User-generated Video

As a New Genre of Documentary

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Thesis submitted to the University of London

For the degree of the Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in Media Arts

November 2012

Declaration of Authorship

I (Mohamed Said Mahfouz) hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This study analyses the behavior of Internet users interested in producing their own documentary videos and assesses the characteristics and techniques that govern the production of such videos. The development and global diffusion of Internet 2.0 technologies have facilitated a rapid proliferation of user-generated video, of varying quality and aesthetic seriousness, on the Internet in recent years. These videos are produced by amateur Internet users, and express the dominant social, cultural, and political trends of their respective milieux while also reflecting the new availability of affordable mobile cameras and editing software. These new tools are helping thousands of ordinary people to explore their political and artistic concerns in an unprecedented, public way. User-generated video is increasingly considered a valid source of information by mainstream media networks, to the point that it is even coming to occupy a central role in some forms of news broadcasting.

This study raises an essential question: Can we view user-generated amateur video as a new form of documentary? From this question there derive other important questions about the various forms that these new videos take, the ways that they are produced, the expertise of the people who make them, the distinctive characteristics, if any, of their content, and the extent to which their makers comply with the ethical standards of professional documentary-making.

The theoretical part of this study explains the concept of the professional documentary, its formal characteristics, modes, and ethical requirements, as well as highlighting the differences between documentary, news and reality TV. A working definition of user-generated video will then be proposed in light of developments in media studies and new media theory.

The practical part of the study centres on an e-workshop for non-professional documentary-makers in Egypt called *egdoc*. The workshop is set up in such a way as to allow the behavior of amateur users of the site to be analysed and ultimately compared with the behavior of professional documentary-makers.

The launching of the *egdoc* website coincided with the aftermath of the revolution which began in Egypt on 25 January 2011. This dramatic context, and the unprecedented quantity of amateur video documenting revolutionary events, generated a healthy level of interest in the *egdoc* project and soon gave rise to an adequate sample of amateur video. The *egdoc* study also serves, in its own right, as a valuable snapshot of Egyptian public opinion in the historic period that it covers.

The most important lesson gleaned from the *egdoc* experience was that the distinction between professional and user-generated amateur documentary is fast becoming blurred. Some of the users of *egdoc* can hardly be described as amateurs when you compare their final product with a professional production in terms of either content or form. In addition, the *egdoc* experience suggests that political and social circumstances may contribute to the development of new forms of non-professional documentary in the future.

Acknowledgment

There is a revolution currently unfolding in my country, and despite my journalistic work and research activity, which both dictate being a neutral conveyor of the truth, I have been part of this revolution; I believe in its calls for the devolution of power, respect for human rights and equality between citizens, and participated in it because its aim is to establish a nation that is fit to compete with developed nations after decades of backwardness, corruption and tyranny. Being pro-revolution, in my view, represents maximum neutrality, and does not as such defy the norms of the journalistic profession or the standards of scientific research. The real betrayal would be to give the oppressor and the oppressed 'equal' treatment.

When I left the Middle East for the UK in 2006, the signs of this revolution were looming. President Mubarak had just won a fifth term in rigged elections, his son held the keys to all decisions made through the so-called Policy Committee of the ruling party, and the distance between rich and poor had widened dramatically. On a personal note, I was dealing with the deaths of several colleagues during the occupation of Iraq, and was determined to find a path that would honor their memory. Fate responded with an MA scholarship awarded to me by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and, within a week, a contract to work with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) while pursuing my studies. This proved an ideal combination of theory and practice, and I remain grateful to both the FCO and BBC for the joint opportunity they gave me.

Pulling myself out of Egypt at that time proved costly in more ways than one - some thought I was escaping, and others described me as selfish - but my mind was made up. I had the future - my own, and that of Egypt - in mind, and promised myself that I would

return home with an advanced degree in a field in which Egypt surely needed expertise: new media. The lack of commitment in mainstream media to any code of ethics, and the resulting loss of public confidence, led to the emergence of a uniquely fertile strand of citizen journalism, a phenomenon without which the 2011 revolution would have been impossible; but journalism remains a top-down profession, the impact of which is still scarcely felt in our poorest and least literate communities. Increasing social and political awareness, and fighting discrimination on the basis of sex, race and religion, remain collective challenges in post-revolutionary Egypt, and I believe that new media is capable of helping to cure them, if you equip citizens with even a basic understanding of the tools now at their disposal.

Approximately 180 TV channels are broadcasting today from Egypt, a multi-billion-dollar industry benefitting only a minority of stakeholders while broad categories of the public complain about media exploitation of the revolution, deliberate misleading of viewers, and, last but not least, complicity with the former regime. At the same time, government media colleges are so overwhelmed with bureaucracy that they are prevented from keeping abreast of new media trends and developing the capacities of their students, let alone making developments in new media understandable for ordinary citizens. In order that the impact of this new and unique style of media be felt across all strata of our highly stratified society, and in order to compensate for deficiencies in the role of the traditional media, direct action was, and still is, needed.

This is precisely the context in which my thesis was conceived. The three principal objectives were: (1) to understand the role of social media, and specifically user-generated video content, as a vehicle for social change; (2) to contextualize this phenomenon in light of ongoing developments in new media and citizen journalism; and (3) to show how these developments are being exploited by amateur documentary-

makers, and how these amateurs are challenging the role of the professional documentary industry and potentially redefining documentary itself.

I am grateful to all those who pushed me even a small step along the road to completion of this thesis. I would like, however, to give special thanks to the following people: my supervisor Professor John Ellis, who provided me with consistently valuable advice, and without whom I would not have been able to make a meaningful contribution to the field; my friend the Egyptian diplomat Radwa Khalil, who first drew my attention to the Chevening scholarship in 2005 and encouraged me to apply; my MA tutor and PhD co-supervisor Victoria Mapplebeck, who helped me to a Distinction in 2007 qualifying me for a subsequent PhD scholarship from Royal Holloway; Matthew Eltringham, the former Editor of the BBC's UGC Hub, who welcomed me several times into his department and gave me all the help I needed and more; and my friend Jonathan Keir, who tirelessly proofread my many drafts. I would also like to offer a general thank-you to the academic and administrative staff of Royal Holloway University of London who made sure I understood what anthropological and ethnographic research, intellectual property, and the scientific method all entailed, and to the Training Department of the BBC World Service for their excellent training courses in the field of new media.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my mother and sister for the inspiration they have provided me. I could not have written this thesis without them. My mother has always been the strongest source of support and hope in my life. During my years in the UK, her prayers never failed to reach me through the telephone from Egypt, and ultimately gave me the strength to finish what I had started. To her and to Egypt I dedicate this thesis.

Contents

Accomanying Material: 1 DVD including an offline copy of *egdoc* website (www.egdoc.com)
……(**In a pocket included in the back cover)**

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Introduction

There is no need for mountains of statistics to prove the increase in interest in user-generated video on the Internet over the last decade. Most traditional media outlets, if not all, now regard amateur video as a primary source of news. Social media websites have become the marketplace for these videos to an extent that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago.

This interest in making, sharing, and watching user-generated videos on the Internet has shaped new aesthetic forms, most of which are guided by familiar professional forms and attempt to imitate them in a creative way. The final amateur product, however, typically retains a distinctive homemade flavour that reflects the experience, vision, and the culture of the maker. What we have, then, is an apparent hybrid of amateur and professional which has yet to be clearly defined by documentary theorists.

A clear example of the new blurring between amateur and professional are the 'Keyboard Strivers' coined by Wael Ghoneim, one of the young leaders of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. These activists succeeded in delivering their messages to an unprecedentedly wide audience through documentary-type videos which they themselves produced and posted on the Internet. Some of the artistic forms that were reflected in these videos were unknown within the parameters of the traditional documentary-making culture in Egypt. Some videos simply featured short clips of different people, known for their influence on public opinion, sharing their views while looking at the camera; others, however, mixed state television reports with self-generated content for satirical and at times openly revolutionary purposes. Also noteworthy was the fact that most of these videos appeared online only a short while after the events they recorded, and sometimes even appeared at the same time, live. In other words, technical difficulties and lack of professional

experience did not stop these amateur film-makers from having a deep impact on events as they unfolded.

Thesis Outline:

This thesis is divided into 4 chapters. The first three chapters lay out a theoretical foundation on which to base our definition of the new amateur documentary phenomenon: documentary from a professional perspective (Chapter 1); user-generated videos in the context of new media (Chapter 2); and the use of amateur video in the mainstream media (Chapter 3). The fourth chapter is dedicated to the practical component of the thesis, the *egdoc* website.

The **first chapter** starts by examining the most prominent modern definitions of documentary as a professional form, and how the traditional definition has been challenged by the interactive features of new media. In particular, the views of Ellis and McLain (2005) on the purpose, form, production methods, and social impact of documentaries are explored. The modes of documentary according to Bill Nicholls (2010) - the poetic, the expository, the reflexive, the observational, the participatory, and the performative - are also outlined and discussed. Finally, the respective roles of filming and editing in the documentary-making process are highlighted.

Chapter two deals with the second aspect of this study, user-generated video, from the wider perspective of new media as a whole. The chapter relates the historical roots of the phenomenon as traced by Lev Manovich (2007), starting from Charles Babbage's Analytic Engine and Daguerreotype, and ending with the abundant possibilities resulting from the convergence between digital media and high-speed computing. This chapter covers many of the concepts associated with this paradigm shift, such as *integration*, *media convergence*, *civic engagement*, *e-democracy*, and others. It explains how these

new trends emerge at an evolutionary rather than revolutionary rate. The controversial theories of Tim O'Reilly concerning 'web 2.0' will be discussed, and O'Reilly's critics duly considered. In the last part of this chapter, a new definition of the 'user' is proposed in light of the concept of *produsage* coined by Alex Bruns (2008).

The **third chapter** concerns the use of user-generated videos in the mainstream media, with a special focus on the BBC and the way they have handled these videos, which they began receiving in large numbers after the London bombings of 2005. This flood of videos urged the BBC to launch a special department to verify and classify them, which they called their 'UGC Hub'. This chapter follows the work of Mathew Eltringham – the former head of this department - and exposes the 'tricks' used by the BBC to authenticate amateur videos before broadcasting them. Finally, this chapter dedicates some space to media coverage of the Arab Spring and the role played by user-generated videos as sources of information, for which I was fortunate to be able to draw on my personal experience working for the BBC and Aljazeera Networks during the Egyptian Revolution.

The **fourth chapter** is dedicated to the practical part of this study, which was based on an examination of the characteristics of UGVs in an Egyptian context. The chapter starts with an explanation for the chronological development of the experiment, including ideas for experiments that were excluded and the reasons that led to the final choice of framework for the experiment, as well as models and inspirations drawn from outside Egypt. Brief background to the revolutionary events of 2011 in Egypt - the context in which the experiment was conducted - is provided, before the experiment itself is presented: an electronic interactive workshop on documentary-making called *egdoc*, designed to attract amateur users and to encourage them to post their ideas about film-making, exchange opinions with other film-makers, plan future documentary projects and carry them out in a collaborative environment. The *egdoc* site was specifically designed

to allow this process to be observed step-by-step; the results are analysed in the light of the theoretical definitions and standards of documentary film-making outlined in Chapter One.

Publicity for the *egdoc* website began on social media and continued through a TV program that I was presenting on a popular Egyptian news network (conditions for subscribing to the website included that the user be an amateur). Users were subject to observation from the moment they joined the website. Observations were recorded and classified in a way that allowed the following questions to be answered:

1. What are the distinctive characteristics of user-generated videos in regard to both form and content?
2. Do these videos have the characteristics of professional documentaries?
3. How committed are the amateur users who make these videos to the ethical standards followed in professional documentary-making?
4. Do these videos fulfill their audience's needs?

Documentary film definitions presented in the first chapter were used to evaluate the form and content of the videos that we decided to include in the experiment sample (the videos that received the largest number of views and comments from website users were chosen). The sample included unfinished projects that the user was unable to develop by herself (for example, an idea of a documentary, or an expressive shot) and projects carried to completion by one or more users. Users' behaviour in the 'Ideas' Factory' section of the website in particular allowed us to evaluate the similarities and differences between amateur users of the site and professional film-makers. The website provided users with the opportunity to record their film-making experiences, and that shed the light on the

personal as well as moral and technical challenges facing the new amateur documentary-maker.

Analysis of the comments section of the various uploaded videos also played an important role in the study, and opened up future paths of inquiry. Some of the comments demanded modifications in form and/or content, while others praised the ideas and/or techniques on show. Comments were analyzed and classified to allow us to draw conclusions about the extent to which the demands of the audience are satisfied by user-generated video, and to suggest possible lines of improvement and future development in the field.

Chapter 1 - The Professional Documentary

Before we start analyzing and evaluating user-generated video in light of the standards of traditional documentaries, we should first lay the foundation for this study by defining documentary films and professional documentary-makers. In this chapter, therefore, we will deal with the formal characteristics which distinguish the professional documentary and also compare documentary to related forms like news and reality television.

1.1 What is a *Documentary*?

This question has been a core concern of most modern academic debates in film studies. Since John Grierson first coined the term 'documentary' in 1926, controversially defining it as 'creative treatment of actuality', film theorists have been refining their definitions of documentary. As technological advances have made film-making less labor-intensive, definitions of documentary have also become more relaxed. In 2010, for example, Bill Nichols abstractly said that documentaries are about real people who do not play or perform roles (Nichols, 2010, p. 8). This definition does not meaningfully distinguish documentary from docu-drama, in which dramatic representation exists not for its own sake but to portray an underlying reality.

In general, it has been agreed that 'the drama factor' is an essential part of the documentary industry. Dirk Eitzen (1995) believes that one of the most sensible definitions of documentary to appear in recent years considers it a 'dramatized presentation of man's relation to his institutional life' (Eitzen, 1995, p. 81). Although drama may form a framework for the documentary story; however, it never changes, nor tries to change, reality. Therefore, postmodernists usually give emphasis to the fact that non-fiction films are as framed as fictional (Choi, 2006, p. 137). This definition places the attribution of documentary impact exactly within the area of the viewer, who can decide

to interpret any fictional film - even if sometimes with great difficulty - as a documentary (Vaughan, 1999, p: 58-59).

Postmodernists believe that the documentary is a product of the film-maker's specific intentions in guiding or persuading the viewer's conception of the world. Nonetheless, Michael Renov (1993) believes that the documentary tends to achieve more than just guiding or persuading. He suggests four fundamental, yet flexible, tendencies attributable to documentary practice in its dealing with facts (Renov, 1993, p. 21):

5. To record, reveal, or preserve facts;
6. To promote them or persuade the audience with facts;
7. To analyze them or interrogate the subject to get facts;
8. To express facts.

Therefore, Eitzen says that another important definition for documentary defines it as 'film with a message' (Eitzen, 1995, p. 81). This message always needs a sender and a receiver, which is known as ‘the communication process’. Documentary is such a communication process, as Eitzen specifies; 'the communication, not of imagined things, but of real things only' (Eitzen, 1995, p. 81). Hampe (2007) also sees the documentary as a communication channel for 'the truth' (Hampe, 2007, p. 10) between film-maker and audience. On this account, the main job of documentaries is to reveal truth about the world, and depict the 'unmediated reality' that is made visible before the camera. Truth, in Hampe's point of view, is the 'ethical and moral imperative' of documentary (Hampe, 2007, p.11).

Chapman (2009) also includes this communication process in her definition, which links form and content with style and tools. She believes that documentary is a discursive

formation (form), presenting first-hand experience and fact (content) by creating a rhetoric of immediacy and 'truth' (style), using photographic technology (tools) (Chapman, 2009, p. 8). Nevertheless, with rapid advancement and innovation in photographic technology came doubt. The trustworthiness and credibility of footage used in documentary and news reports began to be questioned. Hence, as Stella Bruzzi (2006) concludes, a new definition of authenticity has emerged, one that avoids the 'traditional adherence to observation'. Moreover, André Bazin's concept of the transparency of film, namely the giving up of formulaic tropes, suggests that the real meaning and power of documentary lies simply in its ability to depict essential facets of existence. Bruzzi suggests that the idea of 'documentary' be replaced with 'a multi-layered, performative exchange between subjects, film-makers/apparatus and spectators' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 10).

1.2 Characteristics of Documentary:

Ellis and McLane (2005) believe that documentary has five characteristics in common which make it distinct from other film types. The first characteristic—*subject*—is, simply put, what the documentary is about. Generally, documentaries deal with something specific and factual; frequently they concern public matters rather than private ones. People, places, and events in them are actual and usually contemporary. The second characteristic--*purpose, viewpoint,* or *approach*—is reflected in what the documentary makers intend to do. They mostly record and interpret the reality in front of the camera and microphone in order to inform and/or persuade us to hold some attitude or take some action in relation to their subjects. Third is the *form* of the documentary, whether scripted in advance or confined to recorded spontaneous action. Documentary makers may recreate what they have observed but they do not create it whole cloth from imagination. The fourth characteristic is *production methods and techniques*. Basic requirements of documentary include the use of real subjects and shooting on location. Lighting is supplemented only when necessary to achieve adequate exposure. The fifth characteristic

is *the sorts of experience they offer audiences.* Documentary film-makers seek to achieve an aesthetic experience of some sort as well as effects on the attitudes and behavior of the audience (Ellis & McLane, 2005, p. 1-3).

1.3 Modes of Documentary:

According to Nichols (2010), there are six distinct conceptual modes of documentary; (1) *poetic* mode, (2) *expository* mode, (3) *observational* mode, (4) *participatory* mode, (5) *reflexive* mode, and (6) *performative* mode (Nichols, 2010, p. 31-32).

1.3.1 The *Poetic* Mode:

The poetic mode focuses only on the 'inner truth' by using artistic expression and subjective impressions with little or no rhetorical content in favor of mood, tone and texture. This impressionistic mode is a transformation of the real material (or the 'historical world' as Nichols calls it) into a more abstract and fragmentary form; the world is broken up into fragments and aesthetically reconstituted without using continuity editing. This mode is clearly reflected in the works of the Dutch documentary maker Joris Ivens (such as *Regen*, or Rain, 1929), Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (such as *Play of Light: Black, White, Grey*, 1930), Francis Thompson (such as *N.Y., N.Y.*, 1957), and Chris Marker (such as *Sans Soleil*, 1982).

However, can this lyrical mode make using imagination valid and acceptable as a theme of documentary? According to Grierson's definition, the documentary is a review of events which have already occurred, and which the director ought to communicate without interference, or in other words the least possible number of special effects, in order to prove his credibility and objectivity. Documentaries (like *Nanook of the North* by Robert J. Flaherty, 1922) take the viewer to places he has never visited, and to people he has never met, but the surprise factor disappears quickly, because of the careful treatment

of that rarely treated reality; treatment of a subject which avoids 'the sin of subjectivity' and prejudice hence breeds a lack of creativity and innovation.

What is reality? Is it the current events taking place around us? Is it the mere description of the surrounding context as it is, or as it appears to be? Is it about what irrefutably happened? From a classic perspective, all these definitions are right, and it was easy for the pioneers of this profession to create dozens of documentaries which fit these bland definitions.

But, from my point of view, none of the people who came up with these early definitions of documentary thought sufficiently about the wider meaning of reality, which covers (all) possible reflections of the surrounding environment and its interactions. There are events and incidents that define this narrow vision of the reality that feeds the documentary as perceived by the classical pioneers. Moreover, there remain those who believe, to this very day, that their duty is to focus on mere material reflections of the environment, neutral reproductions of scenes from our daily lives without intervention or change, in the hope that 'they will get the medal of integrity from the audience and the critics' (Mahfouz, 2010).

To diagnose the insufficiency of this 'mistreatment of reality', we must first admit that the unconscious (meditations, dreams etc.) reflects, directly or indirectly, our conscious environment. According to some views, dreams may be even more 'true' than our waking accounts of our experience because they are free from the intellectualizations and moralizations of our waking selves, or in other words less directly influenced by the social and cultural forces which usually shape our conscious thoughts and which leave behind only what is socially acceptable. This may also interpret John Ellis's point that

people, in front of the camera, only play versions of themselves and they never offer their 'full self' in any particular encounter;

> There is always something more, something private, something which cannot be expressed in a particular moment, in a particular frame and keying of that frame (Ellis, 2011, p. 53).

As an example of a documentary which explores the oniric possibilities of the genre, my film *Nonsense* (2007) does not portray events that did not happen, and does not present an imaginary story; indeed, it presents an experience lived by myself. But, instead of sitting on a chair in front of the camera just talking to an interviewer, I seek help from all kinds of non-traditional documentary tools to tell my story. I do not just do it to overcome the viewer's lack of patience (which is one of my challenges in the film), but because I want to invite the viewer inside my imagination in order for them to see the story from my point of view.

Fig. 1- 1 *Nonsense* (M. S. Mahfouz, UK, 2007)

The originality of *Nonsense* lies in the fact that it documents impressions going on inside the protagonist's imagination about real events and situations. Impressions, and even dreams, are part of reality because they are our way of interpreting reality, and dreams are

actually a reflection of that reality. These dreams help us to understand the character without having to ask direct questions.

In this sense, imagination is part of reality and not just a reflection of it. What takes place in the world of imagination shapes our behavior and culture. It also helps us to understand other people in more depth. Some might call for a definition that combines *inclusion* and *accuracy*; if we thus supplement Grierson's definition of a documentary, we might arrive at the following formula: documentary is 'the creative treatment of actuality and imaginative reality'.

1.3.2 The *Expository* Mode:

The second mode of documentary in Nichols' genealogical paradigm is the expositional mode, which collects footage that functions to strengthen the verbal, unbiased commentary intoned over footage. Unlike the poetic documentary, the expositional mode focuses on the 'objective' reality of a given situation and emphasizing argumentative logic.

The narration in this mode explains the documentary's rhetorical content and offers preferred significance as well as a 'right' and 'proper' answer for the documentary question. Among the visual tactics in this mode is what Nichols refers to as 'evidentiary editing', in which images illustrate, illuminate, evoke, or act in counterpoint to the commentary (Nichols 2010, p. 25). Examples of this mode include Davis Guggenheim's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), Ken Burns' *The Civil War* (1990) about the American civil war, and my documentary *Peace and Revenge* (2004) about the violations of the UN soldiers in Somalia (1992-1993).

Fig. 1- 2 *Peace and Revenge* (M. S. Mahfouz, UAE, 2003)

1.3.3 The *Observational* Mode:

The observational mode arose from the development of lightweight filming and sound recording equipment, and dissatisfaction with didactic quality of expository documentary. It made possible an intimacy of observation new to documentary and enabled the documentarian to record events as they happen in a less invasive approach, leaving his subjects free to act - when not explicitly addressing the camera - without changing or influencing their actions. Therefore, it allowed the audience to deduce whatever conclusions they may reach.

In the editing process, observational documentaries make use of relatively long takes and few cuts with no music, no interviews, no scene arrangement, and no commentary; enhancing feeling of lived or real time. The observational sense comes from the ability of film-maker to include representative and revealing moments, recording sounds at the time of filming (contrary to recording commentary of expository documentary).

Film-makers in this mode remain continuously concerned about the relationship between the camera and the subject, and the key challenge is always how to make the subject behave in front of the camera as natural as possible. To overcome this obstacle, Lionel Rogosin's docu-drama *On the Bowery* (1956) used, for the first time ever, a hidden

camera in a rolled carpet, held by an actor passing in the middle of some miserable alcoholics in New York; which made the film, to a present-day viewer, seem more similar to the modern examples of citizen journalism videos.

Fig. 1- 3 *On the Bowery* (Lionel Rogosin, USA, 1956)

In the 1960s, the non-fiction film genre, as Richard Barsam (1992) observes, was reborn as a result of the experiments in the United States and abroad with cinematic forms seeking a free, direct expression of the realist impulse and the technological developments by Robert Drew, Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker to produce a lightweight, mobile camera with synchronized sound (Barsam, 1992, p. 300), which enabled the camera crew to operate as inconspicuous as possible, so the 'generalizable truths about institutions or human behavior can be extrapolated from small but closely monitored case studies' (Renov, 2004, p. 178).

Characterized by 'the film-maker's apparent absence from, or non-intervention in, the events recorded' (Nichols, 2001, p. 125), this approach (often called *Direct Cinema*) was first evident in the observational documentary *Primary* (1960) by Robert Drew about the Wisconsin electoral campaign of the USA Senators Hubert Humphrey and John Kennedy for the Democratic Party's nomination for President. The film in O'Connell's view is most

important, 'not as a historic example of film-making practice, but as an example of historic film-making influence. It was a breakthrough, and in reality it broke the mold' (O'Connell, 2010, p. 70).

Fig. 1- 4 *Primary* (Robert Drew, USA, 1960)

Another example of an observational documentary, in which the relationship between the camera and the subjects remains invisible, is my film, *Al Rabee* (2006). This documentary is an authentication of daily live events of a miserable family living in a graveyard. They have to accept this situation and, over time, they have become satisfied with the way they live. By accepting this awful fate, they turn somehow to some sort of happiness which seems larger than the rich would feel in their luxurious life.

In this film, I, as the director and cameraman, play the role of a fly-on-the-wall and do not interfere in events, thereby allowing them to evolve in a natural, spontaneous way. For example, I did not care (during the filming or the editing) about the electricity cut during shooting on location, and rather continued filming. While the scene showed complete darkness, we could hear only the sound of a conversation between the mother, the daughter, and a visitor about how to fit a temporary lamp above the stove to help the mother while cooking for guests. The importance of the scene is that it showed the

viewers the agony of depending on a stolen electricity power current to light their house inside a graveyard. In spite of all that, the family members were feeling hope and contentment, which was the reason behind the film title *Al Rabee* (The Spring).

Fig. 1- 5 *Al Rabee* (M. S. Mahfouz, UK, 2006)

1.3.4 The *Participatory* Mode:

Unlike the observational mode of documentary, the *participatory* mode encourages the film-maker to interact with his subjects, sharing experiences with them, and affecting the events being recorded; he simply becomes a character in the film. This mode gives us a sense of what it would be like for a film-maker to be in a particular situation, and how that situation would transform accordingly. The film-maker then can engage in a more reactive and reflective connection to the film events. This mode is highly reflected in most of Michael Moore's works, such as *Roger & Me* (1989) in which he probes the social consequences of the massive downsize of General Motors factories. In this documentary, Michael Moore's voice can be clearly heard as one of the film characters, closely engaging in the events of the story. We can also see this mode strongly reflected in the Egyptian acclaimed documentarist Yousri Fouda's *Al-Qaeda Masterminds* (2002), in which he flew to Pakistan and was secretly directed by Al-Qaeda secret agents from

one Qaeda operative to another, until he was taken to a secure place, where he met Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, chief of Al-Qaeda's military committee, who confirmed that he was the mastermind of the September 11 attacks. This documentary was broadcast on Aljazeera in the first anniversary of the attacks, leading the USA to arrest Khalid Sheikh Mohammed a few months later.

1.3.5 The *Reflexive* Mode:

The *reflexive* mode became technically practicable in the 1950s, with the development of portable synchronous sound equipment. It makes the audience aware of the conventions of representation, exposing the artifice of the documentary and the constructed nature of it, and conveying to people that this is not necessarily 'truth' but a reconstruction of it, in order to challenge the impression of reality in the documentary. Key Examples of this mode include works of Godmilow and Raul Ruiz.

1.3.6 The *Performative* Mode:

The *performative* mode, similarly, raises questions about personal/subjective knowledge, and how understanding such knowledge can help us understand the world. This mode emphasizes the emotional and social impact on the audience, marking a shift in emphasis from the referential as the dominant feature of approach; whereas expressive, poetic and rhetoric approaches to the image or the real world become dominant. This mode, Nichols (1994) argues, encourages the audience to have a revelation, rather than presenting an argument or truth for them to receive. Nichols suggests that performative documentary embodies a paradox; it represents 'subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse', and 'generates a distinct tension between performance and document, between personal and the typical, the embodied and the disembodied, between, in short, history and science' (Nichols, 1994, pp. 95-97). The sole duty of this mode is to make the viewer interpret and

sense the meaning for himself. We can clearly see this mode in Morgan Spurlock's *Supersize me* (2004) as well as Ron Fricke's *Baraka* (1992).

However, the documentary-maker does not typically stop to demand a perfect answer to the question 'What is meant by a documentary?' while he is holding a camera or working on editing. He does not review the history of documentary in the 20th century nor how its concept was formed by scholars through the years. What remains in a documentary-maker's mind while on the job, we may reasonably conclude, are a small number of keywords, core elements necessary for any documentary: truth, trust, authenticity, and a message. Film-makers, as Nichols said, are not beholden to definitions and rules to govern what they do. They delight in subverting conventions, challenging viewers, provoking debate (Nichols, 2010, p. 15).

1.4 The *Professional* Documentary-maker:

In his book *Grammar of the Film Language*, Daniel Arijon (1991) distinguishes between 'creative' and 'competent' professional film-makers; just as literature has its Salman Rushdies and James Pattersons, so too does film have its innovators on the one hand and its dependable purveyors of successful formulae on the other. Film professionalism is also commonly defined by 'the concrete production of visuals' and 'the clear hierarchy, responsibilities and roles within the film team' (Witteveen, 2010, p. 90).

If anything meaningfully distinguishes professional documentary film-makers from professional film-makers generally, it is perhaps that they are preoccupied with presenting a social and political panorama of the world (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 21). Yet professional documentary-makers are different from amateur documentary-makers in that their primary goal is profit; social change may be the reason for the professional documentary-maker's choice of profession, and he may want his films to be taken seriously as art, but in

the end he wants them to be seen by many people and to be paid for his work (Ewing & Abolin, 1974, p.10).

1.5 Determinants of Documentary Form:

Documentaries have formal constraints which distinguish them both from fictional films, and other non-fiction forms, such as news reports and reality TV. Many of these constraints concern editing and shooting techniques. These differences are not only affecting the form of the documentary, but also its claims to truth and objectivity.

1.5.1 Editing Professional Documentary:

There is a wide consensus on the centrality of editing to the film-making process. Karl Reisz, the British film-maker, goes so far as to say that editing *is* the film (Reisz, 1964, p. 123). It is, to the Soviet film pioneer Vsevolod Pudovkin, the creative force of filmic reality (Pudovkin, 1929, p. xvi). Basically, it is the stage when the two-dimensional disjointed shots are put together into a delusion of three-dimensional space by linking together different perspectives on one scene, and by matching the optical with the auditory, the graphic with the vocal (Holland, 1997, p. 91). Other devices the film employs in the editing process in order to project its point of view may include continuities and discontinuities--similarities and contrasts--of light, texture, shape, movement, tone, as well as rhythm and tempo.

The effect of each of these factors on the final version of a film varies widely. The success of *Baraka* (1992) depended largely on its unique rhythmic flow, which urges the viewer to meditate on the relationship between nature and human beings. This rhythm is, to a very large extent if not entirely, the result of careful editing; the film concentrates on movements and characters shot from a variety of angles mostly in medium close-up and close-up.

Fig. 1- 6 *Baraka* (Ron Fricke, USA, 1992)

While many shots in this film are reproduced at normal speed, the shot of the crowded crossroad, for example, is sped up, and contrasts with the slow motion of several other shots (like the shot of the chimpanzee meditating as if it were a human being). There are also some fixed shots that reflect a horrifying stillness (like the shot of the Red Indian gazing at the Camera without a blink). In all these examples, editing helped to convey the underling themes of the documentary: 'the duration of shots is often determined not simply by the amount of information contained in it but by the rhythmic possibilities' (Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 170).

Warner Herzog's *Fata Morgana* is another example of how rhythm contributes to the film's mood and overall impression on the spectator. It was filmed in 1969 and shown for the first time in 1971. This film's rhythm is generally achieved by editing through the combination of mise-en-scene, cinematography and sound.

Fig. 1- 7 *Fata Morgana* (Warner Herzog, West Germany, 1971)

Contrast is another basis for documentary editing. It provides dissimilar views on a theme or both aspects of a case, in order that the documentary becomes balanced. However, merely providing different facets of a topic does not necessarily reflect equal perception (Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 174). Documentary makers can also use figures of speech, rhetorical tropes, and metonymy in order to allude to that which is not visible or audible (Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 180).

In general, film editing has passed through three main technological phases; each one undeniably had its impacts upon the filmic outcome; (1) *film editing*, as the editor physically cuts the selected shots out of the film reel and then join them together at the ends in the pre-determined order, and visual effects can only be incorporated if the film is transferred to videotape, (2) *videotape editing*, as the rushes tapes are dubbed onto a new tape, without any physical cutting, in the preferred order. But changing mind means to begin the whole process from scratch, (3) *non-linear editing*, which has radically changed production for film and television, as the raw material (images and sound) is digitized and

stored on a hard desk and displayed on a computer screen where they can be manipulated easily and speedily using a cut-and-paste method.

