikipedia’ to pool knowledge on topics in 2005. ‘Intellipedia’ now extends to a range of software tools and aggregates information on three levels nonclassified, secret, and top secret, “The busiest of these tools, so far, is the original wiki-based software, which attracts five thousand or so entries and edits a day” (ibid:132).

For ‘crowdsourcing’ or group innovation and collaboration to become useful to PSM, PSM firms may need to create new processes which directly involve the public in a wider range of production and management processes. Audiences were never passive, being affected emotionally and cognitively by broadcast programming, however the ability for bi-directional communication and activity has only been possible on a large scale since PSM firms incorporated online services, “online journalists have wider possibilities to communicate with their readers and get immediate feedback. This is definitely a new dimension of the contemporary journalism culture and of people’s participation in the public sphere” (Lauk, 2008:207). What is suggested here is more than that; a further

extension of public involvement by inviting engagement in development processes as creative, collaborative, agents.

PSM firms and their present orientation towards the public as creative agents

The Internet has mainly been framed by journalists and academics as a way to extend communication between the public and producers; Dan Gillmor argues "The former audience has the most important role in this new era: they must be active users of news, and not mere consumers" (Gillmor, 2006:238). "In the Internet age, many journalists are in almost daily e-mail contact with at least some audience members, or users" (Pavlik, 2008:72). This is, however, still placing the public at a distance from being able to influence the direction or form programming takes. The public are limited in their involvement in the PSM enterprise overall yet they are increasingly acknowledged as important stakeholders in the PSM firm. The quality and volume of their contributions are controlled by producers through, for example, editorialising, filtering, and moderation (the sifting out of unsuitable content). Buckingham acknowledges that "...the advent of low-cost digital production tools and online distribution means a much more dynamic range in who participates and how they participate in the production and distribution of media" (Buckingham, 2008: viii). Media firms are actively exploring how to involve the public yet there is caution and some resistance to the giving away of creative control.

The still unresolved question is whether and in which way it is possible to assimilate new collaborative practices and actual public participation in journalistic work without losing essential professional values including editorial independence and claims of relevance and truthfulness which give it social value and societal worth (Mantymaki, 2009:83-84).

It is rare for the public to be invited into the creative process beyond contributing material. Fears of a denuding of the quality of content or services, or fears of illegal, libellous or defamatory content being posted by users into the public domain may have led to this limiting of potential involvement by the public in the creative development of PSM. "Regulating any illegal behaviour on the Internet is always a challenge because, while the effects of the activity may be felt locally, the actual crime may be initiated halfway across the world" (Packard, 2010: 72). There are additional fears surrounding piracy.

The ability for consumers to comment on programming or contribute content adjusts the power relationship between the media maker and audience-engagers. Loss of control is problematic for producers who seek ways to accommodate social media by, for example, framing public contributions as dressing for their own creative work (Jackson, 2009: 184). Castells notes the tendency for those involved in media and communication (for example) to resort to what he calls 'Gatekeeping' which obviously reduces the level of involvement

in the creative process engagers or communicators are able to have in an enterprise “The rise of mass self-communication has deeply modified the gatekeeping capacity of the programmers of mass communication” (Castells, 2009:418-419).

The Internet is often described as offering ‘interactivity’. The term is imprecise as there are many different levels of engagement from simple clicking to the ability to submit edited and shaped content, for example a video diary. PSM firms are in the main currently offering only a limited range of interactivity, the submission of content.

It is possible to outline at least four different types of approach to the concept of interactivity. The first is a technically informed or structural vision of interactivity in which interactive potentials are built into the hardware and software of different media systems. The second defines design or use as the defining variables. Third, interactivity can be used as a concept which gives rise to new possibilities for interpersonal communication. And finally, interactivity can be seen as a political concept that is tied to broader changes in governmentality and citizenship (Gane and Beer, 2008:97)

Gane and Beer’s deconstruction of interactivity clearly extends the range of potential creative interactions in the development of technology and media systems. What is being suggested here are possible levels of participation by the public in the media enterprise; (1) users provide conversation and comment on professionally produced content, (2) involvement in the production of ‘user-generated content’, for example by making a video diary which is placed into an archive of content from the public but *curated* by a professional producer who has the ultimate yes or no on whether that content is published or not. Yet more complex participation (3), for example, being integrated into *parts of* the innovation process where new programming or services are developed, for example to be invited to test an online service or to see the first cut of a film and give feedback. Finally total involvement in the development process from the ideas stage to completion (4) would also be possible. The greater the involvement of the public in the production process, the more likely it is that the media firm will have to adjust its working practices to accommodate that involvement.

