

PRODUCING PARTICIPATORY MEDIA: (CROWD)SOURCING CONTENT IN BRITAIN/LIFE IN A DAY

Abstract

Created from footage contributed by members of the public to YouTube, the 2011 Life in a Day and 2012 Britain in a Day crowdsourced documentaries show participatory media-making projects on a global and national scale. Drawing comparisons with digital storytelling projects, this article examines efforts to structure and shape the contributions to the ... in a Day crowdsourcing projects as set out in guidance and tutorial materials from the producers. Such guidance and advice are critically analysed to consider the different openings and opportunities made available by the production team as they (crowd)source content. Setting out the practices and possibilities for self-representation is a point of tension that this article explores through the comments thread to one of the production team's guidance videos. This video presents a number of submission requirements, notably that contributors do not edit, and analysis of the responding comments shows how potential contributors critically challenge participation that they regard as the requesting and curating of content.

This article examines the crowdsourced documentaries *Life in a Day* (Macdonald, 2011) and *Britain in a Day* (Matthews, 2012) to examine the production dynamics of participatory media projects. These projects are an opportunity to examine practices of self-representation that have previously been considered in terms of home movie and camcorder cultures (Zimmerman, 1995; Buckingham and Willett, 2009) and digital storytelling (Rose, 2007) in relation to crowdsourcing and participatory cultures. Engaging with critical perspectives on participation in digital storytelling projects, this article examines the guidance materials that seek to frame potential contributions to these participatory projects, and the critical responses from potential contributors that challenge them. This article connects with long-standing debates on participatory media projects that are helpfully articulated by Spurgeon et al. (2009: 284) who, in their discussion of participatory culture as driven from the top down, suggest that, 'participatory culture is almost impossible to achieve in the absence of pre-determined stakeholder agendas'. These comments are understood not as a strict indictment of such agendas, but rather as a call to acknowledge and explore the opportunities, challenges and implications of production agendas and structures.

Crowdsourcing digital stories

Compiled from crowd-sourced footage contributed by members of the public to YouTube, the 2011 *Life in a Day* documentary is edited together from 80,000 submissions to create a 'paean to what it means to be human in the world today'. Likewise, the

2012 documentary that followed, *Britain in a Day*, is edited together from 11,526 submissions to offer ‘remarkable insight into the lives, loves, fears and hopes of people living in Britain today’. Both projects have the objective of bringing together different perspectives, experiences and voices from as diverse a range of participants as possible. *Life in a Day* was developed in collaboration with YouTube and drew inspiration from the Mass Observation Movement approach of giving a voice in documenting everyday life to those outside the elite (see Watercutter, 2011). *Britain in a Day* was developed in collaboration with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and emerged out of a UK context in which the BBC, under its public service broadcaster remit, has been involved with a number of digital storytelling projects, such as *Video Nation* and *Capture Wales* (see Garde-Hansen, 2007). In contrast to digital storytelling projects incorporating facilitated workshops and the involvement of professional producers, the ... *in a Day* projects can be understood within the context of participatory cultures and the increasing access to possibilities for producing content and circulating it online (Burgess and Green, 2014; Delwiche and Henderson, 2012). While this broad goal of bringing together self-representations captured on video can be located within a much longer tradition of participatory media (see Dovey and Rose, 2013), the ... *in a Day* projects present a number of distinctive, shared aspects.

The first and most obvious reason for taking these two projects together is that *Britain in a Day* is an explicit follow-up project to *Life in a Day*. For both projects, Ridley Scott is the executive producer and YouTube is the platform for the collection of materials by potential contributors. Second, both these documentary projects employ a crowdsourcing approach to ‘content creation’ (see Howe, 2006 for an account of the ways in which crowdsourcing is used). By combining individual contributions into a collective whole, and through the absence of face-to-face facilitated training, this crowdsourcing approach differs from digital storytelling approaches to documenting everyday life. To different degrees, at different points and in different formats, digital storytelling projects employ a workshop approach to supporting participants. As Carpentier (2003: 432) identifies, one of the basic principles of the *Video Nation* project is that ‘the material originates from a partnership between the production team and participant whereby the latter are granted more control over the production process’. With the crowdsourcing approach, there were no in-person connections in the form of workshops. On the face of it, and in comparison with the organisational partnership approach, the crowdsourcing dynamic would seem to lead to more autonomy on the part of the participants, who might be able to develop a filmmaking approach aside from workshops and training sessions. As this article will address, however, the ... *in a Day* projects were not without orchestration and strong steering impulses. The third reason for taking these films together is that, although they are not unique in their crowdsourcing approach, the presence of an established production company – Scott Free Productions – distinguishes them from other projects such as *One Day on Earth*. Indeed, the presence of a commercial production company has underpinned critical responses that question what it means for contributors to *Life in a Day* to be credited as co-directors and raise issues of monetary compensation and rights (Moner, 2011). As Kyle Ruddick, founder and director of *One Day on Earth*, comments, ‘much of [YouTube’s] project emulates ... but our execution is based in a grass roots community and the end result will be different’ (cited by O’Neill, 2011). This organisational dimension that Ruddick draws out indicates how *Life in a Day* and *One Day on Earth* emerge from different contexts with different goals.