Throughout the past century, each of these types of editing has moved film-making, equally fictional and non-fictional, several steps forward. Nonetheless, due to the fundamental difference of aims between a story-film and a documentary, different editing conceptions between them consequently emerge. A story-film, Karel Reisz (1964) explains, is concerned with the development of a *plot*, while the documentary is concerned with the exposition of a *theme*. 'The absence of a plot is at once advantage and a disadvantage to the documentary director. What a documentary director loses in missing the suspense of a plot, he gains in his freedom to edit his films in an original and expressive way. He is not tied by the strict chronology of the events laid down by a set story, but can present facets of his theme and alternations of mood in the order and tempo he chooses' (Reisz, 1964, p. 124). Overall, Reisz suggests that the documentary director is in full charge of production more than is his fiction film counterpart. 'The interpretation of a theme is so much a matter of fine personal judgments, that to spread the responsibility for writing, direction and editing between three separate individuals would be impair the film's unity' (Reisz, 1964, p. 125).

Another difference between a fiction film editor and a documentary editor is that the former discards all but the best of multiple takes, while the latter eliminates superfluous footage; footage that is not needed to tell the best story (Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 164). Therefore, John Rosenberg believes that editing a documentary is 'a bit like playing with blocks' (Rosenberg, 2010, p. 85). The objective, according to this view, would be to manipulate the story parts by moving each one sideways with the aim of creating a meaningful storyline. Editing for documentaries, nonetheless, is possibly even more vital than editing for fictional films.

> Since documentary footage is ostensibly ‘raw’, its transformation by editing may dramatically produce meanings that become discernible only when juxtaposed to moments that, for example, produce a series of incidents that argue for a pattern of behavior rather than as seemingly isolated moments…. This is not to say that editing produces deceptions but rather to indicate that editing constructs and encourages certain truths (Hong, et al., 2011, p. 206).

In this regard, June Cross (2011) suggests that 'the editing room is like a studio where we shape and weave bits of image and sound to arrive at an emotional truth based on the best research we can muster' (Cross, 2011, p. 62). But what are the considerations upon which directors should ground their editing decisions in their editing room? Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, the two prominent film-makers from the 1920s to the 1940s disputed over the answer of this question. Vertov, on one hand, argues that absolutely new meanings may be constructed throughout the rhythms of the editing and the juxtapositions of shots which are, per se, relatively meaningless. He suggests that film-makers should manipulate their original material for their own creative ends.

On the other hand, Eisenstein believes that the flow of the shots must be decided upon by the demands of the narrative line and its emotional influence on the audience (Schnitzer, et al., 1973). This sequencing of independent shots, as Navarro describes it, is part of a film’s meaning-making system (Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 163). In spite of all that, the tendency of documentary film-makers to emulate reality TV by making purely observational documentaries was also reflected in the way these films were edited (and even in the way they were shot). As Kukkonen and Klimek state, the small mistakes, rough editing and uneven filming of the live broadcast have become a central characteristic of the documentary image. These deliberate inaccuracies connote that the filming process was not carefully planned and constructed but executed ad hoc and that only limited post-production was applied (Kukkonen & Klimek, 2011, p. 60). These calculated weaknesses reinforce the subjectivity of the documentary film and make it more reliable and authentic. In the third chapter we will see that such features are behind

the increasing interest in, and use of, amateur videos for both news reports and documentary films.

1.5.2 Filming Professional Documentary:

Filming is also one of the most prominent formal determinants of documentaries. Although filming techniques of documentaries and fictional films are similar, filming styles may differ widely. Documentary filming techniques are typically similar to those used in news reports and reality TV; we will therefore focus here on the common features among these three forms, comparing them to the filming of fictional films in terms of flexibility in technique, shooting style, and behavior of the filming team on location.

One factor which distinguishes the filming of documentaries is the need for flexibility in coping with different circumstances (location, time, subject, equipment, etc.). Chapman states that there should be a 'unique level of flexibility' which should be accompanied by an overview and a strong sense of purpose (Chapman, 2009, p. 80). Filming fictional films does not require such flexibility, because everything can theoretically be arranged in advance before filming starts. The filming process itself, in fictional films, does not start until all technical and human resource decisions have been made and film sets constructed. This is the traditional rule which defines the difference between the filming of these two artistic types.

Spontaneity and simplicity are also distinct features in filming documentaries. These are achieved through the use of handheld cameras, overlapping sounds, unbalanced compositions, and the aesthetic of visual and aural clutter. We regard these determinants nowadays as makers of documentary truth, immediacy, instantaneity, and authenticity; 'They seem to evoke the unpredictability of experience' (Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 32). Excessive embellishment in shots deprives the documentary of its credibility and

instantaneity. Some shots in *Meet the Kilshaws* (Victoria Mapplebeck, 2002) were completely disfigured because the camera was facing the illuminated window, but the director did not exclude these shots because they were essential for the story. Picture quality is no longer a pressing concern for documentaries; the ultimate goal is to getting the best content at whatever stylistic price. If the cameraman hesitates for a few seconds about the most appropriate shooting angle, or the right zoom, he might lose a rare situation, a spontaneous reaction, or a defining statement.

Fig. 1- 8 *Meet the Kilshaws* (Victoria Mapplebeck, UK, 2002)

That is why documentary films use shot/counter-shot techniques very occasionally since documentary is usually shot with only one camera that captures the event, only from one angle, as it happens. Documentary films, therefore, not only offer a single spatial point of view; they offer a single temporal point of view. That temporal point of view, in Constantinou's theory, is of live action as it is occurring (Constantinou, et al., 2008, p. 149).

Another difference in filming documentaries and fictional films is that capturing the details and the critical events at the moment they happen, in documentaries, mostly requires not drawing attention. When a documentary crew is on location, they should remain discreet, respectful, and efficient especially in foreign or potentially hostile

environment (Thompson & Bowen, 2009, p. 167); such respect for foreign customs is an integral part of the documenarist's code of ethics. However, Chapman (2009) believes, the crossover between fiction and documentary in terms of shooting style has changed.

> In the past, drama techniques were seen by broadcasters as a vehicle to achieve higher audience ratings by introducing elements of entertainment values into documentary approach. These days, fiction uses documentary camera techniques, such as following rather than anticipating the action, encouraging a verite style of moving and speaking rather than blocking the action. 'Fiction's search for realism has honored documentary's perceived closeness to 'real' life, flattering by emulation' (Chapman, 2009, p. 94).

1.6 Documentary versus News:

The difference between these two film genres (documentary and news) becomes clear when we compare the news coverage I was asked to present by Abu Dhabi TV following the arrest of three journalists in Jordan in 2003 for the crime of bringing the prophet Mohammad's wives into contempt and the documentary I produced for the same TV channel about the freedom of the press in Jordan during the same period. The main difference between the two is that the news report always answers the question 'What happened?', while the documentary answers the question 'What next?'. In this example, the report referred to the journalists' "offending" essay as a background to the incident, and then went on to describe the arrest of the three journalists, and the reactions of their friends and family. On the other hand, the documentary tried to explore the religious and cultural backgrounds of the society, the cultural context which explained the hostile reaction to the essay. It also presented background information about the laws and regulations which limited freedom of expression in Jordan. The discussion was then extended to include general freedoms in Jordan, including the extent of police and judicial commitment to fulfill the King's word promising that 'the ceiling of freedoms will be as high as the sky'. The documentary also tried to explore what happened to the victims of similar cases under the laws applied at that time.

So, the news report deals with an event horizontally, while the documentary may deal with it vertically to search beyond the event itself, exploring its backgrounds and context. In spite of this apparently obvious distinction, however, an audience may still sometimes confuse a documentary (as an aesthetic art form) with a news report. According to Renov (1993), this may be a result of the fact that the documentary is still trying hard to find its own position in the midst of the ongoing conflict between life and beauty (Renov, 1993, p. 11). On the one hand, there has been a common assumption that the absence of 'beauty', as a contemporary style in documentary making, yields a greater quotient of 'truth' (Arthur, 1997, p. 3). On the other hand, some traditional documentarists believe that non-fiction film is, and should be, inspired by the aesthetic characteristics of its fictional counterpart.

This has been debated in several academic studies, given that it relates to how we perceive a documentary message and how we evaluate it aesthetically. Carl Deal, a documentary director and producer who used to be a military correspondent and international TV news producer, notes that, according to his own experience when comparing both news reports and documentaries, it is the time factor which determines if there will be a chance or not to get involved in the content, and it also determines the possibility of using different stylistic tools and aesthetic effects in production. Deal says:

> Reporting on the latest activities that are related to the much bigger stories that are unfolding day to day is a blast… You're engaged with the content in some respect, but when you're producing news segments, you're also managing satellite feeds and delivery mechanisms and whoever is editing. It's an adrenaline rush, and I think that's a big part of broadcast news. While I enjoyed it immensely, it also fell short for me because it's limited by time and because there are a hundred stories unfolding at once (quoted in Kasson, 2010).

In other words, if the news report and the documentary are relatively different in form, they may often be relatively similar in 'the raw material' of the content. It is of course inescapably true that reality is, by definition, the raw material of any documentary film. Real events are represented as in the eye of the film-maker; and, as Stella Bruzzi (2006) suggests, the outcome is a negotiation between the presentation and representation of this reality (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 9). However, Bruzzi adds, no non-fictional record can contain the whole truth (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 39), as the truth relates to a specific (individual / not unanimous) worldview (Bakker, 2005).

Michelson (1984) believes that the film (as a motion picture) is the sum of the facts recorded on film (as a recording and display medium). Each fact is a separate document. The documents have been joined to one another in a given sequence, so that the film consists of linkages between signifying pieces. The final sum of all these linkages represents an organic whole (Michelson, 1984, p. 84) and shapes the *pathos of facts*, the *enthusiasm of facts*, as Michelson defines the documentary (Michelson, 1984, p. 104). While *fact* is the intangible substance that is required for documentary-making, *truth* is the objective of any documentary, as suggested by Roy Stryker (Stott, 1973, p. 14). Traditionally, the perception of documentary was always predicated upon this assumption: documentaries present facts and represent reality, whether the implied message calls for changing this reality (e.g. the revolutionary documentaries in the 1960s), or defending it against the forces of antagonistic revolutions.

'Truth', however, is not the bastion of documentary-makers alone: 'presenting facts' has also been the erstwhile goal of news producers who, ideally at least, 'present facts and truth with clarity, dispassion and neutrality, however inconvenient or dismaying much of that information may be' (Yorke, 1987, p. ii). Nonetheless, Philip Rosen does not think that the television news can be considered a form of documentary (Rosen P., 1993, p. 71).

The news is, in Paul Arthur's view, 'innocent' or 'artless' because of the total absence of aesthetic reconstruction (Arthur, 1997, p. 2). Despite the clear, dispassionate, neutral facts and truth both newsreel and documentary present, only the latter is regarded as a dialectical relationship between the pursuit of the most authentic mode of factual representation and the impossibility of this aim (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 4). It is, at heart, 'a negotiation between the polarities of objectivity and subjectivity' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 39), between the filmic qualities brought to the documentary by the film-maker and the film-maker's angle, perspective and artistry (Chanan, 2007, p. 4). This is the intelligible distinction between documentary and news. Documentary cannot be impartial, and the assumption that documentary is objective and innately factual, says David Rolinson, is misguided (Rolinson, 2009).

Yet, even news, the French writer, editor, and film director Jean-Louis Comolli (1996) states, cannot claim impartiality. It is 'naïve' to think, in Comolli's view, that simply because the camera records a real event, it provides us with an objective and impartial image of that reality. That which is represented is seen via a 'representer' which, necessarily, transmits it (Comolli, 1996). The photographic image, to quote Chanan, is both an index and an icon: an automatic rendering of the scene and a pictorial resemblance full of associations and connotations (Chanan, 2007, p. 4). Abraham Zapruder's 22 seconds of accidental footage of the assassination of President Kennedy on 22nd November 1963 in Texas, for example, seems neutral and objective, even though it presents us with a personal viewing experience (like a home movie) which implies a subjective perception, reflecting who shot it, how, and why. This significant archival footage is a piece of film of tremendously low technical quality whose content was, however, of the highest importance. The inconsistency between quality and magnitude of content makes this 'notorious' piece of footage particularly compelling (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 13).

Linda Williams, likewise, detects a loss of faith 'in the ability of the camera to reflect objective truth' (Williams, 2005, p. 60). This is conceivably due to the advent of several new channels and the consequent competition for ratings which has become associated with major changes within the concept of news itself, such as the growth of a public relations industry that provides its own highly partial interpretation of newsworthy events (Holland, 1997, p. 189).

The essential question remains: where does the truth live? J. Dennis Robinson (2000) gives an example of the editorial decisions made by the American film-maker Louis de Rochemont (1899-1978) in his role as director of the monthly newsreel *The March of Time* for most of its 16-year run. De Rochemont defied American broadcasters, who were averse to showing the face of Adolf Hitler on American television in the 1930s, by making the audience confront the 'Führer' on screen. Despite his insistence on reality, Robinson says, de Rochemont had no moral problem inserting artificial footage into news clips when 'required'. Robinson quotes a study of *The March of Time* conducted by Raymond Fielding, revealing that de Rochemont already used imitators to resemble well-known figures in shots carefully included in the cinematic show (Fielding, 1978) . As de Rochemont lived in Newington, an American town in New Hampshire, from 1940 through the mid 1970s, residents of this town said they often found their relatives and friends on screen in *The March of Time* 'when a missing shot was needed' (Robinson, 2000).

In later chapters, we will further investigate how ordinary people, who have already become one of the most reliable sources of news in contemporary documentary- and news-making, exist at this blurred area where traditional journalism and documentary meet and influence one another.

1.7 Documentary and Reality TV:

Victoria Mapplebeck's *Smart Hearts* (1999) is widely regarded as the first live web documentary in Britain. It is a five-part documentary, exploring the broken marriage of Brendan Quick and Claire de Jong, using new technologies (i.e. a webcam) to increase access and intimacy. What made this series different from any other is that the usual levels of documentary access had been radically increased (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 23). For some critics, this was an example of the moral decline of Channel 4 (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 24); As Mapplebeck filmed Claire, Brendan, and his new girlfriend Lisa Jensen, they filmed each other as well, creating an intensely personal picture of the difficulties of contemporary relationships. To increase the level of interaction throughout the series, the viewers were additionally able to chat live with the documentary subjects and crew.

Due to the immense popularity of Reality TV over the past twenty years, most of the subjects who appeared on such programs have become widely renowned national celebrities, at least temporarily. Jade Goody became famous after participating on the third series of *Big Brother* in 2002; she later took part on other reality productions, wrote a bestselling autobiography and launched a top-selling perfume line, before she died of cervical cancer in 2009. In the Middle East, Ahmad El-Sherief, one of the graduates of the Arabic adaptation of the French television show *Star Academy* in its first season in 2003, received a distribution for albums contract from Rotana, the Arab World's largest entertainment company, and also starred in a feature film produced by PEPSI.

Many assistant producers and researchers now specialize as 'people finders'. The format as well as the initial script of the documentary, in most cases, is already determined, as it would be in theatre or film, so research has merely become 'a matter of casting'. Reality TV subjects are not only treated nowadays as professionals, as Gillian Pachter claims in 'The Telegraph' in 2004 (Pachter, 2004), but they also have turned out to be part of the

production equation (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 34). They understand the formulas and seem prepared to 'conspire' in the obligatory crisis moments and caricatures (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 29); in short, they more and more believe that they should be in control of form and content, like other professional performers (Pachter, 2004). In *Smart Hearts*, Victoria Mapplebeck had to give Brendan and Claire complete editorial control in order to have their consent. It is suggested that the new technologies used in such productions have liberated subjects, providing them with a greater influence during both filming and editorial phases. Conrad Green, the series producer of British *Big Brother*, thinks that the new formats of Reality TV have drastically altered the relationship between subject, producer and audience; He says, 'I, as the producer, can intervene only a certain amount. The people in the house can determine their fate but not completely' (quoted in Kilborn, 2003, p. 59).

Whatever the ethical and legal quandaries involved, however, one thing is certain: what makes the Reality TV format so popular is precisely this close access. The subjects can be boring, but the access never is. This access is consensual as the subjects are aware of the cameras. This intrusive filming has been linked, in some critiques, to the violation of privacy in the non-consensual world of surveillance and electronic monitoring (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 22). Reality TV is all about watching rather than being told (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 19).

One approach to documentary-making, in Stephen Mamber's phrase, is 'uncontrolled documentary' (Mamber, 1976). Reality TV, however, engineers the documentary scenes of exhibitionism, conflict, drama and tears, instead of waiting for the archetypal scenes to occur in their own time (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 26). For instance, in *Amish in the City*, the American reality television series (2004), five Amish teenagers were invited to experience 'modern' (non-Amish) culture by living in a house with six mainstream

American teenagers. Pachter (2004) refers to it as reality based on a controlled situation (Pachter, 2004).

Fig. 1- 9 *Amish in the City* (Jon Kroll, USA, 2004)

While Victoria Mapplebeck regards Reality TV as manipulated observational documentary (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 20), Biressi and Nunn (2005) believe that the two genres are distinct, but with two key features in common; an emphasis on the representation of ordinary people, and hypothetically unscripted or unplanned moments that supposedly expose unmediated reality (Biressi & Nunn, 2005, pp. 10-11). Reality TV, unlike other documentary formats, creates an artificial environment, places the subjects in it, and records the results. Biressi and Nunn accept as true that the producers of reality TV have drawn substantially from previously established aesthetics of intimacy pioneered by documentary makers:

> Over the longer term, new and newly adapted technologies have frequently been the trigger for the development of new documentary styles. Since the 1960s, the relative portability of hand-held cameras, changes in sound recording, the availability of home movie equipment, video and CCTV, the possibility of live web-streaming and DV cameras all appeared to liberate film-makers, allowing them to represent reality all the more convincingly (Biressi & Nunn, 2005, pp. 15-16).

On the other hand, as Reality TV subjects are fully exposed in a sensational way (e.g. the close-up of Nick Bateman in tears, broken, unmasked and live to nation in *Big Brother*),

some commentators, such as Yvonne Roberts, think this is 'emotional disemboweling, leaving viewers queasy and the participants degraded' (Mapplebeck, 2002, p. 24).

Fig. 1- 10 Nick Bateman in *Big Brother* (2000), Photograph: Channel 4

1.8 Professional Documentary Ethics:

1.8.1 What is 'Ethics'?

The meaning of 'ethics' is hard to identify, and the views many people have about ethics are not the same. As a branch of philosophy, ethics is primarily concerned with how one should behave - the 'What should I do?' question, both in general and in specific situations (applied ethics) - and thereby with what is right, moral or fair.

In practice, most professionals conform to codes of ethical behavior most of the time, if only because the codes reflect mere common sense, and because most professional situations do not present ethical dilemmas. The question of expertise in resolving ethical dilemmas is hotly debated in university philosophy departments and professional settings alike; on one side, there are those who argue that only a 'professional ethicist' has the theoretical understanding and disinterested detachment to make ethically informed decisions; on the other, professionals usually argue that only they have the first-hand

experience necessary to make difficult choices when it matters. There is a broad consensus among professional ethicists and professionals alike, however, that 'proficient practitioners need to be able to manage value-conflicts and resolve ethical dilemmas while ensuring that their actions are in accordance with the minimum requirements of the profession'.

There are not enough professional ethicists to resolve all the dilemmas thrown up by professional practice in modern society; it is inevitable that professionals will be called upon to exercise their own personal discretion to make ethical judgments at least some of the time. This sense of responsibility will vary according to professional and profession; in more market-driven professions with less public accountability, observance of minimum ethical standards may be the accepted norm among practicing professionals. Those faced with more urgent responsibility - doctors are the obvious example - are typically expected by both the public and their own professional associations to take ethics more seriously, and typically do; medical ethics courses are now a part of the core curriculum in medical degrees in a growing number of countries (Lester, 2007).

1.8.2 Documentary Between *Actuality* and *Artistic Amorality*:

'The camera can never deliver an unmediated reproduction of the truth' (Winston 2005). Even in a film with no voice-over, no music, no close-ups and no extreme long shots, there must be an implied message (Cronin, 2002, pp. 48-49). 'Production means mediation', and 'the central question for documentary ethics is how much [this] mediation is ethical' (Winston, 2005, p. 181).

In documentaries, every shot may involve a moral dimension or require a moral decision. The American feminist activist and director Michelle Citron (1999), for example, says that her early decision to make fictional movies, where paid actors play the protagonists'

roles and say words written by her, was justified because, since they are reciting words written by her, she assumed that she would avoid the quandaries of moral responsibility that come with documentaries. Later she discovered that, even in fictional films, other moral criteria apply, whether at the end of the editing process or during distribution and screening. These are the film-maker's responsibilities toward the audience (Citron, 1999, p. 271). But in the case of documentaries, moral issues are present at every stage of the film-making process: writing, producing, filming, editing, distribution, and even during screening.

In the early 1990s, film-makers were commonly considered as valued independent voices at a time of deteriorating public trust in mainstream media and increasingly one-sided political propaganda. In the USA, for example, discrimination against African Americans arguably reached its post-1968 climax during the Presidencies of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), George HW Bush (1989- 1993), and the first term of Bill Clinton (1993 1997). One example of this discrimination was the neglect by Ministry of Agriculture officials of complaints by African American farmers that they were being deprived of subsidies available to their white peers. Republican indecision about how best to deal with racial discrimination was reflected in media coverage of the issue. But in 1994 the documentary *Hoop Dreams*, directed by Steve James, managed to change the American perspectives on this issue, urging society to reject such discrimination and to put more pressure on the government to issue laws criminalizing it. This goal was achieved in Bill Clinton's second term.

Fig. 1- 11 *Hoop Dreams* (Steve James, USA, 1994)

Thus, the increase in commercial opportunities and the importance of 'politics' as a documentary theme created conspicuous pressure. Documentary-makers found themselves under ever-closer scrutiny for the ethics of their practices (Aufderheide, et al., 2009). However, with the growing interest in the documentary genre and rivalry among documentarists to produce more creative (and profitable) films, the ethical sensitivities of the documentarist, as claimed by Brian Winston, have been much eroded due to this constant implicit claim on artistic license. He argues that the documentary-maker has relentlessly been perplexed by two conflicting statements; the documentary claim on 'actuality' which requires behaving ethically, and its unjournalistic parallel desire to be allowed to be 'creative' which permits a measure of artistic 'amorality' (Winston, 2005, p. 181). John Ellis (2005) brings forward some examples that collectively produced what he specifically calls 'the documentary crisis of 1998-9'.

> The documentary crisis of 1998-9… embraces examples of people pretending to be what they are not in order to deceive factual program makers; and program makers pretending that their footage can claim a factual status (Ellis, 2005, p. 17).

One of those examples is *The Connection*, an hour-long documentary, made for the ITV Network. The documentary, which was broadcast in 14 countries and won 8 awards, allegedly uncovered a new route for smuggling cocaine from Colombia to the UK. 'The

Guardian' newspaper soon came to a conclusion that the film was ‘an elaborate fake’, involving 16 different deceptions such as conducting an interview with a retired minor bureaucrat in the director's hotel room and pretending it was an interview with a drug baron in a secret location. On 5 December 1999, the Carlton TV internal inquiry acknowledged that The Guardian’s claims were correct and subsequently the Independent Television Commission (ITC) imposed a fine on Carlton TV of £2 million (Ellis, 2005, p.9).

1.8.3 The Film-maker's Responsibility Towards Subjects:

Ethics in documentary film-making are most commonly invoked in discussions about the appropriate relationship between a film-maker and his subjects. According to Pryluck (2005), this relationship changed radically with the development of lightweight equipment (Pryluck, 2005, p. 194). This new equipment enabled film-makers, in Rosenthal's view, to use and expose people’s lives. This exploitation, Rosenthal elaborates, is 'often done for the best of motives, but it occasionally brings unforeseen and dire consequences into the lives of filmed subjects. So the basic question is; what is the duty of care, or responsibility, owed by film-makers to those they film?' (Rosenthal & Corner, 2005, p. 246).

Rosenthal’s views can be applied to the film *I, Muslim* by Czech producer Jiří Ovečka, which was aired on Czech television on the 7th of October 2005. On the 1st of March 2006, Brandon Swanson wrote in *The Prague Post*, that the film had angered Muslims in his country and disturbed the Arab ambassadors because it took some of its footage from hidden cameras inside a mosque in Prague (Swanson, 2006). This footage included conversations between Muslims that were mixed later with footage about terrorism. This mixing was done in a way that was considered unfair by Muslims (the timing of the documentary also coincided with the publishing of cartoon images of the Prophet

Mohammad that were considered defamatory. The cartoons provoked a series of violent incidents in the Muslim world, in which it is estimated that as many as 100 people lost their lives).

Muslims in the Czech Republic filed complaints to The Czech Radio and Television Broadcasting Council (RRTV), saying that the film depicted scenes taken from hidden cameras, in a way that reinforces wrong stereotypes about Islam (Swanson, 2006). These shots showed the correspondent of the network inside the mosque, claiming that he wanted to become a Muslim. His claim opened the door for conversations with the mosque visitors about religion, Europe, terrorism, and the status of women in Islam. This example poses the same question that we asked before, but in a different way: should the film-maker have revealed his identity, and asked the film's subjects to choose if they wanted to appear in the film and bear the effects of showing it on their religion's reputation, or not?

Fig. 1- 12 *I, Muslim* (Jiří Ovečka, Czech Republic, 2005)

The documentary maker undoubtedly holds an ethical responsibility to notify his subjects of how they will be represented in the documentary, and how this might influence them when the documentary is broadcast. When the subjects agree to be depicted in such a way, after informing them of the potential outcomes of the film; their agreement to these conditions then counts as 'informed consent'.

In practice, every consent needs to be tailor-made according to the individual circumstances of the contributor and contribution. The documentary maker, however, is not permitted to obtain this consent by intimidation or coercion, or from someone who is physically or mentally not capable to give consent, or by the omission of any fact that might influence the giving or withholding of this consent (Rosenthal & Corner, 2005, p. 262).

Ethics also dictates that documentary-makers represent their subjects as realistically as possible and not use any footage to support other ideas out of context (Ethics and Documentary, 2010). Michael Moore's films, for example, tend to leave their viewers with an impression of a given issue, both because of the unbalanced way he presents his main ideas and because of the overtly sentimental way he characterizes his subjects.

In *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), for example, Moore's obvious distaste for the Bush administration led him to present some of his assumptions as if they had already been deduced from credible arguments. He also uses exaggeration a lot in all his films to speak to the emotions in order to win over the audience. His perspectives might not necessarily be wrong, but his exaggeration in narration, his choice of characters, and his general film-making style are all factors that rate him as a biased film-maker.

Theoretically speaking, objectivity is an attainable goal. But in reality, sticking to it might be very difficult for documentarists. Applying standards of objectivity to individual films is also difficult for industry watchdogs (Jolliffe & Zinnes, 2006, p. 56).

Fig. 1- 13 *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, USA, 2004)

1.8.4 The Informed Consent:

Kees Bakker argues that informed consent depends on the honesty of the film-maker, but we have to be aware that the film-maker cannot foresee all possible interpretations and effects of his film on the private life of subjects (Jolliffe & Zinnes, 2006, p. 56). Such moral dilemmas are usually left unresolved due to economic, personal, practical, or temporal considerations (Aibel, 1991, p. 118).

The film-maker, first of all, is not always in a communicative situation with his subjects. Second, it can be unfeasible at times to inform the subject of the detailed vision and potential effects of the documentary, and to predict every possible interpretation of it. In addition, the film-maker is not always able to reveal the final cut of his/her film to the subjects; in most cases this ethical practice involves financial considerations. Finally, the film could hold dissimilar meanings when shown in foreign countries and cultures, and could generate different and unpredictable consequences for documentarist and subjects alike.

All these moral dilemmas were at play in my documentary *Peshawar, City of Darkness*, (2000), which deals with the Afghani journalists who lived as refugees in the Pakistani city of Peshawar during the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Unsafe living circumstances and a dangerous context for shooting did not allow for normal, smooth communication with the subjects, who were simply terrified journalists working undercover inside this random city; shooting was done in the shortest possible period of time in order to avoid drawing attention, and to escape the eyes of Taliban spies.

In such circumstances, it was not easy to speak with the subjects about all the details of the documentary's vision, and to discuss its possible effects and interpretations. The limited time-frame also prevented us from showing the final cut version of the footage to the subjects, which was vital due to the sensitivity of the film's content for the subjects whose lives were in danger; we were hoping to offer them the opportunity to make all the decisions about every shot, lest the film should expose their identities or draw the Taliban's attention to where they were hiding. In addition to the security issues and the logistical difficulty of returning to Peshawar once we had left, the decision to return after editing would have meant a significant addition to the film's budget. Eventually, we decided to avoid distribution of the documentary in Afghanistan and Pakistan, so as to avoid compromising the lives of the subjects in these two countries.

Fig. 1- 14 *Peshawar, City of Darkness* (M. Said Mahfouz, UAE, 2000)

There are other cases where disclosure of the documentary script and its possible influences could hinder the obtaining of such consent. This might happen, for instance, in the case of disagreement between the subject and the filmmaker on the purpose of the film; the film may depict an activist group, political lobby or governmental authority which is hostile to negative publicity and refuses to grant consent. In some cases, filming equipment may be damaged, or members of the film crew attacked, by the subject if the true objectives of the film become known. This is perhaps why the director of the Czech film *I, Muslim* hid his identity while filming in a mosque in order not to provoke Muslim worshippers, who may have reacted angrily if they had discovered that his film was linking Islam with terrorism.

Such situations threaten the ability of film-maker to obtain the consent of the subjects as well as the viability of the film as a whole. The filmmaker may have to make compromises to satisfy subjects without affecting the essence of the film, or she may have to film in secret.

1.8.5 Paying Subjects:

John Ellis (2011) believes that the documentary maker does not hold the full responsibility for the facts brought forward in his film; the subjects filmed also have to provide true information about themselves, rather than pretending to be what they are not. However, for them to do so, they need to be sure that the film-maker will convey this information honestly and objectively (Ellis, 2011). Robert Aibel (1991) suggests that the public has become increasingly sensitive to the moral irresponsibility of documentarists. Many people are now wary of taking part in any documentary whatsoever; they fear that they will be defamed by a sensationalist film-maker in search of easy success at their expense (Aibel, 1991, p. 117). In the meantime, documentary subjects have become the focus of a competitive market based on principles of supply and demand. This, in Bakker's view (2006), puts the concept of 'informed consent' under pressure because 'it is

a kind of corruption; the appearance in the film has become a paid contract' (Jolliffe & Zinnes, 2006, p. 56). Subjects should thereby not merely be considered as passive victims; they may turn against the film-maker because they have interests of their own.

One of the most notable examples in this vein is the judicial conflict between the French film-maker Nicholas Philibert and the subject of his acclaimed documentary *Etre et Avoir* (To Be and to Have, 2002). The film depicts everyday life in a rural classroom in the French village of Saint-Etienne-sur-Esson, and became an unexpected French cinema success when it was released in 2002.

Through a vivid narrative line, the film focuses on teacher Georges Lopez and the effectiveness of his teaching methods. The film made Lopez a star in France, and broke the box office records. Lopez refused a one-off payment offered from the documentary-makers and triggered an acrimonious lawsuit, claiming that the film's success rested entirely on his personality, and that his teaching methods, made famous by the film, were his intellectual property. He demanded a £170,000 payment, in return, which was rejected by the court. The teacher, in the court judgment, had no grounds to argue he should be treated as an actor because he was filmed as he went about his everyday professional duties.

Fig. 1- 15 *Etre et Avoir* (Nicholas Philibert, France, 2002)

1.8.6 The Documentary-maker and the Spectator:

Just as documentary makers have an obligation to their subjects, they also have an obligation to their audiences. The spectator expects documentaries to show some kind of reality. Documentary makers must not exaggerate or twist facts so as to produce an attention-grabbing story (Ethics and Documentary, 2010), or to meet the standards of a producer, a network or a television show. The spectator, as Bakker (2006) claims, 'isn't that innocent anymore' (Jolliffe & Zinnes, 2006, p. 58).

Reconstructed reality should also be unambiguously marked. The German 'fake' documentary *Suicide*, by Raoul Heimrich (2004), for example, exaggerated in its attempt to draw the attention of the audience, and left the question about whether the film was a documentary (or a docudrama) unanswered. The film did not clearly distinguish between the scenes that were true and those that were staged with the help of visual effects, making them seem unmistakably true. The story of the film is about two film-makers who are working on a project that focuses on documenting the suicides of desperate people. The film is very misleading and even shocking for the audience, who experience it as a documentary.

