

Collective Subjectivity - On the way to new manners of working and distribution formats in audiovisual media

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1. About this Text

Together with the camcorder revolution and with the digital possibilities of post production and distribution an immense technical space of feasibility was opened. The actual possibilities of realisation however are restricted by the network of standardized production and distribution, by traditional methods which still date from the time of classical film and by our ideas which are formed by cinema and TV.

This text invites video artists, film-makers, film-editors and actors to reflect and to develop together a method for developing non linear and polyphone narrative ways for the area of audio-vision and of other related media and formats. Starting point is the reflection of hyper structures, interactivity, transmediality and mainly the question in what way collectivity and unbroken subjectivity could be compatible.

2. Presence as a chance

The more expensive the manufacturing of a certain product is the deeper it is involved in economic constraints. These economic constraints appear as rituals of production which have to be followed precisely and as exactly defined areas of work and fields of profession.

The area of film was liberated from the literal restraints by the camcorder revolution, the non linear cutting programs and the opportunities of the internet but yet the new forms of production and post production don't develop in a liberated field, instead the structures which are generated by the medium film fixed themselves as a network of institutions and conventions which are going on to produce restraints which were originally dictated by the physicality of the film, the production (studio system) connected with it and the distribution (distributors and cinema).

The conventions reach from the developing of material over script, production and post production to the forms of distribution. These conventions are - especially in Europe - kept up by the traditional sponsoring of film which forces that the steps of production are precisely kept, by the distribution system, by the categories and standardizations fixed during festivals which include the traditional forms of distribution and not least by the endeavours of many to gain a conventional place as a cog in the works as a "scriptwriter", an "actor", a "director" or a "producer".

The market in this case is just not the place of liquefaction and permanent adaptation but the economic implications dictate - by the means of hardening of institutions which work above all on the maintaining of themselves - conventions of production and formats of distribution which do not do justice to the state-of-the-art technology of the medium.

Theory and experiment could be means of softening the conventional hardenings. It would be the task of the theory to find the points where conventions and traditional formats prevent us from grasping the chances of the presence. It could be the task of an experimental practice to scout practically the space of possibility which lies in the difference between the potential of the physical medium on the one hand and its application on the other hand.

One of the goals of building up such an experimental structure should be the creation of economic structures and possibilities of distribution - by the means of convincing results - which correspond to the new forms of production and which are able to grow with them. In order to develop such a structure of production an institutional initial sponsoring or a training seems to be suitable for the moment because from this larger free spaces and possibilities of reflection would

result. Some institutions seem to be less suitable for this because they have to fix themselves by the logic of their definition and therefore any development becomes dangerous for them. If we understand the audio-visual media not only as an industry but also as a culture we have to think of the development of the technique always as a development of formats, too.

For the moment we should start with methods which break radically with the present ways of production; that means to start with some kind of research of the fundamental principles in which practice and reflection engage with each other. After this phase of deconstruction and radical experiments certain methods of production and formats connected with them could be developed which address certain target groups and which finally would appeal to a larger audience, too.

3. Control and imagination

The goal of a radical experiment is not only to liberate oneself of conventions of production from outside and to go new ways in a highly imaginative manner but to develop methods which prevent us from communicating our unconscious conventional shaping into the work. We have to realize that our wishes, our imaginations, and our visions are not an obstacle to the conventions but that they are shaped by them.

In traditional film there is usually the idea of a product and the goal of the connected financial and artistic appreciation as a motive in the beginning. The vision of a work or the idea of the successful achievement of a successful format (i.e. a report, an art video or a feature film) leads to a certain more or less conventional strategy of conception and shooting. Shooting itself is in this case related rather to the interpreting arts than to the original-creative ones. What was drawn up before is then realized.

The need for appreciation and the connected aspiration to profit and career lead to certain strategies. With the help of these imaginative success shall be realized which relates always to already achieved success of others (or oneself's).

This connection consists fundamentally in the functional unity of copying and delimiting and attains its logic by the context in which the success of one's own has been in mind (1).

