II. From lonely Genius to Community Creation — Whose Voice Matters?

In the second part of this monograph, I explain the rationale for the design of our participatory arts project and discuss the theoretical foundations that underlie its formation while introducing the kind of strategies we needed to apply to foster and unlock the creativity of the community. Additionally, I investigate whether the project led to a fruitful exchange between the *TransCoding* team and our community that added meaning to both, and how the role of the artist changed through the project.

I start with a definition of participatory culture in the context of *TransCoding*, followed by thoughts on the social media and content strategies applied (chapters 4 and 5). I look at the actual art production (6) and search for the motivation of contributors who decided to participate in the creative endeavour (7) and next, I feature the community's voice by presenting contributions from community members that shaped one of the main artworks of *TransCoding*, *Slices of Life* (8). Last, I investigate the distribution of authority in the creation process within the ecosystem of *TransCoding*, which consists of the online community and the artist(s) involved. I present a key moment that changed the course of the project (9) and introduce in detail the work with single community members on the audiovisual installation *Read me*.

I use as my theoretical framework the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, scholars for clinical and social sciences in psychology and education, and the theories on participatory culture via web 2.0 of researchers and cultural scholars such as Claire Bishop, Henry Jenkins, Nina Simon and David Gauntlett. In order to arrive at a definition of participatory culture relevant to our project and to locate our position within this concept, I will first address what such a culture is, and which specific model we developed for *TransCoding*.

4. Theory Of Participatory Culture

In their paper *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture – Media Education for the 21st century*, Henry Jenkins and his co-authors Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton and Alice J. Robison define participatory culture as

"a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, members care about others' opinions of what they have created)." (Jenkins, Purushotma, et al., Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture – Media Education for the 21st century 2009, xii)

They state that forms of participatory culture include "affiliations," memberships that can be formal and informal, and in online communities are centred around various forms of media. They embrace "expressions" by producing new creative forms), "collaborative problem-solving" by working together in formal and informal teams to complete tasks and develop new knowledge, and "circulations" – that is, they shape the flow of media through podcasting, blogging or micro-blogging. (Jenkins, Purushotma, et al., Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture – Media Education for the 21st century 2009, xii)

Where can we find those characteristics of participatory culture in the set-up of this project? For *TransCoding* I chose social media as a means to address our community, since our target group used them as a common tool of communication, so that there was a relatively low barrier to self-expression. I established the topic 'identity' as the focus of the artwork and our social media presence, since I assumed that almost everybody will deal with the notion of his or her identity at some point in their life. The comparatively universal topic served as an easy way to enter into our project, and provided a low threshold to participation. Affiliation and online membership of *TransCoding* could be obtained through becoming a reader or follower of the associated blog *whatifblog.net*, through observing or actively participating in our communities on Facebook and Twitter (or any of the linked social media channels), or through personal contact with one of the team members.

On our social media channels, my colleague Montrey and I supported the community's engagement through a variety of actions. Our posts, related to our topic 'identity,' gave opportunity to reflect on and to work creatively with what we offered. As inspiration, and to encourage the sharing of knowledge, we

featured artworks from the world of contemporary art that were related to our topic. Additionally, we offered our followers incentives to express themselves and get creative by posing smaller or bigger artistic challenges, and by giving away free sound samples via a Creative Commons licence on our SoundCloud channel. We also actively encouraged members of our community to write guest blogs, and generally furthered communication and exchange as a means to support the feeling of affiliation.

During the production of the main artworks I worked directly and collaboratively with single community members for the audiovisual installation *Read me* (described in depth in chapter 9, 'A Potential for Change'). We worked through collaborative problem-solving. For *Read me* the participants could actively decide about the musical, visual and text content for their personalised version of the installation and could produce the content entirely by themselves, if they chose to do so. In comparison, the collaboration in *Slices of Life* was largely more indirect, although the community exerted a strong influence on that too and provided content in the form of texts, images and sound.

Last but not least, our members and their work mattered to us. We shared and showcased their creative work and contributions via our main blog *what-ifblog.net*, the companion blog on Tumblr (what-ifblog.tumblr.com), a blog that explicitly served as a community gallery, on Facebook, on Twitter, on our SoundCloud channel, and on Pinterest and Instagram. Circulation was also supported through our members via their own social media channels.

Thus, the work we did within the framework of *TransCoding* was based on a low barrier to artistic expression, support for the creation and sharing of creations, affiliation and membership, collaborative problem-solving and the circulation of content produced within the project; in short, the principles of participatory culture specified by Jenkins et al..

Next I would like to look at the democratic affordances the project offered its community members.

Access and Authority

Media scholar Münker states that a participatory public "wishes for interdisciplinary discourse, enables the development of new concepts, consciously exceeds familiar organization and invites the observer to look for new perspectives and paths" (Jank 2012, [translation from German to English by the author]). Referring to philosopher and sociologist Habermas, he claims that there are four criteria for a sphere of civil openness: "Access to it is principally open, the members are completely equal, the choice of topic is entirely open

and the circle of potential participants is open" [translation from German to English by the author]. (Münker 2009: 36 f.)

The project *TransCoding* was theoretically open to anyone who had access to uncensored internet and a computer. The spread of the project was wide. In the year 2015 we reached visitors from119 countries with almost 10 000 views on the blog alone (Fig 2.1).
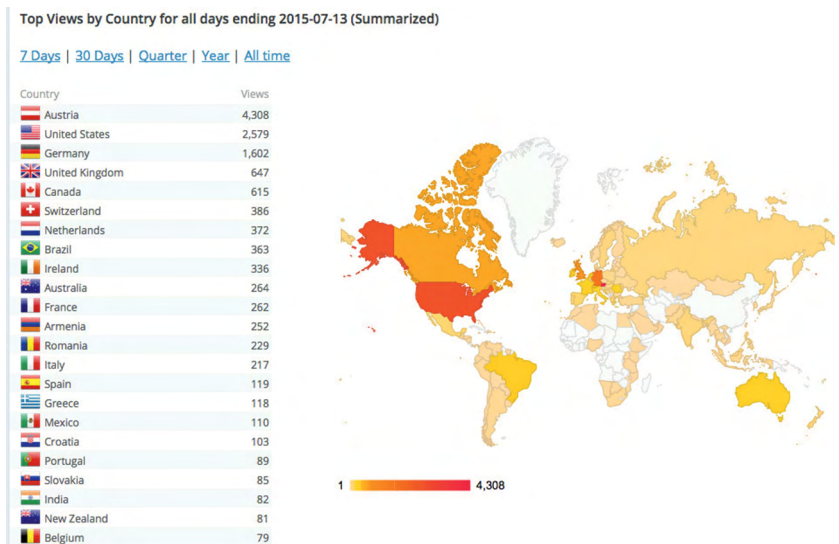

Fig. 2.1: Statistics of the blog what-ifblog.net on 2015-07-12. Image © TransCoding

In contrast to Münker, museum consultant and scholar Sabine Jank talks about the limitations of participation when she addresses participation as a utopian idea, and discusses the feasibility of participation in her article *Strategien der Partizipation* [Strategies of Participation]." (Jank 2012) She states that a "participatory public" is generally seen as a utopian idea, because its multiple perspectives and congenial composition are linked with a breakup of the traditional production of knowledge. In her opinion the media scholar Stefan Münker, whom she quotes, describes an ideal type of participatory public.

Our core target group was an internet-literate young audience of digital natives. Its members were interested in creatively expressing themselves, came from popular culture, and wouldn't necessarily attend classical contemporary multimedia performances. They were what arts marketing expert Keith Diggle describes as being an apparently 'unavailable audience'; non-traditional attenders at an organisation's concert who may nevertheless be reached in new ways. (Diggle, 1994: 32, cited by Carboni 2011). Contributions from participants outside the target group were equally welcome. Although we explicitly addressed a young and tech-savvy audience, I cannot deny that there

were possible impediments for participating in *TransCoding*, starting with the problem that people might have restricted access to the internet, or limited or no access to technical hardware such as computers, recording tools, photo or video cameras. Other constraints to participation included a general lack of technical knowledge in handling either features of social media (uploading blogposts on WordPress) or using software tools such as digital audio workstations. However, we tried to regularly offer calls for submissions that didn't ask for technical expertise. Last but not least, language was an issue. Although we tried to open the project as wide as we could by using English, not everybody is comfortable with posting in a language other than his or her mother tongue.

The key features of web 2.0 allow for free classification and arrangement of information in the form of social tagging (the so-called folksonomy), user participation in the form of crowdsourcing, and contribution through evaluation, review and commenting. Users are empowered to shape their medial reality (7 key features of web 2.0 | webAppRater 2010). Our content was made available to share, reuse, distribute and edit as a basic sign of authority and autonomy. A wide dissemination and dispersion allowed for content delivery via multiple channels, including file sharing and permalinks.

Fig. 2.2: "In 2006, the World Wide Web became a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter." (Lev Grossman Monday, Dec. 25, 2006, http://ti.me/18GMbym, visited on 2016-2-29). To *TransCoding* the 'You,' the community, matters. Image © TransCoding

Jank argues that another potentiality of participation is the conscious establishment of a "philosophy of conflict" that understands critical debate, protest and provocation as a micro-political practice through which all participants become active agents thus constituting a public that is equal. This raises questions of power constellations, objective knowledge (and access to it), unrestricted communication, open, critical dialogue and the dissolution of traditional practices, as well as public access and the congenial inclusion of outsiders. Participation here is characterised by a processual quality. (Jank 2012: 147) These questions have become important in our project, as I will elaborate later in chapter 9 ('A Potential for Change: Case study *What if we had wings?* – An Area of Conflict').

As the lead artist in the project I opened up the development of the associated artwork to the influence of the community, from the conceptualising phase onwards. The dialogue with the community came first, before concrete ideas for the actual parts of the artwork *Slices of Life* came to life. This was not always the case, but happened as the result of a conflict in the initial phase of the project, when the then still acting art collective of *TransCoding* first conceptualised and composed a substantial part of what was to be the main artwork without any interaction with the community, and invited the community only much later to contribute. Our participants were solicited to contribute texts that we integrated into the video for our artwork *What if we had wings?* for violin, (live) electronics and video. However, the kind of material and the multitude of diverse contributions the community presented to us following our call for entries provoked pronounced discontent among the artists and led to a substantial dispute about the sense of community participation in general and participation via web 2.0 in particular. The conflict led to the dissolution of the collective, and I continued as the single artist working in interaction with the community, supported by the research team only.

Subsequently, I progressively changed the model of participation from 'contributory,' where participants "are solicited to provide limited and specified actions or ideas to an otherwise institutionally [i.e. by myself] controlled process" (Simon 2010: 187) to 'collaborative' leaning towards 'co-creative' participation. According to Simon, "[i]n collaborative projects, visitors are invited to serve as active partners in the creation of institutional projects that are originated and ultimately controlled by the institution," whereas "[i]n co-creative projects, community members work together with institutional staff members from the beginning to define the project's goals and to generate the program or exhibit based on community." How did interaction with the community actually shape the specific topics and aesthetics of the artwork *Slices of Life*?

As a first step, we provided context on the topic of 'identity' in general and in the arts in particular on our project blog *what-ifblog.net* and extended it across

our various social media channels, thus establishing an initial community. We also initiated discussions on our topics on our project Facebook page and our personal Facebook sites. Community members could make their interest and preferences clear through liking, commenting, or (passively) ignoring our posts. This process demanded continuous evaluation and (re-)design of our system according to the reactions or non-reactions of our community while being aware of our research objectives.

Later, we started our 'calls for entries.' Here, community members could actively participate in the form of contributing photographs, text fragments, or presenting us with sound samples to compose with. They could shape the overall narrative through their own story-telling, influence the musical material by introducing me to their own compositions via challenges on our SoundCloud group, and have an effect on the visual aspect of the artwork by submitting photos as response to our calls for entries.

In a third step, a selection of the community's stories, sounds, compositional material and photographs found their way into several smaller and bigger artworks such as the show *Slices of Life* (2016/17) for violin, soundtrack and video. As in the overall project, the topic of *Slices of Life* was 'identity' and the many facets identity can take on. Images, texts and sounds for the show are in large part contributions from the *TransCoding* community, from contributors in Cuba, Spain, Canada, Croatia, USA, Austria, Philippines, Armenia, Russia, England, Poland, Bulgaria, New Zeeland, Germany, Romania and France. In *TransCoding*'s second main artwork, the audiovisual installation *Read me*, I took a third and even more radical step. Here, participants had the option to shape and personalise the visual, textual and musical content of the installation to their taste, using the hardware and software framework I provided (more on that in chapter 9, 'A Potential for Change'). In a fourth step, the community used material we provided to make their own art, thus gaining sole authority over their creative decisions.

In conclusion, I can say that free access to the project, influence on the discourse and shared authority were the democratic affordances the community was offered. We consciously worked on the idea of defining the (commonly hierarchic) relationship between artist and community as one of permeability and mutual influence.

Before I present selected community contributions in chapter 8, I would like to investigate what kind of incentives trigger the engagement of community members, and what it is that motivates participants to invest in a call for entries and our project in general.

5. Social Media – Content Strategy

When I started the project, sceptical onlookers asked why anyone would ever contribute to my artwork. I – a privileged white woman from Europe who even got paid for her work on the project – was putting together a show for violin, electronics and video and asked people to participate in the creation of it. Why should anybody feel motivated to do so?

My task in conceptualising the social media and the artistic approach was moreover guided by an explicit research question: How could I further crossover between high art and popular art by offering creative and intellectual incentives to the community for participation, while on the one hand staying true to the domain I came from, namely contemporary art music and multimedia art, and on the other hand listening back to and channelling the community's own creative voices. Confronting the challenge of motivation in participatory culture, and in particular in this project, was therefore central to the progress of the work and concerned especially the social media content strategy.

One can identify at least three dimensions of *TransCoding* that were important in terms of the interaction between artist and community and the involvement of single followers: the social, the content and the artistic dimension. Within the project set-up they were emphasised through different means and could be experienced in both the communicative and the creative process. The three dimensions need not to be seen in isolation but in relation to each other. Their interplay determined if and how people interacted, and it influenced their motivation for participation and the manner of their involvement. However, they weren't necessarily equally relevant for the individual participants at all times.

The social dimension played an important role in opening up the project to a wide audience, establishing a feeling of a close-knit community. Furthermore, it was essential in bringing down possible barriers of communication caused by a traditional and hierarchical understanding of the role of the artist, a position that gives the sole aesthetic and decision-making authority to the 'creative genius.'

How did we structure social interaction? First of all, we understood the project as an inclusive one, meaning that we opened it up to people of all countries, races, religions and ages. We openly and clearly invited people to interact and contribute on our blog *what-ifblog.net*. Within the project, interactions, communication and creative outcomes were regulated by a social agreement that clarified the possible ways to contribute and to join the project via guest blogs, and the creative and legal processes behind it (https://what-ifblog.net/about/, https://what-ifblog.net/your-contribution/, https://what-ifblog.net/disclaimer/, https://what-ifblog.net/2014/04/18/you-and-us/). We explicitly

and repeatedly invited people to participate and make their voices heard, and we guaranteed authentic appreciation of community contributions. We strove for truthful and authentic communication between professional artist and community on equal footing. We engaged in personal contact and exchange via chats and email, if this was asked for by individual community members.

The design of the blog – warm and colourful, not overly sophisticated yet visually appealing, with an emphasis on expressive photos as thematic hooks – reinforced our effort to make 'highbrow art' accessible. We downscaled the seemingly 'elitist' and exclusive process of making art by giving insight into the work of a professional artist. Under the heading 'Making of,' for instance, I offered insights into the deliberations and preparations at the start of our creative project; discussed the development of an artistic concept in general; allowed our audience to share in our joys and doubts on how we worked when producing *Slices of Life*; announced concerts, at which I presented the jointly produced artwork; and later shared the associated (video or audio) documentation. The team's social media manager and I worked on turning the image of the mystical creative 'genius' into that of a person who is involved in the same process of preparation, incubation, insight and evaluation, of success and failure as every other ordinary person in any creative process.

We worked on managing and creating a sense of a creative community. At regular intervals we called for community contributions to gather material for the show via our social media channels. We observed two kinds of participation mode: passive participants read our posts as 'silent' followers of our various channels, or liked individual posts, sounds or images we presented; the active ones became engaged in different activities in the framework of the project.

We came up with a list of possible forms of participation, which we graded from the least to the most challenging:

1. Comment on a (blog) post, especially on what-ifblog.net, on the official Facebook page or the team's personal Facebook sites, or on TransCoding's Twitter channel, or on any of the visual or audio social media channels of the project.
2. Supply a link within the comment section of our WordPress, Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr channels.
3. Contribute with text on WordPress, Facebook, Tumblr or Twitter.
4. Pingback on our blog via contributor's blog, a feature that was only possible for subscribers to WordPress.
5. Upload a photo on Tumblr, Facebook or Instagram and share it with the TransCoding community.
6. Film a video and share it with the community on one of the associated social media channels.