Fig. 1- 16 *Suicide* (Raoul Heimrich, Germany, 2004)

Furthermore, the spectators' understanding and perception of any documentary are surrounded by their moral and ideological environment. Bakker (2006) deems that the spectator should be conscious of the fact that the representation of the documentary and his/her own interpretation of it are both guided by the worldviews of the film-maker and the spectator respectively (Jolliffe & Zinnes, 2006, p. 58).

Consider the controversial documentary *Fitna* (2008), which was co-written by the right-wing Dutch politician Geert Wilders. The film presents Wilders' personal perspective about the relationship between the Qur'an and terrorism. Although the film was a mere reflection of widely held ideas in the West concerning Islam, Wilders received death threats, and was severely criticized in many Islamic countries, and in the Islamic communities of most Western countries. This reception is indicative of a culture which sanctifies the so-called 'religious constants', refusing to make them subject to human controversy, and also of a culture which refuses to accept any criticism of their own affairs; such critics might have listened to a Muslim who criticized the violence in the ideology of some extremist Muslim groups, but they absolutely refused to listen to the same ideas from the West. The representation of a certain idea by the film-maker, and its interpretation by the audience, cannot be considered to be done apart from these cultural considerations.

Fig. 1- 17 *Fitna* (Geert Wilders, Netherland, 2008)

1.8.7 The Documentary-maker and the Broadcaster:

Documentarists are typically dependent on professional distributors to get their work to the public, and are subject to the ethical and other broadcasting standards (not to mention the corporate interests) of networks who will distribute their work. This has traditionally made some forms of documentary difficult to produce, and others downright impossible.

One example of the phenomenon of broadcaster interference concerns the documentary *Ford Transit* (2002) by Hany Abu-Assad. The film tells the story of a Palestinian taxi driver who has to cope with the many Israeli road blocks in the occupied territories. The VPRO Broadcasting Organization, which commissioned the film, decided to withdraw it from the Dutch Film Festival after it found out that certain scenes were staged by actors, and that the taxi driver - the film's central protagonist - was not actually a taxi driver in real life. This is an ethical dilemma. On the one hand, the documentarist has broken genres without admitting it; he ought to have admitted that he reconstructed one of the scenes, or that he mixed drama with documentation, or mixed imagination with reality. All these methods are approved in making documentaries, provided that the film-maker is frank and faithful, and distinguishes them from the other scenes, lest the message of the scene be confused by the audience. On the other hand, this directorial sleight of hand may be justified in a case of such gross violations of human rights. But the question is: does the objective of the documentary justify the means used to achieve it, even if those means are immoral? In the end, however, this was not an ethical decision that the documentarist got to make; it was taken out of his hands by the broadcaster.

1.9 Summary:

In the previous pages we introduced and discussed modern definitions of documentary and professional documentary-makers. We mentioned the role of the 'drama factor' in the documentary industry and its place in such definitions as that which consider

documentary the 'dramatized presentation of man's relation to his institutional life'. Drama, as we explained, may form a framework for the documentary story, but it never changes, nor tries to change, reality. We examined the four fundamental tendencies in documentary practice as suggested by Michael Renov (1993); i.e. to record, reveal, or preserve facts; to promote facts or persuade the audience with facts; to analyze facts or interrogate the subject to get facts; or to express facts. We also discussed Eitzen's definition of the documentary as simply a 'film with a message'. That led us to Hampe's view of the documentary as a communication channel for 'the truth' between film-maker and audience. Also mentioned are the five distinguishing characteristics of documentary proposed by Ellis and McLane.

We also introduced Bill Nichols' genealogical paradigm that states six modes for documentary; (1) *poetic* mode, (2) *expository* mode, (3) *observational* mode, (4) *participatory* mode, (5) *reflexive* mode, and (6) *performative* mode. We explored the validity of using imagination as raw material in documentary in light of Nichols' view about the *poetic* mode of documentary. Taking my film *Nonsense* (2007) as an example, we said that reality is not only the events occurring around us or the mere portrayal of the surrounding environment as it is; it is rather (all) possible reflections of the surrounding environment and its interactions, 'the creative treatment of actuality and imaginative reality'.

We then focused on the question of professionalism in film. According to Witteveen, 'professionalism' refers to 'the concrete production of visuals' and 'the clear hierarchy, responsibilities and roles within the film team'. We also mentioned how Victoria Mapplebeck differentiates between professional documentary film-makers and professional film-makers generally; for Mapplebeck, the former are preoccupied with presenting a social and political panorama of the world. The difference between

professional documentary-makers and amateur documentary-makers was highlighted, namely that professionals are preoccupied with presenting a social and political panorama of the world; besides, they are driven by the profit motive. They also want their films to be taken seriously as art and to be seen by as many people as possible. Furthermore, we compared documentary and other related non-fiction forms such as news reports and reality TV, not only in terms of form but also with regards to claims to truth and objectivity.

We discussed in detail two of the main constraints related to the documentary form (i.e. editing and shooting) which distinguish it from fictional films. We explained how editing is central to the film-making process in general and documentary-making in particular. We also traced the evolution of editing and filming technologies and the effect of these changes on the documentary-making process. We also compared the shooting of documentaries, news reports and reality TV shows to fictional films in terms of flexibility in technique, shooting style, behavior of the filming team on location, and the relationship between the subject and the camera. This relationship was then explored, and the key challenge of how to make the subject behave naturally in front of the camera highlighted. We mentioned the example of Lionel Rogosin in his docu-drama *On the Bowery* (1956) in which he overcame this obstacle in a way that seemed more similar to modern examples of citizen journalism videos.

We stressed the difference between documentary and news: news reports deal with what happened, while documentaries may search beyond the event itself, exploring its background and context. We nevertheless tried to understand why an audience may sometimes confuse a documentary with a news report and whether either can claim impartiality simply because the camera is recording a real event?

We came then to some of the central ethical issues in documentary studies. Ethical issues, indeed, are at play at every stage of the film-making process, even in films which may appear simple in form or content. We saw the example of the documentary *Hoop Dreams* (1994), directed by Steve James, and how it managed to change American perspectives on discrimination against African Americans. We quoted John Ellis on the so-called 'documentary crisis of 1998-9', in which film-makers faced up to new ethical challenges in the industry for the first time. We discussed the film-maker's responsibility towards subjects and how this relationship completely changed with the development of lightweight equipment. We cited the example of the film *I, Muslim* by Czech producer Jiří Ovečka, which shows how the documentary-maker has a moral responsibility to notify his subjects of how they will be represented in his documentary, and how this might affect their lives when it is shown. We explained that ethics also dictates that documentary-makers should represent their subjects as realistically as possible without prejudice. We concluded, however, that such moral dilemmas are usually left unresolved due to economic, personal, practical, temporal or other considerations. I gave an example of my documentary *Peshawar, City of Darkness* (2000) and how I was not able to inform subjects of the possible consequences of their involvement.

We also touched upon cases where the film-maker should pay his subjects; as ordinary people have become progressively more aware of their own rights and interests as well as the irresponsible behavior of some film-makers, they have increasingly begun to demand money to accept being filmed, as we saw from the judicial dispute between the French film-maker Nicholas Philibert and the subject of his documentary *Etre et Avoir* (2002).

Modes of broadcasting and viewing documentaries are also subject to ethical considerations. We explored how audience reception is indicative of the culture in which the film is made and broadcast. The representation of a certain idea by the film-maker,

and its interpretation by the audience, cannot be considered apart from these cultural considerations. Finally, we explored the relationship between film-makers, broadcasters and distributors, and how these relationships can make some forms of documentary difficult to produce and others impossible.

This chapter, therefore, drew a full picture of the professional realm of documentary in order for us to better understand its amateur counterpart and make relevant comparisons. In the next chapter we will shed more light on the definition and characteristics of user-generated video in the context of new media and Web 2.0 features which enabled Internet users to enhance their understanding of the world through documentary.

Chapter 2 – User-generated Video in a New Media Context

2.1 What is User-generated Video?

User-generated video (UGV) generates multi-disciplinary interest; most definitions of the concept of UGV reflect this diversity. Technology-oriented studies place UGV within a new media context as one of the key features of Web 2.0. The tipping point came with the mass deployment of core technology that facilitates video creation and sharing. Affordable new technology has led to an explosion in the number of amateurs creating and viewing digital video content. The extent to which these new amateur users have control over the tools at their disposal varies widely. UGV is typically defined to cover any video which is created with technologies like cell phones and other mobile devices; this definition may be expanded to cover any video which is not professionally produced, shot or edited.

Social scientists, on the other hand, highlight community as a key driving factor in amateur video creation. UGV in social scientific discourse typically refers to a peer-to-peer application, a democratic participatory medium for sharing visual experiences with other members of the community, particularly as the Internet, the main UGV incubator, migrates from text-based to video-based content. Commercial-oriented theories, however, tend to look at UGV from an entirely different standpoint; namely, as an innovative way for marketing and producing income.

The term UGV came into prominence in 2005 in the wake of the boom in 'always-on' broadband usage. Matthew Eltringham, Editor of the BBC College of Journalism website and the former Editor of the BBC UGC Hub, thinks that this term is 'a hangover from the term UGC, an ugly acronym that emerged at the time of the first use of this kind of content - the Tsunami and 7/7 - but has stuck despite many attempts by many people to

find new terms to describe it. It does what it says on the tin' (M Eltringham 2009, pers. comm. 26 August). This type of video is best known for fuelling the popularity of websites such as YouTube. It can document domestic life, travel, work, current events, and can take the form of either fiction or non-fiction. Many news outlets now accept video submissions from their viewers. Although the UGV market is highly competitive and showing clear signs of rapid maturation, quality content is still scarce.

But why bother studying UGV in its modern format, placing it in various contexts and looking at it through the perspectives of different disciplines? It is apparent that UGV has become the heart of today's Internet; approximately 90% of UK streaming videos come from UGV sites, mainly YouTube, according to Dan Stevenson, the marketing director of Screen Digest Ltd (D Stevenson 2009, pers. comm. 12 August). The sheer quantity of UGV being generated is mind-boggling: an average of 60 minutes of video is uploaded onto YouTube every second of every day (YouTube, 2012), 71% of online Americans used video-sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo in 2011, up from 66% a year earlier. The daily use of video-sharing websites also jumped five percentage points, from 23% of online Americans in May 2010 to 28% in May 2011. The total number of views of uploaded videos on the Internet was estimated at 431.8 billion in 2011 (Moore, 2011).

2.2 The Origins of New Media:

New media came to recontextualise UGV, or rather UGC in its wider form, so as to make it openly democratic and unrestrictedly participatory. New media came to recontextualise UGV, or rather UGC in its wider form, so as to make it openly democratic and unrestrictedly participatory. Accessibility of cheap mobile filming equipment and open-source editing software, as well as the convergence between different media technologies and instant uploadability of media content, have all made it easier for users to produce the content they want, independent of traditional production conglomerates. Interactivity via the

Internet and related modes of exchange have opened up new possibilities for sharing opinions about UGC, and even generating UGC collectively with other users, regardless of the location of each user. In other words, the process of generating UGC has perceptibly become easier and cheaper; more and more consumers have become producers of their own content. Nevertheless, new media is not, in fact, new. The history of new media, as Lev Manovich (2007) traces it, begins in the 1830s, with two major breakthroughs that were to have far-reaching effects: the 'analytical engine', as labelled by its designer Charles Babbage (1791-1871), aimed at performing mathematical operations; and the development of an early photographic process, called 'daguerreotype' after one of its inventors, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) (Manovich, 2007, pp 45-48). Babbage's incomplete machine comprised the essential germ of today's electronic computer. The idea was to enter data and instructions to the machine via punched cards to be stored in the memory. An arithmetical unit (the 'mill' as Babbage called it) was to carry out arithmetic operations. Final outcomes were eventually to be printed out (Randell, 1982, p. 204). Daguerre's invention analogously contained within it the seeds of modern photography; the image, in daguerreotype, was to be exposed directly onto a sheet of copper plated with a thin coat of silver, creating, after three to fifteen minutes of exposure, a highly detailed image that could only be copied by photographing the original picture in the same way. For the first time ever, people could acquire a precise semblance of themselves at a modest cost (Barger & White, 2000, p. 58).

These two developments appeared together and slowly developed side by side. During the nineteenth century, various tabulators and calculators - later to be known as 'computers' - were developed. In parallel, additional modern media tools were invented, allowing for the storage of images, image sequences, sounds and text. Manovich regards the conjunction of those two separate trajectories - digital media and high-speed computing - in the late twentieth century as the birth of *new media*:

> Media and computer… merge into one. All existing media are translated into numerical data accessible for the computers. The result: graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces and text become computable, i.e. simply another set of computer data. In short, media becomes new media (Manovich, 2007, p.48).

As a result, a *new economy* has emerged that is informational, global and networked, based upon the pervasive diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Castells, 1996, p. 17). A new social morphology of our societies, termed by Castells as *a networked society*, has accordingly emerged on a global scale, substantially modifying industrial production, personal experience, political power, and artistic culture (Castells, 1996, 469). The *Internet* has kept the global economy growing and provided a low-cost global forum for anyone with a message. Public and private networks of data-, tele-, and mass communication have gradually merged, creating multifunctional, high-speed networks (Dijk, 2006, p. 7). This *integration* has enabled data and information to be transferred easily from one digital application to another. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the entire world has changed.

New media would appear to be characterized by the shifting relationship between technical advancements and cultural progress. Media scholars look at this phenomenon from different angles. Henry Jenkins (2006) speaks of *media convergence* that 'alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences' (Jenkins, 2006, p. 15). Burgess et al (2006) discuss *civic engagement* and *e-democracy* in the context of new convergences between social networks and consumer-created content on the Internet (Burgess, et al., 2006). In the same vein, Meijer and Burger (2008) coin the term *Citizens for Citizens* (C4C) to refer to an emergent pattern of public participation between citizens that is taking place in the digital world (Meijer & Burger, 2008).

These easily discernible new trends, however, as Livingstone (1999) and Haddon (2006) argue, appear to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. In order to prove this

hypothesis, Wilzig and Avigdor (2004) apply a natural life-cycle model consisting of 6 stages: birth, penetration, growth, maturity, self-defence, and adaptation, convergence or obsolescence. Using a biological metaphor, the model suggests that the Internet 'gestated' during the 1960s as the Pentagon was attempting to establish a military communications network to survive a nuclear attack. This project gave birth to ARPA net (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), which 'piggybacked' on the conventional telephone infrastructure and computers (Wilzig & Avigdor, 2004, p. 719). As élite American universities became increasingly involved, the ARPAnet gradually grew into the Internet. The Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau's Worldwide Web (W3) soon became a mass medium, accessed via the Internet, subsequent to the invention of Hypertext Mark-up Language (HTML).

> The growth rate of the Internet from the mid-1990s onwards increased exponentially... but this occurred after more than two decades of relatively incremental growth, due to economic inertia (non-profit from the start) and technological complexity (a very user-unfriendly experience back then) – and not because of any action or reaction of older media which hardly registered it on their radar screen. [T]he major uses of the Internet have changed dramatically… [And] the level of new medium/old medium competition has intensified (Wilzig & Avigdor, 2004, p. 720).

For Wilzig & Avigdor, the Web's remarkable 'growth' was largely attributed to the wide availability of required infrastructure (i.e. the telephone system and home computers) among ordinary citizens; its multi-functionality (based on the 'convergence' between older media and the new medium), interactivity, user-friendly new applications, as well as mostly free, flexibly consumed content (Wilzig & Avigdor, 2004, p. 721-722). To adapt to the 'maturing' Internet, older media have done their best to survive within the Internet's underlying infrastructure (e.g. online radio), or have changed to fit the demands of online audiences (e.g. online newspapers).

2.3 Modern Definitions of New Media:

New media technologies, digital media technologies, transformed media, modern media, computerized media, Internet-based communication and so on are all examples of common synonyms for 'new media' that could easily be invoked to answer the 'What is new media?' question. However, consensus is emerging in scholarly studies that all such definitions are deficient because they disregard the growing impact of new media developments on everyday human activities. In other words, if new media is to be seen as a tool for social, political and economic change - as is the case in this study - it has to be viewed within the context of the cultural processes involved, and the 'associated timescale of domestic diffusion and appropriation'… 'Research must be careful to distinguish questions of change from those of progress, and questions of technological change from those of social change' (Livingstone, 1999, p. 6).

A sui generis approach considers new media as 'those forms that combine the three Cs: computing and information technology (IT), communication networks, and digitized media and information content' (Miles, 1997; Rice, 1999; Barry, 2000 quoted by Flew, 2005, p.2), as a consequence of another C-word that is *convergence* (Flew, 2005, p2). Any combination of these three Cs leads to technologies that contribute to new media. The three Cs cover a broad range of new media, such as the Worldwide Web, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs and DVDs, virtual reality technology, television programmes which are shot on digital video and edited on computer workstations, feature films which use 3D or 4D animation and digital compositing, image compositions — photographs, illustrations, layouts, advertisements — which are also created on computers and then printed on paper, and so forth (Figure 2-1).

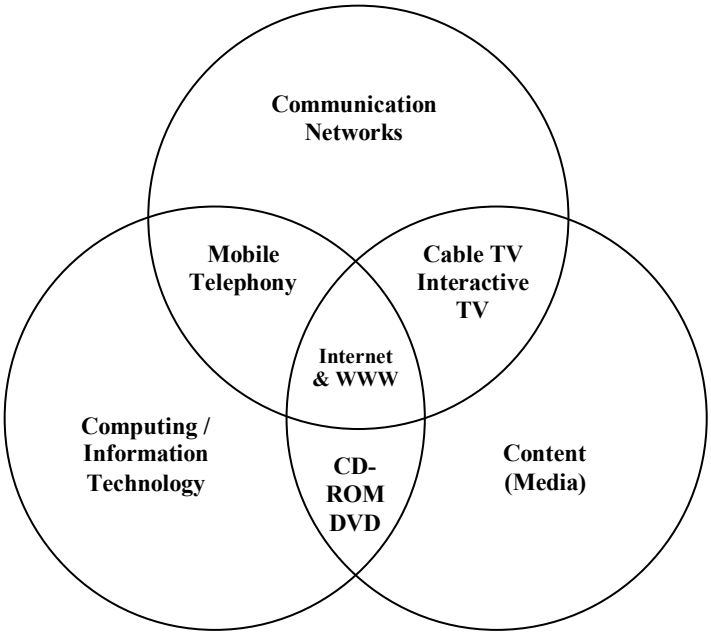

Fig. 2- 1 The 3 Cs of new media (Trevor Barr, 2000, newsmedia.com.au, p.25 cited in Flew, 2004, p.3)

2.2.1 Web 2.0, the New Media Controversial Concept:

Web 2.0, the buzzword that has exceeded two billion entries on Google since it first appeared online in September 2005 up to the time of writing (June 2012), is still a controversial concept. This controversy is fuelled by countless, often contradictory definitions and theories. Despite this endless conjecture and theorizing, however, there are several core principles common to most, if not all, definitions.

Since its beginning in the 1990's, the Web is claimed to have been envisaged to go through three major generations, which are commonly known as Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. While Web 1.0 was largely related to content generated by professional websites, Web 2.0 came with a lot of social media sites and social networks, in which anyone from anywhere could interact seamlessly, and Web 3.0 -- also known as Semantic Web or Linked Data – has been to help users organize, find and share online information. David Best (2006) suggests that the term Web 2.0 is, above all, meant to summarize new technologies, applications, and ideas on the Worldwide Web (Best, 2006). As Web-business mogul Tim O'Reilly - the father of the term - (2007) argues,

> Web 2.0 does not have a hard boundary, but rather a gravitational core. You can visualize Web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core (O'Reilly, 2007, p.18).

In his attempt to shed more light upon what he is meant by Web 2.0, O'Reilly suggests seven principles that characterize the Web 2.0 'era', exemplified by Web 1.0 survivors and Web 2.0 achievements (Table 2-1).

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Principles</th><th>Practices</th><th colspan="2">Examples</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="11">1</td><td rowspan="11">The Web As Platform</td><td rowspan="11"></td><td>Netscape</td><td>Google</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Standard bearer for Web 1.0</td><td>▪Standard bearer for Web 2.0</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Web browser, Desktop application</td><td>▪Web application; not a server, nor a browser</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪High-priced server products</td><td>▪Service, paid by customers
▪No scheduled software releases
▪No licensing or sale
▪Open source operating systems
▪Home-grown applications & utilities</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Control over content & applications in the browser</td><td>▪Doesn't host content that enables users to find (happens in space between browser & search engine)
▪Database management.</td></tr>
<tr><td>DoubleClick</td><td>Overture & AdSense</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Limited</td><td>▪Serve hundreds of thousands</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Advertisers in charge</td><td>▪Consumers in charge</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Internet dominated by top websites</td><td>▪Long tail (Collective power of small websites)</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Requires a formal sales contract</td><td>▪Enable ad placement on Web page</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Banner ads & pop-ups</td><td>▪Minimally intrusive & consumer-friendly text ad</td></tr>
<tr><td>Akamai</td><td>BitTorrent</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Centralised</td><td>▪Decentralised (P2P)</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪More servers = Better service</td><td>▪More users = Better service</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Harnessing Collective Intelligence</td><td>▪Empower customers to help each other, enhance customers' expertise & behaviour patterns</td><td colspan="2">▪Hyper-linking, Yahoo (as a directory of links), Google (PageRank to provide better search results), eBay & Amazon (collective activity of all their users), Wikipedia (a radical experiment in trust), del.icio.us & Flicker (folksonomy – collective tagging), Cloudmark (collaborative spam filtering), Viral marketing, Peer-production methods of open source, Blogging and RSS (Really Simple Syndication)</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Data, the Next Intel Inside</td><td>▪Provide open access for users & applications to enhance proprietary data</td><td colspan="2">▪Amazon, Google Maps, and mash-ups like housingmaps.com</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">4</td><td rowspan="2">End of Software Release Cycle</td><td>▪Operations are a core competency</td><td colspan="2">▪Google, automating daily processes such as crawling the Web, updating its indices, filtering spam, responding to queries, etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪Perpetual Beta: Users treated as co-developers</td><td colspan="2">▪Google Maps, Flicker, del.icio.us (engaging users in developing the site & continuously improving products in real time).</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>Lightweight Programming Models</td><td>▪Make it easy for people to roll their own solutions, incorporating your, and their, components</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Software Above Level of a Single Device</td><td>▪Provide services accessible from any touchpoint.</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>Rich User Experiences</td><td>▪Adapt to user's context to optimise its experience.</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

Table 2- 1 O'Reilly's Web 2.0 principles

2.2.1.1 Adoption of Web 2.0:

To explain how Web 2.0 is adopted by users, Amy Shuen (2008) refers to the five factors by which Everett Rogers (1995) account for the high growth and rapid adoption of some new products and technologies. For Rogers, the five factors include: *relative advantage* (how much better the new product is compared with the old one), *compatibility* (whether a new product fits with current values and usages), *complexity* (if its features are easy to use and understand), *trialability* (the opportunities for users to try the product before deciding on it), and *observability* (how visible product usage and impact are to others).

Shuen (2008, pp.78-79) indicates that these five factors are clearly reflected in Web 2.0 technologies and applications, thereby helping to explain why Facebook, as an example, has been adopted so quickly. Facebook, according to Shuen, offers greater reach to old acquaintances (relative advantage), easy and instantaneous access that suits the digital youth generation (compatibility), easy usage (complexity), free trial, paid for by n-sided cross network effects (trialability), and easy identity-checking as users can easily identify who is on and using the website by name, frequent messages, and uploaded photos (observability).

Notwithstanding the new creative features of the Web 2.0 model, there are times when a Web 1.0 approach is apt in a Web 2.0 context. In many cases, a webmaster does not want users to interact with a webpage, such as a restaurant webpage that simply displays its updated menu, or an encyclopedia where entries are fact-checked, edited and referred to a specific author or entity (i.e. not to users, as in Wikipedia). Some Web 1.0 sites are following a Web 2.0 model to a certain extent (e. g. static websites that include a section for visitor comments); while, lest we forget, web pages that are created in countries with low Internet literacy and connectivity are still largely stuck with the Web 1.0 model (e.g. Somalia).

2.2.1.2 Criticism of Web 2.0:

Nonetheless, Web 2.0 idea has been the subject of several controversies. In a much-discussed 2006 interview, Tim Berners-Lee, recognized as one of the Web's 'creators', wonders whether Web 2.0 is really any different from Web 1.0, which was also designed to be a collaborative and interactive space from the beginning (Laningham, 2006). As Dmytri Kleiner and Brian Wyrick (2007) show, Web 2.0 technology was already possible and in some cases readily available through *Usenet* in the late 1970s, with its 'discussions' and amateur journalism, and enabling of photo and file sharing (Kleiner & Wyrick, 2007). O'Reilly himself (2007) acknowledges that the 'blogosphere' can be thought of as a new, peer-to-peer equivalent to *Usenet* and *bulletin-boards* that he calls 'the conversational watering holes of the early Internet' (O'Reilly, 2007, p. 9).

Berners-Lee (2006) went on to state that Web 2.0 errs in billing itself as a new generation; he argues instead that it is merely a 'piece of jargon' and that 'nobody even knows what it means'. Kleiner and Wyrick (2007), likewise, strongly oppose the use of the term 'Web 2.0', and even go so far as to decry it as a business model that implies private capture of community-created value which is, they argue, a betrayal of the promise of technology-sharing and free cooperation. Web 2.0 investors, for Kleiner and Wyrick, are parasitic - they often arrive late in the game when value creation already has good momentum, swoop in to take ownership and use their financial power to promote the service. What's more; Web 2.0 investors, as Kleiner and Wyrick see them, allow the community to contribute openly and to utilize that contribution, but they never allow the community to own what it creates. Kleiner and Wyrick also think that, rather than a Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, there is simply an ongoing development of online applications that cannot be cleanly divided. They conclude that, after the dotcom bust, capital flowed into Web 1.0 applications making them easy-to-use, cheap or even free for non-technical information-producers. This led to the creation of a ‘landless’ information proletariat ready to provide

alienated content-creating labor for the new info-landlords of Web 2.0. Kleiner and Wyrick's critique of Web 2.0 goes on to promote peer-to-peer (P2P) technology, a term created by Howard Rheingold and Justin Hall, as more efficient than Web 2.0 systems. P2P is, from their point of view, said to:

- avoid the bottlenecks created by centralized systems,
- allow content to be published with less infrastructure, often no more than a computer and an Internet connection,
- avoid the need for massive data centers of centralized sites,
- lack central control (i.e. no censorship),
- and lack large central cross-referencing databases of user information (i.e. more private).

Kleiner and Wyrick therefore conclude that Web 2.0 is capitalism's pre-emptive attack on P2P systems;

> The mission of Web 2.0 is to destroy the P2P aspect of the Internet. To make you, your computer, and your Internet connection dependent on connecting to a centralized service that controls your ability to communicate (Kleiner and Wyrick, 2007).

2.2.2 The Interactive Possibilities of New Media:

Computer-based *interactivity* is a dominant theme in discussions of new media. This, in part, reflects the radical shift to many-to-many communication from the one-to-many mass communication model of the pre-Internet and even Web 1.0 eras. W. R. Neuman (1991) describes it as 'the quality of electronically mediated communications characterized by increased control over the communication process by both the sender and receiver' (Neuman, 1991, p. 104). Nonetheless, contrary to what is commonly

believed, interactivity was present in some aspects of traditional media, such as letters to the editor, radio and television talk-show hotlines, consumer surveys, viewership / listenership / readership figures, etc. Nevertheless, compared with 'new' interactive media, such measures were clearly less empowering and more laborious.

The key characteristic of interactivity is that it distinctly increases individual autonomy. Flew (2005) describes interactive media modes as 'those that give users a degree of choice in the information system, both in terms of choice of access to information sources and control over the outcomes of using that system and making those choices' (Flew, 2005). An explicit instance of this privilege is large-scale Web search engines, such as Google, which provides the user thousands of possible sources of information in just a few seconds, indexed and cached in the form of web pages, PDF files, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, Flash SWF, plain text files, videos, and so on. Moreover, the user may customize their search results by choosing their default interface and search language, specifying the spatial and temporal context of the information sought, and creating e-mail alerts.

However, to avoid the numerous dead ends that are a nagging feature of any traditional Internet search, vertical search engines have recently emerged to offer specialized information for niche users by building specialized language dictionaries to enhance search outcomes within a specific context. A search for 'UGV' on a regular search engine, for example, could return 'Unmanned Ground Vehicles', but a vertical search engine specialized in new media recognizes this as the acronym for 'User-generated Video', a far more relevant term for those interested in new media. Such an amalgamation of interactivity with the characteristics of mass communication – 'the unlimited range of content, the scope of the audience, and the global nature of communication' – may be considered, in Livingstone's (1999) view, as the true novelty of the Internet. Neuman

(1991) attributes this inherent characteristic of new media - interactivity - to 'increased speed, interconnectivity, the two-way character of electronic communications, and the increased control over the process by both producer and audience member' (Neuman, 1991, p. 105).

Although the concept of interactivity has become central to new media studies, it has been derided as so vague as to be virtually meaningless. Manovich believes that the concept of interactivity, when used in computer-based media studies, is a 'tautology';

> Modern human-computer interface (HCI) is by its very definition interactive -- it allows the user to control the computer in real-time by manipulating information displayed on the screen. Once an object is represented in a computer, it automatically becomes interactive. Therefore, to call computer media interactive is meaningless -- it simply means stating the most basic fact about computers (Manovich, 2007, p 71).

Manovich argues that conventional art, such as literary narration, sculpture and architecture, is already somehow 'interactive', encouraging viewers to activate their imagination. He suggests that 'modern media and art pushed… these techniques further, putting new cognitive and physical demands on the viewer' (Manovich, 2007, p.71). It remains clear, however, as Livingstone (1999) claims, that the most drastic media-related change in modern society has been the shift from one-way, mass communication towards more decentralized, participatory communication. Likewise, Andrew Barry proposes that interactivity marks a shift from disciplinary regimes, which emphasize rules, timetables, organization, and intellectual authority, to more interactive formations which promote flexibility, user choice, creativity, and individual discovery (Barry, 1998).

2.2.3 Content Sharing on the Internet:

Internet users' online activities are observably evolving. More and more users are expressing themselves by sharing and adding content. This content-sharing may take the form of personal knowledge or experience, digital photos and videos, and several other forms of what has been generically labelled *user-generated content* (UGC).

UGC encompasses various kinds of media content that is acquired, developed and widely disseminated by the public in an interactive manner using a plethora of new technologies loosely grouped under the name of 'Web 2.0'. Some UGC initiatives involve individual effort (such as podcasts, web logging/blogging and its video equivalent, video blogging/v-logging) while others require a more collaborative effort (such as wikis, tagging, rating, social networking). UGC participants are divided into four categories: the 'creators' (a very small portion of Internet users) that generate original content and distribute it on the appropriate platforms, the 'critics' who comment on published content, the 'joiners' who passively share it, and the 'spectators' (the large majority of Internet users) who just read or watch contributions without ever leaving a comment (Forrester, 2008).

2.2.3.1 Blogs:

The most common type of UGC is the blog, broadly definable as a personal homepage in diary format. Nardi et al suggest that blogs are conspicuously analogous to radio programmes, which broadcast massages without interruption and receive call-ins as limited feedback (Nardi, et al., 2004, p. 230). Blogs are made up of brief, frequently updated posts that are typically arranged in reverse-chronological order (Stone, 2002, p.9), facilitated by mostly-free, easy-to-use blog publishing tools. Those posts are mainly textual, but they may also include pictures or other multimedia forms. They usually operate in relation to specific areas of interest which ordinary users are involved in but

that the mainstream media has difficulties in covering (Jensen, 2007). Entries are inclined to be more conversational than standard print articles. Other features also include: a *permalink* or URL (Uniform Resource Link), a permanent link that refers the reader back to the entry after it has moved to the archive; a *post date*; *comments* added by other readers; a *trackback* that enables bloggers to keep track of who is linking and/or referring to their posts; *calendar*s which allow readers to find entries posted on any date; and a *blogroll*, a list of other Blogs that the author affiliates with.

Blogging, as it appears today, started in April 1997, with the American software developer and writer Dave Winer creating the first blog ever, 'Scripting News', which he called 'the longest-running Web log currently on the Internet' (Winer, 2010) and the inspiration for a number of subsequent blogs, such as News for Nerds (September 1997), Robot Wisdom (December, 1997), Live Journal (1999) and countless others. In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks in New York City and Washington D.C., bloggers showed themselves to be a brave new outlet of information for large numbers of people. Dave Winer used his blog to post news flashes, New York webcam, stills, and links to witness accounts. In response to these developments in the early blogosphere, the first version of the Movable Type Weblog publishing system was made publicly available, and was duly followed by other publishing tools designed to make blogging easier and more accessible. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of online diarists, or bloggers, have since been disseminating their opinions in the public domain, a victory not only for democratic self-expression and networking, but also for political activism and amateur journalism (Kahn & Kellner, 2004, p.91). Following the invasion of Iraq by USA and allied forces on March 20th 2003, the blogosphere resounded with cries of indignation and corporate media collusion (Morgan, 2007, p. 142).