This article engages with scholarly debates on digital storytelling and participatory cultures to consider the specific production contexts from which the ... *in a Day* projects emerged, and the shared tensions associated with their crowdsourcing production processes. Connecting critical commentaries on digital storytelling and participatory culture, and points where they meet (e.g. Burgess, 2006; Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013), is an important step for examining the ... *in a Day* projects and scholarly efforts to develop ‘more precise categories for assessing competing claims regarding participation’ (Jenkins, in Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013: 267).

As the compilation of clips submitted to YouTube, both projects ostensibly privilege participatory processes in (user-)generating (self-)representations of everyday life. As Jenkins (in Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013: 266) goes on to argue, however, “‘participatory culture’ has become an empty signifier often used in very superficial ways by all kinds of groups that want to entice our participation but do not want to give up any real control’. Issues of control are at the core of this discussion, and link it to extant critical perspectives addressing the ‘contradictions between the emancipatory aspects of giving voice to an “active” audience’ and ‘the attempts of media professionals to orchestrate, canalize, and manage’ (Carpentier, 2003: 426).

Processes for participation

In their discussion of participatory cultures, Spurgeon et al. (2009: 284) introduce ‘co-creative media’ as a term to ‘get under the hood of participatory culture as a facilitated social process which involves the articulation of expertise and enthusiasm’. The twinning of expertise and enthusiasm is significant for not overlooking, as Carpentier (2003) also identifies, the input from media professionals and the notion of equal partnership. Bringing together such a complex project requires experience and resources, and the participation and contribution of participants must be shaped and supported to be able to realise a public outcome. Critical evaluation needs to be a nuanced and subtle affair that recognises the shifts in the balance of media power and efforts for media democratisation (Carpentier, 2003), responses to the ‘hidden injuries of media power’ (Couldry, 2001; 2008) and steps towards the ‘participatory utopia’ (Carpentier, in Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013). That said, commentators from a number of backgrounds and perspectives have critically reflected on and evaluated the processes of producing participatory media projects, including a number of studies on digital storytelling (Dreher, 2012; Lundby, 2008; Thumim, 2012).

The BBC *Capture Wales* project is the focus of several critical reflections, and provides an instructive case for addressing the possibilities and tensions of participatory media projects. In evaluating *Capture Wales*, Garde-Hansen (2007) argues that the BBC’s digital storytelling projects ‘make visible user-generated content’ and have ‘sought to wrench media production away from the experts and to put the tools in the hands of ordinary members of the public’. In turn, other commentators considering *Capture Wales* in subsequent years have questioned such a movement in the location of expertise and the ways in which such expertise continues to be expressed.

In her critical appraisal of *Capture Wales*, Kidd (in Meadows and Kidd, 2009: 115) suggests that, ‘although we might imagine interactive texts/projects to offer increased opportunity to assert control and creative influence over media output, for the most part, “interactive” possibility currently operates within boundaries that are set and maintained by an authority’. With the ... *in a Day* projects, the visible authority rests with the production teams involved in setting the invitation, collecting and collating materials sent in, assessing these, and then editing them into finished feature-length

documentaries. The question of authority can loom large in participatory media projects. For Watkins and Russo (2009: 271), *Capture Wales* stories were not ‘made free from interference’, but created within ‘creative restrictions and preset themes, with varying degrees of input from workshop trainers’. Writing in the same volume on digital storytelling, Thumim (2009) also expresses tensions with *Capture Wales* in terms of differing authorities and their capacity to speak. Thumim (2009: 208) argues that with *Captures Wales*, self-representation takes place within the ‘strict construct of what constitutes digital storytelling for the project’s producers’ (see also Carpentier, 2003, in his analysis of *Video Nation*). Specifically in relation to *Life in a Day*, Gaudenzi (2013) argues that the producers employed strategies of participation but did not create an interactive framework. Of continued importance in examining participatory media projects are questions around how media professionals are able to facilitate forms of self-representation and negotiate with participants what the end outcomes might be.