7. The contributor creates their own piece of music and shares it via SoundCloud with *TransCoding*'s community.
8. The contributor remixes sounds from the project's SoundCloud with their own music, shares it via any social media channel and links it to the project.
9. Download a mute video offered by us, score the music, re-upload on YouTube and share it with the community.

At the heart of our propositions for participations stood the 'calls for entries' on *what-ifblog.net* that in turns asked for image, sound or text submissions. Sometimes we also encouraged our followers to tell us about their personal context and creative disposition. Usually a call was embedded in a larger chain of thematically linked blog posts or events. We let community members decide how to approach the calls and which agency to follow: some got creative for themselves because the call had aroused their interest; others entered an intersubjective exchange with us and consciously contributed to the multimedia show. (This will be described in detail in the following chapters). We explicitly featured the community's creative involvement and fostered their sense of accomplishment by dedicating a full category to them at *what-ifblog.net* under the header 'You, Us and the Project' and by offering a separate blog on Tumblr for the exhibition of their works.

The content dimension was central in directing general attention to the project, piquing people's curiosity and making them return to the blog. By choosing 'identity' as a topic that invites exploration, touches emotionally and is part of everybody's existence, we opened the access gates wide for everybody on a macro level. 'Identity' can be considered from different perspectives and we tried to cover many. We started from Greek Antiquity, included customs (and religions) from New Zeeland, Cuba, Mexico, Morocco; entered into the fictive lives of personalities our participants had invented; featured individual living artists with their take on identity; touched repeatedly on (undoing) gender; caught frames of life through the lens of our photographers; inquired how sound could relate to our community's sense of identity; made the notion of human rights and diversity part of our discourse on identity; and debated current topics such as virtual reality or coding and their impact on our lives.

Specifically related to our research claim of promoting classical contemporary music and multimedia art, 'identity' was as often as possible covered in direct relation to artworks. We looked for art that had 'identity' as a topic, interviewed artists of different genres on their work and creative processes to discover their creative identity, or introduced our community to festivals and events that featured new art to draw their attention directly to the field. The category under which we featured these blog posts was called 'Art We Love.' We wanted people to feel our enthusiasm about the art we promoted and

strove to give our blog posts a personal touch. This stood in direct relation to the social dimension we aimed to establish.

'Art We Love' additionally served us as backdrop for the creative challenges we set out for our community. Those were designed to be entertaining and interesting to explore, trigger different kinds of motivation and offer value in themselves for the participants, while fitting into the context of the artwork I developed in the framework of *TransCoding*.

'Calls for Entries' on *what-ifblog.net*

These were the four early calls for submissions that we featured on *what-ifblog.net* in which we asked for different kinds of contributions that could take the form of music, texts, video scorings or photography. I will introduce you to the texts and add a selection of responses.

Window shopping for a new identity. Vienna. Spring 2014 (April 15, 2014) was the very first call on *what-ifblog.net*, six weeks after I had launched the website, and it aimed to stimulate (artistic) comments from our participants on our blog. At the same time, I was curious whether and how community members would artistically express their concept of identity and freedom. Both comments we received featured music.

"If you find a picture/quote/music related to identity or freedom of choice in your home town, in your image/sound/or text-archive, on the internet, or in your creative imagination, please let us know and share it with us." (Lüneburg, Window shopping for a new identity. Vienna. Spring 2014 2014)

Response by Sylvia Hinz, Berlin:

"thank you for this great project and the initiative! ... i'd like to share with you my 'windserie' ... enjoy! ...
identity ... my 'windserie' describes my preoccupation with the topic wind and breath — all my life. i grew up near the coast, always loved the sounds of wind and storm, started to play the recorder aged 7 and have a focus on breath (including breathing sounds) and wind noises ever since then. and ongoing ...
this is my identity. http://sylviahinz.bandcamp.com/album/windserie" (Comment by Sylvia Hinz on the blog post: Lüneburg, Window shopping for a new identity. Vienna. Spring 2014 2014)

The call *City Hopping for a New Identity – the Sky is No Limit* (April 24, 2014) asked for life stories of community members expressed in the format of a photo, text or video.

"What if we had wings? What if we could escape our personal boundaries, follow our visions and dare the impossible?
Have you ever moved to a different country? Did you go on an adventure tour at some point in your life? Has there been one place of which you can say that having been there has changed your perspective on life? Did you ever have to learn a new language or you would not have been able to communicate with the people around you? How was it like? How did you feel? We would like to know what shaped your life. What shaped your identity as it is now?
...
Send us a photo, a text, a video of a place you visited, an impression of a country that shaped you, a recording of a language you miss. Pingback it to us by adding a link to this post or add a comment. We are looking forward to hearing from you." (Lüneburg, City Hopping for a New Identity – the Sky is No Limit 2014)

It triggered several responses, among which the guest blog *Armenia-Homeland* by Anahit Mughnetsyan was the most elaborate (documented in chapter 8, 'The Community's Voice'). The topic of spirituality as an attribute of one's identity became established through Anahit's text.

The challenge *Who is Damian, Lia and Barbara...?* (May 15, 2014), which we launched on YouTube, was quite ambitious. It demanded not only artistic skills but at the same time technical knowledge to score the videos and handle the downloads and uploads on YouTube. Also, participants needed to have their own YouTube channel to be able to participate.

"Today, we proudly present the new YouTube channel of what-ifblog.net. On this channel we will feature art works that have been sent to us in reference to our project. Enjoy exploring.

Our first idea was to start the remix challenge: Who is...? We had a fun evening videotaping little sequences of the artist team of **what if**? in our spooky Viennese basement. We then composed individual mini-video portraits of each of us, and uploaded them on our channel for you to download and play around with. The idea is that the music you add will change the identity of the person on screen.
...
If you would like to take part in this arts project follow the link to our channel bit.ly/1jKOIuD, download one of the artists' videos and compose the music for it: Who is Damian/Lia/ Barbara...? Think about a musical character you would like to give him/her. Find a musical identity you consider fitting.

Become a part of the project. Compose a piece of music, upload the video with the music on YouTube and send us the link (if you like as a comment below), so we can feature it. Be creative, have fun, we are looking forward to your artwork!”
(Lüneburg, Who is Damian, Lia and Barbara…? A Remix Challenge on YouTube 2014)

Several young sound artists responded to the call. They fell squarely into our target group of tech-savvy social media users, who came from pop culture but were inspired by the challenge.

👁 Link to the scorings of the video *Lia* by Christian Schwind and Marco Pietrolungo
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 5

Call for Entries: Creativity is Contagious was inspired by a quote from Albert Einstein which I had stumbled upon on the internet. It was the first call in which we asked for photos. Additionally, we introduced a new feature of the project, the community gallery on Tumblr.

“We’re intrigued by the question of where creativity comes from. We do believe that one creative act or work has a tendency to inspire others. Thus, we’d like you to take part in our next call for entries, which is an experiment to see just how far the seed of our creative call will spread.

We all know the concept of a selfie. But what about a shelfie? Urban Dictionary defines a shelfie as ‘A picture or portrait of your bookshelf. Showcasing literature IN ALL ITS GLORY! … Not to be confused with selfie.’ Literature is one way to do it. But as we have seen, creativity comes in many forms.

Instructions:
Submit a shelfie that fits within our broader definition: anything that expresses your creative identity, on a bookshelf. It can be your favourite books, of course. But it can also be pens, paper, notebooks, pencils, instruments, decorative items, artwork or clothing. … Selected entries will be featured on our What if? Community Gallery on Tumblr …”
(Montrey, Creativity is Contagious, Pass it On 2014)

Responses included among many others Maria Baez Vales’ beautiful harvest picture.

Fig. 2.3: Maria Baez Vales' (Mexico) contribution to our call for shelfies.

Gloria Guns sent us her greenhouse shelf along with an explanation: "I am based in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada, which is very far north in the high Canadian Arctic. Here is my submission for the call for shelfie entries. It's my vegetable garden, which I keep on a low shelf, obviously indoors because the Arctic is always cold. I am a musician and a writer, but lately I have been really enjoying tending to my garden, as I find it incredibly therapeutic - and fresh produce is hard to come by in the Arctic (and expensive)." (Gloria Guns on her submission on Tumblr).

Fig 2.4: Gloria Guns' greenhouse shelfie.

In the next chapter, I will trace the search, the ruptures and the continuities in the development of the artwork *Slices of Life* that occurred because of the unusual way of creating in interaction with the online community.

6. The Art Production

Preparation, Incubation, Insight and Evaluation

Creative processes go through the phases of preparation, incubation, insight and evaluation. (Wallas 1926) During the development of *Slices of Life*, those phases were shaped by the interests, participation and general influence of the community, and needed constant adjustment.

Within the preparation phase, I searched for and presented topics that on the one hand served the exploration of the general theme 'identity' and the communication flow on our social media channels, and on the other hand advanced the creative work on *Slices of Life*. The process was iterative and was characterised by a constant probing for areas of interest that might trigger the participation of our highly heterogeneous community. Content needed to be carefully prepared for people who we wanted to lure into the project, especially when posts were concerned with contemporary (classical) art music or new multimedia art. We needed to find an angle that would talk to our community of mostly non-professional creatives that had little or no experience with this kind of art form.

How we proceeded from there in the form of our calls for entries depended on the reaction and interest of these people, who came from different cultural backgrounds, most of whom we had never met, and who didn't belong to our peer group. The responses to our calls and the material that came in, in the form of photos, drawings, texts, sounds or videos were usually quite different from what I had in mind when I conceptualised the calls. The community interpreted them in a way that met their personal interest, not necessarily the demands of the growing artwork. In fact, the overall content of *Slices of Life* was grounded in democratic affordances that we granted the community. Our members influenced the emergent fields of interest by passively rejecting or actively reacting to what we presented, and they shaped the content by way of their submitted narratives, imagery and sounds. There was a constant need for thematic adjustments and aesthetic fine-tuning in all the phases of the creative work.

Thematic Development of *Slices of Life*

Thematically, the artwork *Slices of Life* took several turns. Originally I had intended to base it on the topic of (undoing) gender. However, I soon had to give this up, because the topic drew hardly any community to the blog. With the original arts team we then followed the ancient concept of the four temperaments that categorise human personalities into 'humours,' according

to which each of the four types of humours corresponds to a different personality type. We incorporated the sanguine temperament that is associated with air in our artwork *What if we had wings?* This happened at a point when the building of and interaction with our community was still at an early stage. The compositional and performance gestures of the piece were rather abstract and strictly non-narrative. However, the call for entries that went along with it asked our community members to submit their visions and dreams in the form of short poetic statements, and this offered an opportunity to anchor the theme in their personal experience in a concrete way.

For the accompanying video I developed a simple, straightforward symbolism: an airplane that takes off from the runway and cruises above a vanishing landscape. I took the flight footage while travelling using a smartphone. The aesthetics of the video had a spontaneous and unrefined feel, and referred directly to the title of the piece *What if we had wings?* I placed the text submissions of the participants in the video. Using the flight footage was a first step towards a visual aesthetics that took its inspiration from the practices of social media users. I worked with material that anybody could have taken almost without effort: video shots from a vacation, captured to share with friends and followers on Facebook, YouTube or Twitter.

👁 Link to the video documentation of *What if we had wings?*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART I CHAPTER 2

If I could only share

what my mind's eyes see

through a camera lens

Sharlea Taft, USA

Fig. 2.5: Still from the video *What if we had wings?* which I premiered at the European Researchers Night in Vienna in 2014. The text is based on a submission by photographer and community member Sharlea Taft, USA. On the right: a runway stripe. Image © TransCoding

In contrast to the abstract musical score we had collaboratively developed as the then acting arts team, the words of the community and the symbolism I chose for the video were clear, straightforward and fairly concrete.
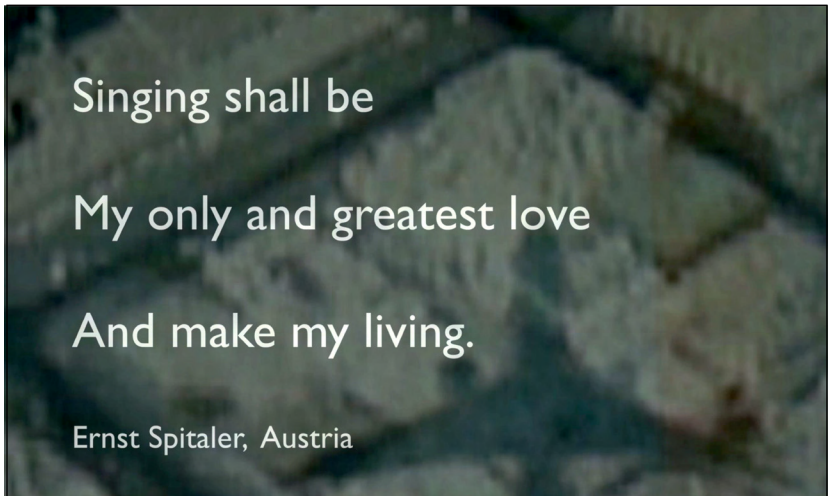
Fig. 2.6: Still from the video *What if we had wings?* which I premiered at the European Researchers Night in Vienna in 2014. The text is based on a submission by community member Ernst Spitaler, Austria. In the background: the shadow of a starting airplane. Image © TransCoding

My colleagues were unhappy with the miscellaneous and diverse nature of the submissions, and with the concreteness of the visual and textual content. Concerns arose about the value of the community submissions. Moreover, the new power relations bothered them. It touched on their self-concept as artists working independently from society. My colleagues were worried that if they worked with the community material which – in their eyes – was not up to their usual quality standards, this might blur the image and careful branding as artists they had built over the years. As a consequence, they requested that we weaken the influence of the community by either letting them in only much later in the process, by exerting firm curatorial control over the submissions, or by processing contributions to make them 'fitting.' However, since this correlated with neither the original artistic and democratic idea nor the research mandate of *TransCoding*, we decided to terminate our work as an arts team and I continued as single artist in interaction with the community.

What made my situation different from the of my colleagues in the original arts team was the fact that to me, as a person originally educated as performer, the communication with the community was challenging but also worth the additional effort. It put me in touch with a new audience and helped me to think out of the box of the contemporary (art) music world and venture into new musical and aesthetic territory. Nevertheless, instead of being able to rely on pre-established quality assessments approved by my peer group, I needed

to adapt and reframe my evaluation modes. I searched for a new aesthetic and conceptual approach in which I used the material authentically in a way that the often rough character of the contributions became a characteristic trait of and explicitly shaped the aesthetics of the developing artwork.

Testing New Grounds

Thus, the third phase of the project found me testing the grounds anew. After first having asked the community directly about their interests:

"**Who are you?** Are you interested in writing, photographing, filming?
Are you a digital musician? a coder? a gatherer of thoughts?
What are your main topics when you blog/facebook/tweet/youtube/pinterest?
What or **who** are your passions and influences?
Which artist do you admire most?
And:
Do those topics have anything to do with who you feel you are?"
(Lüneburg, 5 Questions that are Important to Us 2014)

I now wanted to know what triggered their creativity:

"**What gets your creativity going?**
What motivates you to make art?
In which situation do you feel a creative flow?
Take a picture, write a sentence, write a short musical composition or just arrange some sounds." (Montrey, Call for Entries | What Gets Your Creativity Going? 2015)

And I listened back to the music of our followers when asking for remixes and compositions.

"**what if?** is calling for the craziest drones ever – and our audio archive provides just the inspiration. We've uploaded some inspiring audio files to SoundCloud and they're ready to be remixed into whatever your musical imagination will come up with." (Lüneburg, Call for Entries - Drone Remix Contest 2015)

I created artworks around these calls in which I experimented with aesthetics that were inspired by the contributions of the community. I looked into street art, and again worked with images that were produced with everyday means such as smartphone snapshots or webcam videos. As audio material, for instance, I used sounds from our SoundCloud that everybody else could compose with as well, or roamed the internet for interesting sound samples

under a Creative Commons licence. I tested the resulting artworks *Souvenir de Budapest, They speak in Layered..., The Gods Envy Us, Soundwaves* and *Mad Maddy* on the blog, on Facebook, SoundCloud and YouTube for reactions from the community.