But why would so many people post their diaries on the Internet? Nardi et al (2004) broach this question in their research that partly focuses on the relationship between bloggers and their audience. They conclude that blogging is as much about reading as writing, and that the idiosyncratic diary format of the blogs 'seems more of a lure for readers than the private record of the writer it so invitingly resembles'. Today's bloggers, for Nardi et al, are just 'as conscious of the possibilities and constraints imposed by their various readers as the chroniclers of yore' (Nardi et al, 2004, pp. 231).

2.2.3.2 Video Blogs:

Another leading form of UGC is the video equivalent of blogs: video logs or V-logs. Some Internet observers consider the mere uploading of the user's favorite TV videos onto sites like YouTube as a form of UGV, but such parasitic uploading of copyrighted material scarcely merits the name 'user-generated'. Real V-loggers, however, are those who regularly record video diaries of their views, feelings and experiences and share them on the Web with the world. This function has also been facilitated by the development of third-generation (3G) mobile telephony which enables mobile phones and other hand-held devices to take and upload video content onto the Web almost as soon as it is recorded. One of the characteristics of V-logs is the amount of interactivity possible in this format. Viewers can make their thoughts known through comments to the video, which can lead to lengthy, fun and informative discussions. Users can even respond to a video with their own videos to increase the amount of participation.

2.3 Toward a New Definition of the *User*:

What remains now in this extensive discussion about user-generated media is to provide an interrelated definition for 'the user'. Generally, a 'user' treats the computer as a means rather than an end. Even though the term *computer* first appeared in 1897 in reference to a

mechanical calculating machine, the term 'user', when used in the context of computer studies, is believed to have been coined in 1967 (Etymonline, 2010) in Paul Baran's 'packet switching' proposal to decentralize the USA military research network. This broad understanding of the user, as embraced by a number of specialized online dictionaries (such as The Free On-line Dictionary of Computing, 1996) encompasses: reception, manipulation and/or production of an electronic form of information to mark the main activity of the user. The National Information Assurance Glossary (2006, p.68) emphasizes these requirements from another technical perspective. It defines the user as an individual or process authorized to access an information system (IS). By virtue of this accessibility, the user is in a position not only to consume the available information in the system, but also to manipulate and reproduce it. In other words, the user functions as a source or final destination of information, or both. Technically, then, a 'user' can be either the sender of a message (i.e. who first encodes it), or the receiver (i.e. who eventually decodes it), or even both. Moreover, in theoretical discussions of Internet usage, the term 'user' is commonly applied to simply refer to any person who uses the Internet via a computer or increasingly via other digital media.

Whichever definition we prefer, the user is progressively stepping beyond the position of a mere consumer and is becoming a participant in the production of knowledge. Bruns (2008) explores this radical shift from an industrial model of production to a shared production model (Produsage) based on a principle of inclusivity, not exclusivity:

> Produsage, or common-based, peer-to-peer form of production… is a process of perpetual, ceaseless, continuous update, extension, and revision which operates not according to a predetermined blueprint or design, but is driven by the vagaries of user-producer interest in and enthusiasm for fixing specific problems or extending particular aspects of the project (Bruns, 2008, p 23).

This approach calls into question not only how we use the Internet or what we can do on it, but also poses thoughtful questions that draw attention to our orthodox concept of creativity and talent. 'We are all producers now', says Shirky (2003). The Internet has opened wide the doors for amateurs to acquire and employ the experience and expertise of qualified experts, developing a new generation of 'ordinary geniuses' whose works are continually expanding to occupy, as Bruns (2008) suggests, a hybrid position of being both *users* and…. *producers*. Shirky (2003) even goes so far as to suggest 'the disappearance of the consumer altogether';

> [T]he Internet destroys the noisy-advertiser/silent-consumer relationship that the mass media relies upon. The rise of the Internet undermines the existence of the consumer because it undermines the role of mass media. In the age of the Internet, no one is a passive consumer anymore because everyone is a media outlet (Shirky, 2003).

2.4 Summary:

This chapter looked into user-generated video (UGV), one of the most influential media phenomena of the digital era. The term 'user-generated video' was delineated and its origins and impact explored. This chapter also explained in detail how 'media' has become 'new media', what is meant by 'Web 2.0'. We also discussed *interactivity* as a dominant theme in new media, followed by an outline of the types of online activities in which users are engaged, collectively referred to as user-generated content (UGC). In particular, we retraced the history of blogging and the rise of video blogs. In addition to putting forward the key characteristics of v-loggers, we referred to the difference between such user-generated video (UGV) and merely uploading the user's favorite TV videos on the Web and sharing them with other Web users. The second part of this chapter focused on the user. We outlined common definitions of the concept of 'user' in light of developments in the field of digital communications technology. We made extensive reference to Bruns

(2008) to understand the radical shift in user activity away from mere consumption to an active role in the production process, a development he called 'produsage'.

The core question of next chapter will be: how UGV has been taken up by mainstream media, and how mainstream media has been integrating UGV within its conventional content.

Chapter 3 – UGV and Mainstream Media

User-generated video - and, more generally, user-generated content as related to news reporting - is becoming commonplace in mainstream media, particularly as old TV and newspaper giants lose their dominance; shrinking ad revenue, not helped by a global downturn in the economy, has led to serious cutbacks in journalist numbers, thereby forcing these outlets to rely ever more on user-generated content. Many mainstream media conglomerates have established a digital presence and revised their traditional output to attract new audiences; 'old' media, as Sonia Livingstone argues, are increasingly being used in new arrangements of space and time (Livingstone, 1999, p. 3).

3.1 Adoption of UGV in Mainstream Media:

Audiences, in the developed world at least, have become more inclined to watch TV via broadband on their PCs, downloading their favourite programmes onto a PVR (personal video recorder) for greater viewing flexibility, as well as turning to alternative, independent Internet TV channels seeking their own reliable sources of information and entertainment. As they have done so, these audiences have also begun to contribute to mainstream media by sharing user-generated content (UGC) in various forms.

Furthermore, established media companies now largely feel that 'they cannot do without new media acquisition' (Morgan, 2007, p. 140). To cite just one prominent example, in August 2006 Sony Pictures Entertainment, a Hollywood studio, acquired Grouper, an Internet company which hosts user-generated videos on its website, for $65 million (NYtimes, 2006). This trend towards new media acquisition by existing media giants shows no signs of slowing.

3.1.1 What Happens in the BBC:

Among numerous attempts to keep pace with the new media revolution, the initiative taken by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2005 deserves special mention. The BBC created a user-generated content team in early April 2005 which included three staff tasked with sifting through the material submitted by viewers via e-mail and text message; verifying its authenticity, accuracy and legality, and ensuring that it was promptly passed on to relevant BBC news outlets. The London bombings on 7 July 2005, however, were a turning-point in the BBC's shift towards UGC. The BBC received a flood of videos from tube passengers; editors were struck by the newfound quality of such amateur material. Newsrooms began actively seeking the public's pictures, videos and eye-witness accounts. The BBC's interactive team took on extra staff and new software to cope with the flow of material. The team was made permanent and provided with ten additional staff, working 24/7. In 2006, the BBC News 24 launched what it billed as the first ever entirely user-generated news programme, 'Your News', featuring stories made up from exclusive material sent in by the public.

In 2009, when the Iranian government banned foreign media from covering the election protests; e-mails, videos, Facebook and Twitter postings from Iran became the main source of news for the BBC's Persian TV. 'We are well aware of the power and importance of citizen journalism', Matthew Eltringham, the Editor of the BBC College of Journalism website and the former Editor of the BBC UGC Hub, speaks for the BBC (Eltringham, The Editors, 2009).

Soon, the BBC announced its UGC strategy to its staff, which was grounded mainly upon 'creating value in what the market does not do' (BBC, 2007). The UGC market, as the BBC regards it, is efficiently characterized by the following:

- Agility (i.e. ability to respond rapidly as the market evolves)
- Innovation (including the ability to take risks)
- Specialism (i.e. ability to focus on key topics)
- Co-creation of content (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Community building
- Global approach

Nevertheless, the market does not cover other areas, which the BBC has been attempting to target, such as:

- Media literacy (i.e. lack of facilitating and training on creation)
- Editorial control (which is neglected in favor of quantity)
- Moderation (i.e. limited checks and controls in some cases)

3.2 UGV From a Mainstream Media Point of View:

From a professional point of view, Eltringham defines UGV as 'any video created/taken by a non-professional for non-commercial reasons. They may be an accidental journalist - i.e. eyewitness to a newsworthy event, or they may be filming or creating something for their own blog or a community website, they may even be doing it at the behest of mainstream media as part of their coverage. It can be filmed on anything from a basic mobile phone or iPhone to more sophisticated camera equipment'. There may be grey areas, as Eltringham says, where semi-professional bloggers or citizen journalists have higher skill levels or more importantly generate some income from their work -- in which case their videos would not strictly be defined as user-generated. Eltringham believes that 'journalism is not a licensed trade so it is not always possible to clearly define when or whether an individual is 'a journalist'(M Eltringham 2009, pers. comm. 26 August).

Trushar Barot, the Assistant Editor of the BBC UGC hub, confirms that the BBC receives about a hundred video clips a week from the public at minimum; and, at most, it can go into several hundreds (B Trushar 2012, pers. comm. 18 May). With a big story, however, this number can rise substantially; during post-election protests in Iran in 2009, for example, the BBC was receiving up to 200 video clips a day (M Eltringham 2009, pers. comm. 26 August).

Generally, the BBC breaks down UGC into two categories; users' views and users' media. Both are reflected in the final output in various ways:

- Adding views (i.e. contributions such as phone-ins, e-mails, voting, tagging, and conversations such as message boards).
- Adding media (i.e. publishing, as in blogs; and uploading created media, video/audio/images) Figure (3-1).

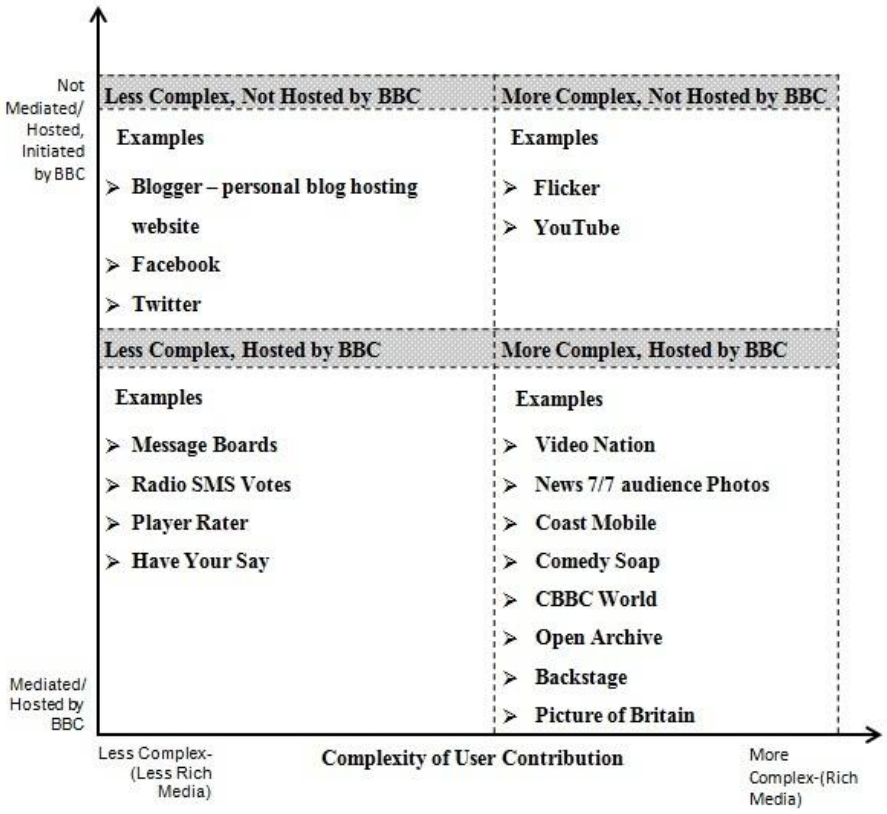

Fig. 3- 1 Complexity of User Contribution at the BBC

3.3 The Process of Bringing UGV to the Screen:

Before exploring the role of editorial considerations in shaping the use of UGV in mainstream media, it will be useful to explain what happens between the reception of UGV material by a media outlet and its eventual broadcast. Although the ways in which mainstream media make use of UGV varies from one medium to another according to form, medium agenda, functionalities and capacities, and the target audience, the process involved in bringing UGV to the screen is almost always the same. I will cite an example of how the BBC exploits pictures (stills and very short video clips) provided by the audience.

There are various ways for people to send their content to the BBC. One of these is through the 'yourpics@bbc.co.uk' email address. People can also upload their content via an uploader form at *http://upload.news.bbc.cs.streamuk.com/* as well as text/MMS. In addition, the BBC now have a BBC News mobile application (currently on iPhone and Android) that people can also use to send through their content. Videos and photos can then be accessed and viewed by any member of the BBC staff in a sub-folder called *YourPics*. The UGC hub team monitors this folder and moves the images received to Mediaport, which brings together all of the recording operations and picture information from across BBC News in a single co-ordinated operation with a mission to get the best pictures to air as quickly as possible. This department works in co-operation with the main Television Newsroom, News 24, BBC World and the BBC's interactive and on-demand services. Once the material has been verified for authenticity, it is moved into a sub-folder called *Approved Pics*, where it is safe to be transmitted. The hub puts details of UGC pictures, audio and story information (eyewitnesses, etc.) on ENPS (Electronic News Production System accessed by the BBC broadcast journalists - BJs). The News Interactive team then gets the footage from the *Approved Pics* sub-folder. They send the

pictures to the Interactive Central Technical Area (CTA), which converts them to the correct size for television before routing them to the picture desk and then onto a system where programme producers and output editors access the new user-generated material directly. In practice, this process should not take more than five minutes.

But what if the content provided by a user is 'fake'? This would demand taking into serious consideration a crucial determinant in the interrelationship between the mainstream medium and UGC, namely *authentication*.

3.4 Authenticating UGV:

In the 1990s, authentication and trust were mostly discussed in the context of e-commerce, as Internet users were required to provide personal details and credit card numbers to opaque websites. A set of standards was subsequently developed to foster trust among users. In the case of Web 2.0, the issue of trust has moved away from the people who run sites and is now starting to focus more on the people who use them. For example, there has been frequent controversy about the reliability and correctness of entries on Wikipedia, the online collective encyclopedia, as it counts upon volunteer contributors, many of whom are not necessarily experts. More importantly, user-generated photos and videos, the most popular form of UGC, are frequently subjected to intense scrutiny, primarily for the reason that the genuine motivation(s) behind any user's contribution can never be determined, and because modern computing systems have made it easy for large numbers of amateurs to manipulate images as they see fit.

Generally, however, it has been argued that user-generated content, for all its subjectivity, is more reliable and authentic than many professional productions. The fact that a video clip, taken by an amateur, is grainy and wobbly would seem to distinguish it from edited

mainstream media productions, which have been 'tidied up' on the basis of time and agenda considerations. From this perspective, edited content cannot be regarded as authentic as unedited, raw, amateurish content produced by ordinary people. Nonetheless, a number of isolated incidents in the 1990s and early 2000s made this notion questionable, and paved the way for a new perception of, and approach towards, UGC, culminating in the announcement of an 'authenticity crisis' by John Ellis (2005), which we also mentioned in the first chapter. In 1996, the British daily newspaper 'The Sun', for example, ran a front page splash on a video allegedly showing Princess Diana and her then lover James Hewitt cavorting. It was soon discovered, however, that the grainy video featured look-alikes. The so-called 'war against terrorism' has also inspired many hoaxers to deceive the media for different purposes. In May 2004, the Daily Mirror newspaper published photos depicting British troops torturing an Iraqi detainee. In one picture a soldier was seen urinating on a hooded man while in another the hooded man was being hit with a rifle in the groin.

Fig. 3- 2 Daily Mirror's hoaxed pictures, source: www.bbc.co.uk, 14 May, 2004

The photos triggered open criticism from army commanders who denied the incident and called for an investigation. The Queen's Lancashire Regiment (QLR) said the *Daily*

Mirror had endangered British troops by running the pictures. The defense minister said that some British soldiers had been injured by petrol bomb thrown by children in Iraq and a British patrol suffered a grenade attack in Basra. It was eventually found that the photos were actually taken at a Territorial Army Barracks, 'categorically not in Iraq' according to the defense minister Adam Ingram, and that two soldiers gave them to the *Mirror*, which said it had fallen victim to a 'calculated and malicious hoax'. Soon thereafter, *Daily Mirror* editor Piers Morgan was sacked. The photos were authenticated by reconsidering a number of details as follows (BBC, 2004):

- The hood was too clean and 'ironed' for something that would have been crumpled up in someone's pocket.
- The stream of urine did not look authentic and shadows had been added to the drops of urine, the wet patch on the hood was fake, and the droplets were coming from a bottle of water.
- The captive's 'slightly silky' football shirt, bearing an Iraqi flag would be out of place in the Shia area of Basra. The shirt would be sweaty, dirty and dishevelled after alleged beatings. There were no bruises or marks on the captured man.
- The captive's posture did not suggest he was being tortured. The body would be curled up, legs pulled into the foetal position.
- The quality of the photos was too sharp.

Three months later, a video that allegedly showed an American being beheaded in Iraq was found to be a hoax too. The American, Benjamin Vanderford, 22 years old, said 'he videotaped the staged beheading at his friend's house using fake blood' and that he did this for two reasons: to attract attention, and to make a statement on these types of videos

and how easily they can be faked. The 55-second grainy video clip had been broadcast on two Arab television stations and disseminated widely on the Internet.

Fig. 3- 3 (left) Vanderford at home in San Francisco, AP; (right) Vanderford's mock beheading (Reuters)

It is a truism that when the way something appears is changed, there may be social consequences (Reynolds, 2007, p. 9). Therefore, the first step towards uncovering a hoax is to consider possible motives. According to Reynolds, a manipulated image may accuse, misrepresent, persuade or entertain depending on the context. In the case of UGC, some contributors may create hoax images in an attempt to gain notoriety, to amuse or to convey a political message. To be sure, being aware of such possible motivations causes mainstream media to be more cautious of UGC, regardless of how real it looks.

3.4.1 The BBC and Hoaxes:

Eltringham believes that social media are not changing the core principles behind journalism; they are just changing the way those principles are applied. In traditional journalistic thinking, he says, a story should not be reported until at least two independent sources have verified it. Twitter, for example, is a massive new source of both facts and rumors; increasingly, news organizations are joining in these online discussions, and then working to verify the information shared there. Once the verification process has been

completed, they are then feeding the information back into the social media conversation. News organizations add authority and authenticity to the online conversation (Eltringham, 2011).

The BBC, Eltringham adds, has been trying to combine its impartiality with the flood of UGC and social media communication on Twitter, Flicker, Facebook, emails, texts etc.

> We need to change our reporting activity to engage with 'stuff' on the dark side of the line as part and parcel of our daily journalism. Social media unleashes the capacity of people to publish and share rumor, lies, facts and factoids. We – as a trusted broadcaster (along with other journalists of course) – become increasingly significant as a reference or clearing house, filtering fact from fiction (Eltringham, 2011).

Therefore, the BBC urges its staff to cross-check any suspicious user-generated photo or video with the wires, emergency services or BBC local staff. Basically, the BBC makes a distinction between two categories: users who send images they did not take or do not own, and users who send fake pictures. Phil Coomes, the former Picture Editor, BBC News Interactive, suggests a number of procedures to be followed so as to authenticate the material before transmission (BBC, 2010):

- **Too good:** Are these photos good enough to sit alongside the professional work on the wires? If so, be suspicious. If you receive a really strong news image, do a quick check of the photo wires on ELVIS [Electronic Visual Image System, the BBC Intranet-based picture archive], Yahoo or Google news photos. You may find a match.

- **This photographer gets about a bit:** If you receive multiple photos, how likely is it that the person sending these images has been to all the locations? When a disaster strikes, the user will normally only get shots from one location. More than that…. Be suspicious.

- **Text:** Anyone who takes the trouble to send in their stills will back it up with some sort of description. Anything that has little or no text is usually one to avoid. Anything along the lines of 'these are great pictures' should tell you they just grabbed them off the net.

- **The obvious:** Email them back to get more details or a phone number. At this point, anyone who does not own the images usually confesses if you ask them directly.

- **Image size:** Check the dimensions of the photos in pixels. The original files as shot in camera will always be around 2000x1200 and above. Anything smaller has been re-sized. This may have been done to ease the sending process, but watch out for odd numbers. For example Yahoo news photos are usually 380 wide or 345 high.

- **Photoshop:** Ask someone with Photoshop on their PC to load the image and zoom in. Look at where tones meet, and see if there is any obvious manipulation or multiple layers. This can be hard to spot as the JPEG compression will affect the picture.

3.4.2 BBC UGC Editorial Considerations:

Moreover, in order for the BBC to ensure that all UGC it receives is subject to appropriate editorial scrutiny, that requests for contributions are made reasonably and that, where relevant, the BBC has obtained appropriate consents, an editorial guidance list was internally published in 2006 for the BBC staff, with the aforementioned aims. These guidelines were elaborated later and published on the BBC website. The main concerns that this list focused upon include:

- BBC staff is urged not to encourage their audiences to risk their personal safety or that of others in order to gather material for submission to the BBC, whether this material is requested or expected to come. Audiences should also be reminded that they are not expected to breach police or emergency service lines, and if they are believed to have done so, their contribution will not be used.

- People should not be encouraged to break the law in order to supply the BBC with material, for instance by trespassing on private property.

- Children and teenagers should not routinely be asked to act as regular news gatherers for the BBC, unless it is for programmes that are intended for children. Safety considerations may apply here as well.

- If the BBC feels that a picture or video has breached someone's privacy or if it is clear that they did not wish their image to be captured, the material could be dropped or the subject's identity could be covered.

- People will not always realise that they are being filmed, photographed or recorded, due to the shrinking size and growing sophistication of digital cameras and audio recording equipment on mobile devices. Even if they do, they may not realize that images of them may be submitted for broadcast locally, nationally or even globally. Therefore, they may not always have the opportunity to ask whoever is recording to stop. Many of the images and material the BBC receives do not come with any documented form of consent from the subjects. The usual editorial judgments should be applied then, in order to decide whether further consents may be needed before publishing the material. In case a longer piece of content is requested, the contributor should get permission from anyone included in that content. A verifiable proof of consent can be achieved by advising contributors to record the consent from people they film or record. The consent of a parent or guardian before using interviews or clearly identifiable shots of a child is needed.

- Special care must be taken if the material is suspected to have been supplied by a member of a lobby group or organization with a vested interest in the story, rather than a disinterested bystander. However, material should be clearly labelled, whether from the public or any third party organization to ensure transparency about the material's provenance.

- People should be discouraged from referring to themselves as 'BBC journalists' to avoid confusion in the field.

- Under the Data Protection Act, the BBC should not pass on details about the contributors to a third party unless the contributor has agreed. Police and court requests could be exceptions in certain circumstances.

- As a rule, the BBC does not pay for UGC. However, the BBC may consider making 'an appropriate payment' for user-created footage that is deemed to be 'particularly editorially important or unique and depicts something of great significance'. Once the material is received, the BBC is given a free, non-exclusive license to publish the footage/pictures on any platform. Yet, as the user retains the copyright, they can still give or sell their material to others. They may even make an exclusive deal with another outlet, which would terminate their license to the BBC.

(BBC, 2010)

3.5 The UGV in News Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution:

I was lucky to be involved with UGV use in coverage of the Egyptian revolution (25 January 2011-11 February 2011) on both the BBC and Aljazeera. The 25-29 January period (2011) was in fact the end of my 5-year career as a broadcast journalist and presenter with the BBC; I was to start my new job as a TV presenter at Aljazeera on 6 February.

My observations during this period focused on the revolutionary use of UGV in news coverage of this major event. Aljazeera was widely believed to be sympathizing with the Arab revolts, and was actively soliciting UGV content from Egyptian citizens caught up in the revolution. Aljazeera's transmission of UGV content allowed the outside world to have a revolutionarily vivid picture of what was going on in Egypt, and also - at least until the Egyptian government blocked the people's access to Aljazeera midway through the revolution (Aljazeera Arabic, not Aljazeera English, which was still available inside the country for the minority who could understand it) - encouraged Egyptians to join the protests.

In the months prior to the 25 January revolution, and in stark contrast to this Aljazeera-inspired new media revolution, Egyptian state media were engaged in old-fashioned propaganda and manipulation. Most notably, on 17 September 2010, the state-run *Al-Ahram* newspaper published a manipulated picture that appeared to place President Mubarak at the front position of his counterparts in a summit meeting held in Washington (the original picture showed USA president Barack Obama walking in the front, with the Israeli prime minister, the Palestinian president and the King of Jordan slightly behind).

Fig. 3- 4 Mubarak photoshoped in *Al Ahram* state-run newspaper

This was one of several incidents in recent years which contributed to a widespread loss of confidence in state-run media among the Egyptian population. When the 25 January protests erupted, information-hungry citizens were forced to resort to the Internet and social networks, or reliable international TV channels like the BBC and Aljazeera.

3.5.1 The BBC:

The great challenge of the so-called 'Arab Spring' revolutions, as a media phenomenon, was the explosion of the user generated content (UGC) combined with the necessity to rely on it as direct official access to the action was very often prohibited or hindered. Generally, the BBC dealt with this effectively, depending on its regional expertise in the Arabic network and the Monitoring section. The BBC made efforts to alert listeners and viewers when such material could not be adequately verified.

During the first four days of the revolution (25-29 January), the BBC witnessed a 400% increase in user-generated material. However, Mostafa Menshawi, BBC envoy to Cairo during the revolution, says that amateur footage was merely proof that an important historical event was taking place rather than a substitute for experienced photo-journalists (Menshawi, 2012).

On 27 January, when the government entirely cut off all Internet access and mobile phone coverage throughout the country, activists offered interviews to the BBC and Aljazeera in exchange for access to their satellite Internet connections. Some clever Internet users managed to find more innovative workaround solutions in order to overcome the Internet collapse, which lasted nearly a week, such as using telephone numbers to access remote Internet service providers (e.g. French Data Networks and the Swedish Telcomix) as well as setting up FTP (file transfer protocol) accounts to send videos to mainstream media,

particularly the BBC and Aljazeera. The BBC became increasingly dependent on VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services, satellite Internet and satellite phones to speak to eyewitnesses.

The UGV material received by the BBC not only contributed to the depth and credibility of its coverage, but also led to investigations into controversial incidents; for example, the van that ploughed into crowds of anti-government protesters in Cairo and killed 41 people on 28 January (so-called Friday of Anger). The rampaging van was filmed and posted on YouTube and a clip showing the driver deliberately ramming his vehicle into demonstrators was sent to the BBC on 4 February showing it was a diplomatic van owned by the American embassy in Cairo. The video led the USA officials to admit the incident, claiming that 20 of its vans had been stolen during a week of upheaval.

Another example was the shocking user-generated video sent to the BBC on 19 December 2011 revealing an Egyptian female protester being stripped and beaten repeatedly and brutally by security soldiers dressed in riot gear. The video led the Supreme Council of Armed Forces to admit that the incident had indeed taken place after initially claiming that the video had been doctored when it was first published by Reuters.

In the days of the revolution itself, the BBC relied overwhelmingly on verified citizen journalism as reliable and credible source of information. On 28 January, for example, I co-produced and co-presented a two-hour radio program on BBC Arabic about the protests in Egypt, in which no one was interviewed except eyewitnesses and Egyptian citizens inside Egypt. This did not mean, however, that the BBC broadcast all, or even most, of the user-generated content they received. For example, clips received on 2 February 2011 from pro-Mubarak supporters in the Egyptian suburb of Mohandeseen

(Mostafa Mahmoud Square) inciting Egyptians to attack the protesters in Tahrir square were not broadcast. Soon afterwards, thousands of Mubarak supporters headed to Tahrir square riding camels and horses and attacked anti-regime protesters, leaving dozens with head injuries.

3.5.2 Aljazeera:

On 30 January, the Egyptian authorities shut down the office of Aljazeera network in Cairo; Aljazeera journalists had their press credentials revoked, and nine journalists were detained at various stages. Aljazeera's transmission via the government-controlled Nile-sat satellite was cut off, causing the Qatar-based channel to broadcast through Hot-Bird and Arab-sat instead. Aljazeera's office in Cairo was set on fire on 4 February along with all the equipment inside it, and Aljazeera website was attacked by pro-Mubarak hackers. On 5 February, the State Security Intelligence Service (SSIS) detained Aljazeera bureau chief Abdel-Fattah Fayed. Aljazeera producers therefore had to find alternative sources of information to satisfy the worldwide audience which was by now, thanks to Aljazeera's unprecedented coverage of the revolution, glued to their screens.

Ayman Gaballah, the head of Aljazeera Live channel, decided to remodel the screen to feature continuous activist-generated content through its citizen media service *Sharek* (in English, Participate), which was launched in 2008. During the revolution, *Sharek* received about 1000 UGVs, most of which were shot with hand-held mobile devices and particularly cell phone cameras. Those videos documented the protests and the incidents of brutality and arrests committed by police against civilians. Cell phone cameras undoubtedly gave protesters a sense of ownership of the events that were unfolding; their videos and photos were to be used to shape the story that would live on. Videos received by the *Sharek* service were not just from Tahrir Square, but also from other areas and

cities, documenting everyday life, and the work of the so-called 'Leagues of Neighborhood Protection Committees' which were formed to guard homes and prevent street crime in the absence of police. Human rights activists were also feeding citizen-generated images and videos to *Sharek* and other international media in order to garner attention and win support for the uprising.

Furthermore, Aljazeera assigned a team of journalists and technicians to monitor websites like 'bambuser' and 'YouTube' and download videos depicting what was happening in Egypt. The task of the team also included classifying each user-uploaded video clip, verifying it, and enhancing its quality as much as possible to fit Aljazeera broadcast standards. Usually, this process did not take more than five minutes. By the end, Aljazeera's reporting of the revolution was more heavily indebted to information and footage from citizen journalists on the streets than any news agency had ever been before.

3.6 Summary:

In this chapter we spoke in detail about the use of user-generated video in the mainstream media, most notably in coverage of the so-called Arab Spring Revolutions. Before elaborating on this example, I began by drawing a full picture of the existing landscape in which UGC has come to play a significant role. I hinted at some of the myriad opportunities for interactivity that online media provide audiences, and which mainstream media fail to provide, and, furthermore, how this vivid contrast resulted in the migration of young audiences, in particular, towards the virtual sphere. We described the BBC's approach to the UGC market and how it selects the UGC it broadcasts, offered data on the amount of UGVs it receives, and outlined the process a UGV must go through before making it to air.

The other related dilemmas this chapter explored concerned *authentication* and *trust*. We began by comparing how this issue was addressed in the 1990s compared with yesterday's Web 2.0 and today's Web 3.0. The conclusion reached was that the trust problem has moved away from those who run websites (administrators) to those who populate them (users). The chapter also outlined a series of incidents which occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s that shaped a new approach towards the issue of trust and authenticity in UGC, which John Ellis (2005) described as a result of an 'authenticity crisis'. Some examples were also quoted from the BBC explaining how 'suspicious' UGC is editorially authenticated. The chapter moved on to investigate why some users generate hoax content. Various positions were reviewed regarding the editorial guidelines for mainstream media, particularly the BBC. To this end, I presented a list of UGC editorial guidelines which the BBC disseminated internally in 2006 (and which were later elaborated and announced on the BBC website). Finally, I offered my personal observations on UGV and how it was used in the BBC and Aljazeera Networks during the Egyptian Revolution.

In light of the theoretical framework that I presented in the previous chapters, Chapter 4 will look for an answer to the key question of this study: can UGV be seen as documentary? In Chapter 4, I will apply certain professional evaluation standards to a number of amateur videos received on a web-based project facilitating documentary production for young amateurs.

Chapter 4 – egdoc, a Web-based Experiment

In the previous chapters, we discussed the concept of the traditional documentary, ethical issues surrounding it, and differences between documentary and other related film genres, including news reports and reality TV. Then we introduced the new media phenomenon, which is busy producing new forms for documentaries and the expression of opinion. We also explored the ways by which the mainstream media benefited from these new forms. We mentioned that one of these benefits is the authentication of news through amateur videos. One of the most prominent examples that we discussed in detail was the dependence of Aljazeera Network on such videos during the Egyptian revolution due to the fact that the network was forbidden by government authorities from working in protest hotspots.