Iosifidis argues the importance of offering greater involvement in the PSM firm to the publics it serves and, furthermore, into the societal fabric within which it is located.

It is imperative to re-embed PSB institutions in society, by means of ‘participatory programming’, open and accountable management, opportunities for the public to participate in editorial decision-making, and

finally systems of governance in line with the way the network society operates (Iosifidis, 2010:18).

Neither the nature of participatory programming or what form this might take is explored in detail. It is argued here that the public's current role as a mere contributor of content to the PSM enterprise is not enough to constitute a truly collaborative partnership. Shirky argues that the ability for the public to self-organise and – in the case of the media – to create their own media begins to bring into question the value of institutions such as PSM firms.

In the past the hold of those institutions on public life was irreplaceable, in part because there was no alternative to managing large-scale effort. Now that there is competition to traditional institutional forms for getting things done, those institutions will continue to exist, but their purchase on modern life will weaken as novel alternatives for group action arise (Shirky, 2008: 22).

This weakening of tenure for media professionals is also the concern of Katz who also offers four factors which he feels support the case for adjustment to the broadcast paradigm by PSM;

...changes in (1) technology and (4) contact. They are accompanied by (2) the collapse of public regulation in the maze of technological change and commercial investment along with (3) changes in content reflecting a public opinion that has turned against the professionals who claimed to know, better than we do, what's good for us. This is what we meant by "the end of television" (Katz, 2009:7).

In the face of changing consumption practices institutions may seek to retain the status quo by seeking to mould the Internet to suit existing practices, "Retailers think of the internet as a store – a catalogue and a checkout. Marketers see it as their means to deliver a brand message. Media companies see it as a medium, assuming that online is about content and distribution" (Jarvis, 2009:27). In addition to disrupting existing paradigms the Internet disrupts existing processes which supported institutional processes.

While the internet lowers distribution costs and enables new services, it also disrupts existing copyright structures through its disintermediating potential – its capacity to bypass traditional gatekeepers and open up new distributive possibilities (Freedman, 2008:187).

The author supports Freedman suggesting it would be more fruitful for PSM firms to explore how they might create systems which enable the public to support the PSM enterprise through creative and collaborative contribution. This would place the PSM firm in the position of a motivational facilitator and curator for the public as creative agents.

Towards crowd commissioning within UK PSM firms

In common with other PSM firms the BBC, one of the world's largest PSM media firms, has been examining the benefit of collaborative partnerships in order to innovate and keep pace with the changing mediascape and changing consumption practices. Rather than concerning itself with developing a new relationship with the public large scale the Corporation has been focussing on creating partnerships with independent and commercial producers and other digital firms.

We must have a better relationship with the industry, building trust and working collaboratively in the transition to digital...Above all, the BBC must focus its energies on what really matters: commissioning and producing the highest quality new ideas. Ideas that are significantly different from what other broadcasters provide, across the full range of BBC programming (Lyons, 2010 n.p).

The foregrounding of creative partnerships with other media companies within an existing commissioning model largely retains a pre-existing structure and processes. This is merely a clustering of traditional media outlets under the umbrella of a larger PSM firm in order to lessen impact on the market and support a wider range of suppliers of PSM to assist plurality of supply. There has been little adjustment of the existing institutional model with the exception of small explorations into open innovation such as the BBC's 'Backstage' programme. BBC Backstage, run by Ian Forrester a producer in the BBC's New Media and Technology Division invites programmers and coders to modify BBC web applications in order to test existing services and to innovate to create new online services. A community of developers aggregates around a blog and face to face events such as 'mash ups' (collaborative innovation days for technologists). The activity around the BBC Backstage programme has recently declined due to the temporary absence of Ian Forrester from the BBC, however it continues in less active form. Additional activities aggregating ideas from the public on the BBC's learning provision are being promoted through the BBC Backstage website.