👁 Link to the videos *Souvenir de Budapest, They speak in layered...* and *The Gods Envy Us*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 6 (1)
🔊 Link to the soundtracks *Mad Maddy* and *Soundwaves*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 6 (2)

However, these turned out to be blind alleys, not to be continued, because I couldn't engage the community with them. None of these works led to the one encompassing artwork that later would become *Slices of Life*, capturing the many facets of 'identity' we looked at on our social media channels. It all felt too detached from the project. In my opinion, the reason for that was that these artworks were about my struggle to come to terms with the challenges of the project rather than the community's visions of life and identity.

In contrast, *Read me*, the interactive audiovisual installation that I had also developed in this interim phase, was already very successful. The concept that individual community members were permitted to personalise the installation after their own taste and personality seemed to fit better with the community's wishes, the project's objectives and my own artistic expectations.

It was an artistic workshop with a group of students in Graz on 'undoing gender' that finally inspired me to bring back the project in a U-turn to the initial questions:

"**What if** we could live our lives regardless of the expectations of society, family, friends or colleagues?
What if our body, our gender wasn't our limit?
What if we took the freedom to be who we want to be and how can we express this in our art?" (Lüneburg, What-ifblog.net | About 2014)

I decided to build *Slices of Life* on narratives that depicted real (or fictional) life choices among our community members and their right and freedom to live and express them. I designed the popular and successful #GYHAFYs challenge (#GiveYourselfAHolidayAwayFromYourself) on which I based two slices of the show, namely *Johnny* and *My Chosen Name is*; I analysed the sound and text material of the personalised *Read me* installations for their expressive and story-telling potential and used them with permission from the respective community members, and did the same with the visual material we had received in the course of the project.

Last but not least, I rounded the project off not only in the spirit of Judith Butler, who provided the initial spark for our project, but even more so in the spirit of one of our most active community members, the lawyer Gloria Guns from Canada. As text material for the final slice of life, I used what she calls the basis of her personal conviction and her professional work: Subsection 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

7. Motivation For Participation

TransCoding with its huge topic 'identity,' and its three performance domains – the virtual online community interaction domain, my professional composing and live performing domain, and the research domain – makes for a complex social phenomenon and eludes simple categorisation. The key challenge was to gain an understanding of the motivational factors that moved the community from passive consuming to active participation.

We identified at least five models of engagement of our community:

- passive following of the blog and/or other social media channels;
- casual engagement in the form of liking or commenting;
- active involvement that had an impact on other community members' own creative work (for instance by using our SoundCloud to compose remixes, or by writing guest blogs on *what-ifblog.net*);
- interaction with me as professional artist and involvement in the shaping of the overall artworks *Read me* or *Slices of Life* through contributing texts, photos, voice recordings, sound samples or compositions; and
- sustained engagement with repeated participation in different challenges for different personal or project related purposes.

Attempts to explain motivational factors will necessarily face the problem of the disparate origin, age group and professional occupation of the participants. The general human subjectivity in recounting one's own actions and the tendency to individual self-promotion which showed in interviews we conducted with the participants (and which can often be observed in creative communities), add a further level of complexity to the analysis. So does the context of the digital, virtual setting that misses live person-to-person contact with the research subject. Moreover, different kind of calls for entries afforded different intensities of engagement, ranging from spontaneous, quick reactions to a long preoccupation with the creative process, which in itself made for different levels and kinds of motivation. However, in what follows I will present the findings that emerged from my participant observation, the analysis of responses to calls, and the small interviews we conducted with individual contributors.

(Cultural-)Political Motivation and the Idea Behind the Call

Different practices of engagement need to be considered in relation to the social and cultural context of the acting agents. Some participants simply supported the project out of (cultural-)political motivation. Among these were

sound artists, young festival promoters (mostly from Eastern Europe) and politically engaged individuals. They contributed, because they backed the idea of open source and common creative practices (predominantly our users from SoundCloud), or they believed in outreach, diversity and the need to open up classical culture to as many people as possible. Some decided to explicitly make a political statement in answering the call to read and record Subsection 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as we were working at a time of political upheaval about human rights in general and refugee movements in particular. Polish musicologist Monika Zyla for instance, a zealous protester for human rights and political freedom in Poland, translated the particular paragraph into Polish and sent us her personal recording. Anthony Green, a human rights activist and artist, mailed us a recording with an artistic twist which served as the rhythmic basis for the final section of *Slices of Life, Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*

🔊 Link to the recordings of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* read by Monika Zyla, Anthony Green and Julien Charest:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (1)

Then there were those who submitted contributions because they felt that the general ideas or the cause behind certain challenges resonated with them. Calls such as 'What Gets Your Creativity Going?' or 'Powerful Woman' seemed to trigger a motivational impetus rooted in experiences from the everyday life of our participants.

Sometimes people participated to explicitly support me in when I needed sound, photo or text material for *Slices of Life*, but sometimes they did so to just satisfy their own creative needs. As discussed in chapter 3, 'The Team Interviewed by Torsten Flüh', it mattered how challenges were presented and if they were able to prompt an emotional response in our community. When developing the artwork, and for this purpose designing the calls for entries, I tried to anticipate and respond to my users' preferences and areas of interest, since calls would only work if they were relevant to them and if I succeeded in matching their interest to mine, to mutually beneficial ends.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Apart from the social, personal and sometimes even political drive of our community members, we also found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were relevant to our task, and indeed were a key factor in triggering our participants' impulse to be creative and pick up the challenges we offered. We tried to implement this in our calls for entries, as I will describe below.

According to psychologists Deci and Ryan, who developed the Selfdetermination theory (SDT), "[t]he most basic distinction is between *intrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and *extrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome." (Deci and Ryan 2000: 55) They define intrinsic motivation "as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards." (ibid: 56). Deci and Ryan argue that intrinsic motivation includes free choice and satisfaction, as well as interest and enjoyment of the activity; however, they also connect intrinsic motivation to the psychological needs for 'competence, autonomy and relatedness'. This leads them to propose that

"the primary reason people are likely to be willing to do the [extrinsically motivated] behaviors is that they are valued by significant others to whom they feel (or would like to feel) connected, whether that be a family, a peer group, or a society. This suggests that the groundwork for facilitating internalization is providing a sense of belongingness and connectedness to the persons, group, or culture disseminating a goal, or what in SDT we call a sense of *relatedness*." (Deci and Ryan 2000: 64)

In our project and especially in the calls for entries, we needed to set relevant and various stimuli to reach our heterogeneous community. In our *Call for Entries – Drone Remix Contest*, for instance, effectuated through our SoundCloud channel, we strove to balance intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. The call ran for three weeks from August 17, 2015 to September 7, 2015. We promoted the challenge on our main hub the blog *what-ifblog.net*, on our Facebook page (as a Facebook event), on Twitter, on Google+ and on our SoundCloud group, a feature that has now been abolished by the company. The original text for the challenge was as follows:

"What do you get when you combine a dysfunctional accordion, the beauty of Japanese wind bells and a sonified bubble speech?

what if? is calling for the craziest drones ever – and our audio archive provides just the inspiration. We've uploaded some inspiring audio files to SoundCloud and they're ready to be remixed into whatever your musical imagination will come up with.

To enter, create a wholly new audio experience by combining sounds from the what if? SoundCloud. Submissions may be any length, but must incorporate at least two of our tracks. (Deadline: September 7).

Maybe you'll grab a sound of nature (crickets from Croatia as your personal rhythm group), a selection from our synthesiser sounds, or a dark tune from our playlist 'Computer Blues'.

Blend them together with your own music and then upload your drone remix to our SoundCloud group." (Lüneburg and Montrey, SoundCloud Group | What-ifblog.net 2015)

The text was formulated to stimulate intrinsic motivation by stirring the fantasy of possible contestants, emphasising the fun factor and calling for autonomous creative engagement with the free sound material we provided. The extrinsic motivational factors were the right balance between specified challenge and freedom to explore – not too many but clear instructions for the creative task – and the general framework of a contest and the community feeling on our social media platform. Participating in the challenge promised a chance to gain competence in audio creation, and on the other hand the sense of being related to and belonging in a peer group. Participants showed great investment and composed remixes up to eighteen minutes long.

As an example, contributor T.C. Elliott – who was one of our winners – wanted to explore new compositional techniques, and the challenge fitted into his habitual creative behaviour, a sign for intrinsic motivation. Moreover, the contest came at the right time with the right kind of challenge, so he was also extrinsically motivated:

"I am participating in the 50 songs in 90 days songwriting challenge for the… oh, eighth year? So I am already in the 'let's write some music' frame of mind. I am wanting to get into midi recording and this drone challenge was a perfect opportunity. I don't generally use prerecorded track or do remix challenges, but this was specific enough (use THESE tracks) and still open enough (make a piece of music) that it seemed doable. I've only used drones in writing music one or two times before so this was still a new experience." (Elliott 2015)

Gloria had time to spare, the challenge triggered an interest that had already existed before (intrinsic motivation), and she found the extrinsic motivations of a deadline and the opportunity to share her work via our social media channels encouraging.

"Earlier this year on International Drone Day, I had the idea of making a drone piece about the Korean belief in fan death, but was too busy at the time with my job to do it. When I saw the remix challenge, I had just finished my work contract and had some time off before school was going to start, so I had some free time. I figured the remix challenge was a good opportunity to do the drone piece I had thought about earlier. I find that external motivators such as deadlines and an opportunity to share my composition (through your soundcloud/facebook/blog) really work well for me in terms of encouraging me to do something creative." (Guns, #WhatIfDrone-Remix 2015)

As a side note: Gloria, a Canadian citizen, has Korean origins and her remix *Fan Death* is rooted in her specific identity as she explains in a programme note.

"There is a persistent belief among Koreans that it is dangerous to leave a fan on while you sleep, because it might suffocate you. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and can't fall back asleep, and all I can hear is the evil hum of the fan.

Composed as part of the Drone Remix project run by What If? (www.facebook.com/ events/ 1621294274814993/), using several of their crickets and Gran Cassa samples, along with all of the fans in my house. Also featuring an old Korean lullaby [sung by Gloria herself], which translates roughly to:

'hush, hush, dear baby
you sleep so soundly...'"
(Guns, *Fan Death* 2015)

Gloria's participation was especially successful since not only did she produce an artwork that she found satisfying, but her soundtrack also found its way into two separate artworks of *TransCoding*: the audiovisual installation *Read me* personalised for Gloria herself and the segment *Slices of Life – Korean Lullaby* in the show for violin, soundtracks and video.

👁 Link to the videos *Read me* personalised for *Gloria Guns* and *Slices of Life – Korean Lullaby*
🔊 Link to the remix *Fan Death* by Gloria Guns:
   http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (2)

Relatedness and Belonging

Another motivation for participation was the personal link to us as persons and artists. To consciously further this connection was part of my intention, when I worked on personalising our network-based communication. I supported direct exchange with our community members, and tried to remove the barriers of the (traditionally) hierarchical artist–audience relationship that is common in classical music. This led to several community members taking the opportunity to chat either with my colleague Montrey or with myself on Facebook, via Twitter or mail. Over the personal contact they shared their artworks, or they used the exclusive personal interaction to discuss how they liked our social media channels. Some even let us in on their personal situation in their home country.

I, on the other hand, offered inside in my creative thinking, and in the problems and difficulties that occurred in the process of the project. In the blog post series *Making of: Vienna Weekend Thoughts (1-3)*, for instance, I introduced the community to the ideas that inspired me for this project describing my fascination with the democratic idea of participatory culture while featuring Charles Leadbeater's inspirational YouTube video *We think* on mass creativity.

"Dear All,

What are my plans for this mini-series Vienna Weekend Thoughts? Today, tomorrow and on Sunday, I would like to introduce you to ideas that inspired me for this project, reflect a bit on surprises on the way and give you a prospect on what is planned next.

First of all, I would like to present to you Charles Leadbeater's YouTube video 'We think' [http://tinyurl.com/pcsjvp6]: 'The Audience is taking to the stage', 'People can have their say' and 'New ideas usually come through conversation' – These sentences carry a huge fascination for me and I was wondering if that could be transferred to our field of work, new music and media art. ...

And here we are now. In February our project officially started. Eight months later, our community has grown, gets involved, and talks to us. A first art work with texts of the community has been realised and our latest shelfie challenge is well on its way. We have had very individual, funny and arty submissions that beautifully reflect the personality of the people who submitted. Have a look at our what if? community gallery [http://what-ifblog.tumblr.com/] on Tumblr.

Today, I would like to ask you to shower us with more of your shelfies. We would like to weave them into a music video as the next part of our artwork on identity. Also, let us know what you think, keep talking to us, inspire us as we hope to inspire you.

Thank you for being part of this.
Barbara"
(Lüneburg, Making of: Vienna Weekend Thoughts 1 – We Think Therefore We Are 2014)

In the second post, I reflected on beautiful surprises during the creative and communicative process and hinted on difficulties on the way, and in the third post I gave them an artistic perspective on how community's contributions might possibly be integrated into the future artwork, while at the same time introducing them to art I loved. I did this all in the hope to connect on a personal level and to diminish the traditional distance between audience, that is our community, and myself, the professional artist and researcher.

According to Deci and Ryan connectedness is also a feeling that is one of the possible positive outcomes when acting upon extrinsic motivation: Extrinsic motivation leads people to a sense of belongingness and relatedness that can be gained through their actions. #WhatIfDrone-remix winner, Ken Ficara, explained to us his reasons for participating in the contest. Not only expected he to feed his love for drones (an intrinsic motivation), but he also mentioned that he felt connected with our aesthetic approach.

"I love drones, have hours and hours of them
I mean, drone pieces of my own. So that attracts me
However, the fact that I knew your work and I felt like I connected with your
approach/aesthetic
made me say yes
I knew the spirit would be positive, first of all
And your description sounded open/exploratory/fun, not dronier-than-thou"
(Ficara 2015)

'Relatedness' is one of the ground pillars that shape participatory culture on social media. In *We-think: Mass innovation not mass production* (Leadbeater 2008) Charles Leadbeater claims that people like to share on the web, because they socialise in online communities, they build together and get recognition for the work they do; they are not what they 'own' but what they 'share'.

Especially on Facebook, our community liked to enter conversations and share their experiences. Our question 'What gets your creativity going?' for instance triggered a lively and lengthy discussion about how to activate one's creativity amongst our community members and with us (Montrey, Call for Entries | What Gets Your Creativity Going? 2015). Moreover, it supported the feeling of belonging to a close-knit community and that of a shared identity: We were all creators. 'What gets your creativity going?' was a challenge that aimed for joint exploring and learning and which inspired participants and myself to do extra artworks on the side. Submissions took on the form of a creativity prompter on Facebook by Monique Besten from Belgium, (and my spontaneous artistic response to it), a guest blogpost on *what-ifblog.net* by Gloria Guns with a series of Arctic photos, and several compositions of members of our former SoundCloud group.

Concluding I state that *TransCoding*'s online-communication and artworks was contextualised within a history of shared experiences which gave more meaning to our interaction. *TransCoding* offered a common goal and a purpose for coming together on our virtual platforms. It created social connections across different cultural backgrounds that would have not been possible to establish in daily life starting with geographical reasons, since the community came from four different continents.

The Act of Creation and Hedonic Rewards

Peter Troxler emphasises the importance of 'hedonic' versus pecuniary rewards, namely learning, the act of creation, peer recognition and ego gratification, as motivational factors.

"The business, or rather, the benefits of commons-based peer-production are not uniquely monetary. The rewards include indirect mechanisms, such as the positive effects of learning, *on future earnings* or enhanced reputation ... The business also includes what economists call hedonic rewards: not consumption, but the act of creation gives pleasure to the prosumers. Peer recognition is another physiological reward, involving ego gratification." (Troxler, Libraries of the Peer Production Era 2011)

Government civil engineer Andy Getch, USA, participated in our remix contest and later in our #GYHAFY call. When we interviewed him on his reasons for creating music, he not only listed hedonic rewards, such as pleasure in music-making, emotional gratification, admiration for musicians and the inner urge to grow into that role himself, but he also describes music as a core aspect of his identity.