Some of these videos may also take aesthetic forms that reflect more interaction between user and event. Therefore, the core question of this chapter is: can this type of videos reach the level of documentaries? In other words, can we perceive them as a new genre of documentary? I have chosen to look for the answer through the application of certain measures to a number of amateur videos.

The first stage of this experiment consists of three steps. The first one is providing an environment for these videos. The second is supporting this environment with documentary features, conditions, and techniques, which swing between simplicity and complexity, in order to measure the level of talent and professionalism of the amateur video-makers being studied. The third step is receiving the videos directly from their makers. Then starts the second stage, which includes two steps: applying the preset criteria to the videos, and drawing conclusions.

4.1 Chronology of the Idea:

The original theme of the experiment, at the beginning of this study, was to take advantage of my job then as a broadcast journalist and presenter with the BBC Arabic Service to present a program on BBC Arabic TV that could help in testing my hypothesis while fulfilling the BBC's demonstrable interest in new media. The suggested title for the program was *Al-Ainul.Aqrab* (A Closer Look), which is a reference to the ease and speed of amateurs when it comes to reaching events that need documentation. The idea of the program was simply to invite amateur film-makers to send their videos to the program to discuss them with some academic and professional experts, and then to have an audience poll. The following is a synopsis of the suggested program as it was presented on 6 October 2008 to Salah Negm, BBC TV Arabic News Editor at that time:

> *'Al-Ainul.Aqrab'* is suggested to be a weekly, 48-minute, pre-recorded studio production featuring critics and officials discussing independent short documentaries produced by young talents with no/low budgets and perhaps using their personal equipment, such as camcorders and mobile phone cameras, rather than the professional ones. Those documentaries are proposed to be broadcast within the program and thrashed out by specialists, maybe in the presence of producers/directors via satellite. The program is to focus on documentaries of deep political, social and/or cultural perspectives, locally or globally.

The main obstacle confronting the implementation of this idea was the absence of a secure system supported by the BBC Arabic service for the reception of videos of varying sizes, since the BBC e-mail could not carry files with size more than 2 Gigabits. Although a very limited number of e-mail services support the sending of video files with size more than 5 Gigabits, the BBC usually prefers to control its electronic services for the sake of protecting the privacy of the materials sent to it. Therefore, the failure to provide this service under the supervision of the BBC (essentially for budget-related reasons) was the reason behind the cancellation of the idea.

Hence, I considered the design of an independent online project that was free from external control, and sufficiently capable of achieving the aims of the study. But before embarking on such an endeavor, it was necessary to examine existing projects already specializing in user-generated video, and whether I could use any of them to test my hypothesis.

4.2 Inspiring Projects:

4.2.1 BBC Open Collective Production:

In the middle of 2009, the BBC World Service launched a joint project with the Open University to produce a series of documentaries under the title 'The Virtual Revolution'. This was done to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the World Wide Web. The new thing about this project was that it used a radical new technique to tell the story, known as *The 3D Documentary Explorer*, which allowed viewers to access different parts of the documentary separately (interviews, footage, and graphics) through the BBC website. It also allowed the audience to choose from these clips what they see as reflecting their own perspective about the story. The viewer was then able to make suggestions, raise questions or add comments about the documentary, and even do their own editing according to their own vision, in such a manner that allowed everyone in the audience to have their own version of the documentary. This paradigm shift in BBC documentary-making was called 'Open Collective Production'.

This project represented the climax of instantaneous interaction which was, until then, one of a kind in the Internet realm. It was able to reflect the maximum possible amount of user input. However, the project failed in two specific areas. First, the production process was starting at the BBC side, ending at the user's side; therefore the user could not be

considered as the sole producer of the documentary. Second, we simply never saw the end product because there was no option on the website for the user to upload it.

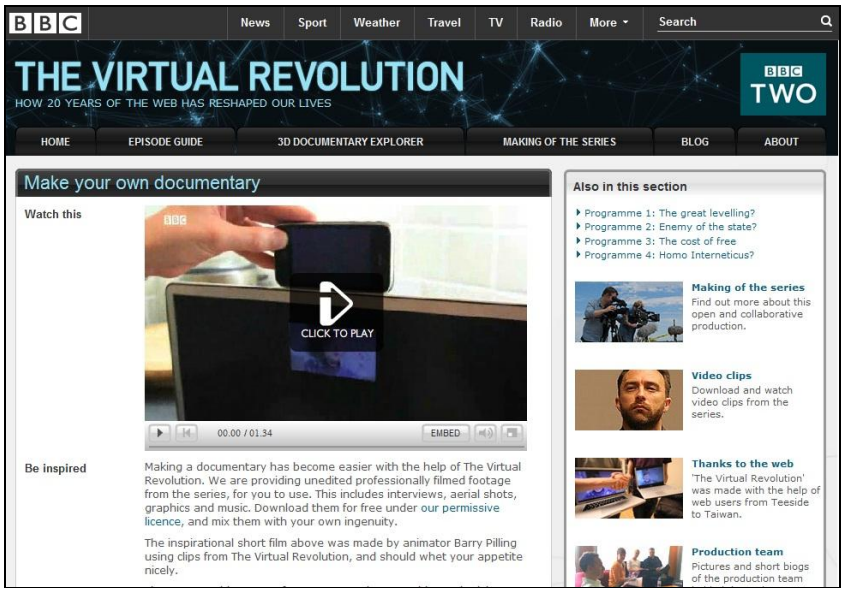

Fig. 4- 1 *Open Collective Production* project

4.2.2 BBC *My World* competition:

On 22 January 2010, the BBC World Service announced a global multimedia competition entitled *My World*, aiming to build a unique picture of people's lives around the globe, via user-generated video. Audiences worldwide were invited to shoot a two-minute mini-documentary with compelling personal narratives, using any kind of camera available to them – from a mobile phone to a digital camera. The most original, ambitious and thematically important pieces would be shortlisted, and then be assembled into sequences of ten films by guest curators to be shown on BBC World News. Finally, a single film would be chosen by the curators and awarded the prize of a semi-professional camcorder.

The following is a description of the competition as published then on the BBC World Service website:

1. You can interpret the My World theme any way you choose. Your film could be a compelling personal story, tell of a place that is changing, or document the joy or difficulty of your work life.

2. Each film must be relevant to one of the five major continents - Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania - and must be tagged as such. You can shoot a single shot documentary, if appropriate to your story, or edit your film with any editing software available to you.

3. A selection of all work received may be shown on TV and online and an ultimate winner will be selected based on the judging criteria.

4. After submissions close, five prestigious My World curators will each be assigned films from a particular continent. From each, they will choose and assemble a sequence of up to ten of the best films creating a fascinating portrait of the world today.

5. Finally each of the five curated sequences will be available to view online and on BBC World News. An overall winner will then be chosen and receive a prize of a semi-professional HD mini DV camcorder.

(BBC Arts & Culture - My World, 2010)

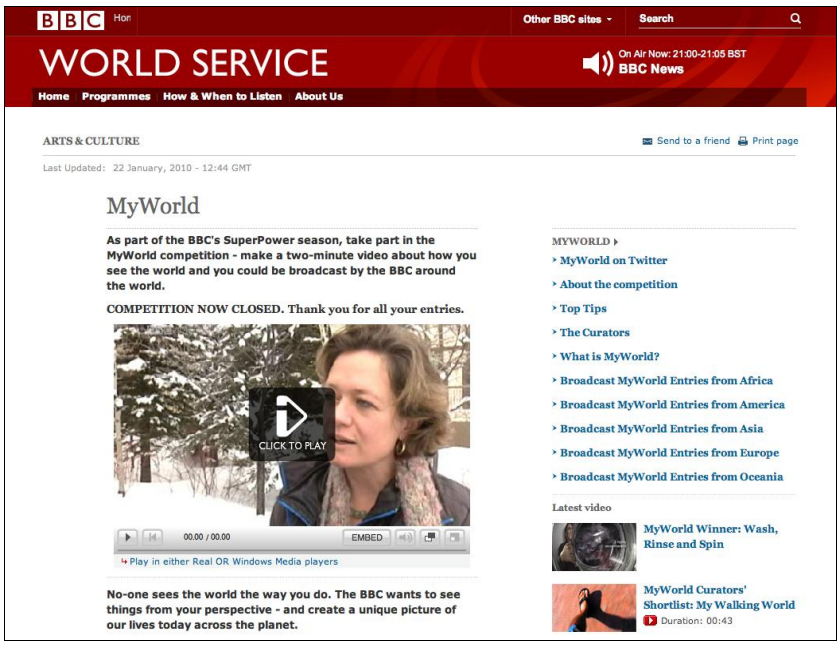

Fig. 4- 2 BBC *My World* Competition

I compared the aims of this competition to the experiment I was looking forward to conducting in order to prove my hypothesis stated in this study. I found two observations; firstly, the competition did not require that all who had participated in it should have been amateurs, and secondly, the final product (made up of a number of winning videos) would

certainly reflect the jury's own views about the world, which would be clear in the video clips they select and their order in the final film. Therefore, we cannot perceive that final product as a completely user-made documentary.

4.2.3 The Echo Chamber project:

Meanwhile, two collective documentary projects were gaining prominence on the Internet. The first was *The Echo Chamber* Project, which aimed to produce an open-source, investigative documentary about how biased TV media discourse led to the war in Iraq. This was to be done by developing collaborative techniques for producing the film, potentially providing solutions for incorporating a broader range of voices and perspectives into the mainstream media.

The following flowchart shows how that project was to be implemented;

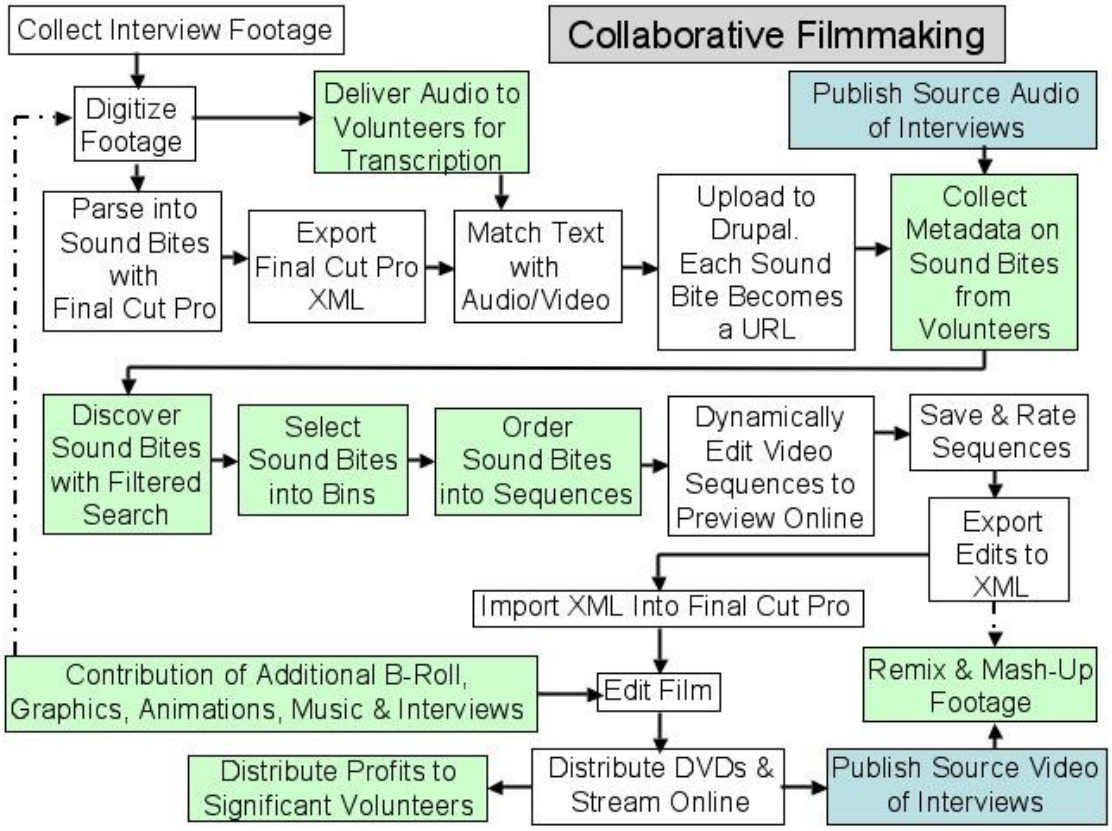

Fig. 4- 3 Collaborative editing workflow diagram of *The Echo Chamber* project

As we may observe, these steps could easily be carried out by experts; however, they may seem too numerous and too complicated to be followed by amateurs. In addition, they did not allow for immediacy, which is paramount for amateur film-makers.

4.2.4 *Lost Zombies* social network:

The second project was *Lost Zombies*, a zombie-themed social network whose purpose was to create a community-generated zombie movie. The members would submit their photos and videos, corresponding to a script suggested by the project managers, who had the right to include or exclude them. These videos would actually have to include created dramatic scenes depicting zombie attacks on humans. It was therefore inappropriate to consider the outcome of this project a documentary, not to mention the fact that it was not fully generated by amateurs (they did not participate in the writing of the script).

Fig. 4- 4 *Lost Zombies* social network

These two online projects were among the most prominent of their kind between 2008 and 2010, and were based on providing an online platform for generating film with

maximum possible dependence on the amateurs themselves. In fact, as we have seen, neither of these projects succeeded in presenting a documentary that was fully generated by the amateurs. As a result, these projects cannot be called upon to test my hypothesis concerning whether UGV could be seen as a new genre of documentary.

Likewise, neither of the interactive documentary projects on the Internet was appropriate as an experiment to answer my research questions. The interactive documentary's beginning is normally proposed by the creator, left to the interactor user to find divergences along the trajectories they follow. Such project has no single discourse; authorship and control over the storyline are more shared, which makes the task of analyzing the behavior of individual users more difficult.

It was indispensable for me to come up with a documentary-specific project with measures and standards to suit my research. That is how the idea of designing a website called *The Amateur Documentary Workshop* (www.egdoc.com) came to life; primarily targeting Egyptian amateurs in order to control for extraneous intercultural variables.

4.3 *egdoc* Experiment:

The specific purpose of *egdoc* experiment is to explore whether user-generated video can be seen as documentary or not, by evaluating the extent to which such video matches the criteria of professional documentary, so that we can develop our understating of the aesthetic forms of UGV, identify its characteristics and learn how it is made. The idea is simply to invite amateurs to upload their videos onto an interactive website, designed according to the needs of the study, and then to analyze the amateurs' behavior on this website during the time of the study, choosing examples from the videos uploaded and evaluating them in the light of professional documentary definitions and standards. The

website provides an integrated environment for the production and sharing of videos which have the potential to be developed into documentaries. It helps users through the film-making process, from brainstorming to shooting, editing, uploading the video in draft form, and finally, inviting comments and input from fellow users. This online environment is intended as far as possible to mimic the process of professional documentary production, and generally to foster a spirit of professionalism and constructive criticism. Basically, *egdoc* addresses two categories of young people: (1) those who have an idea for a video and want to develop it; and (2) those who have videos which they think they are similar to documentaries.

4.3.1 *Egypt* at the Time of the Experiment:

The design of egdoc.com started in August 2010 in Alexandria (Egypt), with the help of a local web-design company. The plan was to get the website ready within two months, in order to be able to start publicity for it two months before the parliamentary elections which were due to be held in November 2010. We were hoping to take advantage of audience engagement with the election process by inviting them to express their opinions about it through videos. It was widely believed that these elections would be the last to be held under the rule of Husni Mubarak, who was said to have been preparing his son Gamal to succeed him (the octogenarian Mubarak's term was due to end the following October). The parliamentary majority was expected to execute Mubarak's alleged succession plans; and, the results were believed to have been compromised to favor Mubarak's ruling Nationalists and marginalize all opposition parties.

For technical reasons, the website design was not accomplished until after the elections, following a period of economic stagnation and political deadlock during which many businesses, including the company helping in the website design, were forced to cut back operations.

On 17 December 2010, the Tunisian revolution erupted, and within less than a month it succeeded in dethroning Tunisian President Zein Al Abideen Ben Ali and catalyzing similar movements in Egypt, culminating in mass protests on 25 January 2011 (a national police holiday). The national police force had been regarded by Egyptian protesters as the most publicly thuggish branch of Mubarak's regime, as evidenced for all to see by the police murder of Khalid Mohamed Said (aged 28) on 6 June 2010. The Egyptian economy found itself at a standstill, and work on the website came to a complete halt until March 2011, when a referendum on constitutional amendments was held and Egyptian citizens started to feel that things were returning to normal.

The website was launched on 24 August 2011 after an array of technical and organizational difficulties. At that time, Egypt was dealing with consequences of three major incidents. The first was an especially violent clash between military police and demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square on 1 August. The second was the trial of former President Mubarak, which started on 3 August. The third incident was the killing of six Egyptian soldiers in the Israeli cross border in an Israeli attack on Thursday, 18 August. This incident resulted in the assault on the Israeli embassy in Cairo by a mob of angry Egyptians on 9 September. These events were widely reflected in the activities of Egyptians on social networks and video-sharing websites. In such a context, it was not difficult to draw attention to the *egdoc* website and to convince users, especially amateur film-makers, to join up.

4.3.2 The Description and Design of *egdoc*:

Introducing amateurs to a professional environment through *egdoc* tested two main factors. First, was the amateur initially prepared to comply with the professional standards demanded? Second, what was the extent of their compliance with the professional

standards, if they choose that track? The website was designed to test these two factors easily and accurately. Basically, it was meant to include a minimum degree of visual stimulation - images and illustrations - in order to enable us to measure the effect of other factors on visitors' approach to and interaction with the website. We also tried to make sure that the website pages were designed with the simplest possible layout; the main page, for example, is split into two columns, with brief references on the right and the main space on the left, displaying the latest and most important videos and essays on the website. The internal pages are designed without the right-hand column, as there is no point in repeating the same references mentioned on the main page.

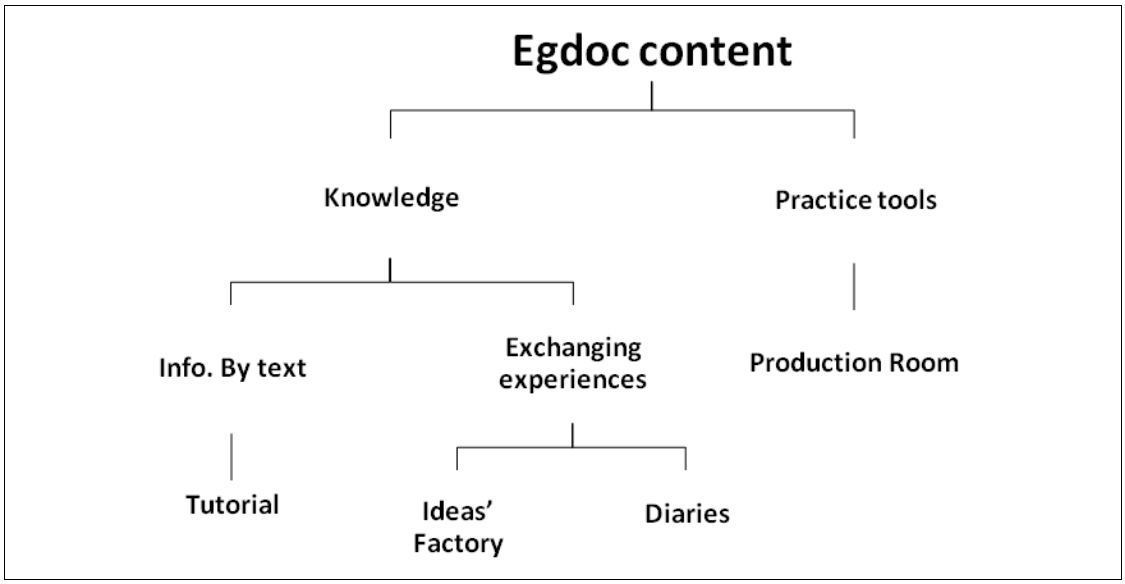

Fig. 4- 5 *egdoc* website content

The website has two components: the first is the *knowledge* component; knowledge which might be a need for a user who is interested in film-making. The second is the tools component, which can make practicing that art an easier task. The first component tests the way website members would apply to gain knowledge about film-making, whether directly (through reading, for example), or through some other way (such as exchanging experiences with peers, or direct practice and learning from mistakes). The first

possibility will be tested through publishing articles on various aspects of film-making that were written and edited in a professional way, and displaying links to these articles in a prominently highlighted area on the main page. The goal is to check the number of hits on these articles, in order to give us an indication about the percentage of website visitors who gain their knowledge about film-making from textual sources. The second possibility will be measured through the diaries included in the *Ideas' Factory* section, to give users the opportunity to describe how they gained their experience before they did their work which they uploaded on the website, how they actually did that work, and what difficulties and challenges they faced.

The images accompanying the links to the articles on the main page reflect in a direct way the elements involved in the film-making industry (such as a young man holding a camera, and another one with fingers shaping a square like a screen through which he is looking, and a picture from a documentary script). I chose to make them appear one after another in the same area, in order to give the visitor the opportunity to see them all together as soon as he enters the website, thereby helping him to realize what the site is about in the shortest possible time. In addition, an eye-catching heading at the top of the main page gives the viewer an immediate impression of the website as a whole.

The second component available on the website - *production tools* - can be found in the *Ideas' Factory* section, where users share their ideas in varying degrees of detail. The visitor can even discuss these ideas with other users if he so desires. After he makes a decision about these ideas, and puts them into practice, he can upload the product on the website, and it will appear in the production room, where it will be subject again to discussions among users. The user can upload each clip of the video work separately to

get the feedback about it, which helps in shaping his general view of the whole project in light of the discussions.

The main aim of this website was, indeed, to build loyal members who would visit it on a regular basis. This required making the site as user-friendly as possible. Page loading times, for instance, would have to be reduced to a minimum without sacrificing the value of page content. Moreover, a variety of functions were provided on the website in order to encourage users to acquire knowledge and experience of film-making.

4.3.3 Website by Section:

4.3.3.1 Home Page:

The website's home page is headed by three lines that summarize the message of the website. They are written in an attractive style in order to encourage visitors to engage with the website activities, as follows;

> Creation always comes from the world of imagination even if it aims at stating reality. Why don't we all meet in this magical world and create something together? Let's turn our imagined futures into a collective reality.

There is also a paragraph on the main page under the title 'What we aim for' reading as follows;

> This interactive website aims to change the way that documentary films are made and distributed by capitalizing on the rise user-generated video (UGV). Our goal is to serve as an incubator for non-professional documentary ideas, allowing amateurs to collaborate with one another to turn their ideas into reality.

Fig. 4- 6 *egdoc* home page

Beneath this paragraph, there is space for advertising, and then a 2-minute video in which I briefly present the idea of the website and provide some useful information for prospective members.

Fig. 4- 7 *How it works*, a 2-minute video on *egdoc* home page

4.3.3.2 Registering on the Website:

Clicking on the 'Sign Up' button at the top of the main page takes the user to a new page including the general required information for new members who want to register; name/nickname, email address, phone number, gender, date of birth and profession. It also includes required answers for two questions, 'Why would you like to join us?' and '[What are your] previous works?'. These data provides us with a full picture of the registering member, regarding his/her identity, motives and background. Moreover, this page presents the terms and conditions of membership, which state the following:

1. The website provides services for Egyptians not specialized in the fields of film production.

2. By participating in the website (including the texts, images, illustration drawings, video and audio materials), you give permission for the website and its members to use your submitted material free of recompense whether in its original form or after amendment on the basis of artistic and/or editorial considerations for the serving of the agreed-upon project or any previous or future projects. You also agree for the website to enable trusted third parties to use this material for the purpose of public research or broadcasting.

3. The intellectual property right of your contribution shall remain in your possession, and the aforementioned permission does not limit the rights provided therein to us. You may use your material as you like including permitting others to use it.

4. Unless you demand otherwise, the website and its members shall show your name in the suitable way artistically and editorially on the projects you contribute to whether by text or video, or by providing any required service to complete a project (such as editing, composing, voice-over, etc.).

5. The website may need to contact you for administrative reasons or to authenticate your contribution.

6. Your contribution must be your own work and you must have the right to give permission for the website and its members to use it in the agreed-upon projects. The website considers your submission of any work or part thereof as a confirmation to this effect, and the legal responsibility is yours alone should the truth be otherwise. The website also considers that you have the full consent of everyone who can be identified in your contribution or the consent of their parents or guardians in the case that they are less than 18 years old.

7. You shall not expose yourself or others to any danger and you shall not breach the provisions of law while preparing the content of your contribution.

8. Any contribution shall not include any vilification, claim without evidence, false information, nor any shocking or unsuitable texts or images.

4.3.3.3 Ideas' Factory:

The *Ideas' Factory* section allows registered users to submit ideas for new film projects, to make them open to public viewing and voting, to receive comments on them and feedback and to forward ideas to friends via email or social networks, such as Facebook. The introductory text for this section reads as follows;

> What do you have for us? Is it an idea you can turn into a documentary film? Or a scene which can be developed? Or a script you have already prepared? If you have any of these, you are already well on your way… Here in the Ideas' Factory, you will reveal your ideas for documentary films to your fellow amateurs, and they will share their ideas with you. You will exchange opinions about the best way to develop these ideas and turn them into reality. You will then vote for the best documentary idea, and go together from there. Be honest in stating your ideas and goals for your documentary film, and don't hesitate to offer suggestions on how best to achieve these goals. This may include nominating yourself to play a role in any project you agree upon.

It is clear that this introductory text uses motivational terms encouraging users not to be hesitant about sharing their ideas, and also encouraging co-operation and interaction with other visitors to the website. Efforts were made to ensure that language remained simple, easy to understand, and direct.

Users can add their ideas by clicking on the 'Add New Idea' button; when they do, they are directed to a new page in which their idea is directly solicited, whether a film title, an initial script, suggestions for editing and shooting, etc. Also included in a drop-down menu is a suggested timeframe for the work of proposed team members. New ideas cannot be submitted if a mandatory position is not filled (i.e. director, script writer,

cameraman, picture editor, sound editor). The idea's owner is always able to add a new role to his/her team by clicking the 'Add' button at the top of the table.

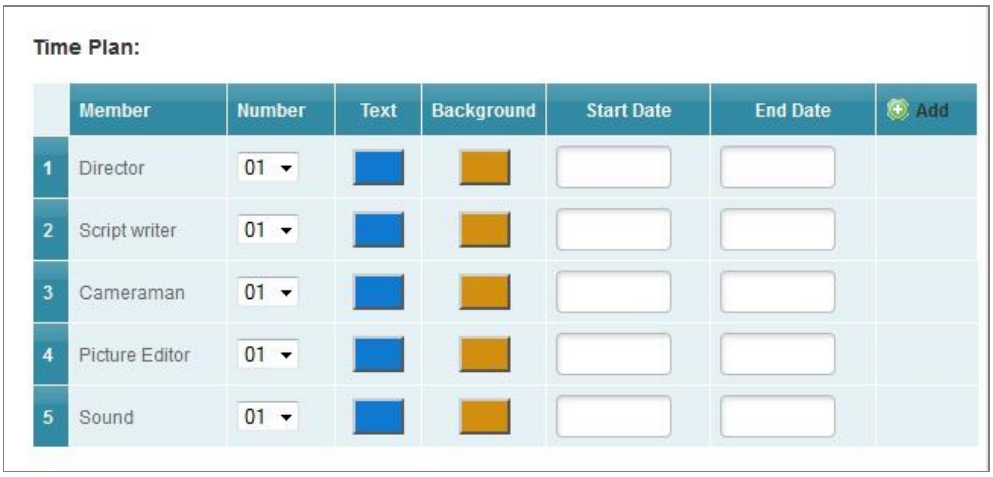

Fig. 4- 8 Project time plan and proposed team members on *egdoc*

As we may observe in the above figure, this is an easy and accurate way of displaying the suggested timetable and work plan, as two different colors are chosen for each role in the table (one for the text and another for background), in addition to specifying the beginning and ending dates for each role.

Fig. 4- 9 *egdoc* project, filled time plan

The above figure is a timetable suggested by the registered member *mhmd_klil* for his project *The Barrier Wall*. We will analyze this timetable in detail later in this chapter, since it reflects a serious lack of understanding of the role of each team member and the amount of time they will need to do their work. In any case, the point of including such a timetable feature was to test the time-management skills of website users. The result I expected to see was a lack of use of this feature, because such time-management skills go against the *ad hoc* spontaneity which distinguishes the work of amateurs.

4.3.3.4 Production Room:

Once the new idea is submitted, the project moves to the workshop area**,** or *Production Room* as it is called**.** There, the registered member can edit his own project features (e.g. users' requests, film title, synopsis, etc.) as well as the timetable. He can also accept or reject other users' requests to join his project (only for producers or owners), assign roles to team members, and change workshop status (i.e. open for registration, running, or finished). It is possible as well for other registered members to give their feedback about the idea, whether through comments or by voting. *Production Room* also allows registered members to request to join other projects and upload videos related to their ongoing projects. There is no way for non-members to download these videos, as they remain the exclusive property of the members doing the editing.

Through this page, users can also post their own diaries during the completion of the project, whether by uploading audio, video or image file(s) at the top of the page, or by adding new text diary at the bottom. This diary explains the technical difficulties those users encountered and how they overcame them, the ethical challenges they faced and how they made their decisions concerning shooting, editing etc., in addition to their feelings during the project, the daily evaluation of their work, and the advice they want to

give to their counterparts through their personal experience in making this film, etc. Also available for users in this section is the chance to update their diaries and comment on other users' diaries. Another feature of this section, delayed due to budget constraints, is the online *Chat Room*, enabling users to exchange opinions as the film takes shape.

4.3.3.5 Video Library:

Video Library is the place where users and visitors can find an archive of previous projects as well as the videos uploaded by registered members. Any uploaded video gets immediately moved to this section, together with a range of interactive possibilities (i.e. comments, rating etc.).

4.3.3.6 Tutorial:

The *Tutorial* area includes articles posted by website administrators. These articles deal with different aspects of documentary-making of interest to amateur visitors, such as script writing (for example, the idea that the documentary maker does not need a script in the traditional meaning of the word, but needs to have an idea about what the documentary might look like at the end in light of the facts being collected in the initial stages of preparing for the film, as well as the film-maker's artistic vision for how these facts will be presented through the film); standards to be applied when choosing a camera that will be used to shoot a non-professional documentary (for example, the differences between analogue and digital cameras, differences in picture quality, mobile phone camera functions, etc.); technical advice for shooting, including lighting and sound recording; and editing (including links to free editing software, i.e. Windows Movie Maker).

4.3.3.7 Glossary:

In this section, registered members and visitors can find a simple definition of the technical terms frequently used in the industry as well as on the website, such as script, shooting, editing, etc.

The main aim of these two sections (*Tutorial* and *Glossary*) is to provide textual information related to the principles and know-how of film-making in its simplest form, in order to measure the extent of user adoption of this means of gaining knowledge and acquiring experience, by counting the number of visits to these two sections compared to his/her production on the website during the period of the experiment.

4.3.4 *egdoc* Integration with Other Systems:

The website is integrated with major social networking portals like Facebook and Twitter, enabling users to send invitations, publish news about ideas and workshops, invite friends to contribute, etc. The intention was to facilitate the spread of the website among user communities and attract the largest possible number of people to participate.