Channel 4 is a UK PSM firm which began working on 2 November 1982. Owned and operated by the Channel Four Television Corporation it changed status in 1990 to be established as a public body in order to provide a fourth television service, from 1993, to the UK. Channel 4 is a television-led brand however it has established a strong presence online, partly due to the need to reflect the consumption habits of its younger audience. In July, 2008, Channel 4 launched a sister brand, 4iP "4iP is an innovation fund to stimulate public service digital media across the UK. In English, that means supporting great ideas for websites, games and mobile services which help people improve their lives" (Loosemore, 2008: n.p.). Channel 4 are investing £20 million, partners in Scotland, Yorkshire

and the West Midlands will contribute £5 million, and £1 million will come from The Arts Council of England and NESTA (an organisation supporting innovation in the UK).

On launch Channel 4iP stated it was aiming to re-think public service media for a digital age. This was subsequently adjusted towards a lesser mission - though still in line with the mentoring of media for the public good – specifically commissioning and mentoring online services and tools via an open process. Anyone may submit ideas in response to specific ‘calls’ which vary from (for example) services which support digital democracy or which ‘amplify voices’ and provide an outlet for expression for communities who might be less connected to the media. In particular 4iP wish to commission services which connect ‘wise crowds’ and provide ‘disruptive media tools’. The criteria for selection include the stipulation that the online tools or services must be suitable for digital networks, foreground participation and collaboration, and the service must be financially self-sustaining. Services commissioned during the first year of the new channel include AudioBoo which assists the public to put audio online, www.newspaperclub.com which generates a publicly authored online newspaper, and www.papasangre.com which is exploring new forms of video gaming. Each service encourages collaborative public expression, innovation, creativity, and debate.

4iP principles



Is about this..	But not this...
networks	broadcast
participation / collaboration	viewing
people	audiences
open	closed
evolving	pre-packaged
less is more	more is more
catalysing	ongoing support
conversation	couch potato

Figure 1: 4 Innovation for the Public

This is a form of crowdsourcing as 4iP claim to be seeking ideas “from as wide a range of people and companies as possible. Nobody is too small, nobody too big” (Channel 4iP, 2010). Commissioning calls are given out via an online blog, but also via face to face events where young entrepreneurs and digital agencies are invited to collectively brainstorm. The 4iP website and blog is written in a style which is likely to appeal to a young entrepreneur and the site frames 4iP as an enthusiastic business incubator. The progress of commissioned ideas, and the testing of new services, is shared with the developer community through Tweets and blog posts. A production study will be undertaken from autumn 2010 which will draw together online conversations and an analysis of the development of a selected project commissioned by 4iP. This will include semi-structured interviews with the developer community and, where possible, with commissioners from 4iP. The researcher will attend any face to face mentoring days intended to inform potential individuals and companies of the processes and opportunities offered by 4iP to developers.

Initial indications are that although Channel 4iPs commissioning and development process markets itself as being radically different, and it is certainly more open than many other PSM innovation and development processes, familiar independent companies and digital agencies may be involved. It may be easier to partner with an organisation who has a proven history of delivering successful projects. Given there may be a tendency to choose established creative agencies or commercial companies, there are however significant differences from the ‘traditional’ PSM commissioning model used by, for example, the BBC in the UK. Firstly the commissioning process is open to anyone, be they a media firm or an individual member of the public. Secondly Channel 4iP frame themselves in the role of mentor, able to assist those who have had work commissioned by providing practical help in the form of technologists. Thirdly the commissioning process specifically calls for tools suitable for the Internet which assists the public good. Fourthly the progress of the commissioned service is made public and used to motivate the growth of a development community around 4iP. Lastly, although the work is given an initial development budget the service is expected to become self-sustaining as quickly as possible. Channel 4iP is therefore an incubator of projects which are likely to remain in the ownership of the original innovator.