By the imagination of success convention communicates into work. The economically shaped conventions and ways of production get in contact with the imaginations and ideas so that authorities of control arise which are not based on compulsion from outside but on wishes of one's own. These authorities of control cannot be experienced by the single film-maker and they sometimes are eclipsed by the conflict which arises between him on the one side and

producers, editors and sponsors on the other side. In this conflict he experiences his vision as something unusual and doesn't see that it only flows from a recombination of something existing.

The fitting in of products - on a massive scale - to schemes of success leads automatically to the facilitation of success of the one who is present in the media. This self-facilitation of success by success has two aspects: On the one hand all what is shown is shaped towards forms of success (clichés) and on the other hand that what is not suitable is failed to be seen.

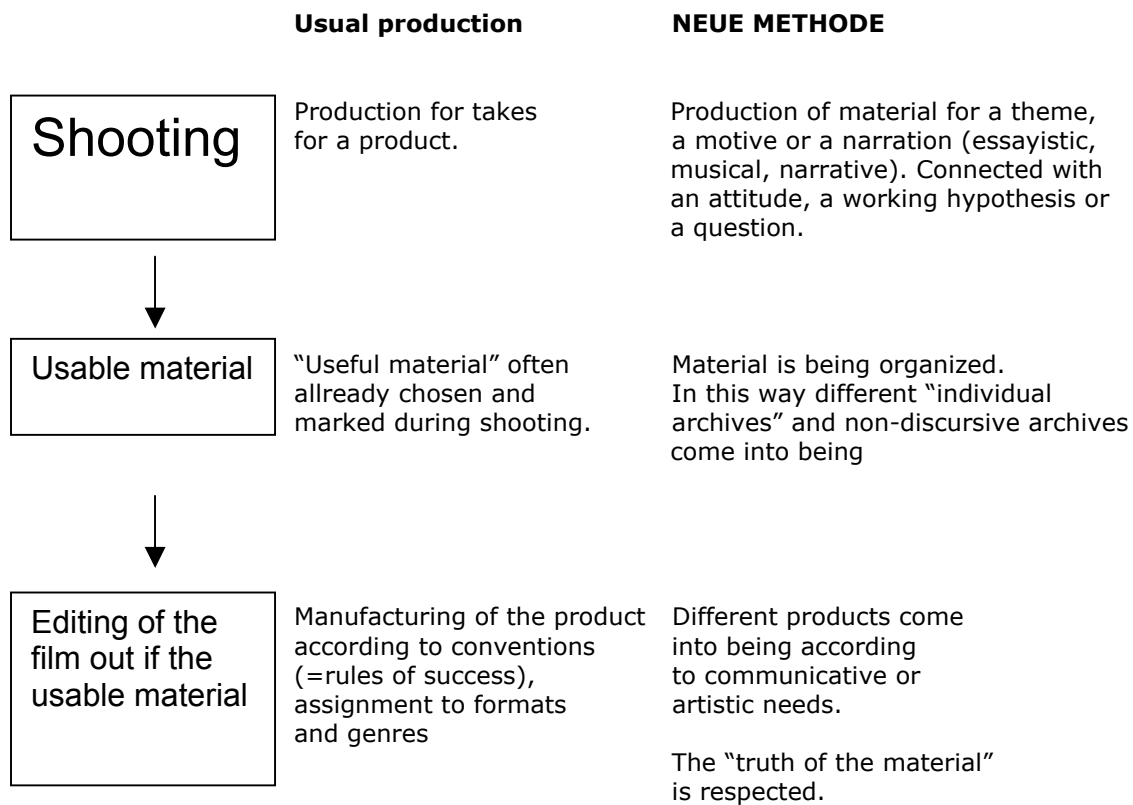
Our thesis is that by today's technical development it makes sense also from pure economic points of view to do a kind of basic research in the area of new forms of audio-visuality, a research as a radical experiment which will become economically fruitful by fading out the direct usability just for a moment.