4.3.5 *User* Roles and Responsibilities:

In general, *egdoc* members are divided into two categories: public users and special users. Public users are either non-member visitors or registered users, whereas special users are either website administrators or owners of ideas contained on the site. Each type of these members has specific roles and responsibilities, summarized in the following table:

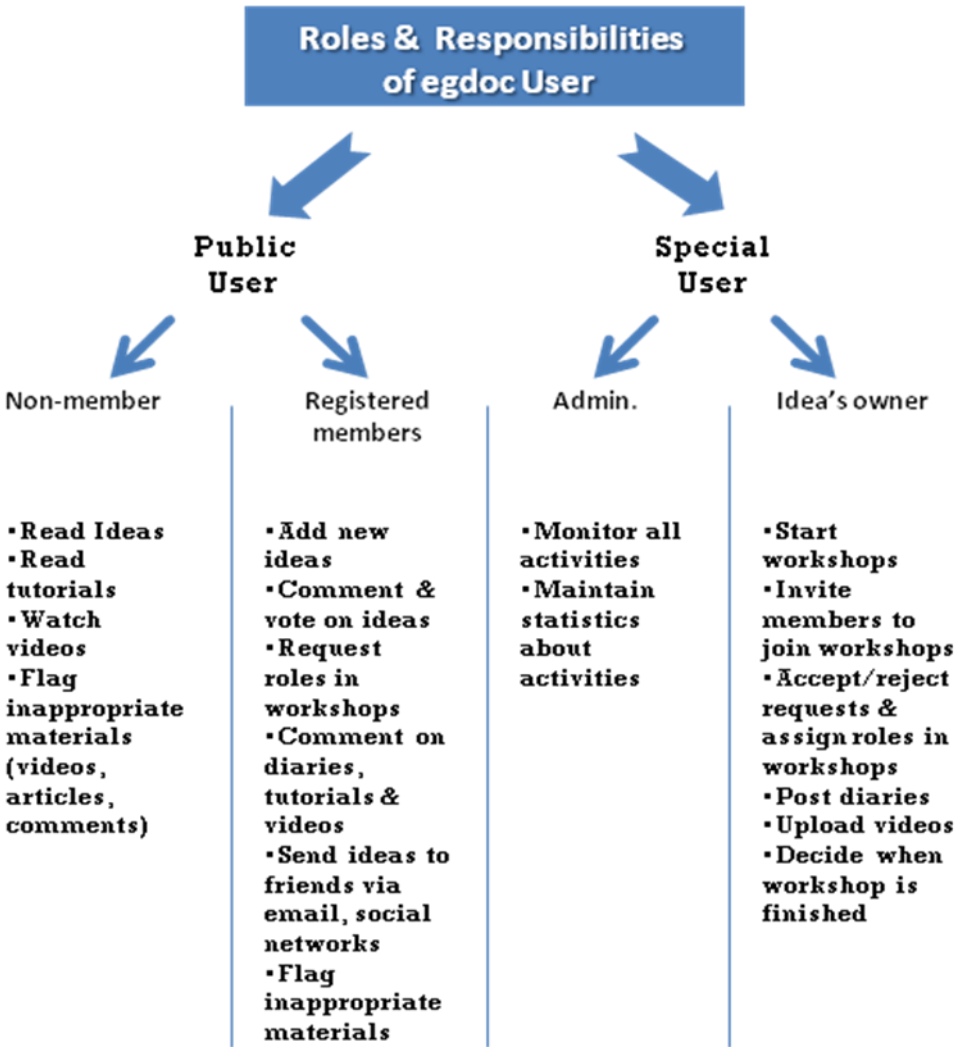

Table 4- 1 Roles and responsibilities of *egdoc* user

4.4 *Docummunity* - a Parallel Project:

In April 2012, an interactive website called *Docummunity* (docummunity.com) was launched on the Internet. It looked significantly like *egdoc* in terms of their mechanism of action; however, *Docummunity* sought to demonstrate different hypotheses. *Docummunity* is a word that is formed of the first syllable of Documentary, Docu-, and the second syllable of the word community, -mmunity. This website was also a PhD experiment in collaborative documentary-making conducted by Australian researcher Jeremy Weinstein at Swinburne University of Technology. This project was indeed noteworthy for my purposes; it is therefore necessary to make a comparison to determine differences between the two projects in terms of content and objectives.

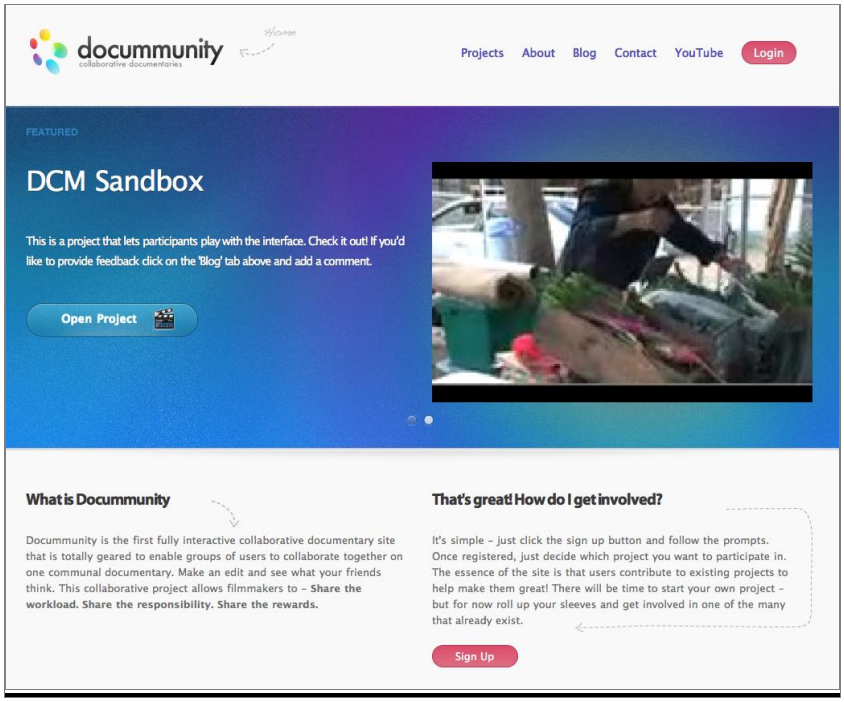

Fig. 4- 10 *Documunity* home page (www.documunity.com)

Documunity has two main purposes: (1) to explore the hypothesis that the Internet can facilitate new and innovative modes of documentary production; and (2) to understand how participants' involvement in collaborative documentaries can assist in obstructing or strengthening the transmission of truth (Gye & Weinstein, 2011, p. 54).

As is clear from these objectives, *Documunity* targets film-makers in general, regardless of whether they are amateur or professional, as it tests their ability to coordinate their efforts virtually via the Internet, and the extent of their success in the production of a collective work, whereas *egdoc* requires that the member be a non-specialist in film-making.

Just like *egdoc*, *Documunity* facilitates the uploading of audio, video and image files. However, the essential idea of *Documunity* is based primarily upon video editing, as 'the raw footage is developed into a story, a call for action or the construction of an argument' (Gye & Weinstein, 2011, p. 54). Contrary to *Documunity*, the *egdoc* website did not

provide an editing feature. *egdoc* sought only to see how editing was done by its members, through diaries accompanying the workshops. The purpose behind not providing an editing tool on *egdoc* was to avoid imposing a specific method or tool on users, thereby giving them the freedom to choose the methods and tools that suited them. In addition, we believed that the diaries and interviews would help us to establish the difficulties and the challenges the users faced during the editing process; this feature is not to be found on the *Docummunity* website, perhaps because it is not concerned with observing and analyzing users' behavior.

Common to both *egdoc* and *Docummunity* is the fact that there is no central authority which decides on the final form of the end product. The democratic ethos common to both websites allows a large number of voices to be heard. I believe that both websites has tried to liberate the will of the user, and to give him the authority to make his own decision inside a virtual production environment which allows the development of his professional identity. While *egdoc* promotes the amateur user’s ability to compete with the professional user, *Docummunity* promotes the power of a collective production environment for the emergence of truth.

Both websites also allow participants to exchange opinions about the content posted and/or uploaded as it is developed in various formats. This discussion takes the form of text-based interactions. *Docummunity* offers a 'Discussion' tab at the bottom of the video-editing page, while *egdoc* provides the facility of voting and adding comments.

The product on both websites grows up just like a human being, as more footage can always be added to the ongoing projects, and multiple versions of the same story can be developed over time, allowing the resulting outcome to be dynamic rather than static.

Furthermore, the history of the development of each project on both websites is traceable, archivable and retrievable. Such interactive features play a key role in *Docummunity* and an essential one in *egdoc*. *Docummunity*, however, explores the possibility of producing a collective documentary, whereas *egdoc* represents a source of experience and knowledge and a chance to exchange views among amateur users.

Nevertheless, according to Weinstein himself, *Docummunity* has a number of pitfalls. Weinstein states that *Docummunity*, as a collaborative system, is subject to difficulties linked to group dynamics, such as the 'tragedy of the commons', 'the free-rider problem' and the issue of the rights of the individual versus those of the group. However, Weinstein believes that it is possible for these potential concerns to be resolved with members who understand the concept of the collaborative process, have sufficient means to articulate their views and are given a structure that facilitates this new way of working (Gye & Weinstein, 2011, p. 54).

In any case, *Docummunity* has yet to be publically judged, as it has only recently been exposed to Internet users at the time of writing (April 2012). But it is evident that the key distinction between this noteworthy collaborative environment and *egdoc* is that the former is a model of 'democratic, collaborative documentary' - an essentially qualitative model - whereas the latter, while also 'democratic', 'collaborative' and 'qualitative' in its own way, also has competitive, quantitative elements to it as well.

4.5 Members' Motives for Registering with *egdoc*:

During the period running from between 24 August 2011 to 24 May 2012 (the period of the *egdoc* experiment) 76 users joined the website, 70 were male and 6 were female. These members had a variety of motives for registering with *egdoc*, as evidenced by the

range of answers to the 'Why would you like to join us?' question on the 'Sign Up' page. Calculating the percentages for each category (Figure 4-11), it can be observed that 23.68% of the total number of *egdoc* members stated that their main motive was to seek help in developing their uncompleted projects. For instance, *Hosam geba* said;

> I liked the website so much. I made many uncompleted films which I want to develop and complete and I need your opinions.

Furthermore, 15.78% of members stated that they joined the website in order to gain more film-making skills. *adham*, for example, wrote;

> I am a student in the final year of a degree in Commerce at Cairo University. I had a dream to join the Institute of Cinema Studies, but my family did not agree. Now I learnt to make my own films and upload them on the Internet. I want to join this website to learn from the experiences of others.

Exchanging feedback about uploaded videos was another motive that encouraged 11.84% of members to join the website. *mhmd_klil*, for example, wrote;

> I joined the website in an attempt to gain experiences in the field of film-making and to exchange experiences with others who have experience in this field, in addition to getting to know the opinions of others about what I make and sharing them opinion about it, specially that Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, has no cultural forums or outlets that are interested in film-making. Therefore, most experiences are gained by one's own effort and keeping in touch with people from the same field, which mostly occurs by chance.

In the meantime, 10.52% simply wished to get their videos in a place of prominence on the Internet. This 10.52% believed, with the user *Fady Nour*, that it was 'much better' for them to show their work in a place that 'appreciates this kind of work'. However, 5.26% were just looking forward to meeting counterparts who share the same passion of film-making. We see this in *Yasalaam101*'s statement, as he said: 'I hope to get to know other amateurs in this field and exchange experiences with them'.

Perhaps the most interesting category among those who joined *egdoc* was an estimated 5.26% who offered motives to which the website was not designed to cater. *Mido* simply wrote, 'I love acting and [making] short movies. My dream is to act in a film'. Members like *Mido*, did not recognize the difference between fictional and non-fictional film. Although the website plainly points out to its specialization in the documentary field, these members believed that their fictional acting talents could be developed or publicized through joining.

This confusion among amateurs about the purpose and nature of the website reflects some or all of the following: (1) it shows that they found the website by searching the general tag word *film;* (2) it shows that they did not care about the kind of films which the website focuses on, or that they did not notice or understand the distinction between documentary and other filmic forms; and (3) it shows that they may have been involved with a large number of websites that focus generally on film and film-making, and that *egdoc* was merely one website among many that they hoped would allow them to realize their dreams in the field.

A large number of members (23.68%), however, like *Amro*, and *Muhammad El Fateh*, did not answer the 'Why did you join us?' question. When asked about this via telephone, *Muhammad El Fateh*, for example, clarified that the only reason he joined the website was to upload his videos, not to support the website with extra information, especially if the provision of such information was only optional.

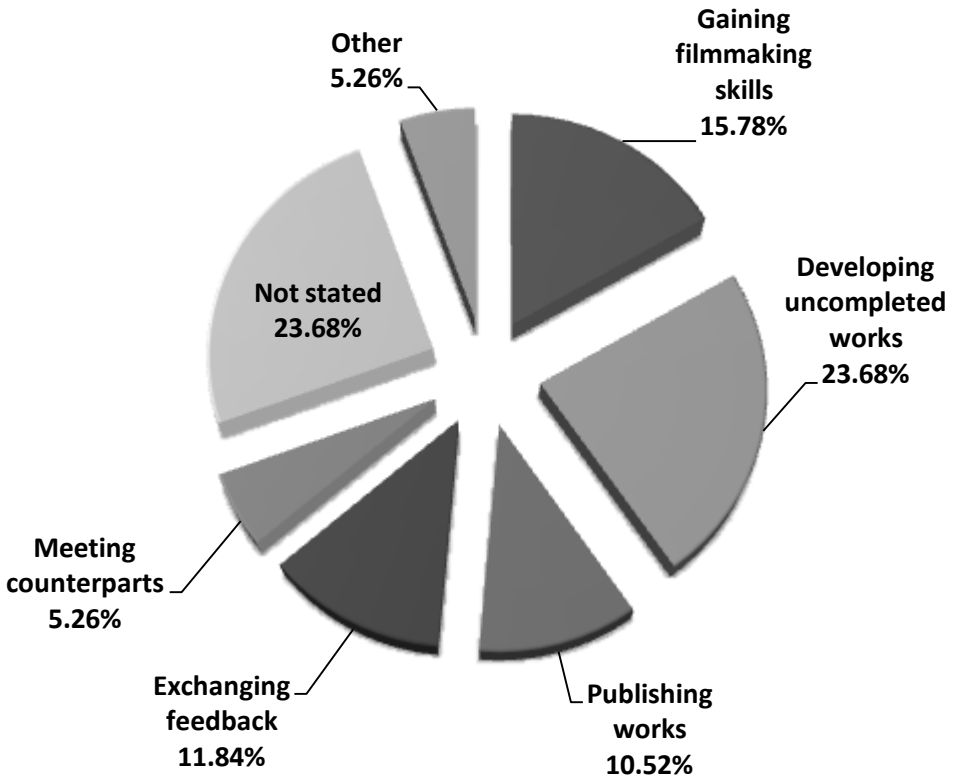

Fig. 4- 11 Members' motives for registering with *egdoc*

4.6 Previous Experiences of the Members:

Amir Fawaz, like many others, was affected by the revolution. He not only watched videos of the revolution online, but also shot plenty of video himself, and produced material that he considered worthy of documentary status. He promised to upload his videos onto the website, but he had never done so during the period of the experiment, even though his comments suggest that he had visited the website at least four times. In *Amir Fawaz*'s own words:

> I co-directed a documentary and made another one on my own about the revolution. I also made a documentary about the blowup of the State Security [building] in Nasr City of Cairo, which I will upload, God willing.

This answer is very similar to the answers of 57 other members to the '[What are your] previous experiences?' question on the 'Sign Up' page. However, 35 of those who promised to upload their previous films (50 members in total) did not upload them. Seven

members, such as *adham*, whose answer was similar to *Amir Fawaz*'s, uploaded videos that they produced, all of which were fictional. Additionally, 9 members stated that they had experience only in fictional film-making, whereas 9 members left this space blank.

Among all website members, *mhmd_klil*, who also mentioned he had had previous documentary experience, had modified this statement. At the time he joined the website he wrote he had produced *يوميات الميدان* (Square Dairy) film, which tells his observations during the 18 days of 25 January revolution in Alexandria. In 20 April 2012 he added to this statement;

> I also produced 'The Barrier Wall' short film about the barrier that the Armed Forces built in front of the cabinet premises in December 2011 after the clashes that took place between demonstrators and security forces and the army authorities have constructed to prevent the demonstrators from accessing the cabinet premises.

In an interview with *mhmd_klil* (Appendix 2), we will see that he had been seeking actively to gain experience in this field from various sources. It is clear that *egdoc* was one of these sources, and that he had achieved the primary objectives he had had for joining it; the best evidence of this is his continued activity on the website throughout the duration of the experiment, and his commitment to amend this information specifically to inform his fellows on the website about the development that had occurred on his work. Table 4-2 summarizes what *egdoc* members stated about their previous experiences:

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">▪ 58 members: We have experience in documentary</td><td rowspan="3">▪ 50 members: We promise to upload our previous works</td><td>▪ 35 members didn't upload them</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ 7 members uploaded fictional works of their own instead</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ 8 members uploaded documentary works of their own</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">▪ 8 members: We don't like our previous works. We're not going to upload them</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">▪ 9 members: We have experience in fiction</td><td colspan="2">▪ 3 members uploaded their own fictional works</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">▪ 6 members didn't upload them</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">▪ 9 members left space blank</td></tr>
</table>

Table 4- 2 Previous experience of *egdoc* members

4.7 Uploaded Videos:

The total number of video clips uploaded onto the website during the 274 days of the experiment (24 August 2011 – 24 May 2012) is estimated at 101 – an average of one video clip every 2.7 days. These videos can be divided into two categories:

(1) Videos that were **not made by the uploader**, whether that is stated by him in the description of the video or not (58 video clips). These videos are originally either (a) **made by another amateur** (25 videos), or (b) by **a professional film-maker** (33 videos).

(2) Videos **made by the uploader** (43 videos) and which are either (a) videos that **need to be developed** until they become complete films (14 videos), most of which were uploaded by their makers to get the advice from other members about how to improve them, or (b) **complete videos** (29 videos) which are presented by their makers as complete films.

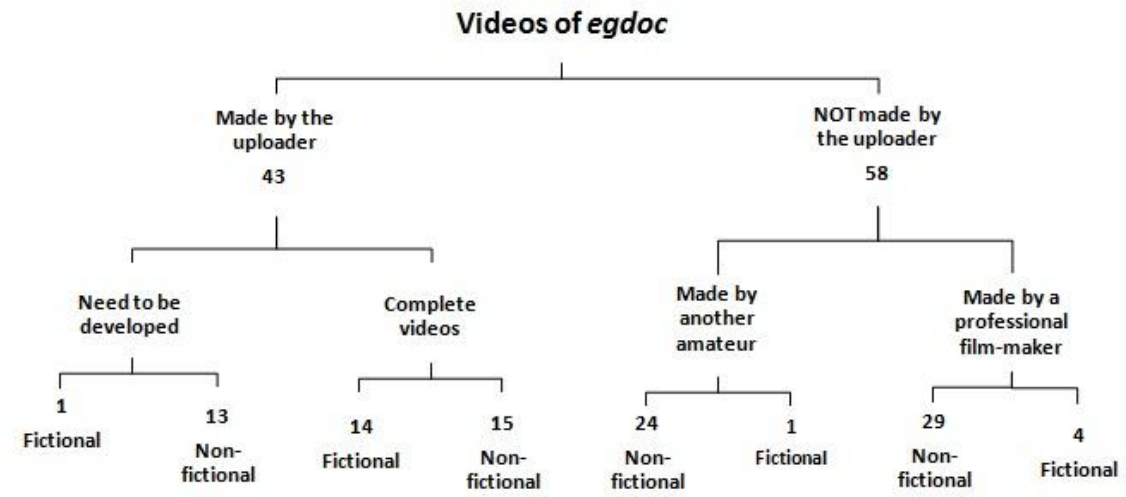

Fig. 4- 12 Videos uploaded on *egdoc*

Among the 13 videos representing incomplete documentary works needing further development is *The Liver Meat Seller,* directed by *adham*, and described by him as follows:

> It is a film about the liver meat seller in our neighborhood…Look at how he sharpens his knife and cuts the liver without fear… Frankly, he was very nice. He was very happy when I told him that I am making a film about him… Such people feel that they serve others but no one thinks about them. What do you think? How can I make this idea better?

Fig. 4- 13 *The Liver Meat Seller*, adham, 2011

The video has just one shot that focuses on the liver meat seller as he prepares the meat for cooking by removing the fat, and it succeeds in focusing on that by limiting the shot

size, so as to reveal only the seller's hands and his tools, thereby giving the viewer an opportunity to focus on this action and engage in his own reflections.

There is another video that was uploaded by the user *mhmd_klil*, a 40-second shot showing multitudes of demonstrators surrounding the building of the State Security Investigations Service (SSIS) in Alexandria before breaking into it on the evening of Friday 4 March 2011. The description of the video states the following:

> This is the video clip I shot on the day the demonstrators broke into the State Security building of Alexandria… I wish you can help me with your ideas to develop the video to make it a documentary film… I have a lot of shots for this day, but I need your suggestions about turning them into a documentary.

There is another video clip from the same user (*mhmd_klil*) entitled *Ongoing Life*, which he describes as follows:

> Life goes on fast and no one can cope with its pace… morning becomes night and night brings morning back, and it is the same, it keeps going on… whether we like it or not, people wait for others and others wait for others… other people are running and no one can catch them… but at the bottom line… all is running..

The video is similar to *The Liver Meat Seller* in that it is composed of one shot, but this time the shot is semi-fixed, recording the movement of cars in Al Raml station square in Alexandria from a high angle during daylight hours. It also uses a fast-forward function to make the cars appear to move much faster than they actually do. The shot also moves from day into night, reflecting the fast pace of ongoing changes. The video, as *mhmd_klil* suggests in his own description, reflects the user's philosophical view of life itself.

Fig. 4- 14 *Ongoing Life*, mhmd_klil, 2011

In a later section, we will discuss the comments on these clips, which include a discussion among website members about how these videos can be developed.

The number of completed documentary videos uploaded by their makers for various motives (including diffusion to a wider audience) is estimated at 15. However, *mhmd_klil*, for example, stated in his profile that he also produced a series of 16 videos retelling his daily life during the 16 days of the revolution (minus the 26th and 27th of January). He uploaded only one of those videos, entitled *مشاهد لم ترها من جمعة الغضب في الإسكندرية* (Scenes You Have Not Witnessed Before During the Friday of Anger). The description of this video defines it as a short documentary (13 minutes and 24 seconds):

> Scenes you have not witnessed before during the Friday of Anger, 28th of January, in Alexandria, a short documentary about the 28th of January known as *The Friday of Anger*, in Alexandria. It tells the story of the whole day from the start in the morning when the Central Security Forces were deployed in all the main streets and squares, like Al Quaed Ibrahim Mosque square, Misr Train station, Mahatat Al Raml, Al Menshia, and Alexandria Bibliotheque. Just when the people finished the Friday prayers, police started beating the demonstrators.
>
> These scenes are out for the first time after the Internet and cell phones services were stopped in the three main governorates of the revolution; Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez. Some other governorates were also affected by the halt of these services, and that prevented us from uploading these scenes immediately after they happened. I present these scenes to you, just as I witnessed them during my participation in the revolution as I recorded them by camera when they took place; how the demonstrators went out, how the security force dealt with them, and why Alexandria was an influential powerful factor in the Egyptian revolution. Watch the film.

From the series of comments on the video, we can see that the user *mhmd_klil* feels confused about whether he should make a separate film about each of the sixteen days or combine them all into one film. It is clear that he uploaded his clip onto the website to get the opinions of other members.

Fig. 4- 15 *'Scenes You Have Not Witnessed Befor During the Friday of Anger in Alexandria*', mhmd_klil, 2011

Most of the videos uploaded in this category dealt with issues related to daily life, like *mohamed chan*'s video زحمة (Crowdedness) about public transportation, as well as حتبقى أحلى (Things will turn out better) about bread crisis, and اليتيم (The orphan) about the suffering of orphans, both produced and uploaded by عمرو (Amro).

The number of non-professional documentary videos not made by their uploaders is estimated at 24 clips, uploaded by 20 different website members in an attempt to draw the attention of other members to their themes and styles. *'The Plaque of Honor of the Military Council's Violations'* is an example of this category of video. The uploader, *Seif karim*, wrote in his description of the video:

> It is a documentary made by a political activist called Mahmoud El-Malt. It defines 25 reasons for calling the people to go out and demonstrate in the 25th of January 2012 [the first anniversary of the 25th January revolution]. The film depends on the scenes revealing the clashes between the demonstrators and the army. It starts with the so-called "camel battle" [when pro-Mubarak thugs on horses and camels attacked protesters arrayed in Tahrir Square] which took place in the 2nd and 3rd of February before the removal of the former regime and it ends with the parliament elections and the incidents of the cabinet premises.

> The film considers that disengaging Tahrir square demonstrations with violence, virginity checking for girls, Maspiro clashes, Mohammad Mahmoud street clashes, and cabinet premises clashes were enough reasons to demonstrate on the 25th of January 2012. I like the film because it is well-made and very convincing.

Other videos uploaded onto *egdoc* under this category include أغيثوا الصومال (Relief Somalia), which is made of still images depicting the famine in Somalia, with mournful music, and there are videos reflect the situation in Egypt, such as *Scandal of Mushir Hussien Tantawy*, which considers the role of Mohamed Hussien Tantawy, the head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and his responsibility for the unrest in Egypt after the revolution. There is also a video entitled *6 April*, which tells the history of April 6 Movement from its emergence in April 2008 as a youth movement for the rights of workers in the city of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra to its participation in the revolution and opposition to the Military Council.

The number of professional documentary videos which were uploaded by amateur members for discussion is estimated at 29. One of these professional videos is *The Laughing Revolution*, a film exploring the humor of anti-Mubarak protesters. The member who uploaded the film, *Mena hossam*, said that what she liked about the film was that it presented a new perspective on the Egyptian revolution. The film proved very popular among both Egyptian and international audiences, and was also broadcast on the BBC Arabic network a few days after the ousting of President Mubarak.

Fig. 4- 16 *The Laughing Revolution*, BBC

Other examples of this kind of video uploaded onto the website include a documentary entitled *By What Guilt Was He Killed?* about the allegations of torture and murder of a salafist by a State Security policeman during interrogation about his involvement in the blowing up of Al Kedeesain Church in Alexandria on New Year's Eve 2010. This documentary was made by the Cairo-based Al-Hekma TV channel. One of the members also uploaded a film produced by the BBC, and broadcast on Egyptian TV, about the assassination of former Egyptian president Mohammad Anwar Sadat in 1981. The film includes an analytical description for how the crime took place in 3D graphics. There is also a video entitled كيف وقعت أحداث بور سعيد والأهلي (How Port Said & Ahly Events Happened) about the killing of 73 Al-Ahly football fans during a match in Port Said, widely believed to have been orchestrated by entities belonging to the Mubarak regime.

As we can see, many of these documentaries are historical in nature; some are investigative, focusing on security violations by security institutions during the Mubarak era, the Egyptian revolution, and other Arab revolutions, while others explore the mysterious workings of these institutions. Almost all of these documentaries were broadcast at some stage on Arabic TV networks. Uploading such professional documentaries reflect the taste of amateur users on *egdoc*, in terms of both form and content.

4.8 Interaction on the Website:

Despite the Web 2.0 features added to *egdoc* to encourage user interaction, it has been observed that the level of active user interaction was very low during the period of the experiment. The interaction opportunities available to members of the website include: uploading and viewing videos, adding new ideas (in the *Ideas' Factory* section), voting on projects, announcing a workshop position, requesting positions, accepting or rejecting requests, posting diaries, commenting on ideas and videos, rating videos, and flagging

inappropriate content. The following is a table that shows the levels of interaction on the website:

Activity	**Total**	**Per day** [Experiment period = 274 days]	**Per member** [*egdoc* members = 76]
Video uploads	101	0.36	1.32
Views	78825	287.68	1037
New ideas	3	0.01	0.039
Positions publicized	19	0.06	0.15
Positions requested	15	0.54	0.19
Requests accepted	15	0.54	0.19
Requests rejected	0	0	0
Diaries	4	0.014	0.05
Comments	121	0.44	1.59
Video rating (Like/Dislike)	356	1.29	4.68
Video Flagging	0	0	0
Total actions	**79459**	**290**	**1045.5**

Table 4- 3 Members' interaction on *egdoc* between 24 August 2011 and 24 May 2012 (274 days)

From the table we can see that the interaction of *egdoc* members is largely confined to the uploading videos - viewing them, rating them, and commenting on them. Most of these activities (except for uploading videos and posting comments) do not require more than a click of a button, while other activities requiring time, organized physical and intellectual effort (such as suggesting new ideas, and displaying them in an organized way that requires filling in boxes, establishing a time plan, and discussing the details of carrying this plan out) hardly featured. For example, while 59.18% of all videos were rated, the aggregate ratings only accounted for 0.45% of the total views (besides, witness the difference between the number of video views and the number of comments).

4.8.1 Comments:

Obviously, comments on *egdoc* offer unique insights about the ways amateurs engage with, and make meaning from, user-generated video to support their learning and understanding of film-making. The number of comments also reflects the extent of user interaction with the videos uploaded, whether professional or non-professional, and whether made by their uploaders or not; viewer post positive and negative opinions about what they watch, or offer suggestions on how to develop the documentary idea.

The total number of comments made on the website during the period of the experiment was 121. This means that comments account for a mere 0.15% of total views. The comments suggested varying degrees of interest in the film-making process and willingness to exchange opinions on the part of site members. However, commenting on videos was not the main means of communication between amateurs, since the amount of comments compared to the number of views for the documentaries was relatively low.

Comments on the videos can be divided into two broad categories: positive evaluation (45 comments) and criticism (49 comments). Reasons for positive comments included: (a) **close access** (11 comments), as in the video *The Unknown Murdered* uploaded by *mhmd_klil*, showing a close-up of the body of one of the protesters killed during the 25 January revolution; (b) **originality** (13 comments) as in the video entitled *The Barrier Wall*, which one of the commentators said it cast a *new* spotlight on the human-rights violations of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt. This also applies to the video *Bahlam* (I dream), which was a diary made by *mhmd_klil* in which he sits in front of the camera describing his dreams from one day to the next; several comments suggested that this was a novel approach. *The Laughing Revolution*, which was produced by the BBC and uploaded by *Mena hossam*, was one of the professional documentaries praised by a number of the members for its originality; (c) **spontaneity** (12 comments), as

in the video *The Liver Meat Seller*, which was made and uploaded by *adham*. Most of the comments that were shared about it saw that it was a film made on the spot: 'the idea came to its maker while he was buying liver meat, and so he made the film immediately', (d) **simplicity** (9 comments) as in the video *Samira Ibrahim*, the 24-year-old activist who was alleged to have been subjected to a virginity test by army doctors to protect soldiers from claims of rape.

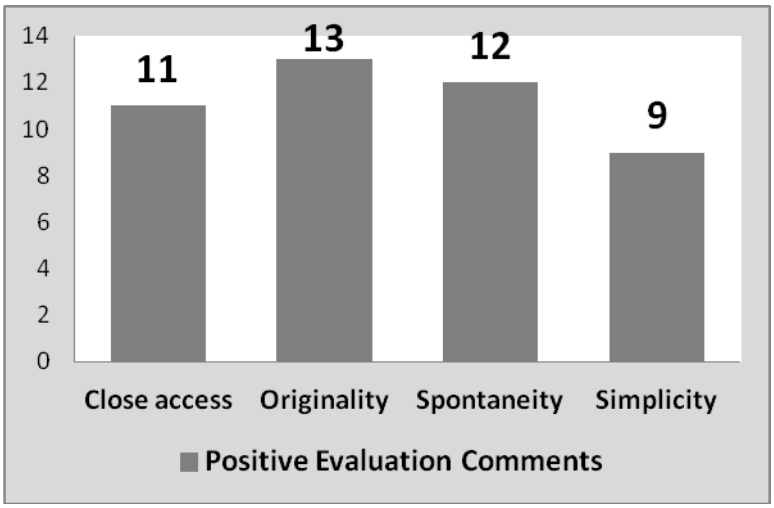

Fig. 4- 17 Reasons for positive evaluation comments on *egdoc*

The reasons for criticism include: (1) **insufficiency** (20 comments), as in the video *The Liver Meat Seller*, about which *mhmd_klil*, for example, said that 'the end came suddenly'; he wished that the video had included more details about the life of the protagonist, such as the daily pressures that he faces, how he spends his day, and so on. In his comment he also mentioned that these additions would have helped him to think about a deeper meaning for the video; (b) **shallowness** (11 comments) as in the video *Ongoing Life*, which was accused, by some members, of being a shallow film, as it just shows traffic flows, and tries to deduce a philosophical meaning out of them, (c) **unrelatedness to daily life** (18 comments) like in the videos *تجنيس السعوديين في البحرين* (Naturalizing Saudis, Arabic Horses), and *A Dentist in the Street*, which most commentators said those videos had nothing to do with what was happening in Egypt.

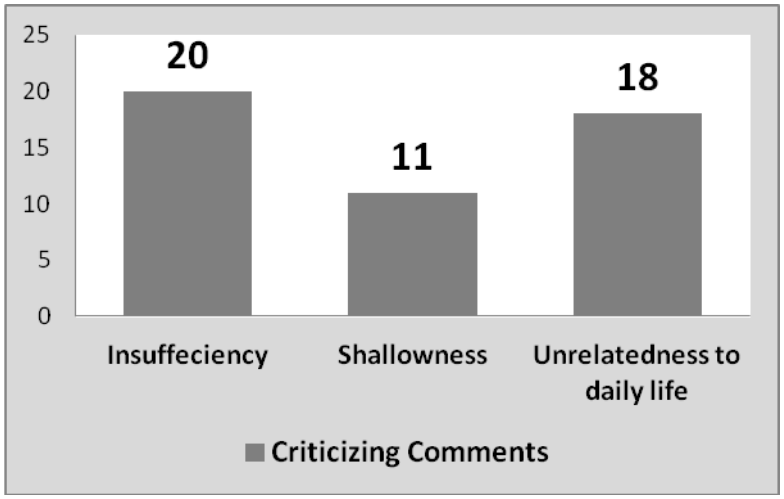

Fig. 4- 18 Reasons for criticizing videos through comments on *egdoc*

The rest of the comments (27) were either spam or related to fictional videos, and were excluded from analysis because they did not fit within the scope of this research.