Beyond user-testing: ‘Adventure Rock’ and the case for involving the public in research and development

New Media producers often undertake ‘user-testing’ when they have completed the ‘Beta’ version of an online service. The Beta version is the version of a service tested by a small number of users before it has its public launch. This phase of development is considered of high importance as it is when any ‘bugs’ (non-functioning code) is detected and rectified. Increasingly Beta testing takes place in the public domain with invited publics who are usually known to the developers for example users who may already be registered with the media

firm. Producers also undertake user-testing during the first phase of development to find out whether 'user interfaces' are attractive and functional. It is argued here that the public should be involved in the development of services from the beginning in order that high quality PSM is created. In addition that the involvement of the public in the development of public services assists producers to ensure content and services are appropriate and of high value.

In 2007 the BBC was completing the development of a new genre of public service programming, 'Adventure Rock', a virtual world for children aged 6-12. The University of Westminster undertook a producer and user study funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the BBC to establish how children inhabit and engage with immersive environments (Jackson, Gauntlett, and Steemers, 2008). 90 children aged between 7-11 from ten schools in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland took part in five workshops. The workshops took place in December 2007 and January 2008 with five mixed socioeconomic and ethnic groups. In addition the group in London was split into two age bandings (6-9 year olds and 10-11 year olds). In the first workshop children were encouraged to suggest what they would like to see in a virtual world. The children had four weeks to explore 'Adventure Rock' in their own time, and keep diaries. The second workshop began with a discussion on what the children's felt about 'Adventure Rock', and any other virtual worlds for children which they had visited over the Christmas break. They drew and mapped out what they had felt were the significant objects, places and things in 'Adventure Rock', explaining what they would add, remove or change if they had been the producers. The parents of the children were given a questionnaire to capture their thoughts on 'Adventure Rock' and other, commercial, virtual worlds for children. Parents were also asked whether they felt PSM should be creating such immersive services for children, and whether their perception of BBC Children's and the BBC in general had changed over the period of the fieldwork. Alongside this 'audience' study, the researchers also interviewed and collaborated with the producers of 'Adventure Rock' to compare producer intentions with user experiences.

'Adventure Rock' is a 3D virtual place which offers exploration, gaming and studios (for the creation of music, cartoons, animation, video, dancing, and 'inventing things'). The children collect coins which can be swapped in the 'Upgrade Centre' for new clothes for their avatar or new equipment for Cody, a friendly robot who accompanies them on their journey. The children also find pages from a book and strange hieroglyphics which may, in time, begin to explain the mysteries of the 'Adventure Rock' Island. External to 'Adventure Rock' is a website which offers a gallery for the children to show their work and a message board which enables moderated conversation between the players. The researchers were offered a Beta version of the virtual world which contained 'bugs' (non-functioning code), in addition areas of the world had not been completed which made the exploration of the world difficult for the children involved in the fieldwork. Finally, the registration process was found to be technically complex for the children as it involved the

downloading and saving of a large file and subsequent manipulation of several windows of instructions.

The younger children particularly enjoyed exploring the 3D immersive environment however almost all the children stopped visiting the world after four months. Most of the children felt the BBC should be offering virtual environments and immersive gaming and they welcomed this new kind of programming. They liked being asked for their opinion and all the children approached the project seriously. From the children's perspective 'Adventure Rock' did not offer the sociability that the older children particularly wanted; many children would have liked to have competed against each other, but this was not possible within the world. The older boys and girls wanted to have commerce (shops and trading) and to be able to compete against each other. In addition the older children particularly wanted to have more say about their identity and more ways to express their persona through the avatar they created to explore the world. Some of the older boys and girls expressed a wish for more fashionable clothing and hair styles for their avatars. The Muslim girls in the study wanted to be offered a range of head scarves. 'Adventure Rock' was not available for Apple Macintosh computers or via internet-enabled games consoles something the BBC producers were aware of, but they had underestimated the level of concern this gave the children, their parents and (most of all) the schools who took part in the user and producer study.