A radical experiment would consist in using the camera not as a technical instrument for the obtaining of an before imagined taking which has a certain function in a context but to bring it into action as a methodical tool which will open to us different perspectives on real processes which may be quite produced. In this method the handling of the camera is not led by the idea of creating a certain material which will fit in a certain way in a successful product but there is an interest in real situative or communicative processes. In this sense the method is also a method of research which uses artistic means in order to make the invisible and failed to be seen in life visible.

In these real processes both the communication between real people and the imagination of the anonymous eyes of the others, incorporated by the camera, play a central role. In the producing on both stages arise a live dramaturgy and the immediacy of an event. By making this method an original-creative process we emancipate ourselves from subordination to the logic of self-facilitating of success. Starting point of a work may be a motive, a question, a theme or a story. Development of conception and material may also occur with the help of the camera.

4. About differentiation between conventional film and video work on one hand and our method on the other

Because the material is not formed according to the idea of having-to-be-fitted in a product but is obtained in a living process of radical experiment it represents something AS SUCH (AN UND FÜR SICH). Because of that it possesses an inner stability and can be manufactured in totally different contexts without the creative achievement of the production being destroyed.



The conventional film contains certain elements of theatre, novel and painting and the technique of film and video is only used to fulfil imaginable results, whereas the here proposed method makes the video filming a cultural technique in process. Just as a writer may enter in a dialog with his text during the process of rework, the one who uses the "Neue Methode" enters into a dialog with the material shot by him.

The video technique in the „Neue Methode“ is not used in order to improve a certain kind of realisation or reduce its cost, a realisation which would function as well without video technique but with the help of it something is realized that would be unthinkable without it. It can be used for different purposes, in particular also for actions that before were part of the preparation of a production.

This is also to be understood as an emancipation progress of the new medium that liberates itself from its historical evolution and scouts its new possibilities. In this way video wouldn't be only an inexpensive possibility of film shooting but would grow up into an autonomous medium with methodical and esthetical laws of its own (2).

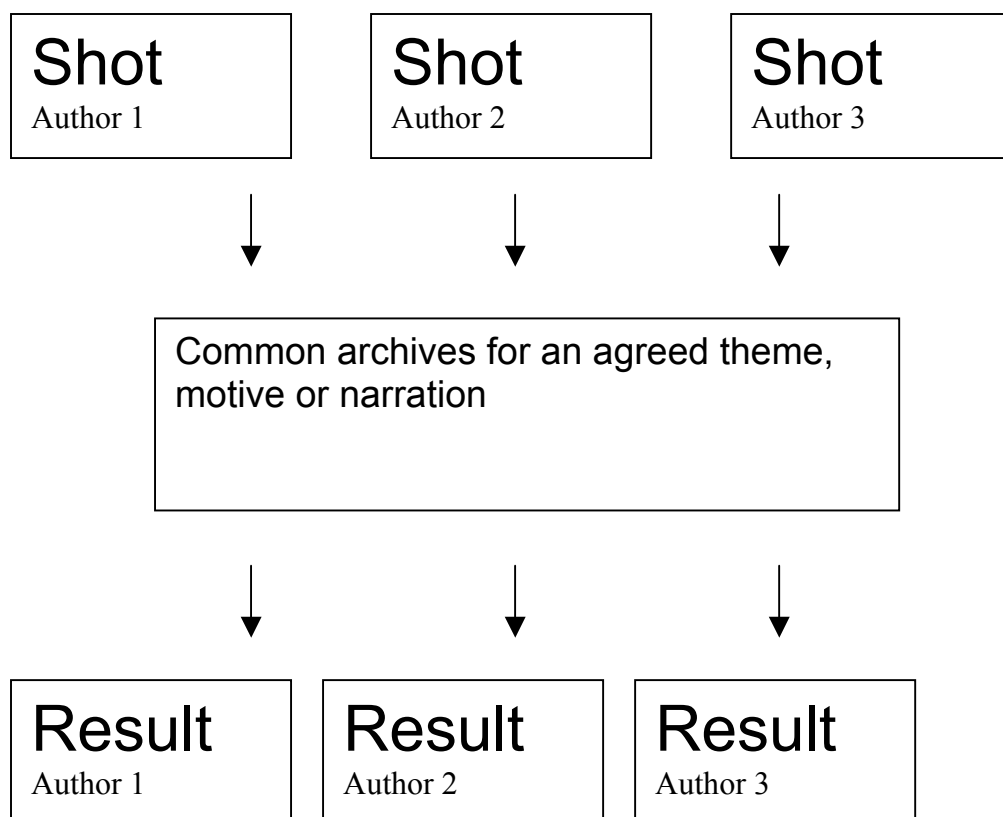
5. From the individual technique to collectivity