4.8.2 Video Lengths:

It has been observed that 'most online video viewers watch mere seconds, rather than minutes, of a video' (TubeMogul, 2008). Shorter videos, therefore, may have more viewers than longer ones. *TubeMogul* (a brand-focused video marketing company) has found that the ideal run-time for web video is 2.5 to 4 minutes (TubeMogul, 2008). Alexandra Juhasz agrees with this conclusion, arguing that the appropriate duration of online videos is approximately three minutes:

> Given that the cinema consolidated itself at 90 minutes, and that television did so at 30, it has been quite a relief, really, especially given our high level of distraction, to minimize our viewing to a reasonable three minutes: 'communication that is just as unobstructed and immediate as the communication of an idea through a qualified word' [as Sergei Eisenstein (1920) says]; bite-sized, word-sized, postage-sized cinema; strong, intense, interchangeable, and forgettable films (Juhasz, 2008, p. 302)

In fact, most of the website users did not limit themselves to such principle; the shortest amateur non-fictional complete video length on the website (made by the uploader) is 24 seconds (*The Unknown Murdered*, by *mhmd_klil*) while the longest length for an amateur

non-fictional video is 9 minutes and 26 seconds (*فيلم لأمراض الفم للأطفال* 'Oral Diseases, [Simplified Video] For Children', by *saleh el-araby*). However, we observed that the number of views for videos between 20 seconds and two minutes was 3640 (22%), while the number of views for videos between two and five minutes was 10042 (61%), and finally the number of views for videos longer than five minutes was 2815 (17%).

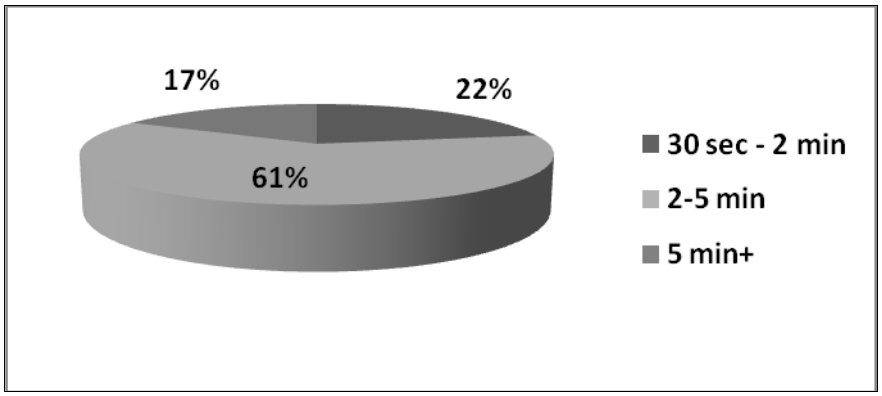

Fig. 4- 19 Views vs. video length on *egdoc*

As a general observation, a large number of online users are used to fast-forwarding through videos, watching some parts and skipping others. For that reason, *egdoc*, like many other video-sharing websites, deactivated this function. Realizing this, some users who upload their videos onto *egdoc* seem to have applied the 'inverted pyramid' print model (i.e. placing the climax at the top, then the less important parts later) in order to guarantee that the most important/exciting parts of their videos are watched.

Fig. 4- 20 *Hatebaa Ahla* (Things Will Turn Out Better), Amro

An example of this phenomenon is the video حتبقى أحلى (Things will turn out better) which is a mixture of written statements and still images, exploring the bread crisis in El-Wadi El-Gadid (The largest governorate in Egypt in size and the smallest in population number). The video starts with a still image of a hand carrying a loaf of bread which looks too small to be a loaf of bread; it is smaller than the hand holding it. The second photo is a fixed shot of a lady carrying a lot more bread. The third photo is of a very long line of customers in front of a bakery. The fourth photo is of a number of loaves scattered on a table, probably for the purpose of cooling them after coming out of the oven. The fifth photo is of a huge number of people who are gathered in an unorganized way, fighting in front of a bread-selling outlet. Finally, there is a photo of a baker in the process of taking bread out of the oven. After that comes a sequence of statements explaining the problem and offering some possible solutions.

We notice here that the video-maker wanted to put some still images (which are the interesting factor in the video, compared to the written statements which might be considered as an unattractive tool by many), in the first forty seconds of the video, which lasts for 3 minutes and forty seconds. Although the video-maker reflected one dimension of the problem in each photo, he started with a shot that reveals the more dangerous aspect of the problem: a hand carrying a loaf of bread that is too small for it. The viewer can stop after watching these few seconds of the video to capture its message, but if he wants to know more details about the problem, and the solutions proposed by the video-maker, then obviously he has to watch the rest of the video.

4.8.3 Users' New Ideas on egdoc:

There were only three 'new ideas' added to this section of the website, presented by only three of the 76 registered members. Only two projects out of the three reached fruition: *The Barrier Wall*, made by *mhmd_klil*, and الضحك بالذقون (Deceiving People), made by a

team led by *Mohamed Salah*. The third video, *Do We Really Love Egypt?*, by *filmlover737*, was not taken up by website members. Analyzing the ways the creators of these projects presented and explained their ideas will help us to understand the behavior, character, and concerns of the amateur film-maker. An analysis of why website members generally refused to present new themes in an organized way, or to participate in ongoing projects, will also help us to understand the dynamics of the amateur film-making process in general.

4.8.3.1 (*The Barrier Wall*) Video Project:

In *The Barrier Wall* video project, the user started his briefing by describing it as a 'short film', by which he was not necessarily focusing on the film's length, but reflecting its generic relationship with professional short films. *mhmd_klil* continues in his description of the project saying:

> It is a short film about the barrier wall built by the Armed Forces in front of the cabinet premises, which is the area that witnessed severe clashes between the demonstrators and the Military Police and ended up with the burning of the Scientific Convention building and 369 were injured or dead. The wall formed a psychological barrier for the demonstrators who wanted to strike in front of the cabinet premises, while they were accused by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and some Media of doing acts of thugs.

There are two remarks to be made on this brief description of the film. The first is that it included striking numerical data; whether accurate or otherwise, this reflects the desire of the user to assure us of the importance of his film idea, and to suggest that he is well-prepared and well-placed to develop it. Secondly, after he laid the factual foundations for his idea, he explained the motives behind it, namely that this barrier wall became a psychological barrier for the demonstrators and, by extension, the Egyptian people as a whole.

Through these two remarks, we can conclude that there is a professional air to this amateur's work; he appreciates information, prepares for shooting with research, and focuses on the humanitarian issues in his topics. This last conclusion is verified when we look into his poetic video, *Ongoing Life*.

In the *Initial Script* box of *The Barrier Wall*'s project, *mhmd_klil* wrote:

> The wall turned into a political blog on which the protesters record their opinions and their criticism for the Military Council. The wall makes vision impossible for the pedestrians, but 'Hazem Gooda', the hero of the film, tries to reach behind it as he is thinking that freedom starts only behind this wall, and that life in front of it is considered 'shackled'.

While this is a very simple idea, it is clear from *mhmd_klil*'s suggestions for shooting (different separate scenes in front of the barrier wall for the film hero while he tries to shoot what was behind the wall through the narrow openings between the blocks) that he couples the simplicity of his idea with imaginative strategies for bringing it to life. *mhmd_klil* left the boxes of the editing and sound suggestions empty, but after we watch the video that he produced and already uploaded we discover that he had already created a lot of visual and sound effects, which he might have not been able to describe. Nevertheless, we can conclude that *mhmd_klil* thought mainly about generalities while preparing to make the film, and less about the technical details. He suggested a team of 5 people for the main roles (director, script writer, cameraman, picture editor, and sound), before nominating himself to play the role of the director and script writer, leaving the other three roles open for other site members. He presented a timeline for the roles of each team member, which appeared as follows:

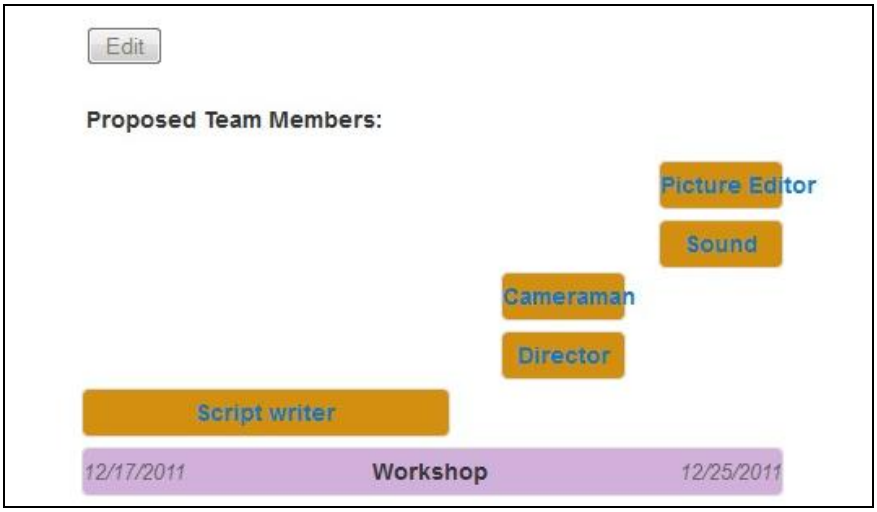

Fig. 4- 21 *The Barrier Wall*'s suggested time plan

According to this suggested plan, work on the project would start on the 17th of December 2011, and end by the 25th of December, i.e. a total of 8 days of work. Half of this period is dedicated to writing the script, while the director works simultaneously with the cameraman on location, then they disappear completely from the plan allowing the picture editor and sound editor to work together to edit the film. Such a plan would be completely foreign to professional reality, where the director typically works on a project from start to finish. But again, this user's commitment to his project is clearly observed, and he demonstrates general, if deficient, understanding of the nature of the role of each team member in a documentary.

mhmd_klil suggested this idea as a workshop for website members, hoping that others would join in, but he never received any offers of help from other site members. This did not deter *mhmd_klil* from implementing the project and finishing it on his own; indeed, he put himself forward for all the roles, and then, as the author of the idea, accepted his own nominations. He thus began work on the idea, and uploaded the video when it was finished, receiving comments on the video itself.

He also uploaded a Word file including a textual description of his emotional rollercoaster-ride during shooting. In this text, he describes how he participated in the strike in Tahrir Square with one of his friends, how they approached the wall, and how his friend tried to discover what was behind it. *mhmd_klil* wrote:

> The camera recorded the moves of my friend over the wall as he tried to look inside the holes and take "precious" photos of those who were behind the wall "enjoying full freedom"… This was what my friend saw, thinking that what was behind the wall was very precious, only because they enjoy freedom, and because they can reach a place that we can't reach.
>
> My friend looked into every hole between the cement blocks, and took some pictures from the openings of the wall. After every photo, I used to go to him and film him with the video camera. In the first time, when I looked through the hole, I saw a cat moving and trying to climb over a tree, and in front of it there was a barbed wire. In the second time I saw a big motorcycle appearing in front of a huge tank, beside which there were two men chatting in a low voice. In the third time I found nothing…

The poetic style of this description is also reflected in the video itself. It gives a lyrical sense of how one of the young participants in the Egyptian revolution perceived the practices of the Military Council.

4.8.3.2 Do We Really Love Egypt?

The second project on the website was suggested by *filmlover737* and was entitled *Do We Really Love Egypt?* It is worth highlighting the fact that this member interacted less than other members on the website. Nevertheless, he posted two valuable comments; one on *The Liver Meat Seller* and the other on *The Laughing Revolution*. He did not state at all in his profile the reasons why he joined the website, or if he had previous film-making experience. He was also one of the few members who did not upload any videos onto the website. He expresses his motivation for the project idea he put forward as follows:

> Egypt is in danger… The Military Counsel lied to us… The Brotherhood is preoccupied with the authority… The [parliamentary] elections were not fair… The

> media is cursing the youth of the revolution… The people are fed up with demonstrations… What shall we do?"

For the initial script, he suggested exploring the 'opinions of different people in the streets, including some shots from the demonstrations with sad music'. He also added more details in the 'suggestions for shooting' space, suggesting 'shooting in Tahrir square during the day as well as in poor neighborhoods'. In the 'suggestions for editing' space, it is interesting that *filmlover737* only wrote: 'Not to be boring!'. Contrary to appearances, this phrase does not reflect an inability to understand the nature of the editing process, but rather the realization, in principle, that the rhythm of the film crucially depends on the editing process. *filmlover737* may not know how to use editing to accomplish this purpose, but he decided to present the idea to other users in the hope that they would co-operate with him to make the film idea a reality.

In the space dedicated to 'Suggestions for Sound', *filmlover737* wrote: 'Sad music that reflects the emotional state of the people now'. This suggestion reflects his belief that all the artistic elements must be used to express the emotional state that the film wants to reflect, to ensure the success in delivering the message to the viewer. Generally, it seems that both *filmlover737* and *mhmd_klil* understand the role of each member in the team, and the touch they can add to the final product.

filmlover737 suggested a 3-week schedule for work on the film, from 1 to 20 November 2011. The schedule appeared on the website as follows:

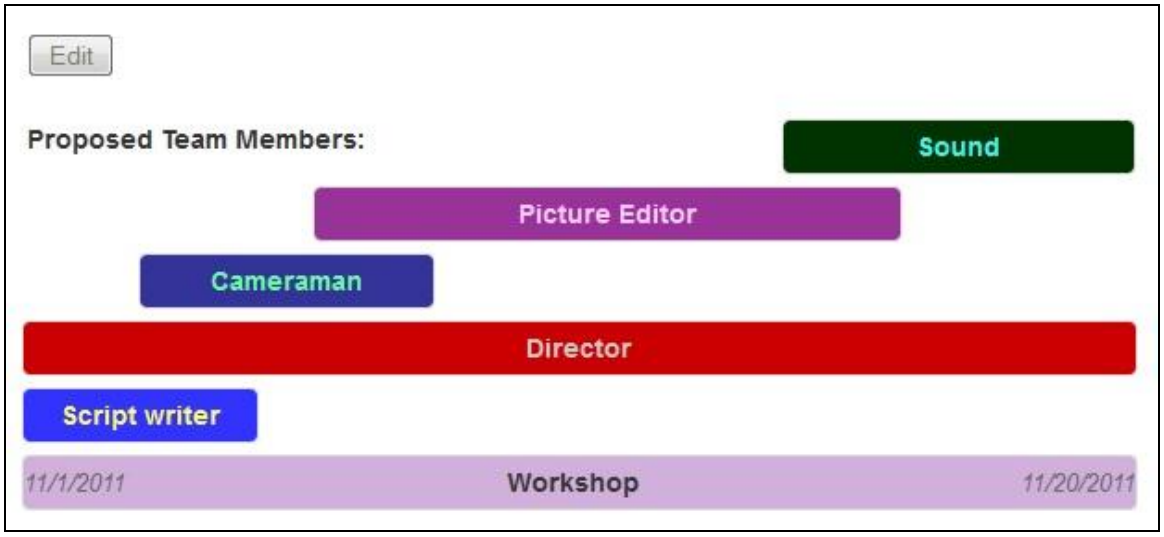

Fig. 4- 22 *Do We Really Love Egypt?*, project time plan on *egdoc*

This plan looks ideal, since the roles are distributed in a logical and quasi-professional manner, which is interesting if we bear in mind that this user was among the least active on the website. Nevertheless, his understanding of the relationship between editing and film rhythm, and his accuracy in putting this plan both reflect a certain amount of artistic experience. This user wanted to play the director's role in his project, but he opened the rest of the roles for others. Unfortunately, he did not get any response.

4.8.3.3 الضحك بالذقون (Deceiving People):

This project reflects the advanced level of film-making knowledge that some amateurs have. It is the graduation project of nine final-year students from The Mass Communication Department of Cairo University. One of these students, *Mohamed Salah*, signed up to the website and posted the idea of the film, not to seek the help of others but, as he mentioned in his answer for the (Why would you like to join us?) question in his profile, 'to benefit from their opinions about the idea'. *Mohamed Salah* describes the project in the Synopsis space as follows:

> The film represents the difference between the treatment through Qur'an and using it for personal profit. This is done in the form of an investigation, by showing two

> people; one of them was being treated through Qur'an in the right way, while the other was just deceiving others by Qur'an to gain money.

This is a daring and difficult idea, especially in a society where a huge number of people believe in superstition, and where religion is considered above all other cultural considerations. The idea itself perfectly reflects a culture which does not condemn or disapprove of using the Qur'an instead of going to the doctor to seek treatment for illness. At the same time it tries to distinguish between Qur'anic swindlers and genuinely devout Qur'anic healers. *Mohamed Salah* goes on explaining the details of the idea in 'The Initial Script' space as follows:

> The film starts with 3D graphics telling the story of the battle between Adam and Iblis [the principal evil spirit in Islamic mythology], and how people learnt witchcraft from Harut and Marut [two angels mentioned in Qur'an, sent down to test the people by performing deeds of magic], then the coming of Our Master Soliman to banish witchcraft and, finally, the continuity of the conflict between the sons of Adam and Satan.
>
> Then the film shows some interviews, not exceeding three minutes in length, with a group of religious figures from Muslims and Christians, and one specialist in the Jewish religion. After that comes the story, where we see one of the team members acting as a sick person and going to a couple of people who use Qur'an for treatment, and we compare the analysis of both of them. At the end the actor shares her experience.

This user had a clear, if traditional, vision for the film's structure, according to which religion is the beginning and end of the debate; clergymen are called upon when an authoritative opinion is needed on a controversial issue. The synopsis did not suggest interviews with scientists, medical specialists, or legal experts, but rather interviews with Muslim and Christian clergymen and a scholar of Jewish religion (directly contacting a Jewish Rabbi in Egypt might be considered as contacting Israel, and might result in harsh social criticism or even legal action).

In the space of 'Suggestions for Shooting', *Mohamed Salah* suggested shooting 'a long shot of a place where healers who honestly use the Qur'an for treatment work, and a long shot of a place where swindlers work, followed by conversations between a team member, who is pretending to be sick, and the swindler'. The first two shots are establishing shots that set up the scenes to follow; as is the normal professional rule (this user in all likelihood formally studied these rules in his university studies). But in the space dedicated to 'Suggestions for Editing', *Mohamed Salah* suggested a recital of the following Qur'anic verse: “And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers” [Al-Baqrah, Verse: 34]. The user confuses editing with the soundtrack here, although in the 'Suggestions for Sound' space, he suggested 'music suitable for the introduction and the events, which is full of mystery'.

Mohamed Salah proposed a schedule starting on the 10th of January 2012, and finishing it on the 15th of April 2012, the longest for a documentary film on the website. The user also suggested a team formed of nine people, five of which were to be involved in writing the script (the longest part of the project). The following figure breaks the schedule down as appeared on the website.

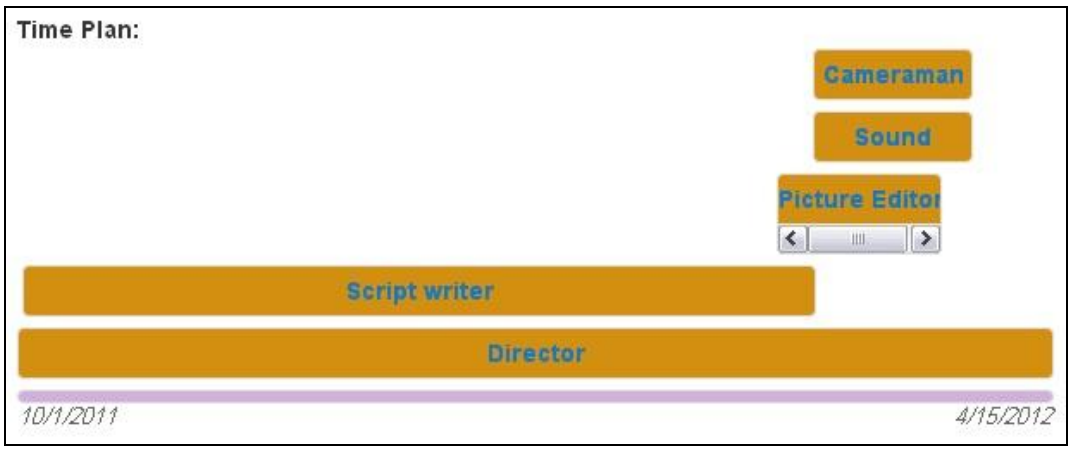

Fig. 4- 23 *Mohamed Salah* project time plan on *egdoc*

From this figure, we can see that *Mohamed Salah* realized that the role of the director continues from the beginning of the project until the end, and that the script writer has to work collaboratively with the director from the beginning. There is no problem in the fact that the period suggested for the script-writing was relatively long when compared to the roles of the rest of the team members, because the script required a lot of research and general preparation.

One interesting detail in the plan was that the editor was to start his work before the cameraman and the soundtrack specialist. Perhaps the reason for this surprising choice was to allow time for the preparation of graphics to be used in the introduction. Another question-mark concerns why the work of the director continues for so long after everyone else's job is done. Still, the time plan is relatively logical and practical. It also reflects a reasonable amount of awareness of the mechanisms by which documentary-making functions.

4.8.4 Tutorial and Information Exchange:

The way many professional film-makers conduct research, process results, build on the experiences of earlier generations, and exchange knowledge with their peers, distinguishes them from amateurs. Despite the attempt to encourage *egdoc* members to improve their methods and produce less one-sided, more communicative and professional films by applying the advice contained in the *Tutorial* section, none of them seemed ever to have visited it; indeed, the number of visits registered was exactly zero. That may prove that the title ('Tutorial') itself was overly didactic and unappealing for website members. We will see below in an interview conducted with two members, *mhmd_klil* and *Fady Nour*, that their preferred methods for collecting information about film-making are 'experiment, trial and error, and learning from mistakes'.

4.9 The Ethical Dilemma:

Although the terms and conditions of the website addressed the ethical standards for documentary-making, such standards are often ignored by amateurs. I will refer here to four examples of members of *egdoc* who to varying degrees failed to meet these ethical standards. The first example is *Fady Nour,* who, in one of the two interviews appended to this chapter, expresses his astonishment after hearing my question about the possibility of shooting a child without the consent of his parents. In his answer to this question he wondered simply: 'What's wrong with that?'.

The second example is *Mohamed Salah*, the author of *الضحك بالذقون* (Deceiving People) project, who posted a diary in which he wrote:

> During our journey for shooting the film we encountered an important and critical obstruction; namely, will we reveal all the details that expose the character of that swindler and expose the truth about him publically to limit the visits of many people to him and prevent them from falling to this trap set up for them? Or should we avoid exposing these details and be content with the general message of the work, that there were some swindlers in that field? If we expose him, will that be considered legal argument evidence to the authorities against him for scam and swindling or against us for defamation and libel?

The third example is *mhmd_klil,* with whom I conducted an interview (Appendix 2), in which I asked him the same question that I asked *Fady Nour*: 'Would you shoot a child without the consent of his parents?' He replied immediately: 'I doubt it!'.

The differences between the three examples reflect the fact that the boundaries between amateur and professional are often blurred; not all amateurs are completely unaware of the ethical considerations related to documentary; and, as we saw in Chapter 3, not all professional film-makers comply fully with ethical criteria. The general lack of ethical awareness among amateurs may be greater than in the world of professional film-making, but that does not mean that ethical concerns are completely absent from the amateur's

view. The problem is that the ways the amateurs gain their film-making expertise focus, as we have seen, on experimentation and learning from trial and error, and consequently their awareness of ethical issues related to this art will evolve relatively slowly if compared with professionals who are obliged to commit formally to codes of conduct in order, for example, to market their work to television networks or professional festivals.

Another ethical dilemma which surfaced on *egdoc* concerned the short clip *The Unknown Murdered*, which depicted one of the victims of the 25 January revolution being carried on an ambulance stretcher. The clip was uploaded by *mhmd_klil* in order to get the opinions of his peers about how to turn the clip into a full-blown documentary, and indeed received plenty of comments, none of these, however, made mention of the fact that the clip included a disturbing close-up of the face of the victim. Most professional networks would avoid airing such shots out of respect for both viewers and victim. The comments posted on *egdoc*, however, regarded the shot as 'interesting', 'attractive', and even 'a seed for a very successful film'.

4.10 Editing as Perceived and Practiced by *egdoc* Users:

There is no doubt that non-linear editing, which we referred to in detail in Chapter 1, allowed amateur users to make strides towards their professional counterparts. In the first chapter we also discussed what was meant by the editing process generally and the editing process in documentary specifically. We also mentioned some of the editing devices used by the film-maker to convey his message, and we offered many examples from professional documentaries. In essence, the editing process is the same for amateurs and professionals, but the obstacles faced, and the skills brought to bear on those obstacles often differ. The diaries exchanged between *Muhammad El Fateh* and *filmlover737* discussed some of the difficulties faced by amateurs during the editing

process, The 'I Want to Learn Editing' entry to *filmlover737*'s diary accompanying his *Do We Really Love Egypt?* project reads as follows:

> It looks that no one liked the idea of the film. No one at all wants to participate with me although I see a lot of people on the website. Anyway, this was just an idea and I wanted to use it to get to know someone who could teach me editing. I know how to shoot very well, but I don't know how to edit the material I shoot… I feel that the things I shoot are worth nothing without the editing. Frankly speaking, I don't want to take a training course on editing because it will be very costly, and most of the websites explain the editing process in English, and my English is not that good…

The sentence 'I feel that the things I shoot are worth nothing without the editing' reflects *filmlover737*'s faith in the pivotal role of editing in film-making. It is clear from his confession that he shared the idea about his project with website members in the hope of finding someone who could teach him editing, and it is also clear that he tried other ways of gaining editing skills with limited success. Apart from a prohibitively costly training course, his only hope was to find an expert who could teach him editing face to face for free. This is a challenge faced by most amateurs, as mentioned by *mhmd_klil* and *Fady Nour* in the two interviews I conducted with them (see Appendix to this study).

In response to *filmlover737*'s diary, *Muhammad El Fateh* published another diary entitled 'How I Edited *The Union Harvest*'. *Mohammad Al Fateh,* as we learnt in a telephone interview, is a student in the faculty of Medicine and an activist in the Students' Union of Tanta University with ties to The Muslim Brotherhood. It appears that he wanted to make a promotional film about the activities of the Students' Union, the first to be elected after the January Revolution. It will be useful to review his experience in editing and making the film, as recounted by him in this post:

> I read the diary of *filmlover737* on the website, in which he was looking for someone to teach him editing. Therefore, I will tell you about what I did in editing *The Union's Harvest* film, for the sake of exchanging experiences. When we decided to make a film to document the efforts of the first elected Students' Union

after the revolution, I thought so much about how we will document the works of the Union's committees and what kind of film that will be. I held a pen and a paper, and sat down to think; how will I walk through that… Writing on PowerPoint style will be very boring and only shooting will be boring too. After a lot of pondering, I asked myself: what if we use all that: pictures, writing, and video?...Hence, we started…

In the framework of the film, we have already agreed on 13 ideas approximately… so we need 13 clips… We faced difficulties in repeating the shooting for the speakers because of their mistakes, or because of any defect in the shooting like tripod moves, or weak sound from the microphone, or the speaker's low voice. Eventually, I had a huge amount of clips, out of which I chose the best and excluded the repeated ones or the ones that had apparent technical or content mistakes. So, at the end a limited amount of clips remained, and I started to prepare the post-shoot script. During the editing of the clips of course there were unneeded parts after and before the shots that we need to use, and some were even in the midst of these shots. These parts needed to be deleted to shorten the clip or because it was out of context… I usually prepare the clips on Adobe Premiere program and then import them again in a format that doesn't lose any quality.

I prepare folders according to the number of parts, and I collect in them all the pictures that will be used along with the clips and graphics of every part. That goes through many stages of selection and organizing. At the end I prepare an Editing Paper. At that point I start thinking about the graphics and how I will direct them in an attractive way… I choose the form, the introduction, the end, and I do all of them on the Photoshop. Then I import everything on the After Effects program to do the animations needed in the way you see them in the film, without depending on copied graphics, except rarely… Then, I import everything in lossless format which is very heavy in size for the sake of not losing any quality. Yes I do work on (Adobe creative suite master collection cs5.5) but the limitedness of the computer doesn't allow me to use the dynamic link function, which allows the direct linking between the programs of premiere and After Effects, which applies any changes done on any of the programs to be done automatically in the other. Then I enter the premier once more and start the editing and the arranging of the clips according to the view that I decided, and I add the appropriate transitions between the clips.

Then I chose the musical background from my own music library as usual, or from what is available on the Internet. I choose what is suitable for the scenes and then I add it on the timeline and the modifications in the Audio Wave, to lower the volume during the speech and lift it up in between the clips. I also cut the music parts according to the synchronization. In the midst of all that and while doing it, I do a lot of modification, I correct the mistakes, and put the final touches to get the final product, and review it many times before importing the product. Then, I import my work in a high resolution format, that can be used to show it on a wide screen in a celebration hall or a conference center, and usually that is MPEG2 Full HDTV 1080p.

The first part of this significant diary excerpt shows that *Muhammad El Fateh* knows very well that editing is the process through which, in Holland's simple definition, *pictures, writing, and video* are brought together (Holland 1997, p. 91 - see Chapter One). Also

noteworthy is *Muhammad El Fateh*'s awareness of how to exclude material that was 'repeated' or 'had apparent technical or content mistakes'. In general, we can say that *Muhammad El Fateh* demonstrates an awareness of the importance of a systematic approach to editing in order to realize his artistic goals.

The final result is a film of a similar quality to the promotional films showcased on the website, such as *6 April*, *The orphan*, and *Relief Somalia*. Most of the time, skilled activists take the responsibility for making such films upon themselves, with the organizations they work for occasionally helping them polish their skills or gain publicity for their activities. In general, however, we can say that films like *The Union Harvest* remain non-profit exercises, and so lie firmly within the bounds of amateur activity.

Another interesting diary excerpt on the website which reflects the relationship between the amateur film-maker and the editing process comes from *Mohamed Salah* and his project *الضحك بالذقون* (Deceiving People). *Mohamed Salah* and his colleagues in the project believe, rightly enough, that the editing process is pivotal in film-making. Under the title 'Difficult Editing Moments', *Mohamed Salah* describes how his team prepared for the editing of the film, how they chose which shots to include in the final cut, and the politics of the decision-making process:

> The process of preparing for the editing was very exhausting. Before that, we had to finish our view about the historical introduction of the film, and to get the approval of Al Azhar Al Sharif on that introduction because of the scenes that will be used which might be controversial, as they may include embodying of prophets or angels. One of the things that were done as well in these preparations was seeking the help of an expert in the field of Media law to get his opinion about the possibility of showing the face of swindlers who exploit Qur'an. Then we started the stage of "first cut" to select the best scenes to be used in the film.
>
> The director and the assistant director both participated in the process of selecting the best scenes, based on shots that have better quality, their content, and the order according to which we need to put the scenes, especially the ones including the different interviews that we did. The preparation team started the process of

> finalizing the paper work for permits and the religious and legal opinions for the film, in addition to writing the audio narration for the historical introduction of the film.
>
> The final decisions were always left to the director of the work, after discussions, because he is the one who communicates with the editors trying to work in a professional way as much as possible. But in spite of that he was always updating the rest of the team about what was accomplished and what will be done later, and he was also open to receive any suggestions about what should be done in the editing process.
>
> Editing has a special importance in our project because it will determine the final features for the film to make it interesting, attractive, realistic, and exciting… it raises the problem… and in the end it tries to give the solution.

For *Mohamed Salah* and his companions, the editing process was not easy, and needed research from the whole team as well as technical preparation by the director and his assistant. Final decisions, however, were for the director alone, although he endeavored to keep his team updated with his decisions. In sum, *Mohamed Salah* believes that editing eventually will help the film to be 'interesting, attractive, realistic, and exciting', and that, to a large extent, editing *is* the film.

However, what are the biggest problems that amateur film-makers encounter during the editing process? In the appended interview conducted with *mhmd_klil*, we learn that 'editing needs stronger computers with higher processors and this is found only in Macintosh computers, which are very expensive for [him]'. The other main challenge concerns video formatting. He explains;

> Adobe Premiere for example doesn't support all the available formats specially the new ones which are used by the HD cameras with the extensions mts, AVCHD, which are not supported except in the original version of the program which was produced by the company in 2011, because before that it was not supported. Of course, the original program is very expensive for me, so I have to use a trial version and convert the video before editing using any conversion software. In such case, you have to sacrifice part of the resolution or the number of frames per second, because my camera shoots 50 frames per second, while converting the video makes it 30 per second. This defect appears strong if I want to do slow motion, for example.