"I make music because I love music, it moves me, a song is playing in my head most of the time. Music provides an emotional outlet, a means of expression when words alone don't. Music is a shining light in my life. I make music because I always admired the musician, the songwriter, and the lone performer in front of an audience. The lone singer-songwriter with a guitar embodies all three, and that is what I am now. I wanted to learn how to play the songs I love, then write my own songs. I make music because I am music." (Getch 2015)

Peer recognition and ego gratification was also an important aspect of participating. Some of the calls for entries were shaped as a competition and the winners were featured in special blog posts on *what-ifblog.net* that portrayed them as artists and persons. After having been one of the selected winners #WhatIfDrone winner Sarah Sherlock wrote on her personal blog:

"I was one of the 3 winners! They had some great entries by producers and composers from Europe and the USA, so I'm really excited about it. This means my song 'Peripheral Vision' will be featured in an Audio-Visual Installation at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, Austria on 10th of October, an international meeting of artists and researchers and I will be also featured on a future dedicated blog post!" (Sherlock 2015)

On August 21, 2017, Susanne Wosnitzka commented on the Facebook page of the blog *Dangerous Minds* on the photo they used for their article on vintage photos of lesbian and gay couples. She proudly announced:

"I used this main pic from this article [Fig. 2.7, below] to create a short story about 'Johnny' to give this supersweet couple a new (fictitious) history. Dr. Barbara Lueneburg composed the music for it – now it's a successful project who already run in Graz/Austria and Canada on music festivals. See and hear here the whole podcast of 'Johnny' in the 'Slices of life' project: https://what-ifblog.net/2016/11/09/johnny-and-other-stories/comment-page-1/#comment-4568"

Fig. 2.7: Vintage photo of a lesbian couple that served as inspiration for Susanne Wosnitzka's story *Johnny*. The narrative became incorporated in the artwork *Slices of Life*. Photo source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/sshreeves/3424679723/, with permission of sshreeves

My team and I supported peer recognition in multiple ways. Community members were offered the possibility to express their personal views on identity in guest blogs. We featured the results of our calls for entries on the main blog *what-ifblog.net*. Every entry in response to a call was exhibited on the community gallery on Tumblr and, depending on the nature of the contribution, on Instagram (photo), SoundCloud (sound or composition) or YouTube (film scoring and variations of the personalised audiovisual

installation *Read me*). Whenever I used material from the community in any of the artworks for *TransCoding*, or when community members personalised the audiovisual installation *Read me*, I first consulted the contributors to get their permission, and afterwards clearly acknowledged and mentioned them in any post on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, both blogs, or in press releases and programme notes for live concerts.

Above all, I shared my pride when our participative art got national and international recognition by my peer group or by the community itself. From their reactions on Facebook and Twitter, it was clear that those members whose contributions became part of the final artwork got special ego gratification from that fact. On April 26, 2017, for instance, when I announced on Facebook, that the show *Slices of Life* was invited to Canada, Anahit Mughnetsyan (Armenia), Gloria Guns (Canada) and Susanne Wosnitzka (Germany), whose contributions to the show were substantial, commented as follows

"Susanne Wosnitzka: Wow – my story to Canada *impressed* 😲😊😊😊😊
Anahit Mughnetsyan: I am so glad for all of us!!!! Our 'art identity' found it's way.......🙂
proud and honored to be part of it.....congratulations to all!!!😊
Gloria Guns: Hooray, you're coming to Canada! Welcome!"
(Wosnitzka, Mughnetsyan and Guns 2017)

In conclusion I should also point out that participants interacting within the same system, structure and content of *TransCoding* may have experienced a different understanding of what the project was to them, depending on their personal context and on their original intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for interaction. There was a clear range, from participation for the purpose of creatively expressing one's own identity (and through that connect with others), to consciously contributing to the show itself, to participating for (cultural-) political reasons, or simply for hedonic rewards such as the sheer enjoyment of being creative and the fulfilment when accomplishing a creative task. Ideally participants could achieve personal empowerment through their participation, would influence the artwork *Slices of Life* or *Read me* and support me with text, image or sound material to creatively work with.

My role was to offer content that met the requirements of our research project and at the same time encouraged the community to participate. I had to showcase classical contemporary multimedia art that was concerned with the topic of 'identity' in order to arouse the interest of the community as much as possible. The challenges I designed had to be of relevance for potential participants, anticipate their fields of interest and trigger an emotional response, while providing the potential that resulting contributions could be included into the project's artworks *Slices of Life* or *Read me*. The team's social media manager and I had to find and constantly improve communication

structures on our social media channels to reach a wider, potentially interested audience and to keep up the flow of communication, information and creative incentives. We analysed the community's reactions to our calls, worked on anticipating the potential intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors of our active members, and also featured the creative work of our contributors. As the person who ultimately incorporated the participants' contributions into the artwork, I had to make the influence and agency of the community clearly perceptible by picking up on their topics and respectfully integrating photos or images, sounds or texts. In this project I understood my role as artist as different from the traditional model in which the artist is exclusively concerned with developing his or her own inner ideas in self-directed effort, or trying to think and inquire independently from society or the audience, or creating art according to artistic principles that only well-informed insiders would be able to understand. In contrast, the creative and communicative work of *TransCoding*, both for the team and for me, was based on the democratic spirit of open source, of sharing among equals, on the free exchange of knowledge and goods, and on a joint creative endeavour.

Gloria Guns' entry in the remix challenge and its use in the artwork *Slices of Life* is an example of how community members had their own voice, expressed their specific identity, and felt satisfaction in the act of creation (and the freedom to do it in their own way), while I could match their self-interest with what the project and I needed myself. However, the process of integration was not always as easy as that. Especially in the beginning of the project, the initial artist collective struggled with the notion of including the creative say of the community in the overall artwork. I will expand on this topic in detail in chapter 9 ('A Potential for Change'). However, before I do so, I would like to feature the community's voice by presenting selected contributions by individual community members.

8. THE COMMUNITY'S VOICE

The community exerted influence on the topic and shape of the artwork through the choice and composition of their narratives, imagery and sounds, and their interest in specific topics, which they communicated through their engagement or lack of it. Their influence shows in the fact that since the first sketches in 2014, when *Slices of Life* was planned as a contemporary (art) music-centred work constructed on abstract symbolism around the Greek-Roman idea of the four temperaments (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic), it has turned into a narrative crossover performance based on a string of real and invented stories, sounds and photos contributed by individual members of the community. With their submissions our active members created various representations of identity – be it musical, photographic or textual. Some of these were so elaborate that I asked permission from the contributors to present them in this book. In addition to featuring them here I will seek for their meaning with regard to the artwork *Slices of Life*.

Exploring the Notion of Spirituality

'Spirituality,' as a part of our identity, was repeatedly made a strong theme on our social media channels. It eventually found its way into the artwork *Slices of Life* not only in the form of the segment *I am a Priest* (more about it in chapter 11, 'Case Study *I am a Priest*'), but also when I was given permission by Anahit Mughnetsyan to weave fragments of her spiritual song *Megha* (sung by soprano Heghine Ohanyan) into the final segment of *Slices of Life*. Armenian composer and choir conductor Anahit Mughnetsyan appears to be a deeply spiritual person. Her guest blog on her homeland describes how the ancient culture of her country, how land and landscape influence her identity, and how the place she feels is her place to be, and her creativity, both have roots in her upbringing and growth in what she calls "Mother-land+home+holy."

"Armenia-Homeland by Anahit Mughnetsyan:
I am a creator and that is my identity!
The place where I live, Armenia, is 'holy' or 'Noah's,' 'stone crosses,' 'paradise' ... land – they say.
Holy? Land? ...
What if the place we live in is really holy, unique, special...?
Why I love living in Armenia. Really don't know. No one knows why he's born, rises, lives, loves in the place which we call homeland...

Homeland...

Home land or land home…The land is my home, yes maybe this is the key to the answers above. Each of us traveled a lot or just a little, it doesn't matter, anyway each of us can find the place where he or she can stay and feel like home+land… but when you travel Armenia you really understand the meaning of your identity, roots…

Identity? Roots? Again questions.
Yes and it's a pleasure to find your roots, and gain answers by walking on the holy+home+land… sometimes you find, sometimes you lose, but always you feel something special, unique for you in the air, from sunshine, from sand, from rain, from lightning, from everything. And what an interesting fact: I felt the same in Russia, Georgia, Iran…

So, then, what's my real home+land? Maybe it is the duration that makes a place my home+land? Because while you live in a place – for a short or for a longer time – in some places you grow, you learn, take and give at the same time; by the way, even from Mother-land+home+holy… in that way: you with your circle of creations. usually you are just a jest in other places, except in your born+land=homeland, where your feelings grow from piano to forte, from soft to strong…

I love my Home+Land=World
What if the World is my home+land?

I appreciate Armenia where I take much and maybe give less, create a music, which is the voice of the land and that voice is unique, special, kind…. and maybe this is our identity to listen and reproduce it clearly and give back to the Mother-land for upcoming generations? Any identity is different and depends on the place you are at that time, and how deep your roots are…every time when you go for discovery and revelation, you take your roots with you, cause you're not a tree;

by the way … as with each country, Armenia isn't an exception with its problems. As a newly reformed country (with over 2700 years of history and cultural heritage), its government does not pay much attention for today's art, culture, especially for music, but we've to remember that each of us has his or her own place and circle within. As I said above, I create music and I am not a composer, I am a creator and that is my identity!

Anyway, you know that: there is always a way to return home+land and the old door which waits for you to knock, which keys are always with you…

And finally I want to thank to my friend Barbara for being the reason again to think about my identity as a human being…

Here you will find some of my music from a live performance: Curch Ohanavan, VCC, 'Voxormya' (Pomiluy, Miserere) music by Anahit Mughnetsyan, камерный хор, худ. рук

и дирижер Р.Мхитарян And click here for a video on my homeland Armenia: Welcome to Artsakh, ancient Armenian Land (original title: *Karabakh a Hidden Treasure* (https://www. YouTube.com/watch?v=3rs8Z_h6EYs)" (Mughnetsyan, "Armenia-Homeland" by Anahit Mughnetsyan 2014)

Fig. 2.8: Nature of Armenia close to Spitak. Used by kind permission of Zaruhi Babayan.

Exploring Identity Through Words — #GYHAFY

My original wish to include Judith Butler's idea of "performing gender" as "a domain of agency or freedom" (Butler, Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender 2011) into the scope of *TransCoding* led to the call that received the most elaborate contributions from our community: *#GYHAFY – Give Yourself A Holiday Away From Yourself.* The idea of the call was to freely pick a gender and script a self-chosen identity around it. The original wording of the call was inspired by weekend magazine questionnaires intended to entertain the reader:

"Call for Entries: #GYHAFY – Give yourself a holiday away from yourself
Take on another gender, another age, another name.

Your chosen gender:
Century of birth:
Country of birth:
Best friend(s)/(unusual) pet:
What did your parents want you to become?
What are you really doing now?
What is your day job?
What is your night job?

Where do you live?
– In a mountain hut/26th floor of a skyscraper/I own my house/I rent a room/I share a
flat with (?)/...
– In the countryside/on a lone island/small city/big city/...
Where would you rather live?

If you were a plant lover/gardener/botanist – what would your
garden/park/meadow/field/balcony/window shelf/... look like?
You hate plants? Tell me about it.

What is the weirdest story of your life?
No story?
– Let me know what annoys you.
– Tell me what you love about life/this special day/last week...
Best encounter ever:

Favourite text/statement/book/...
Your chosen name is:

On **what if?**, we are looking for identities. Get creative.
Comment below on your imagined identity.
Join our FB event #GYHAFY.
Or sent us an email with your chosen identity to barbara.lueneburg@kug.ac.at by the end
of the month.
Yours truly,
Barbara"
(Lüneburg, Call for Entries: #GYHAFY – Give yourself a holiday away from yourself 2016)

We could sense how the personalities of the individual writers enfolded and were
reflected in their invented identities. Artists in real life stayed creative in fiction,

singers became troubadours and fighters for human rights wrote stories about lesbians or transgenders. Linguist Lakoff and philosopher Johnson stress in their work that "metaphor provides a way of partially communicating unshared experiences, and it is the natural structure of our experience that makes this possible" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 226), and media and communication scholar David Gauntlett argues in *Creative Explorations – New approaches to identity and audiences* (2007)

"through language and other forms of self-expression (formations of the body, such as gestures or facial expression, or products of the body, such as drawings [or any other form of creating; author's note] we can make communications about our consciousness and our sense of being in the world which others can connect with and feel that we are living within a set of collective understandings and share some sense of collective experience." (Gauntlett, Creative Explorations – New approaches to identity and audiences 2007, 15)

In what follows, I will feature two #GYHAFYs: *Tala* by the Filipina Feliz Anne Reyes Macahis and the scifi *Piargno* by the American Anthony Green.

Feliz Anne Reyes Macahis is a composer and singer from Manila, Philippines. *Tala* stood out from all the other stories that were submitted, because Feliz not only invented the character of *Tala*, she also sent us three of her own drawings as part of the story and composed music for it.

"#GYHAFY | Tala

Your chosen gender: Female

Century of birth: 21st century

Country of birth: Canada. Well, my mom is Asian and my dad is European, and they were travelling a lot. So I was born in Canada, but I grew up in Scandinavia.

Best friend: his name is Emma. He's my kindred spirit. I've met him in one of my trips years back and if I can remember correctly, we've only seen each other few times – all fleeting moments! But we constantly talk and write letters. Snail mail is the best!

What did your parents want you to become: To be a musician.
What are you really doing now: making a lot of money.

What is your day job: my job is to tell you what you want to hear. You can call it Advisor (but I prefer naming it as 'B*llsh*tter'). It's getting better and better, though. My clients used to be just from U.S. and Europe, but now I'm expanding in Asia.

Fig. 2.9: Portrait of Tala © Feliz Anne Reyes Macahis, by kind permission of the artist.

What is your night job: to assist my dad in his social experiments or to give my mom some ideas for her next composition – basically: to be a daughter. I have a great relationship with my parents. I can be myself; talk to them about anything; and even complain why people are stupid. Haha, you have no idea how this topic could go way deeper once I start the discussion with my dad!

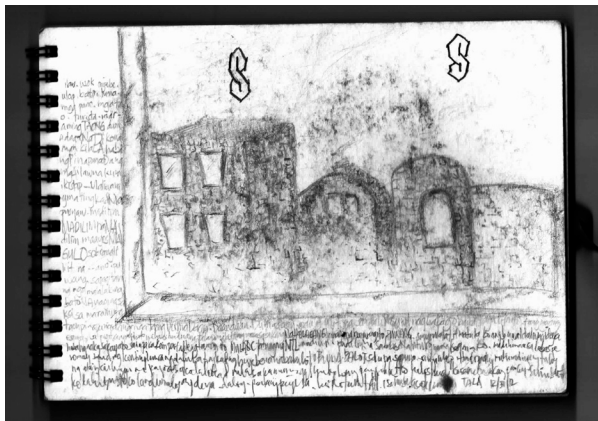I spend the rest of the night sketching some ideas or images.

Fig. 2.10: Illustration for the blogpost *Tala*, © Feliz Anne Reyes Macahis, by kind permission of the artist.

Where do you live: I have a big flat at the city center.

Where would you rather live: closer to my parents' house – near a pond where I could build my own boat house.

If you were a plant lover/ gardener/ botanist – what would your
garden/ park/ meadow/ field/balcony/window shelf… look like:
I love flowers! My window shelf is full of orchids.

What's the weirdest story of your life: I have a twin! I only learned about it when I turned 20. Seriously, that long! My dad wanted to conduct his experiment and have me and *Bituin* as his guinea pigs. He published his book about the study last year.

Another thing is that I make weird drawings. I have so much love in my heart, but my drawings say something else. Can anyone read me, please?

Fig. 2.11: Illustration for the blogpost *Tala* © Feliz Anne Reyes Macahis, by kind permission of the artist.

What annoys you: My clients. A lot of them are dumb. If they use their common sense, they don't have to pay a lot of money for my advice.

Best encounter ever: When I was 12, my mom brought me to her concert. They performed a piece of her that is 10 years older than me! It was like being in a different world.

🔊 Link to *the madness of the night and the woven stars* by Feliz Anne Reyes Macahis:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (3)

Favourite text/ statement: 'Everyone gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense.' – Gertrude Stein

Chosen name: Tala"
(Macahis, # GYHAFY Tala 2016)

Another contributor, Anthony R. Green, describes himself as composer, performer and fighter for social justice. On his personal website he states that "[b]ehind all of his artistic endeavors are the ideals of equality and freedom which manifest themselves in diverse ways in a composition, a performance, a collaboration, or social justice work." (A. R. Green, Anthony R.Green 2016) Anthony picked up on my incentive of gender and invented a male transgender, whose favourite book is the Declaration of Independence.

"GYHAFY | piargno

Your chosen gender: Transgender male
Century of birth: 80th
Country of birth: Intorion (transliterated)
Best friend(s)/(unusual) pet: a tardigrade

Fig. 2.12: *Tartigrade* by Phineas Jones on flickr under a Creative Commons license.

What did your parents want you to become?

They had no interest in my life. I was raised by computers, but not the ones with the ability to care, just the ones who provided the basics.

What are you really doing now?

Creating a vehicle to explore the latest discovered star in Croteo Lurnexa

What is your day job?

Engineer and interpreter

What is your night job?

Participant in a life-long sleep study

Where do you live?

In a pod in the center of the big city Frotorx, in a floating building that has 500 other individuals living in pods. The digital simulations make it more spacious than it sounds.