Overall it became clear during the study that producers need to inform children when areas are closed, under development or where there are any technical problems: a much greater degree of transparency is required between producers and users. Some children became frustrated, angry or anxious when it was not clear whether their inability to access some areas was a technical limitation, or their own fault. The relationship with the engagers or 'inhabitants' of immersive environments also involves rights and responsibilities for both the producers and users. The study informed the BBC Children's department that they needed to provide content organised in 'clusters' to suit younger and older children as there were significant differences between the 7-9 year old and 10-11 year old players. The younger players wanted to have more orientation and help, and they were also happier to enjoy solo play. The older players needed to have social activity, more collaboration, competition, ways to express themselves and more challenges.

From the producer's perspective the study clearly showed there is a need to involve children in the development process of new services right from the start. Complex online service such as virtual worlds require a closer relationship with the public which includes co-production and co-management. The nature of virtual worlds means the public ceases to be 'out there', external to the BBC. The young players created their own experiences within the world and should be considered as co-producers. This may require a re-examination of the ethical and legal framework between children and producers. Producers who are skilled at engaging with the public should be perceived as having 'key roles'.

The researchers strongly recommended BBC Children's should consider ways in which children can be more closely involved, from the earliest point in concept development (not mere beta testing, when the production is almost complete).

Conclusion

The case for involving the public in the development of new PSM services and content has been put forward. It has been suggested that involving the public in collaborative innovation is a natural extension of social and creative behaviours found on the Internet. Furthermore it has been suggested that the use of collaborative innovation processes would assist PSM firms to keep pace with changes to the mediascape. In addition the process of involving the public assists producers to understand preferences, motivations and behaviours which may presently be unknown. It has been shown that there are a range of potential methods to involve the public creatively, from 'crowd commissioning', or growing a developer community around a channel or PSM firm, to inviting the public to imagine and explore new kinds of services and online environments.

'Adventure Rock' extended the BBC's palette into virtual worlds, and both the children and parents who took part in the 2007-2009 study felt PSM should be providing such content. The service was found to have educational value and the children were excited that the world was in 3D and that it was situated 'outside' in the (virtual) open air. The service was flawed because children had not been involved in the imagining and subsequent development of the service it was not suitable for older children (in particular) long term as there were no social or collaborative elements included. In addition, there were few opportunities for the expression of identity. The researchers recommended producers in BBC Childrens' begin to include children in the production process from the commissioning stage onwards.

Channel 4iP stated on launch that it aimed to 're-invent PSM' for the digital age, the channel has recently adjusted that claim to providing new genres of PSM suitable for the age of networks. The study of Channel 4iP's commissioning process is currently in progress however indicative findings show there is a tendency to fall back on digital media companies who have a track record rather than include the public at large. For a new service this is perhaps understandable however it is suggested the ethos of 'crowdcommissioning' should be retained in order to continue to mirror emergent Internet practices. The services Channel 4iP are mentoring and the nascent mentoring process is encouraging in that it explores a potential new institutional model for PSM firms.

The theoretical lens for the paper has been to look at PSM from a participatory perspective, and to frame the public and producers as a potential creative partnership, co-producers, and collaborative stakeholders in PSM innovation. This is possible through the development of a second stage Internet which offers feedback loops in either real or 'as live' time, and the ability to create and

contribute content and ideas. This has the potential to move the position of the public into a more central position within the media enterprise. It has been shown, however, that there is reluctance on the part of producers and media firms to involve the public. This is due to several factors including fears of a denuding of quality or infringement of media law to a disruption of media processes such as copyright. These processes were suitable for the broadcast era but they become a potential barrier to development of content and services for the public good *online*. Compliance with existing standards and regulatory frameworks are of high concern to PSM firms, online and offline.

New strategic alliances and creative partnerships are being explored by PSM firms in the UK, in the case of the BBC, the UK's largest PSM firm, and Channel 4 who have created Channel 4iP to explore new genres of PSM content for the Internet. Researchers have suggested the growth of creative publics may indicate the societal position of PSM may need to be re-considered as the public become more involved in their own media making and perhaps less deferential to institutionalised media making. It has also been suggested PSM firms might consider adopting the role of facilitator, motivator and curator, which might be more suitable for a networked age. Whether it might be *possible* to organise a robust PSM in a distributed or post-institutional form would be a useful area for further research, and also institutional and post-institutional structures where the public might have a greater involvement in innovation, development, strategic direction, governance, and the maintenance of quality and value.

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