From this answer, we can draw two conclusions; first: the user's advanced knowledge of the best techniques for shooting and editing, and the difficulties faced by amateurs in implementing these techniques; and second: the ability of the user to overcome the high price of original software with alternative, if more complex and time-consuming, software solutions.

The other user who was interviewed, *Fady Nour*, faced similar problems to *mhmd_klil*, most notably computer speed;

> [The] editing programs are heavy and need a high speed [processor]. So the exporting [processing / rendering] after the work is done takes many long hours. Sometimes, I used to leave it in the evening, go to sleep and wait to see the result the following morning.

We can understand the extended time needed by *Fady Nour* for the processing and rendering when we watch films like his *الخاتمان* (The Two Rings) and other fictional films he made which are full of special effects. Meanwhile, it is clear that he was determined to overcome his technical challenges, the proof of which is that he eventually succeeded in making his ideas a reality through editing.

In the first chapter, we also noted that *rhythm* was one of the main editing devices used to convey the message of a film. There are many examples on the website of amateur videos which reflect the instinctive realization by the amateurs of the relationship between editing and rhythm. *Ongoing Life* is one of the examples that stand out in this regard. The video has one semi-fixed shot; *mhmd_klil*, the maker of this video, sped up the shot to reflect the fast pace of life, which he describes as follows: “Life goes on fast and no one can cope with its pace… other people are running and no one can catch them… but at the bottom line… all is running..”. This idea might not be new in professional films - in the first chapter we cited the example of the film *Baraka* by American Director Ron Fricke as

a film which relied heavily on rhythm for its effect - but the use of similar techniques by an amateur is indeed a noteworthy achievement.

4.11 egdoc Videos and Definition of Documentary:

Now we come to the most important part of this study, which concerns the compliance of amateur videos uploaded on *egdoc* with the definitions of traditional documentary. 28 non-fictional videos (both complete and incomplete) were uploaded by their makers onto the website. We select one of these (*The Barrier Wall*) to see how it matches up to the definitions of documentary presented in the first chapter. Our main criterion for selection was the amount of interaction by website members (comments and rating) compared to other self-uploaded videos. The video selected comes from an amateur user, with whom we conducted an interview (appended to this study) and that helped us learn more about his background and his understanding of documentary-making and its associated ethical dilemmas. Matching this specific video with definitions of documentary will enrich our understanding of amateur documentary as an offshoot of professional, ethically engaged non-fiction film-making.

The simplest definition of a documentary referred to in Chapter 1 came from Bill Nichols, who states that "documentaries are about real people who do not play or perform roles" (Nichols, 2010, p. 8). *The Barrier Wall* is about a real photographer, called Hazem Gouda, who tries to discover what is behind the wall built by the Armed Forces to prevent demonstrators from accessing cabinet premises. From the diaries of *mhmd_klil*, we learn that Hazem really went to this place, and behaved in the same way that we see in the video; *mhmd_klil* saw him there and thought about documenting the situation. Hazem is playing himself in the film, which makes the definition of Bill Nichols applicable to the video in general. This is the first hand experience which Chapman mentioned as a must for the content of a documentary (Chapman, 2009, p. 8 – See Chapter 1). It also fits one

of the most popular definitions of documentary put forward in recent years, according to which "documentary is the communication, not of imagined things, but of real things only" (Eitzen, 1995, p. 81). Any fictional or dramatic elements in the film were just a framework that did not change anything important about the reality under study, and confirm Eitzen's understanding about the inevitability of drama in documentary making; the documentary in this perspective is a "dramatized presentation of man's relation to his institutional life".

How does *The Barrier Wall* look in the light of Michael Renov's definition of documentaries (Renov, 1993, p. 21)? *The Barrier Wall* video *records* an important moment that followed bloody clashes between demonstrators and security forces, one of the results of which was the building of the barrier wall. It also *reveals* the reaction of the Egyptian youth to the building of this wall, which became a symbol of "the might of the rulers" from the perspective of the demonstrators and those sympathizing with them. It also *promotes* more criticism of the authorities, and tries to *persuade* the audience that this wall is a symbol of injustice. Eventually the film *expresses* the perspective of the film-maker, and the sector he represents from among the Egyptian youth, about the events and their implications. Hence, we can conclude that the video does most of the functions determined by Renov of the documentary, according to what we mentioned in Chapter 1.

Does *The Barrier Wall* fit the five characteristics of documentary as determined by Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane (2006)? As explained in detail in the first chapter, these five characteristics are: (1) subject; (2) purpose, viewpoint, or approach; (3) form; (4) production methods and techniques; and (5) the sorts of experiences the film offers to its audiences.

(1) The subject of *The Barrier Wall* video is specific and deals with factual reality. It deals with an important public issue, but through a private citizen's perspective (the maker's). In the other sense of the term 'subject', the subject of the video (the photographer) is also real, and so is the place where shooting takes place (around the barrier wall). We also see that the events depicted in the film (the continuity of the wall, the blocking of demonstrators) are reported facts.

(2) Through the video we can conclude that its maker wanted to tell us the story of the wall, the dimensions of which we understand when we see the graffiti written on it. The video tried to convince us that the wall is standing between the people and the authorities but that the people should not give up. The people, instead, should find a way to get their voice heard. That was reflected in a figurative way in the attempt of the photographer to look for a hole in the midst of the huge stone blocks and to record what was happening behind the wall.

(3) It is clear that the video lies somewhere between a premeditated piece of art and the on-the-spot shooting. The maker already knew all about the wall, and maybe he thought about how to express his opinions and impressions for some time before he decided to use the camera and shoot the video in the way that he did. Nevertheless, he decided to follow the spontaneous attempts of the photographer to find a hole in the wall. The overall effect was one of spontaneity, thereby reflecting one of the characteristics of documentary as determined by Ellis and McLane.

(4) This video fulfils the fundamental production requirements of any documentary, as suggested by Ellis and McLane: real subjects, shooting on the spot where the events took place, and natural lighting.

(5) This video presents an aesthetic experience for the audience through smooth editing and the addition of audio-visual effects (e.g. slow motion in some scenes).

At the beginning of this study, we mentioned that all documentaries reveal truth about the world, and depict the 'unmediated reality' that is made before the camera (Eitzen, 1995, p. 81). The maker of *The Barrier Wall* also succeeded in depicting such an 'unmediated reality', because he dealt with a real situation as he saw it and felt it, a reality that appears before the camera and also a process which was going on inside his mind. The effect is very similar to that of my film *Nonsense* which I discussed in detail in the first chapter. The goal of my film was to reveal the psychological processes taking place in the mind of the journalist as he goes through different career experiences. This is reality from a personal perspective; I was better placed to present that particular reality than anyone else.

Did *mhmd_klil* have a message he wanted to convey? Did he want to lead the viewer to a certain perspective or view? The answer to these two questions is clearly 'yes'. The video is one of the numerous videos on the Internet condemning the barrier wall and the alleged cruelty of the Armed Forces and the military police in dealing with the demonstrators and criticizing the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and their alleged insistence on remaining in authority in spite of people's objections. Such videos encourage young people to express their own opposition to the regime.

Another example of amateur videos uploaded onto the website which fits the description of a documentary as defined by Eitzen, and Ellis & McLane, is the previously mentioned video *The Liver Meat Seller*, directed by *adham*. In this video, he not only wanted to focus on the way the liver seller works, but he also wanted to present his workspace, by moving the camera horizontally to the right to show the green pepper dish, then to the

left, after turning behind the seller, to reveal the dishes he uses for frying the liver. During that camera move, he shows a couple of veiled girls walking in the street timidly and quickly as they noticed the camera, and of course that reflects the traditions of the society in this area, while the cultural context of the society where these events take place is revealed by the sound of the Qur'an reciter in the background, which is mixed with the normal street noise. One of the website members, *filmlover737*, watched the film and wrote the following comment:

> I think this film is very reflective of the status-quo; the man is cutting the meat without any fear, just like the government and the army who are practicing injustice against the people without any care… I swear to God, that is a deep film… I like it.

So, in two minutes and twenty-eight seconds, the aspects of the story are complete (time, place, subject, story, cultural context, and social atmosphere). But in spite of all that, one of the members, *mhmd_klil*, comments on his conditional admiration of the idea, and wishes that the film had reflected more sides of the liver seller's life. He wrote:

> I like the idea so much, although the end came suddenly. I was wishing actually to see more aspects of the life of the man, like the pressure he experiences every day. He is just standing there, sharpening his knife, cutting the liver, and maybe he is not even able to taste it because he can't afford it… How does he spend his day from the time he opens his shop until the evening? I was really wishing to see more details and to think about a deeper meaning at the end.

mhmd_klil, maker of *The Barrier Wall*, felt that *The Liver Meat Seller* presented an incomplete message, and did not satisfy him as a viewer although it appeared to have all the elements that we mentioned above. Hampe speaks to *mhmd_klil*'s concerns by arguing that the goal of a documentary is to tell the truth morally and ethically (Hampe, 2007, p.10); this new definition of the documentary is concerned with authenticity and meaning and avoids, at least according to Stella Bruzzi (2006), traditional adherence to mere observation. What Bruzzi believes is that the concept of observation must be replaced

with the idea of performative exchange among the film-maker, his subjects, and the audience. Depicting reality is not enough; an audience's understanding of the moral worth of a film is an essential factor in judging a film's status as a documentary. In other words, *mhmd_klil*'s comment about *The Liver Meat Seller* is not only an evaluation of *The Liver Meat Seller* as a documentary; it questions whether *The Liver Meat Seller* can be considered a documentary at all.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I explored many aspects related to user-generated video in the Internet age. I tried to establish evidence for the hypothesis that these videos represent a new genre of documentary, and that they have some characteristics in common with professional documentaries along with other distinctive characteristics of their own. I began by formulating a working definition of documentary by combining different modern definitions, and went on to consider the role played by affordable new technology in the diffusion of amateur UGVs on the Internet. I then raised a new question, not sufficiently dealt with by documentary theorists, concerning the role of imagination. I analyzed my film Nonsense (2007) in light of this question, and went on to suggest a new definition of documentary as 'the creative treatment of psychological as well as material reality', a modification of John Grierson's seminal 1929 definition.

I also discussed two key elements of documentary-making, namely editing and filming. I gave many examples of how professionals used these two elements in different ways to express the content of their documentaries. I then presented the most important characteristics of the relationship between the camera and the film subject, in the course of which I paid particular attention to merely 'observational' documentaries where the feeling of the camera's existence almost disappears. One example was my film Al Rabee (2007), which tells the story of an Egyptian family living in a graveyard. After that I examined the differences between documentary on the one hand and news and reality TV on the other, before moving on to discuss documentary ethics as perceived and practiced by professionals.

This led to a discussion of the role of New Media in shaping the present and future of the documentary industry. I outlined the characteristics of New Media and the implications of the rise of user-generated video (UGV) in the mainstream media, with particular attention paid to the role of UGV in media coverage of the so-called Arab Spring Revolutions, in which I was personally involved through my work at the BBC and Aljazeera networks during the Egyptian Revolution.

This was the background against which I set my practical experiment to test the characteristics of user-generated video and the behavior of amateur users in an online environment geared towards the making of documentaries. This project was a website - egdoc - which functioned as a workshop for amateur documentary-makers. In the last chapter of this thesis, I presented the most important observations from the period of the experiment (24 August 2011 – 24 May 2012). In the remaining pages, I will try to place these observations in the context of the theoretical framework that we erected in previous chapters.

The main question of this thesis is: Can we look at user-generated videos as a new genre of documentaries? The answer from the egdoc experiment is: These videos can be considered a category of documentaries that reflect the advancement of technology which took place along with the rise and flourishing of New Media, and they also show that there is a new generation of documentary film-makers who can be described as produsers (to follow Axel Bruns's 2004 felicitous coining of the term).

The experiment that accompanied this thesis provided an opportunity to observe the behavior of amateur users during the trials and tribulations of the documentary-making process. One important observation was that, in contrast to the professionals, the amateur

documentary-maker does not usually follow an organized plan to make his film. He prefers to create his own methods, discover tools, and develop his skills on his own by trial and error or casual exchange of experiences with peers. But at the same time, we noted that amateur users do understand the central dynamics of documentary-making, and realize (at least partially) the nature, importance, and effect of these dynamics, even if for technical or financial reasons they were not always able to employ these elements in order to achieve the goals of the film.

We also noted that the amateur user acquires knowledge about documentary-making from here and there rather than through formal instruction. Book-learning was the last resort of all, perhaps because it demands a certain level of specialization and background literacy and is generally considered didactic and unappealing by our hands-on amateur.

When preparing to make her film, the amateur user typically thinks about generalities rather than details, whether technical or subject-related, and delays the decisions related to these details until the implementation phase, which might take a long time for two reasons: first, the user is not obliged to finish the project for a deadline; and second, she needs advice from her peers, which may make her rework her idea several times.

As for the content of user-generated documentary videos, we noted that this content is characterized by having close access to the subject, a direct connection to daily life, and a concern for humanitarian causes. This humanitarian or humanistic element allows the user to express his views on a given issue in a personal, poetic way without sacrificing the objective concern for reality which is crucial to documentary.

We also discovered that, in most cases, these videos are an accurate reflection of the culture in which their makers live. This is a major difference between user-generated videos as documentaries and documentaries made by outside professionals. In Egyptian user-generated videos, for example, religion is often considered a supreme authority; the clergy gets the final say on most issues, and the viewer is supposed to take these clerical views as evidence for the message of the film.

At the same time, however, we discover that amateur users are by no means deprived of imagination when it comes to documentary-making. Psychological reality is one with external reality; the expression of the ideas going inside the user's mind is seen as the first step towards documenting the external reality which arouses her humanitarian concern. Amateur users often avail themselves of sophisticated dramatic techniques to express their opinions and achieving their humanitarian, humanistic goals.

The form of the user-generated documentary is nevertheless characterized by spontaneity, simplicity, shortness of duration, and narration according to the 'inverted pyramid' model. As explained in Chapter 4, this means that the user chooses to place the core or most striking scene of her film at the beginning and the less important parts later in light of emerging online viewer trends: most people, most of the time, do not watch videos from beginning to end.

One of the axiomatic facts that amateurs believe is that documentary rhythm is directly connected to editing and the length of individual shots, and that the depth of the meaning is associated with the shot size. One clear example for that was the video بحلم (I Dream), in which the user (mhmd_klil) used close-ups of himself to recount his dreams in a philosophical and poetic way. Moreover, the amateur users tend to mix writing with still

images or moving pictures to explain their ideas, to complete missing information, to make up for a shortage of footage or to stress the importance of the footage they do have, or to prove the film's authenticity by writing interesting or shocking statements. These statements may not include much statistical data, but they do reflect the emotional state of the film-maker.

Generally speaking, user-generated videos aim for aesthetic effect, and are born from a desire to make something special, a desire to move the viewing public without being limited by broadcasting standards as professional documentary-makers and television networks are.

Indeed, the amateur user frequently ignores the ethical standards for documentary-making broadly accepted among professionals, either out of ignorance or from a feeling that he will not be subject to any legal consequences because he is not a professional, or because such constraints place limits on his creativity and would prevent him from taking advantage of opportunities to shoot which might spontaneously present themselves. She may worry that an opportunity will be lost if she waits to get permission from the person she is shooting, or if he does not shoot because the shot might disturb or upset.

Viewers of amateur documentary tend to prefer a clear, convincing message even at the expense of technical sophistication. They like to see the case closed before their eyes, and prefer simplicity to complexity.

These are the main results of my egdoc experiment. The 9-month timeframe for the experiment also allowed me to draw a clearer picture of the way Egyptian amateurs interact with each other and the social and political reality in which they live. When the

experiment began on 24 August 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was in formal charge of a highly unstable post-revolutionary situation, while by the end of the experiment (24 May 2012), a still unstable Egypt was celebrating the first round of presidential elections.

There is no doubt that Egyptian people of all classes and backgrounds participated in, and were affected by, the events of this interim period, which was characterized by ongoing political unrest and social turmoil. Some of this interaction took the form of collaboration with political parties, participation in publicity campaigns, conferences, seminars, online social networks, regular public demonstrations and industrial strike action. From the perspective of some critics, even observation without actual participation was considered a kind of negative interaction; these free riders were, ironically labelled 'The Coach Party', since they just sat on the “coach” and passively followed the news, exchanging their opinions about events without doing anything to shape them. There were also some people who interacted with the turbulent political reality through the Internet. These virtual warriors were called 'keyboard fighters' by Wael Ghoneim, the man who first called for demonstrations on 25 January on his 'We Are All Khalid Said' Facebook page. Some of these 'keyboard fighters' expressed their thoughts and feelings through the production of videos which they then uploaded onto the Internet. These videos came in a variety of shapes and sizes, but collectively had a significant effect on the events of the period, as evidenced by the number of views the most popular videos received (several dozen exceeded 1 million views).

These videos took forms that had not previously been seen in the history of Egyptian documentary. Some had overt political messages, such as support for or opposition to proposed constitutional amendments. Others tried to convince voters to vote for a

particular presidential candidate; one example was an amateur video in support of Hamdeen Sabahi, which included statements from prominent liberals, including artists and moderate clergy, urging viewers to take one united stand. The video is a simple succession of fixed shots showing one person after another facing the camera and delivering his statements. The most important thing about the video is not the camerawork but the content. Before the 2011 revolution, such amateur political videos had never appeared in Egypt.

Other types of amateur videos uploaded by Egyptians during this interim period include reproductions of videos from television programmes already broadcast on professional networks and edited in a critical or sarcastic way. One particularly popular example of this phenomenon was the young doctor Bassem Youssef, whose success attracted the attention of professional networks; eventually the ONTV network hired him on a one-year contract to present a weekly show. Bassem Youssef quickly became a well-known face among the revolutionary youth, and also had an active role in events in this period. The type of amateur video through which Youssef became famous was likewise unheard of in Egypt before the revolution.

The revolutionary environment encouraged amateur documentary and non-fictional film-makers to create new molds, some of which attracted widespread attention in a very short time, especially when compared to the amount of time traditionally needed by audiences to grasp and accept new forms. Perhaps this was partially due to the revolutionary spirit that was reflected in all aspects of Egyptian life in this period, and partially to the spontaneity of the forms themselves.

The sheer speed with which political events unfolded during the period of the experiment also kept amateur Egyptian documentary-makers busier than they had ever been before. Our documentarists covered most or all of the major events of the period, by first recording the events themselves as they happened, and then by adding explanations, editorial comment, expressive music and meaningful visual effects with a view to calling the public to action.

One of the most important events covered by amateurs on the Internet was the torture of Coptic demonstrators in front of the State Television Building in Maspiro in October 2011, when armed military vehicles were believed to have run over 28 demonstrators. Another was the killing of 46 protesters in Mohammad Mahmoud Street in central Cairo by security forces, military police and hired thugs in Cairo in November 2011. Later in the same month, 17 young men were killed as they protested against the interim government and called for the resignation of the cabinet in front of a government building. Hundreds more died soon afterwards in murky clashes following a football match at Port Said stadium. Dozens of demonstrators were then killed or injured as they demonstrated against the dreadful incident in Port Said outside the Interior Ministry. Foreign NGOs then began complaining about human rights abuses in Egypt, and a number of foreign activists were charged with working in Egypt without permission. All these events were reflected in the users' videos in the form of documentary films not only documented but also criticized, inspired and called viewers to action.

Documentary films on the Internet have never enjoyed more vitality within Egypt, nor even, perhaps, without. The unique incubating conditions of the Egyptian revolution presented unprecedented opportunities for new forms and molds of documentary art to emerge. Such art was more often than not on the side of the revolution, and played a vital

role in mobilizing popular resistance to military rule and keeping the flame of revolution alive in people's hearts.

Appendix 1 - Case study of a registered member with egdoc: Fady Nour

Fady Nour

Fady Nour is one of the registered members of the website, 'a mobile-phone film-maker' as he prefers to call himself. He is also an actor, author, and amateur director. Born in Alexandria on 3 December 1989, Fady has made a number of films, all of which were shot using his mobile phone camera (less than 3 mega-pixels), and edited with open-source editing software. The longest video clip Fady has produced is 20 minutes in length; a drama entitled *Al Khatiman* (The Two Rings), which he uploaded onto his Facebook page in 2009. He began work on the film with friends in 2006 when he was 17 years old; in Fady's words, the editing of action and science fiction movies 'always takes years'.

The other video clips on Fady's Facebook page include famous songs, which he edited mixing his own footage with their sound track, to make them look like he was the one singing in the song. In other clips we see him performing some self-choreographed dance moves inspired by his contact with Indian cinema. The most noteworthy clip, however, is perhaps an advertisement which he created and directed. In this clip, which he uploaded onto *egdoc*, we see him with three of his friends running over rooftops fighting for a can

of soft drink. But for its excessive length and poor-quality picture resolution; it could have been a very effective advertisement for the drink.

Fady also wrote and directed a film entitled *Koka and Efreet from 2010*. He describes the film on his Facebook page as follows: 'A short drama action comedy fantasy film, acting: Fady Nour, Ahmad Koka, Sherif Hamada, and Hima, written and directed by Fady Nour.' One can virtually smell the innocence of these descriptions. The film includes all sorts and kinds of unlikely drama, the actors are Fady's childhood friends, and even keep their nicknames in the film. It is, to put it mildly, a homespun, down-to-earth piece of work.

During the 25 January revolution in Egypt, Fady produced a docu-drama which records the development of his thoughts about the revolution, how he hesitated in participating at the beginning, and how he ended up in the streets with a banner saying *Sebna Ne'eesh!* (Let us live!), which was his call to then-President Hosni Mubarak, who was refusing to leave office. This sentence eventually became the title of the film, which was Fady's first documentary-making experience. Nevertheless, he believes that his film-making career began with his earlier experiences.

An interview with Fady Nour on 26 December 2011:

I conducted the following interview with Fady over the telephone, via the phone number that was included in his profile, for the purpose of learning more about his background and his experience in film-making. The interview was conducted in colloquial Arabic; Fady's answers were short, simple, and sometimes even shallow. I insisted on leaving some of the English terms or expressions that he used (like names of computer software for example) without correction, thereby reflecting the extent of his technical knowledge,

and how these terms are dealt with among amateurs, who gain such knowledge from non-professional sources.

Q: What made you like the idea of making films?

A: The beginning was my love for acting, and my desire to become famous. I tried with some of my friends to work in Cairo and we found it was a bit difficult. So I decided to make films and upload them on Facebook so that people might see me. My desire to be noticed made me want to take shots of me and my friends. This was my beginning with documentary films.

Q: When did you make your first film?

A: The first film was fictional, which I made in 2006, entitled *Al Khatiman* (The Two Rings).

Q: And when did you make your first documentary?

A: It was also in 2006, and it was the making of *Al Khatiman*.

Q: Where do you get the ideas for your films?

A: From my dreams, sometimes from reality, and sometimes by adapting from other films - I mean I get inspired by a certain incident in a film. But the documentaries are different. When I find myself in a situation worth recording, I shoot it and I do some 'nice' editing for it, then I upload it on Facebook, or show it to my friends, or just keep it on my computer, and watch it on my own once in a while.

Q: What is a documentary?

A: It is a film that documents something that happened.

Q: What is the difference between documentaries and fictional films?

A: Documentary films are actual, while fictional films have some imaginary element. The fictional films can be easily shaped as you wish, while the documentaries come out just as they happened… you can't change them.

Q: What was the last professional documentary you watched?

A: Your film *Nonsense*. I watched it in a seminar in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina last year [December 2010].

Q: What kind of documentaries do you normally like to watch?

A: The films which record important and human moments in peoples' lives.

Q: Do you work alone or with a team?

A: I work alone. But in the coming days I will be trying to gather a team around me and that is also why I subscribed in this website.

Q: What kind of computer do you have?

A: Pentian 4 [He meant Pentium 4 PC LG].

Q: What kind of camera do you use for shooting?

A: My Mobile phone camera, a Nokia N95. I have had it since 2008. Before that I had a Nokia N73, which I used to shoot *Al Khatiman* film.

Q: What were the most difficult problems that you encountered during shooting your films?

A: Some people disturb us while shooting; they forbid us sometimes from shooting certain things. Oh, if you are shooting somewhere and there is a girl passing by, she comes and says: You shot my picture, delete this video now!!

Q: Have you taken any film-making courses?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever think about doing that?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: I am ok like this.

Q: How did you learn editing then?

A: Through my friend Mohammad Chan, and by the After Effect [he meant After Effects] internet lessons.

Q: What programs do you use for editing?

A: Adobe premiere, and After Effect.

Q: What are the biggest problems that dog you while editing?

A: In the beginning I was surprised during editing that the lighting in some scenes was so bad, or that the sound I had recorded was not audible, and I had to either delete them or repeat them. Editing music into my videos is always exhausting, because I like to use a lot of music, and it must be just right for the video. But the most difficult problem is the speed of the computer I have, because the editing programs are heavy and need a high

speed [*processor*]. So the exporting [*processing / rendering*] after the work is done takes many long hours. Sometimes I used to leave it in the evening, go to sleep and wait to see the result the following morning.

Q: Where do you show your works?

A: On Facebook, and to my friends on their computers.

Q: Who are your audience?

A: The youth of Facebook.

Q: What was the people's reaction to your work?

A: Very good, but there were some who criticized it.

Q: Do you always take permission from the people you shoot?

A: No.

Q: So, would you shoot a child without his family's permission?

A: Yes… What's wrong with that?

Appendix 2 – An Interview with mhmd_klil, a Registered Member with egdoc

Conducted over the telephone on 18 April 2012

mhmd_klil

Q: What was it that made you like to make your own films?

A: I watched a lot of films on TV and on the Internet and I liked the field so much. I started reading in it and since then I wanted to make my own films especially that I believe so much that the visual product can deliver any message you want in the fastest way. In addition to that, there are some hobbies that one feels he likes without any motives or clear reasons. Maybe my love for the cameras was what encouraged me to develop that into making films, especially that I like documentaries in particular… I was hoping that one day I will do something similar on my own.

Q: When did you make your first film?

A: I made the first film in the real meaning of the word after the 25th of January revolution in Egypt. I wanted so much to document that revolution from the beginning although I was not aware at that time that it will become a revolution. I was thinking it will just be some protests that will end in a few days. But day after the other, the huge participation from all the people in the demonstration, which was repeated in a violent bloody way in the 28th of January, made me rethink more and look closer to the things I shot during the demonstrations to be careful and shoot the biggest possible amount of shots for the events and the humanitarian issues as well. I wanted to have all these shots

with me to look closely to them later and then decide on how to use them in a documentary. Probably this was the first time I think seriously about making a film. Before that I did some naive trials, which were simply gathering a group of photos and videos that reflect a certain meaning, or focus on a certain situation, and putting them in a chronological sequence accompanied by background music, and that is it… most of these trials were about personal events or situations… most of them were on Movie Maker software, which comes with Windows.

Q: When did you make your first documentary?

A: The first one was after the 25th of January revolution… it was my diaries during the revolution… but by video.

Q: From where do you get ideas for your films?

A: Mostly from newspapers, magazines, or from the Internet. When I read a story and I like it, I try to develop it according to my abilities, and according to the place where it will be shown…

Q: Do you know what we mean by "documentary"?

A: From my point of view, and I don't know if my perspective of a documentary is right or not, I think it means the same meaning of the word itself… it is a documentation of the reality in the shape of a film. It is contrary to the drama film, which includes imagination, fake events, or anticipating certain events and redrawing them in a dramatic way…

Q: According to your knowledge, what is the difference between documentaries and drama films?

A: As I told you, the documentary deals with reality, while the drama has a huge amount of imagination…

Q: What was the last professional documentary you watched?

A: It was a series of films on National Geographic Network entitled *Imprisoned in Exile* It is documentation about the lives of several people who were imprisoned in countries other than theirs, it selected a group of people who had very beautiful touchy experiences, and it showed them in a way that rebuilt the drama structure for some events because it was difficult to shoot and record in the same places where the imprisoned people, the focus of the story, were held. The story of each person was told in a separate part.

Q: What kind of documentaries do you like to watch?

A: There is no specific kind that I like or dislike to watch, but even if the film theme was not so strong, I might just watch it to observe the shooting style, the music, and the editing. That helps me to learn. But maybe I am more attached to the documentaries that have a humanitarian side, as well as the ones which are based on personal experiences.

Q: Do you work alone or with a team?

A: Mostly, I work alone because I tried to ask my friends many times to work with me even just by participating in shooting or writing the ideas, but although they show interest in the beginning, “silly excuses” start to appear once we start, and I find that I have to continue on my own.

Q: What kind of computer do you have?

A: “DELL laptop, 15.4", 4GB Ram.

Q: What kind of camera do you use for shooting?

A: Panasonic full HD.

Q: What are the most difficult problems that you have confronted during shooting your films?

A: Security problems in the street. For example while shooting a policeman would come and ask about what I am doing. At that point, the camera or the memory card could be taken, and all things on them get erased just because 'shooting is forbidden as the policeman could say! Of course, if I tell him that I am shooting a documentary or a short film, the first thing he would say to give me a hard time would be: 'Show me your shooting permit!". This kind of permit it must be issued by The Ministry of Interior, not just from any Local Security Administration, and that is a big headache. The second problem is with the normal people in the street, as you might feel they don't believe that you have the right to shoot, and be creative as you wish. You might find a lot of people giving you hard time during shooting in the street…

There are some other problem related to the finances and providing some clothes for the film heroes, especially with the short films, or if I get a permission to shoot inside a company, a hospital, or a school. Of course, to create a decorated similar shooting setting it would cost me so much, bearing in mind that I don't make any profit from those films until now, as it just a nonprofit hobby for me.

Q: Did you do any training courses on film-making?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Did you think about doing any courses? Or did you want to do it and you couldn't afford it?

A: I tried more than once to go to courses like that, but unfortunately I feel that all of them are just scams, and has no real experience in them. I mean that most of them are just workshops, and most of the people doing them are inexperienced people who are just after profit. They are just workshops with a fixed price and a fixed time, and eventually you discover that all you got was already available on the Internet. Therefore I decided that I will not look for any training again. If I really find something valuable that I will benefit from, surely I will enroll in it.

Q: So, how did you learn editing?

A: Self-taught… in the beginning I started with Movie Maker software, when I was in the final year in high school, 8 years ago, but the results were very primitive and not creative enough. I also did not know how to use it to do the effects I used to watch in the films. That is why I started looking for other programs. After a while I started using another program called "Power Director", but as the time passed I had more aspirations that I wanted to accomplish through editing. When I looked for something else I found new software for video editing called "Adobe Premiere", and "After Effects" for doing the effects that are difficult to do by the premiere. I looked a lot for training courses for them but they were very costly, and required travelling from Alexandria, my hometown, to Cairo. Therefore I resorted to the Internet and to the specialized books that deal with editing and graphics generally, although they were very few and they just help you know the basics of using the software. I also used to look for educational websites on the Internet, as well as educational videos on YouTube, or try to get in touch with people who have experience in this field, and watch how they do things.

Q: What are the biggest problems that you face during the editing?

A: Basically technical problems. Although the device I am using is ok, but editing needs stronger computers with higher processors. This is found only in Macintosh computers, which are very expensive for me of course, so I try to cope with the available tools in my hands.

I have another problem with the video extension because Adobe Premiere for example doesn't support all the available formats specially the new ones which are used by the HD cameras with the extensions mts, AVCHD, which are not supported except in the original version of the program which was produced by the company in 2011, because before that it was not supported. Of course, the original program is very expensive for me, so I have to use a trial version and convert the video before editing using any conversion software. In such case, you have to sacrifice part of the resolution or the number of frames per second, because my camera shoots 50 frames per second, while converting the video makes it 30 per second. This defect appears strong if I want to do slow motion, for example.

Q: Where do you show you work?

A: On the Internet, Facebook and YouTube.

Q: Who are your audience?

A: The Internet audience, most of them are from my friends and family.

Q: What is the reaction of the audience to your work?

A: I interact with the audience about their reactions. For example some people liked the theme of my film *The Barrier Wall*, they said it was touchy and reflected their own

feelings, and some people even said that it was different from all the videos they have seen about the violations of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Q: Do you always ask permission from the people you shoot?

A: I believe not so many people even notice that I am shooting them because of the small size of my camera.

Q: So, would you take a shot of a child without permission from his family?

A: I doubt it!

How to Use the accompanying DVD to surf *egdoc* website:

1. Insert the DVD in your computer's DVD drive.
2. Double-click on the DVD drive displayed on the screen.
3. Double-click on *pages* folder.
4. Double-click on *index* HTML document.

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