Where would you rather live?

In an underwater hotel on planet Earth.

If you were a plant lover/gardener/botanist – what would your garden/park/meadow/field/ balcony/window shelf/... look like?

Full of black flowers.

You hate plants? Tell me about it.

I don't hate plants. I just don't belong to the cast of people that gives them any thought or attention.

What is the weirdest story of your life?

When I was in an online relationship with 7 other people for 6 years, I could not escape the desire to get plastic surgery to physically change my appearance, rather than rely on the digital version of myself that I had created for my partners. It was the first time I ever considered the old theory that digital representations of your physical self – that don't actually match your physical self – are lies. I ended the online relationship, and began a non-digital one with someone who lives in the pod complex. We are still together – we've been together for 9 years, but we only see each other and talk to each other about once or twice a month. It's the best relationship I've ever had.

Best encounter ever?

One day when I was researching tips on entertaining my tardigrade Loozy, I was contacted by a composer named Frips Chathrameh. I guess he found out that I am a big fan of his scent music. He told me that he also has a tardigrade, and it is also entertained by his scent music. I never thought of that, but it worked like a charm.

Favourite text/statement/book/... ~ The Declaration of Independence

Your chosen name is: Poh Mia"
(Green, #GYHAFY | piargno 2016)

#GYHAFYs found their way into *Slices of Life* in two different forms. Firstly, through the segment *Johnny*, the love story of a lesbian woman. The author, Susanne Wosnitzka, lent her own voice as my fictive interview partner, while I scored the text. Secondly, in the segment *My Chosen Name*, which featured six Mini-GYHAFYs that people gifted to me on Facebook.

"My chosen name is Gloria.
I was created in 1994.
I like slapstick comedy and I'm not ashamed to admit it."
(Mini-GYHAFY by Michael Wolters, Great Britain, contributed on the author's personal Facebook site on February 22, 2016)

These Mini-GYHAFYs were recorded by members of the community to become part of the composition.

👁 Link to the video documentation of *Slices of Life – Johnny*:
   http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (3)
🔊 Link to the audio recording of *My Chosen Name is*
   http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (4)

Exploring Identity Through Sound – Calls for Audio Entries

During the runtime of *TransCoding* we initiated three calls for sound in total. Just before New Year 2016, we asked for submissions of downloadable sound samples as a 'holiday' gift to our community to celebrate the impending New Year. In response to this call alone, we received forty-one submissions from our twenty-seven group members. As we had just sixty-four followers on our SoundCloud at that point, it means that 42% of our followers followed our call. They were a small group, but they were deeply engaged.

"Call for Entries: Holiday Gifts | #WhatIfSoundSamples

Dear All,

Head on over to our SoundCloud, because we've left something under the holiday tree for you. Students from Barbara's 'Undoing Gender' course at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz have been hard at work coming up with ideas that represent gender dynamics and images. The result of one of these thought exercises is 'Screams and Growls,'

in male and female editions: 🔊 https://soundcloud.com/what-ifblog/sets/screams-and-growls

Now we'd like you to ask you for a small holiday gift for our community, as well. Submit a sound sample under a Creative Commons license so that any members of the community maybe use and remix them. Submit directly on our SoundCloud group: https://soundcloud.com/groups/what-ifblog-submissions, Deadline: December 29.

We'll put all your submissions in a playlist, and then we'll pick our favourite three sounds to create a special 'late-under-the-tree' blog post. But most importantly, we can all remix each other's contributions for holiday/New Year's remixes and get some What if? community spirit going. We would love that …

Thank you very much and happy festivities,

Your what if? team."
(Montrey, Call for Entries: Holiday Gifts | #WhatIfSoundSamples 2015)

German DJ and installation artist Denim Szram contributed a free sound sample that reflected in its musical shape and development almost exactly what he described as creative process typical for him:

"My compositional process normally starts with my experimenting with synthesizer and sound recordings, searching for interesting textures and moods. Once I find something interesting I try to expand this and build a variety of sound in different frequency ranges. From low sub frequencies up to high noisy sound, from long pads to short signals. With these different elements I then try to build a dramaturgy, to keep the listener excited.
(Szram, #WhatIfSoundSamples | Denim Szram 2016)

New York based Laura Feathers expresses her creative identity through various outlets such as photography and text, and contributed to almost all calls for entries on *what-ifblog.net*. An electrician by day, Laura extends this to her free time with an electronics hobby. "My knowledge of electronics from my work overlaps with the technical side of music and with the rich history of electronic music," she wrote to us. "I am passionate about exploring new approaches to sound." (L. Feathers, #WhatIfSoundSamples | Laura Feathers 2016) Her offering for #SoundSamples was a track under the artist name Magic Sun. Reminiscent of vintage synth work of decades past, the sound world that Laura created developed into much more than a simple sound sample, a piece almost four minutes long titled *Soundscape 1*:

🔊 Link to *What if? Free Sound Sample* by Denim Szram:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (4)

🔊 Link to *Soundscape 1* by Laura Feathers aka Magic Sun:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (4)

Laura's approach tied in with the call #WhatIfDrone-Remix Contest in which we invited our participants to use sound samples from our SoundCloud to creatively express their musical identity and style.
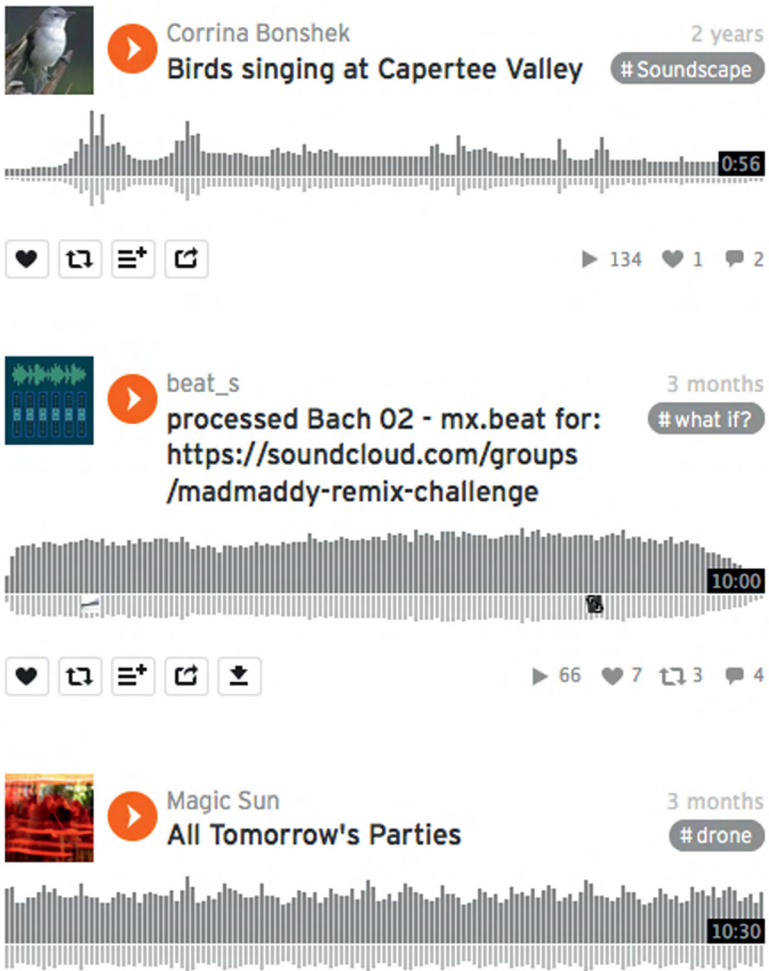

Fig. 2.13: A screenshot from the SoundCloud group of *TransCoding* showing *Call for Entries: Drone remix* with contributions by Corrina Bonshek, Beat S and Magic Sun.

With the third call for audio entries I explicitly addressed our community to help me with the artwork for *Slices of Life*. I asked our members to record themselves reading *Subsection 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*:

"Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability." (Canadian Charter Of Rights And Freedoms Subsection 15 (1) 1982)

We received contributions in English, French and Polish. The original motivation for using this specific text came from Canadian community member Gloria Guns, mentioned above. She wished to include a subsection of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as part of her personalised *Read me* installation. As a human rights lawyer, Gloria considered this subsection of the charter a substantial part of her own personal identity. For my part, I thought that a statement about equality and the right to freedom was a fitting idea to round off the series of identities that formed *Slices of Life* and accordingly I incorporated the recorded voices into its last segment, *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Exploring Identity Through Imagery – Frames of Life

Our calls for images were almost as popular as the calls for texts. Uploading snapshots on Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest or Instagram has grown into an almost ordinary activity with avid social media users, so contributing appeared to be easy, spontaneous and playful for our participants as well. We asked for shelfies, Catrinas (see below) and pictures of powerful women, and we showcased photographers who captured moments of everyday life in their work.

One of the photographers featured was Romanian artist Sabina Ulubeanu who was a supporter of *TransCoding* and a regular participant in our challenges. In her visual art, she loves to frame scenes she 'finds' on the street. Not only are her photos carefully chosen in terms of colour and formal composition, but each motif tells a specific story. For instance, her image of an old woman behind a window. We just get a glimpse of her. The worn window frame adds its story to the woman's life.

Through her photography Sabina makes the particular quality of this moment stand out, so that we, the onlookers, can sense it as well. Her series 'frames of life,' became the visual basis for the video of *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in *Slices of Life*.

Fig. 2.14: *Old woman behind window* © Sabina Ulubeanu (by kind permission of the artist)

In response to the above mentioned *Call for Entries: Creativity is Contagious* in which we asked the community for shelfies that expressed their creative identity, one participant, visual artist and professional engineer Hali Rey, sent us a poetic arrangement consisting of leather-bound books, a statue and text fragments.
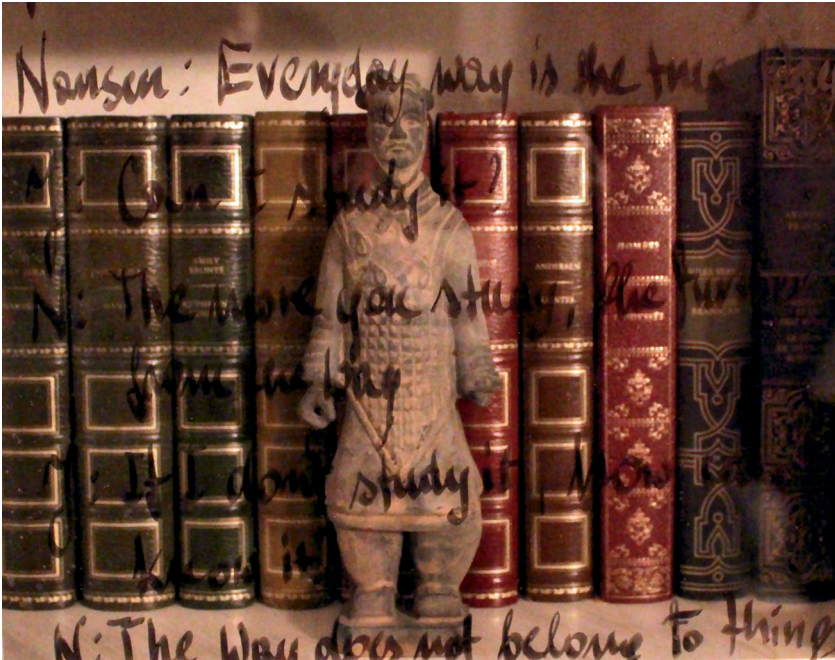

Fig. 2.15: *Shelfie* by Hali Rey, submission for the Call *Creativity is Contagious* (by kind permission of the artist)

The magic of the picture reminded me of my encounter with young Russian pianist Alina Murzakhanova, and her love for literature and classical culture. Alina was one of the community members who got a personalised version of the audiovisual installation *Read me*. When I met Alina, she talked about art and life and we exchanged experiences of what it is like to live in a foreign country. Living abroad sometimes reminded her of the world of the famous story of *Alice in Wonderland*: the grotesqueness of situations, the fractures in everyday life that come from being a foreigner, the uncertainty of right or wrong, those are questions she felt she was confronted with while living among people of another country. For her the text by Lewis Caroll encapsulated all this, and she chose it as the basis for her personalised version of the audiovisual installation *Read me*.

In the soundtrack for her installation, the clear ringing of Asian bells express the dreaminess of Alina's world, claves capture her determination in life, and sounds of an old, broken accordion transport us right into the middle of her version of her own personal wonderland. I derived all the sound material for Alina's soundtrack from *TransCoding*'s SoundCloud. Later, I used the text and the soundtrack of her installation as the compositional source for the segment *Who am I?* in *Slices of Life*, and Hali's shelfies became the backdrop for the corresponding video. Already in the first months of the project threads had appeared that connected individual contributions and the interests of the community members and myself.

👁 Link to the videos *Read me* personalised for Alina Muzakhanova
and *Slices of Life – Who Am I?*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (5)

The next call for entries, *Catrinas*, which we launched on occasion of the Mexican Day of the Dead, was tied in with the notion of spirituality, which as we have seen was one of the undercurrents of *TransCoding*. Additionally, it picked up on the topic of national festivities as an expression of a nation's identity. La Catrina, the famous female skeleton dressed in rich clothes, is a key element within Mexican culture.

"Call for Entries | Catrinas

Around the world, people are dressing up and preparing for celebrations related to All Saints' Day, such as Halloween. We thought we'd tell you about one folk identity and its related traditions, and from that, we could create a fun call for entries! ...

In Mexico, Día de los muertos celebrates our deceased relatives and friends, while keeping their spirits alive in our memories, and making them offerings of food and gifts. Based on an etching by Jose Guadalupe Posada, *La Calavera de la Catrina* has become an important figure expressing the spirit and folk identity of Mexicans on this holiday, and many people take inspiration from her for costumes and crafts ...

We'd like to see your take on Catrina! This can take any form you like: a drawing, a painting, a dressed-up figurine or doll... in fact, some of us have bona fide Catrina dolls lurking on our windowsills; Barbara's resident Catrina is pictured here! Alternatively, you can paint your face and take a selfie, or just wear clothing that suggests the spirit of the holiday." (Montrey, Call for Entries | Catrinas 2014)

The Mexican Día de los muertos, the Catholic All Souls' Day, the Japanese Bon Festival and the Korean Chuseok are festivals that honour the dead and

celebrate death, possibly in an attempt to overcome fear of mortality. In a follow-up blog post Montrey reflected on the call and its connection to our topic of identity:

"What does Catrina have to do with identity? First, most generally, it is a form of artistic self-expression. Secondly, a Catrina is an expression of facing death, of accepting death as inevitable. Yet there is something satirical in this ... The figure of the Catrina, though portraying a dead person, is at the same time very much alive: she is animated, she wears colourful clothes, she dances. In the face of death, we are all equal, yet we all celebrate the preciousness of life through looking death in the eye."
(Montrey, Catrinas | Submissions and Thoughts 2014)

As a representative sample of the many Catrina submissions we received in response to our call, Fig. 2.16 shows Daniela Michelle's drawing which, together with a selection of shelfies and other Catrinas, found its way into one of the associated artworks for *TransCoding*, the music video *The Gods Envy Us*.
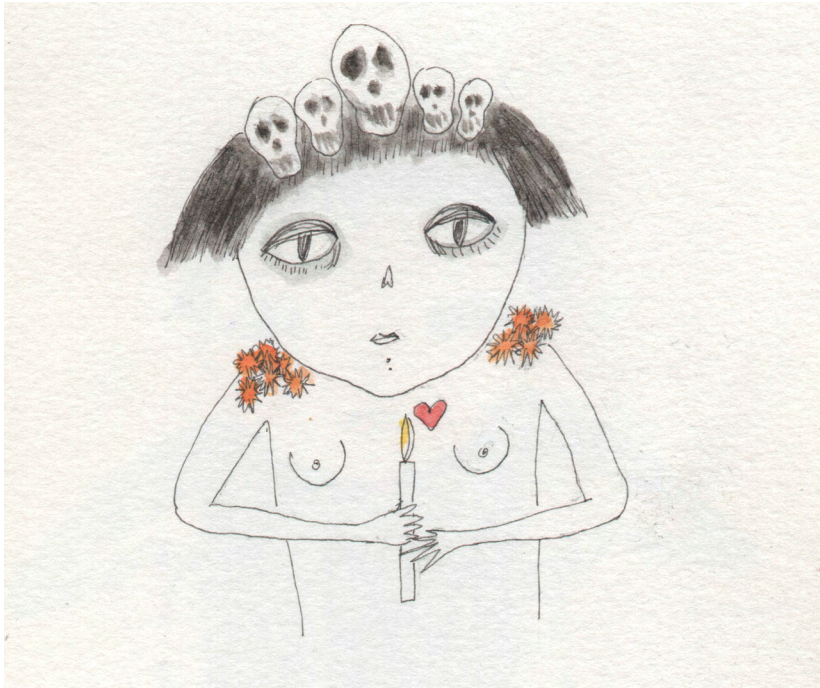

Fig. 2.16 Daniela Michelle's drawing of a Catrina, in response to our *Call for Entries | Catrina*

The video is based on a text quoted by one of our Facebook followers on her personal Facebook page; it was allegedly said by the Greek warrior and hero Achilles, of Homer's *Iliad:* "I'll tell you a secret. Something they don't teach you in your temple. The Gods envy us. They envy us because we're mortal, because any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again."