The base of polyphony is a way of production where radical subjectivity and collectivity do not conflict with but enrich each another. This way of production

is based on production archives. The production archives generate from the regulated collectivization of individual archives. Experiments of different kinds taught us that the work with production archives is especially productive when they are not accessible for the public and when the involved people know each other well or meet regularly. When it is about to put not finished things in the archives the familiarity of the group plays an important role. The smaller and the more familiar the group is the more probable is it that not finished things were put to others' disposal. In order to ensure the needed familiarity people have to meet regularly or they must know each other very well, that's what we experienced. Exclusive cooperation in the internet may be quite interesting and fruitful but it functions according to a totally different economy.

One example:

Three video filmers agree on a theme, a question, a motive or a narration. They shoot – possibly with mutual support – material and put it in the common archives. In a second step they cut their own personal film out of the material of the archives for which they may use both their own and the material of both the other authors.



In case the three video filmmakers knew each other it would be possible for them to show the interim results to one another and to agree on allowing the other two not only to use all materials but also to use their cuts (3).

The results can vary a lot. They can choose different forms: photo-book, video, material for narrative Vj-ing, report, feature film, documentary film, exhibition, newspaper article, material for installations a.s.o. The products can possibly refer to each other and be linked by an internet page.

The advantage of this technique is that in spite of collectivity justice is done to the individual vision.

Single projects come into being by common decisions for a theme, a question, a motive or a narration and the assembling of a collective whose members negotiate the rules of the cooperation.

In this way different production teams generate, each of them carrying out a project on a theme or a narration. These projects could be linked by their members sharing with each other the experiences related to methods, formats and forms of organization.

The techniques of shooting, post production and presentation are collectivized by motivating the collective to describe their action and to explicate the rules they are following. Each team could then fall back on a pool of proven rules of game and formats or develop them further.

The connection between rules and results – which should also be open to observation – are especially interesting.

In this way a complexity of its own right generates, something (new) that is not shaped by the rigidity of the market (which is caused by the attempt at repeating the success of a product in the market) but by the interest in real processes, social engagement and esthetical experimenting. Esthetical experimenting is always the attempt to make the failed to be seen visible (4).

The ignoring of the economicalness itself could lead to methods and formats which in a later phase of development would be also of direct economic interest.

Besides the determining of the theme, the motive or the narration one has to decide to whom the archives shall be open as production archives and how the reading and writing rights are distributed in detail.

The particular groups the members of which work closely together can be connected with other groups – again by pools of material or methodical discourse. In this way a network would generate which can play its role trying

out distribution. Over and above that everybody is free to make his own material usable in other ways and to put it under appropriate licences.

In this way a productive structure in diverse forms of distribution and results could generate: exhibitions, radio works, cinema or TV-film, documentary film, installation a.s.o. A particular challenge yet consists in non linear audio-visual hyper structures in the internet and as liveact (in form of narrative Vj-ing).

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- (1) The dynamic of this strategy differentiates according to which structure-functional connection shall be touched on (entertainment industry, art system or similar).
- (2) Precondition is that real communication processes are recorded and the central task doesn't consist in producing a certain take but in the production of these real processes.
- (3) The procedure we prefer: All materials are copied FOR EVERY AUTHOR on a portable hard disc with the respective batch lists. The files of the edit window refer to the material and can be sent out by e-mail.
- (4) The ideal of perfect openness - like it is propagated in media-activist circles inter alia - might be rather an obstacle in this context, because we have to take into account that people put material at disposal just to such an extent as the use of the archives can be controlled respectively limited by them.