👁 Link to the video *The Gods Envy Us*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 6 (1)

The community contributed in word, image and sound, as well as inspiration. We aimed to offer calls that illuminated the topic of identity from different angles and offered interesting choices for our members to engage with. We started from personal visions in our call 'Contemporary Fairy' (discussed in detail in chapter 9, 'A Potential for Change'), included daily observations everybody could make such as in the photographic series 'frames of life,' touched on philosophical and spiritual questions, included national holidays, as a way to feature a nation's identity and asked our members to express their creative identity through music, word or image.

Participatory art necessarily poses questions around authority and decision-making power. Among others the agency and authority of our community consisted in the acceptance or denial of the incentives we offered, in the performance of their own creative practice when reacting to our project, and last but not least in their particular interpretation of our calls (possibly diverging from my original intentions) that subsequently guided my creative decisions. On the simplest level, challenges or topics that didn't elicit any answers I didn't further pursue in the artwork. Those challenges that received a lot of attention, on the other hand – such as #GYHAFY – found their way into *Slices of Life* and gained meaning for the further development and aesthetics of the overall content.

However, the recursive process of input-output directed from us to the community and vice versa delivered not only an interesting creative interaction but also rather powerful affective experiences, especially among the original group of artists. In the following chapter, I therefore investigate in detail the following question: how, how much, and on what level did I afford our participatory community authority in the decision-making process of our joint creative work, and how did this affect the artist(s) involved and the community?

(Note: chapter 9 is adapted from an article submitted to the Finnish online journal on artistic research RUUKKU: Lüneburg, From ‚Highbrow Art' to Participatory Culture – A Potential for Change *2017).*

9. A Potential For Change

This chapter deals with the question of shared authority and the impact of the interaction with the community on the role and self-concept of the artist. I first analyse in detail the second main artwork of *TransCoding*, the audiovisual installation *Read me*, with regard to concept, mode of participation and the question of authority shared with individual community members.

Case Study *Read me* — an Area of Success

Read me is an interactive audiovisual installation that can be personalised for individual *TransCoding* community members. The original artistic idea and the conceptual and technical framework came from me, but individual community members were invited to personalise the installation for themselves by filling the framework with their own chosen texts, portraits, sounds or even compositions. The afforded authority lay in the actual content: the material provided to turn the installation into a person's personalised artwork.

Fig. 2.17: Still of the audiovisual installation *Read me* in the personalised version for Gloria Guns (October 2015). Image © TransCoding
Concept and composition – Barbara Lüneburg. The musical material I composed with is in great part derived from Gloria's contribution to the *Call for Drones* placed by *TransCoding*.
Photograph of Gloria Guns: © Denise LeBleu
Choice of text material: Gloria Guns
Software programming and visual advice – LIA, Damian Stewart and Marko Ciciliani.

The idea behind *Read me* is the following: Often our first impression of a person leads us to believe that we can grasp who this person is. It seems clear and obvious. Yet the closer we get acquainted, more and more complexities about this same person are revealed. In the installation *Read me*, the closeness of the relationship is expressed through the distance of an audience member to the projection. The further away one is, the clearer the material will be (at its limit, one soundtrack and one sentence visible on the projection). The closer we get, the more complex and layered the material will become. The audio and the visual content of *Read me* reflects the complexity of our impressions of a person. (A playlist of the *Read me* installations can be found at the link bit.ly/1KqVTCd. The videos trace the approach of an onlooker to the installation).

To personalise *Read me* for a community member, I tried to get to know them, preferably personally, but if that was not possible, I made a connection online. In the standard version of the installation, I subsequently asked the community member to send a photograph of themselves along with texts that were close to their heart. For the installation, I overlaid the image with a dark layer, so that an onlooker can only see the shadow of an image behind the overlay. One single sound layer is audible and one single sentence appears in the middle of the projection. The letters of the sentence take away the dark layer and the underlying portrait shimmers through. This symbolises the first strong impression we have from a person when we have a sense that we already clearly know who this person is, when in reality we are usually still very much left in the dark (Fig. 2.18).
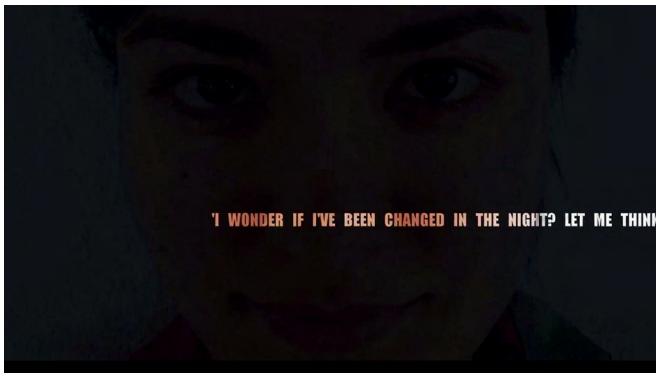

Fig. 2.18: Still of *Read me* (2015) in the version for Alina Murzakhanova. The onlooker is far away. Image © TransCoding

Having met the same person more often, we get to know more layers of them and start to see more clearly. Accordingly, when the onlooker approaches

the installation, further sentences appear and along with them more of the photograph becomes visible. The audio gains a second layer as well. (Fig. 2.19).
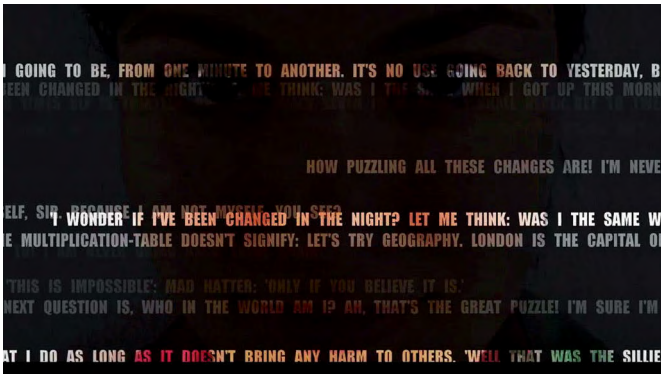

Fig. 2.19: Still of *Read me* (2015) in the version for Alina Murzakhanova. The onlooker comes closer, more layers of text, music and image appear. Image © TransCoding

Once the onlooker is very close, all the layers of music, and all the layers of text appear. The amount of text almost covers the screen and uncovers the image. Now we can see the person in the picture behind much more clearly, yet the texts are not necessarily legible anymore, the content is more shrouded. The audio on the other hand reveals more characteristics of the person represented. The onlooker, sees more, learns more about the person, yet has a sense that they don't know him or her as clearly as in the beginning (Fig. 2.20).
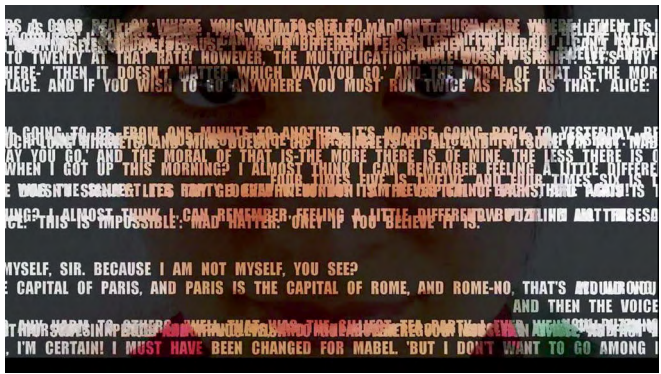

Fig. 2.20: Still of *Read me* (2015) in the version for Alina Murzakhanova. The onlooker is very close, all layers of music, image and text are perceived. Image © TransCoding

In what follows, I retrace in detail the decision-making power, that is, the authority, that I granted users when I opened up the installation to them. I do this by looking at the categories of material they contributed and by assessing the degree of involvement of individual community members. Additionally, I briefly analyse the reasons why I consider the *Read me* iteration featuring Ricardo Tovar Mateus to be especially successful.

Community Authority in the Creation of *Read me*

The modes of working for the installation ranged from what Nina Simon calls "contributory: the participant supplies content, the artist incorporates it in the artwork," to "collaborative: the participant and the artist are committed to deep partnership," to "co-creative: the artist is committed to supporting the needs and goals of the participant that align to the project and provides them with the necessary tool to accomplish the work." (Simon 2010: 190 f) Five versions of *Read me* have been realised in total. Depending on their creative self-assessment, self-consciousness and keenness to be involved, as well as their technological skills, the community members could supply one or all of the following categories of material for the installation: image, text, raw sound material and a composed soundtrack.

When I gave individual community members access enabling them to personalise and creatively work with the installation, I was aware that this could eventually lead to aesthetic frictions between them and myself, which I would possibly find difficult to overcome. Not everybody shares my taste in music or text, and vice versa. Community members might not like what I composed for them or might not find themselves represented in the sounds I chose. In the worst case we could mutually dislike what we had jointly created. In the case of community member Maria Hippenfels [name changed by the author], to whom I will introduce you later, some of the possible frictions showed.

To begin with, I would like to illustrate the degree of decision-making authority through a graph that conveys on which level (x-axis) and to which degree (y-axis) a community member has decision-making power when personalising the audiovisual installation *Read me*. The last column is derived of the arithmetic average (the sum of the different categories of material provided by each community member divided by the total number of categories).

Regarding the material that could be provided, everyone accorded high priority to images. In just two cases I had been offered a series of portrait photos to choose from (accordingly, I assessed this as granting a lesser degree of authority to the participants). Text seemed to be equally important to the community members. Only in the prototype for Montrey did I add a second text

by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies to the one she had chosen. As I knew Clio personally it was my interpretation of Clio Montrey, and she feels that I adequately represented her in the context of the artwork. Maria's choice of text was also slightly supplemented by me, since we needed more text material for her installation.
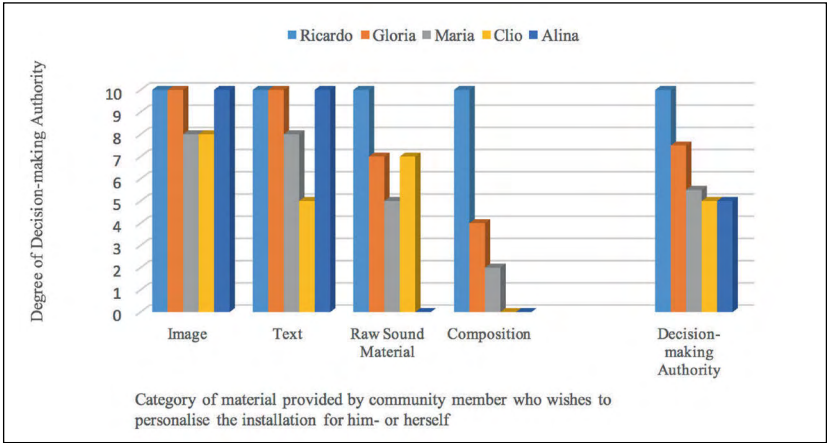

Fig. 2.21: Graphic to convey the degree of decision-making authority granted when *Read me* is personalised by individual community members. Image © TransCoding

From everybody except Alina Murzakhanova, a Russian classical pianist, I also received raw sound material to work with. In Alina's case, she had no piano available to record sounds in situ when we met, and she herself had not enough technological experience and equipment to later provide me with sound material in a digitised form. The sound material contributed by the portrayed community members was usually very personal and added to the individual and unique feel of each single installation.

The compositional process to put together the actual soundtrack yielded the widest range of technological and compositional experience from the community members, which is probably why there was less community decision-making involved. Again the prototype for Montrey is somewhat of an exception, since with her expertise she could have composed the soundtrack herself. However, at that point in the installation's development, the framework and overall aesthetics of the installation had not yet been fully implemented. It was only in subsequent versions that the idea emerged to offer the subjects the option to create the soundtrack themselves. In the case of Gloria Guns, the lawyer and pop musician from Canada, the raw material for the soundtrack of her installation consisted of a remix she had done based on material drawn from our SoundCloud tracks (described in detail in chapter 7, 'Motivation for Participation') and my personal music:

🔊 Link to the remix *Fan Death* by Gloria Guns that served as the raw material for her personalised version of *Read me*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (2)

For Maria we recorded her voice and djembe improvisations. When composing the soundtrack for each of their installations, I was dealing with pre-composed elements, which were inherent in the material they had provided. Therefore, I assigned a percentage of authority to them over the composition of the soundtrack, although I actually composed it myself.

There is only one person who provided every element for the installation, resulting in a comprehensive contribution: Ricardo Tovar Mateus, a young composer and pop musician from Colombia (Fig 2.22).
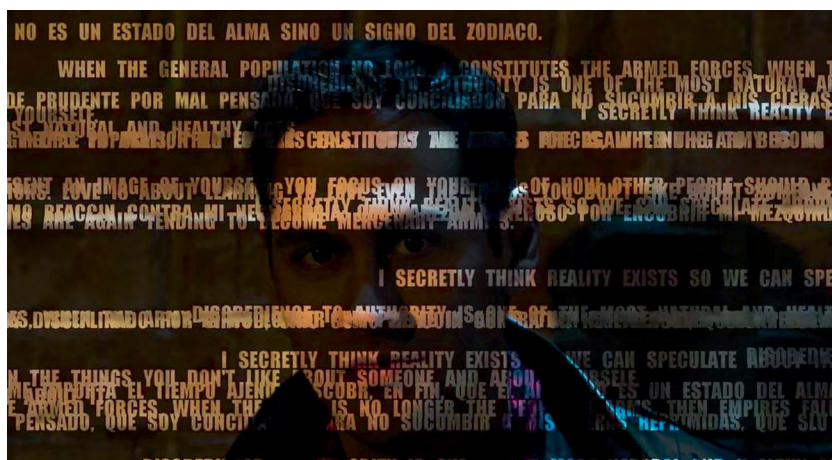

Fig. 2.22: Still of video: *Read me* in the personalised version for and by Ricardo Tovar Mateus (2015). Ricardo was the only participant who provided all the elements for the installation: image, choice of text and composition. Image © TransCoding

He successfully took 100% authority for the material he wanted represented. Why did it work so easily with Ricardo? First of all he fitted perfectly into our target group: at the time of our co-creation he was a bit over 30 years old, educated in 'high art' but working in popular culture. He is technologically savvy and is a skilled composer. He had moreover contributed to two previous calls for entries since autumn 2014, so he had a good understanding of what this project was about.

👁 Link to the video *Read me* personalised for Ricardo Tovar Mateus:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (6)

When calculating the arithmetic average of the percentages in all categories, we found that community members took on at least 50% of the minimum given authority. The individual contributions were clearly framed within the artwork, recognisable and acknowledged. Each installation had a unique feel to it while conveying an impression of the person we saw and of what was dear to their heart. It captured an idea of the multitude of layers that make up their personality.

What were the advantages for both the participant and artist in setting up the installation in a participative manner? First of all, there was the individual value of empowerment: The installation explicitly empowered community members to express their own identities and to actively participate in the creative process. The conventional power structure changed: the usually hierarchic relationship between artist and audience became one of permeability and mutual influence, and the participant had a self-chosen degree of agency in the creative process.

There was a learning value for both the community member and myself as artist: the audience member who co-created the installation was involved in the creative process, learned about new media art from the inside and fostered his or her sense of accomplishment; for me as the artist who set up the artistic framework of the installation, the learning value lay in the variety of personalities I portrayed, the diversity of material and topics that were offered to me, the possible frictions in taste and goal that I had to overcome, and in the resulting artistic challenges. Last but not least, there was the social value: the artwork was dedicated to the people who worked with me on the installation, the installation travelled with me across Europe, I documented it on our YouTube channel and shared peer recognition with them. From their reactions we gathered that it boosted their feeling of self-esteem to be portrayed by me and to be given agency in the process. As a result, the relationship between artist and audience was reinforced far beyond the encounter in a museum or a concert hall (as would more traditionally be the case in the new music scene).

In the next chapter I outline the possible areas of conflict that our project yielded, analysing in detail the development of the multimedia composition *What if we had wings?* from the perspective of the original arts team. To let the reader more clearly grasp the context and the complexity of the setting I will refer to the method of 'thick description' as developed by ethnologist Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures 1973). For this purpose, I will look in close detail into the actual process of developing the artwork and include discussions among the group of artists involved.

Online Community and Original Arts Team in Opposition:
An Area of Conflict — Case Study: *What if we had wings?*

As mentioned in chapter 6 ('The Art Production') the multimedia composition *What if we had wings?* for violin, text-based video, live electronics and soundtrack includes text contributions of our online community that were incorporated into the artwork of the team. The call that rendered the text material was called *Call for Entries | Contemporary Fairy.* We introduced it on our blog with a short fairy tale, followed up by instructions on what kind of contributions we were looking for. We chose the form of a fairy tale, because most people can relate to these as part of their cultural upbringing:

"Call for Entries | Contemporary Fairy

Once upon a time, there lived an artistically inclined polyglot fairy (though she herself disliked that loaded and complex string of labels, because she felt that labels limit how one can express one's identity). She went around the world looking for ways to facilitate artistic collaboration.

What if you were to meet this fairy on your way to the office or to your studio, and she told you she could grant you one wish and make one of your dreams come true? This dream could be anything: personal, professional, artistic, or a wish for society at large…

We would like to gather entries in the following form: One short text, no longer than one sentence. This text can be in any format you desire: a coherent, grammatical sentence, a haiku-length poetic-type written statement, a string of words that can be understood, a graphic poem made with simple word processing means such as use of spaces, special characters, capitalisation, etc. This sentence should tell the audience what your dream (vision) is. It can be personal, professional, creative, or a view for society at large. Your 'wish for the fairy,' if you will."
(Montrey, Call for Entries | Contemporary Fairy 2014)

We received multiple comments on the blog and contributions via mail or Facebook.

Sandra Allain August 13, 2014 at 3:32 pm

I wish time could be a pulse
a fragmented timescale
a soul traveling impulse
between imagination and reality

I wish time did not dim
memories and silhouettes
plastering wrinkles
where emotions are untold

I wish life
I wish to live

http://www.sandraallain.com

Fig. 2.23: Entry for *Call for Entries | Contemporary Fairy* by Sandra Allain on *what-ifblog.net*.

This was the first participation project we initiated that was extremely successful in terms of contribution volume and scope. However, the inclusion of the contributions in the artwork brought to the surface major conflicts among the original arts team on the notion of participation.

To trace the origins of the conflicts I will recall the sequence of events that led to *What if we had wings?* in detail and include excerpts of a discussion among the original group of artists. The arts team had developed the soundtrack for this piece in the context of collaborative sessions between February and August 2014. We created it entirely without relating to the community, but we knew the community had to be involved in our artwork at some point. Consequently, *Call for Entries | Contemporary Fairy* on the blog was meant as a resource of material for a video to go along with the music, whereby the material should be provided by the community. The call was initiated about a week after our last working session. I was to premiere the music (with the video) on European Researchers' Night in Vienna on September 26, 2014.

As it was not technically feasible to hold another arts team gathering between August 1 and the premiere, we discussed the call, the material it rendered and the making of the video online only. Soon some feelings of unease and discomfort came up. (In the following quotes I will refer to my fellow artists with imaginary names: Anna Veenen, Bernhard Hütten and Connor Willing).

Anna Veenen: "The questions I have could be described in general as questions on the balance between 'our show' and the 'participating culture.' ... I don't feel very comfortable with this way of working, and I feel less 'participating' in the project, because it gets further and further away of how I normally work ... I definitely see the many values of the project, of the blog, the growing participation etc, but speaking for myself I am quite incapable to 'participate' in this way. I am not a blog writer, I have no experience with participatory art nor do I feel able to make an artwork which includes many materials by other people. The reason that I participate in this project is because I want to make a show with you three, and I underestimated the participatory part, which is not the way that I work."
(Anna in an email to the author and the rest of the team, on June 16, 2014)

Due to time pressure and to the fact that the other team members were either gone for their summer vacations or busy in their usual professional work context, I took on the task of developing a video for the European Researchers' Night and incorporate the text material we had received. I used footage from a plane flight taken on my smartphone and depicted the community texts as they had come to us without shortening them, refining them or processing them further to make them seem more 'artful.' To do so was a conscious decision of mine, because I wanted our contributors to feel that we appreciated their work as it was and would use it as authentically as possible.

👁 Link to the video documentation of *What if we had wings?*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART I CHAPTER 2

While the performance garnered praise from the community, it didn't meet with the approval of my colleagues. This consequently led to a fundamental discussion between the members of the arts team about the participatory set-up of the project in general and the inclusion of the community in our artwork. In our discussions we searched for what it was that my fellow artists felt worked against the notion of community participation and for the source of their resistance to the basic concept of *TransCoding*.

To understand what happened it is important to follow a timeline that starts even before this project. The setting for an artwork that predated *TransCoding* was different from the artistic research setting of the project itself. Originally the arts team with its four members from the fields of composition, performance, visual art and interactivity had only agreed on a joint collaboration on the topic of 'Undoing Gender,' which aimed to develop a performance for violin, electronics and visuals. Everybody had agreed to be part of the group and of the project because each person wanted to work within this special group of four artists hoping that our collaboration would result in an interesting and rewarding artistic endeavour. Nothing more, no research attached, no community involved.

We explored possible avenues of funding. The research funds we received for *TransCoding* afforded us the necessary means to get the project off the ground, yet at the same time called for a completely new angle to our work: the idea of letting an online community participate.

Initially none of us had realised how deeply the participatory process with the community would eventually concern us on a personal and on an artistic level, and to what extent it would be necessary to engage with it. It had an enormous and unexpected impact on our approach to creating art. We discussed the consequences of it in an extensive team meeting.

Barbara Lüneburg [the author]: "We [Connor Willing, Bernhard Hütten and I] have worked together before. We [addressing Anna Veenen] have never worked together before, yet I have always admired your work. And I think what we did in the summer, at the end of July and the beginning of August, was something really, really special. Yet, I am torn. I am in the middle of this community thing and on the other hand I feel a responsibility towards you. I can feel that you have to move too far out of your comfort zone, which you didn't expect, which I didn't expect and I don't feel comfortable asking you to do that [interacting with the community] but on the other hand I don't know what I can do. [Nods from the others]" (Team discussion on 4th of October 2014).

We were seven months into the project, and I as project leader had necessarily (and willingly) already become deeply immersed in the interaction with the community we were building.

Barbara Lüneburg: "... unexpectedly – this whole community thing grew much more quickly than I thought. It grew to my heart, it is something, as I said before – it's not – what I learned – it especially got another dynamic when Clio [Montrey, social media strategist] came in. I learned that social media is much more about being social than doing things online within an anonymous online community. This is something which I didn't expect to happen at all, which is a really beautiful surprise in a way. I get reactions which are really very warm and very, very encouraging. And people really – like this one woman who wrote to us 'It took me a lot of courage, but now I really want to tell you this is something absolutely special what you are having going on.'" (Team discussion on 4th of October 2014).

My colleagues would have preferred to see their task in producing 'a good work of art,' not in interacting with what they called 'anonymous onlookers.' They confessed that they did not believe in the worth and authenticity of communication which is carried on online. Their primary goal was to create an artwork that reflected their individual identities, rather than ensuring the self-determination of our community, or pursuing the general curiosity inherent in a research setting. Moreover, the attempt to engage with an anonymous community on creative matters, and indeed on occasion personal and artistic

matters, via social media felt too much like an invasive challenge to their own artistic confidence. To them it felt like an intrusion to give the online community insight into our process of creation, whereas I wanted to make the process of making art and what it means to be an artist more transparent to the community.

Bernhard Hütten: "You know I felt a bit overwhelmed knowing that this would suddenly be a bigger part in the project than I thought. And I went along with it and ok, you know, let's give it a try, but for me it's still difficult to engage with the blog."
(Team discussion on 4th of October 2014)

They couldn't relate to the blog, it did not interest them as artists, and they felt it took away from the artwork. Consequently, they were not willing to promote any *TransCoding* material on their personal social media sites, which they usually used as a means for personal or artistic promotion only.

Bernhard Hütten: "I look at the posts and some of the posts I find relevant, but I cannot engage with it at all, it is not something I am interested in."
Connor Willing: "You are reluctant to see the work that we are making together as the team, if you like, in the same context as the blog, because you feel the blog is taking away from it a little. But maybe this is our challenge, you see. How do we make the blog, or how do we, you know..."
Bernhard Hütten: "...integrate it." (Team discussion on 4th of October 2014)

My colleagues proposed to reverse the process of communication by creating the artwork first and only afterwards trying to engage the community. They believed that the artwork should inform the blog, not the blog the artwork.

Connor Willing: "You know I sort of feel, if we had – if the blog had come a little bit later, then the work we would have had established would start to lead the blog maybe a bit more and that may have been the main content of the blog. Whereas at the moment the blog is full of all these different, you know, things that may or may not relate directly."
(Team discussion on 4th of October 2014)

To make art and at the same time to go online with it didn't prove to be a safe environment for my colleagues and for their way of doing art, even after they had given permission for certain content to be posted online. Even though they had consented to participating in active online interaction, they nevertheless felt uncomfortable.

Anna Veenen: "For me one of the things that is problematic with the blog is – as you earlier said – the safe space. That was really for me quite difficult ... You know these videos [which showed her trying out some interactive gestures – author's note] are really just for us or for

me. I don't want to be pushed to say 'no' or 'ok,' or to think 'is it so bad if this is online?'"
(Team discussion on 4th of October 2014)

Showing the artwork at a too early stage felt like a risk to them as professional artists: they didn't want to be associated with anything that in their opinion was not 'perfect' yet. The same applied for integrating contributions that possibly didn't meet their demand for quality. Not only was it a question of taste to my colleagues, but it also got in the way of their habit of collecting the materials themselves and having total control over them. Moreover, they were afraid that if the material was 'not good enough,' it could reflect badly on them as serious artists and could damage their reputation in their new music peer group.

We realised that the structure of the social media, the building of a community and the speed with which social media works was too different, for some of our group, from their working habits and their wish for depth. To work within a participatory context demanded continuous engagement with a community that was perceived as 'anonymous' by my fellow artists and as getting in the way of meaningful collaboration within the group of artists they had originally wanted to work with. The openness that my social media strategist and I felt was necessary to gain the trust of a community and to get the community to interact with the arts team was opposed to the need for a safe haven in which the artists could build their artwork.

Although we had set strict privacy rules for ourselves, the feeling prevailed of not being allowed to 'fail and fail again' in order to develop the artwork, because the failing could possibly become part of the next blog post for the category 'Making of.'

At this point I would like to return to Jank's thoughts on participation as paraphrased in chapter 4 ('Theory of Participatory Culture'). The development of *What if we had wings?* and its participatory aspect clearly raised 'questions of power constellations' and of the 'congenial inclusion of outsiders.' It enabled 'open, critical dialogue' not only with the community but also among the team, as well as the dissolution of traditional practices (Jank 2012: 147). We understood that we needed to develop a new mode of operating; we had to search for a way to include contributions from our community in a meaningful and responsible way; we had to make the border between 'us' and 'them' – the 'outsiders' – permeable; we had to be willing to be influenced and had to value the community. We had to give up some of our control over the artistic material and instead value our community members' creativity and integrate their contributions. We needed to be willing to hear the voice of the community and to share power over the vision for the overall artwork. All of this had to be accomplished without losing ourselves or our artistic integrity.
However, since my colleagues could not find additional value in the participatory

setting for themselves and for their art making, since they found it got in the way of what they really wanted to do, we decided to end the collaboration after the first year of *TransCoding*. There were a number of valid points that had rather to be consciously acknowledged than suppressed: fear of losing the respect of one's peer group; fear that one might not fit in anymore; discomfort in handling material that is not one's own, not to one's taste or maybe not of the quality one is used to working with; unease with operating beyond our self-chosen and established artistic 'brand image'; the need to feel safe in one's working process; a familiarity with well tested and comfortable working habits that made one resistant to an as yet uncertain approach. The pressure from the domain we are working in and from the field that an artist answers to cannot be denied, neither can (our personal) artistic taste be too much ignored in the working process. Both are factors in our professional life as artists that cannot easily be changed.

I would therefore like to look more closely at an example in which a (subliminal) friction between a community member and myself occurred, in which a conflict of 'taste' versus 'authority' came to the surface and in which I was challenged to overcome several of above mentioned points. The perspectives I describe in detail include both that of the artist and of the individual community member.

Read me – Personalised for Maria Hippenfels: A Conflict of 'Taste' Versus 'Authority' With a Positive Outcome

We always heard from the installation's subjects that the personalised installations were meaningful to them. I quote Maria's representative email to me (February 2, 2016) about the music I composed for her soundtrack:

🔊 Link to the soundtrack *Maria – a Portrait*:
   http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (6)

„Liebe Barbara!
Ich hab's mir gestern schon angehört und wollte es noch einmal nachklingen lassen. Dein Soundtrackversuch ist unglaublich. Und selbst dieses Wort kann gar nicht gut genug ausdrücken, was ich empfinde. Ich bin sehr berührt und ich habe das Gefühl, dass die Musik ganz tief in mich hineingeht. Ich kann mich zu 100% damit identifizieren.
Ja! Es ist GENIAL! Und ich bin so unsagbar froh, dass ich ehrlich war zu dir und darauf gewartet habe, dass du Zeit dafür hast.
DANKE schon einmal.
Also ich würde gar nichts ändern. Mein einziges Problem dabei ist, dass ich nicht genug davon bekommen kann. Es ist mir immer wieder zu kurz und von mir aus, kann es ewig andauern. ;-)

Sag mir bitte doch noch einmal, was du von mir brauchst [bezieht sich auf Textmaterial für die Installation, A.d. Verf] !

ganz liebe Grüsse,

Maria"

(Maria in an email to the author on February 2, 2016)

"Dear Barbara!

I listened to it yesterday and I wanted to let it sink in for a while. Your soundtrack attempt is unbelievable. Even these words can't sufficiently express what I feel. I am truly moved and have the feeling that the music touches something deep inside me. I can identify with it 100%.

Yes! It is GENIUS! And I don't have words to tell you how glad I am that I was true to you and waited for you to find the time to compose it.

THANK YOU already in advance.

So I wouldn't change a single thing. My only problem is that I can't get enough of it. I just always feel it is too short, and as far as I'm concerned, it could last for ever. ;-)

Please tell me again what you need now [with regard to the text material for the installation – author's note]!

All the best,

Maria"

(ibid; translation by the author)

Reading the exuberant email from Maria, one could think that she was trustingly relinquishing all authority over the music and the installation to me and that she was following me blindly (but happily) in whatever I offered. That was not the case. I would like now to explore the question of who had authority in which part of the process and where friction arose.

Maria Hippenfels is a dance and kindergarten pedagogue. She teaches elementary music education and holds drumming workshops for non-professional musicians. I had met Maria in the environment of "Schmiede Hallein," a place for creative people who want to collaborate for ten days and create something out of the situation. When Maria approached me for her version of *Read me*, I was a little hesitant. I had heard her sing and improvise in the room next to me. Her improvisations gave me the impression that her creative taste was significantly different from mine, maybe too much so for me to handle easily in the context of the installation. However, Maria repeatedly approached me and almost urged me to personalise *Read me* for her. In the end I took on the challenge, not wanting to disappoint her.

For her installation she gave me a spiritual poem by Hermann Hesse, and a text paragraph on rhythm from a description of a film she loved. In her self-assessment she described herself as a person of contrasting facets: rhythmic,

very active, but also very soft and melancholic. We recorded her improvising on the djembe and with her voice. At first this happened without any guidance from me: she improvised the way she wanted to. Later, I asked her to experiment with sounds and to try extended techniques on her instrument, hoping to get material closer to what I usually use. Subsequently, I sorted through the material and started to compose with it, trying to combine the information and material I had into a coherent piece of music that would describe her. I soon realised that I was having difficulty finding a bridge to link her sound and text worlds with mine, and that I was struggling not only on an artistic level but also on an emotional level to merge the disparate information I had. After a series of fruitless trials I asked Maria if I could delegate the composition to my colleague Clio Montrey, who is very experienced in the crossover between high art and popular culture, and who I thought might meet Maria's expectations and wishes more easily than I felt I could.

Maria replied that she could not identify with Clio's art as much as she could with mine and that she would rather put up with a longer waiting period to get a soundtrack composed by myself. In consequence that meant that I needed to find a way into her world without entirely losing my grip on my own. I realised that I had to get rid of whatever input had come from me. The improvisation I had guided her in was not representative of Maria; the way I wanted Maria to appear was not the person she was. Therefore, I had to find a way to relate to her by repeatedly going through her material and finding out what to me was the essence she wanted to convey. Only then I could add sounds of my own to her djembe playing and her singing and render the whole into something I hoped would capture Maria as a person.

In the end, Maria and I were both content, although I am aware that the soundtrack for Maria is not a soundtrack I would usually compose for myself, since neither the music nor the text Maria chose was entirely to my taste. Nevertheless, it satisfied me that she felt I had understood her through my art and that I had found a way to express her personality using her given material. In her persistence that she wanted this installation, and in her not yielding when I wanted to delegate the compositional process to somebody else, Maria fully exercised the authority the concept of *Read me* gives her. She challenged me to incorporate her ways of expressing herself into my art in a way that was meaningful for both. She changed the traditional (power) model of the artist–audience relationship – in which the artist is powerful and creates, whereas the audience (reverently) consumes – into one of equality. Artist and audience listen to each other and co-create.

In the next section I would like to touch on another phenomenon we encountered with this project. The community takes over and makes the material their own.

SoundCloud – Unlimited Authority Generates Additional Value

We granted unlimited authority to our community members when we shared our artwork or our sound material with them under a Creative Commons license. This effectively meant that we left it to the community's creative discretion how to use our material, and we occasionally encouraged them to exploit it for their own artwork.

We considered this as part of meeting our audience within an 'engagement-based' versus 'appointment-based' model. I draw this terminology from media scholar Henry Jenkins et al. in their book *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. (Jenkins, Ford and Green, Spreadable media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture 2013) In *TransCoding* I define the 'appointment-based' model as the one where artist and audience/ community meet each other in concerts without any deeper interaction, whereas an 'engagement-based' model means that the community not only meets the artist and consumes what art is offered but engages in a meaningful way through sharing, exchanging and creating additional value.

Our SoundCloud (https://soundcloud.com/what-ifblog/) was the most obvious channel on which we could offer them the opportunity to interact with us in this particular way. If people used sounds that we offered for free use under a Creative Commons license, we asked for credit and a link back to us, but had no control over it. Without being actively encouraged by us to do so, members started to use and remix the contributions partly in contexts different from ours (Fig. 2.24: Andy Getch February Album Writing Month, FAWM).

FWF
liked your Tweet.

View

what-ifblog.net @what_ifblog

Community member @AndyGetch1 has used our sound samples from our @SoundCloud to compose a @FAWM track! Listen here: fawm.org/songs/58611

Fig. 2.24: Tweet from 15th of February 2016 about community member Andy Getch using sound samples from the what-if-SoundCloud in a context other than *TransCoding*. Image © TransCoding

Our SoundCloud stats show 336 downloads of our material in 2015 and 2016. We once even made a double loop: Community member Gloria Guns used our sounds for her remix *Fan Death* and I used her remix as a sound pool to personalise *Read me* for her:

👁 Link to the video documentation of *Read me* personalised for Gloria Guns
🔊 Link to the remix *Fan Death* by Gloria Guns:
   http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 7 (2)

The community began to use not only the material we provided, but also materials that they provided to each other, and get in touch with each other independently from us. We considered this as a value in itself. They worked as what anthropologist Grant McCracken calls 'multipliers' in his essay *"Consumers" or "Multipliers"*.

"A 'multiplier' is someone who will treat the good, service or experience as a starting point. Multipliers will build in some of their own intelligence and imagination. They will take possession of a cultural artifact and make it more detailed, more contextually responsive, more culturally nuanced, and lest we forget the point of the exercise, more valuable. Using a term like 'multiplier' will help the meaning maker keep new realities front and center. If there's nothing in the product, service, or experience that can be built on, well, then it's back to the drawing board." (McCracken, Spreadable Media 2013)

Besides sharing and passing along content, liking, commenting and contributing, our users independently generated value by and for themselves, showing the engagement of an active audience. The status of our members changed from consumers to independent makers to multipliers.

A Potential for Change

In their paper *Mapping of practices in the EU Member States on Participatory governance of cultural heritage* Sani et al. ask "What is the point of the public's participation? … [T]his question has become one of the key questions in the debates about participation and the evaluation of participatory practice and it defines key trends and questions that concern those engaged in developing participatory practice." (Sani, et al. 2015, 68)

They claim that each project should investigate what kind of difference the participation practice offers in people's lives: whether it is an active agency – a resource for capability development and self-determination, or if it offers potential for organisational change (in our case, change in the production of art and in the power relationship between artist and audience). Additionally, they

ask if the project shows a commitment to dialogue, debate and reflection with all stakeholders. (Sani, et al. 2015)

In *TransCoding* we strove to change the traditional (power) models of the artist–audience relationship through participatory culture. An indicator for a successful power change is, if the notion of the artist as lone creative genius and the audience as mere spectators and consumers changes into one of mutual influencers, inspirers and co-creators. Both parties are in a dialogue, listen to each other and get to know each other. The community participates in the creative decision-making process, in the creation and the reflection of it; the artist works in dialogue with the community instead of alone.

The activity of the community moves from mere consuming, and "using and choosing" art to "making and shaping" (Cornwall und Gaventa 2001) by establishing a creative communication and partnership with the arts team and by developing their own creative capabilities and determinations. How are these values reflected in our project?

Commitment to Dialogue, Debate and Reflection

In *TransCoding* it is not the artwork, but rather the dialogue with our community that first comes to mind. They are at the foreground of the team's thinking. Before even starting to create art, we think about our community and what could interest them. We begin conversations for the purpose of learning what triggers the imagination of our members, what captures their interest and what gets their creativity going.

We communicate as directly as possible, exchanging with the community via blog posts, music, images, chats, email or comments on our social media platforms. We listen to their words or music and feel a responsibility to acknowledge their ideas and wishes, reflecting them verifiably in our artwork. Community members can express themselves via their creative contributions, guest blog posts, through interviews or feature posts, comments or likes. They can feedback negatively – if they choose to – by ignoring our triggers or in comments. All stakeholders have a voice before, during and after the creation of our joint artwork when joining the dialogue, debate and reflection on our social media channels.

About the change in the aesthetic approach and outcome seen from my perspective as the lead artist, I claim that thinking about our target group while developing *Slices of Life*, listening to the sounds they contributed, looking at the images they sent us and the text or thoughts they provided, effectuated my design of the evolving artwork. With *TransCoding* new music or multimedia art could not 'hide' behind abstract beauty; instead, the work needed to have connotations to which the community could relate, and in which their influence showed.

Various strong elements of concreteness permeate the often-found abstractness of European avant-garde music I originally come from: I worked with a string of stories that feature identity, related to the lives of our community members and picked up the stories they contributed; I incorporated images and texts as originally submitted, without manipulations; I created a sound language that was relatively clear although rooted in extended instrumental techniques and electronic music; I didn't hesitate to use sound design to underline and interpret texts, thoughts, images or identities the community entrusted to us. The direct communication with my audience and their works inspired and influenced me, while all the time demanding a large degree of flexibility.

Here, a clear indication of change was that I altered my aesthetic decision-making and the content of the artwork through my exchanges with the community and their contributions. The (non-professional) community members experienced and expressed personal change and added value through the recognition of their artwork in a different (professional) environment. They gained additional reputation, since an internationally renowned artist performed their (clearly designated) contribution at prestigious festivals, and their personal voice is now heard and appreciated by an international expert community. As an example here are a few responses when I announced a talk on the project on Facebook. The comments indicate the significance of the project for individual community members:

Sabina Ulubeanu: "Honoured to be part of it! Good luck! ❤<"

Anahit Mughnetsyan: "really big honore for me too guys!! greetings from Armenia !!! and big good of luck from our side ! 😊 :)"

Laura Feathers: "I'm honored to be a part of your beautiful project! :)"

Ricardo Tovar Mateus: "I wish you all the best, im sure the talk will be very inspiring like you and the project are Barbara 😊 "

Alina Murzakhanova: "Dear Barbara Lueneburg, it was a very interesting and meaningful project, you have invited me to take part in! I wish you to continue this way and show to the audience more and more wonderful artworks!"

(Feathers, et al. 2016)

Organisational Change in the Production of the Artwork with Relation to the Community

As mentioned above, on the blog I revealed parts of my personality, tried to show how I work or how I think about art. In this way I challenged or 'humanised' the notion of a 'creative genius' to a level that is more tangible, thus consciously altering the traditional power relationship between artist and community. Actively contributing community members likewise shared in the personal involvement

I brought into the project. Personal interactions with the *TransCoding* team – even when happening online – appeared to assist our community members in overcoming their inhibitions in experiencing new music and new media art. In chats or interviews some members told us that they ventured into areas of art that they had previously not explored.

Likewise, the interaction with the community helped me to critically question my cultural socialisation, the art scene I am working in, and my artistic background. I consciously looked for tools to make the art I develop for and with our community accessible without renouncing my personal context and cultural heritage. My peer group in the contemporary (art) music field has begun to take notice with invitations to festivals in Germany, Canada and Austria and comments on performances such as "the epic Slice of Life" (Canadian Music Center 2017) or "probably the most progressive practice currently taking place in music and media composition." (Flüh, Neue Musik von der Urbevölkerung und der Blog-Community - Barbara Lüneburg bei und das Abschlusskonzert mit dem DSO von Ultraschall 2016 2016)

Capability Development and Self-determination for Community Members through Participation

In our online, social media community we observed change on many more levels: in the self-confidence of individual members; in an increased motivation to create; in trust and openness towards the team, indicating a change in the traditional (power) models; in pride in being involved; in pride in being acknowledged as contributor to the artwork; and in the interest in sharing a discourse. My artistic ideas on the other hand were influenced by and developed through the communication and debate with and through the work of the participants and their reflection on the project.

Community members appreciated the personal contact with us. They sometimes gave critical feedback or asked for advice. Anahit Mughnetsyan from Armenia, for instance, chatted with me on Facebook and offered critical thoughts on our *Call for Entries: Catrina* (http://what-ifblog.net/2014/10/27/call-for-entries-catrinas/)

"but your comunity [sic!] gallery is full of strange i think articles ....sorry who is catrina? ... much negative energy comes from ... you think that my article is ok next to them dear Barbara?" (Anahit Mughnetsyan chats with the author on Facebook, March 1, 2015)

A few days later Anahit asks for feedback on her work.

"dear Barbara sending to you scores i wrote but as you know i am not composer just creations of me see and say pls honestly how are they ..." (Anahit Mughnetsyan, Armenia, on Facebook, March 6, 2015)

Catrinas | Submissions

Rounding out our call for Catrinas is this lovely submission from Eline Fris and her coworkers (Mexico City). They made this sweet Catrina doll at the office!

Fig. 2.25: Screenshot from one of the 'Catrina' submissions that Anahit disliked on our Tumblr community gallery. We received the image in response to our call for entries on the occasion of the Mexican national holiday "Day of the Dead." Image © TransCoding

Being included in our artwork and possibly featured in big festivals and at international venues gives motivation to participate, carries a fascination and is a reason for our community members to be proud. Gloria tweeted about her personalised version of *Read me* on her personal Twitter account @glooooooria on February 12, 2016:

"when the artist becomes the art ... an installation about ME by @e_violin of@what_ifblog: youtube.com/watch?v=ZkJTh3 ..." (Gloria Guns on Twitter, February 12, 2016)

The actual activity of writing, photographing, composing and thinking about our challenges holds in itself joy and fascination. Anthony Green comments on the project's Facebook page, February 22, 2016: "Thank you for this awesome project!" (Fig. 2.26).

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Call for Entries | #GYHAFY
Feb 16, 2016 - Feb 29, 2016 · worldwide
12 Went · 8 Interested

Like · Reply · Remove Preview · 2y

What if? A participatory arts project Anthony Green's transgender male has come in. (Thank you!) He lives in the 80th century. From Intorion (transliterated). Have a read.
👍 1
Like · Reply · 2y

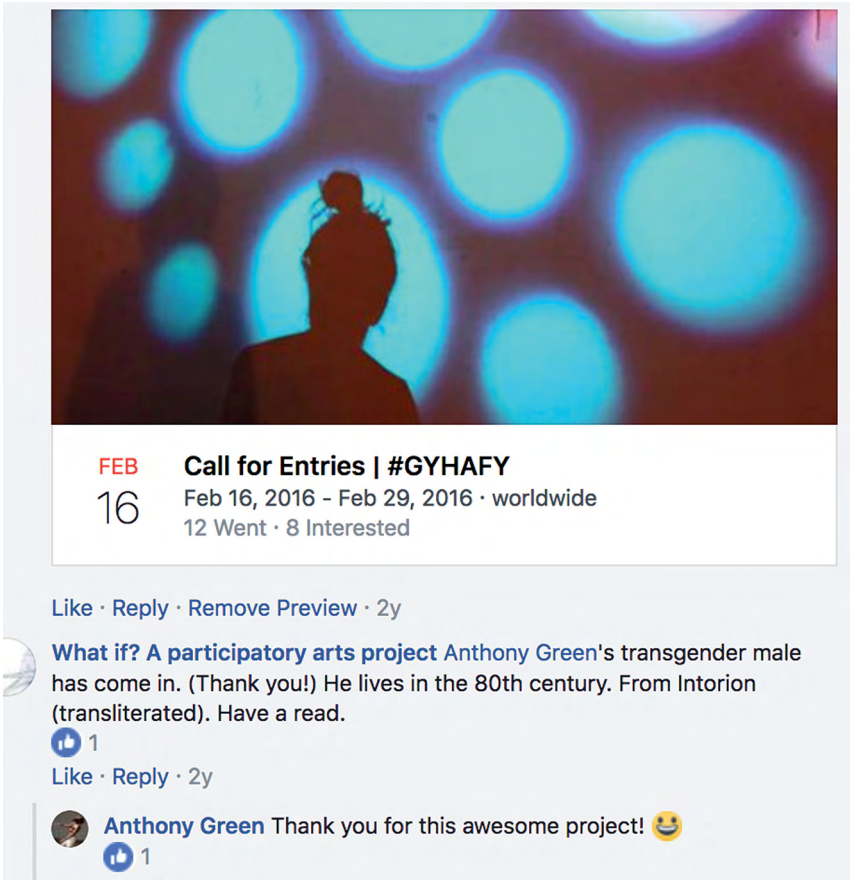**Anthony Green** Thank you for this awesome project! 😃
👍 1

Fig. 2.26: Anthony Green just added a lengthy contribution to our *Call for Entries | #GYHAFY – Take A Holiday Away From Yourself* and thanks us now "for this awesome project." (Facebook, February 22, 2016)

During offline workshops in the framework of *TransCoding* another indicator for a successful power change in the artist–audience relationship became tangible. Here the authority in decision-making with regard to content, aesthetics, form and production of the individual or group artwork lay with the participants alone. The participants used the framework of *TransCoding* as an 'active agency–

a resource for capability development and self-determination' as Sani et al call it. Last but not least, I would like to quote my co-worker Clio Montrey, who also experienced personal change, capability development and self-determination through the project. The example demonstrates the difference participation in *TransCoding* was able to offer in people's life.

"Today I submitted a manuscript to a literary competition. No matter the outcome, I feel like I've already won a tremendous prize.

In early 2015 I was still too shy about my creative writing to share a single piece of fiction online or in public ... I've been steadily writing fiction since I was fifteen, including a very questionable early steampunk novel (it did have dragons, though) and various short stories over the years. It was always for myself ...

But just over a year ago, I could no longer bear it. I decided it was time to start sharing. I began posting tiny snippets of my novel-in-progress along with the SoundCloud tracks I was composing. In July I finally posted a story on my blog. In October I had the pleasure of reading at Resonance (thx Klara!) [Klara Plessis, poet from Canada]. Now I'm here. A few days ago I rediscovered a novella I'd begun in 2012. I've since begun working on it again while allowing my "big novel" a rest before I do a new draft. I'm taking my time but also exploring exciting new areas of creativity I didn't even know I possessed.

Thanks for reading and commenting and giving me feedback on the short pieces of flash fiction I've shared so far! Thanks to Barbara [Lüneburg from the *TransCoding* team] for getting me so involved in blogging that I could no longer deny my deep love for writing. And thanks to everyone who read this post!

Much love, Clio"
(Status from March 25, 2016, on Clio Em's personal Facebook site)

Working in the context of *TransCoding* afforded Montrey community (and professional) approval, encouragement and a field of practice for her writing which resulted in a different self-perception of her creative abilities.

The following chapter discusses whether we can gain new scholarly insights through arts practice within the specific framework of artistic research. We compare 'knowledge gain' and 'methodology' in 'artistic research' and 'ethnographic sociology.' For this investigation I collaborated with my co-worker Kai Ginkel, who contributed to the chapter from his expertise as a sociologist.