These reflections and critical commentaries on the BBC digital storytelling projects instructively flag organisational contexts and agendas. As Carpentier (2011: 21) argues, ‘in order to understand participation ... the characteristics and the contexts of the specific processes, localities, and actors have to be taken into account’. This discussion translates these observations and interventions into a ‘crowd’ context relating to contemporary manifestations of participatory cultures. Building on these critical perspectives on participation and interaction, this article examines the guidance materials through which frameworks for participating and contributing are articulated. Rather than immediacy and presence associated with digital storytelling workshop sessions, the relationship between producers and potential contributors formed through the ... *in a Day* projects was shaped around guidance materials communicated at distance. Focusing on the ... *in a Day* projects, the following discussion addresses how professional expertise and conventions seek to shape participatory media practices, and the ways in which potential contributors contest these.

Guidance materials and the quality discourse

The above discussion of stakeholder agendas and the ‘facilitated social process’ points to the ways in which guidance and support materials can inform the media-making practices of participants. Such documents and resources provide insights into the ‘participatory attitude of the media professional’ (Carpentier, 2003: 442). Spurgeon et al.’s (2009: 284) use of ‘co-creative’ is also helpful for pointing to the importance of guidance materials by ‘complicating’ the idea that participatory culture is the product of an autonomous relationship between the individual creator and the magic of technology’. The issue of professional interventions into the practices of participants in participatory media projects can be seen first with the *London Voices* and *Capture Wales* digital storytelling projects, in relation to which Thumim (2009: 214) identifies the deployment of a ‘serious, “tasteful” institutional aesthetic’, and second with *Video Nation*, in relation to which Carpentier (2003: 440) identifies how ‘criteria for “good” and the “watchable” were normalized during the training sessions’. Engaging with the production documentation and guidance tutorials and materials, the following examines the editorial processes and power relations that seek to structure participatory practices and expressions of/on everyday life in the ... *in a Day* projects. More specifically, the organisation of material can be seen in efforts to shape the kind of material submitted and the requirements placed on the sourced material. More than making sense of submitted material through an editing and labelling process, these guidance materials

can be understood as prefigurative – stakeholder agendas are materialised in specific guidance resources and documents that provide a framework for future action.

In relation to *Britain in a Day*, guidance materials located on the BBC's website consist of several short videos under the 'How to Make a Film' and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' tabs. In contrast to the earlier BBC *Video Nations* project, in which training 'Shorts' were made by some of the more experienced participants (see Carpentier, 2003), the *Britain in a Day* tutorials were made by the BBC team with the involvement of television presenters. While the BBC led the *Video Nation* training, the visibility afforded to the expertise of *Video Nation* contributors is distinctive in comparison to *Britain in a Day*'s celebrity tutorials. The short tutorial films by well-known television personalities (Dan Snow on preparing filming and Julia Bradbury on filming content) stand out as attempts to communicate established production processes and norms, and emphasise specific aesthetics.

In the tutorial *Dan Snow on How to Prepare Your Filming*, Snow outlines different filming possibilities, and states that the best piece of equipment to use is a video camera. In working through three possibilities, there is a differentiation of skill and suitability that resonates with Zimmerman's (1995) discussion of cameras in the 1950s. Zimmerman (1995: 118) identifies how 'manufacturers differentiated amateur cameras according to how much technical skill, expertise, and manipulation their operation required'. Snow's video partly differentiates expertise, but also seeks to ensure usable material. While the *Britain in a Day* team regards media technologies as increasingly accessible, it is clear that the contributors must still be steered in their choices. In Julie Bradbury's video on shooting content, there are a number of suggestions on filming practice that highlight this priority more explicitly. Alongside advice given on securing consent, there are demonstrations explicitly addressing aesthetic considerations – for example, advice on zooming and professional filming. This advice echoes with Zimmerman's (1995: 122) comments about the adoption of a certain style as a natural and innate form of common sense: 'just as suburban golfers practiced drives and putts to lower their scores, family film-making continually veered toward the illusory adoption of Hollywood professional expertise'. With Bradbury's advice, the stylistic choices that should be employed in contributing to *Britain in a Day* are set out. As Zimmerman (1995) explored how a Hollywood style became an innate and natural form of storytelling for home movie-makers, these guidance materials indicate how participatory media projects such as *Britain in a Day* also set specific forms of storytelling as natural and innate.

The guidance materials produced for the ... *in a Day* projects had an explicit didactic function tied to the investment in generating content. In critically considering the didactic aspect of guidance materials produced by the BBC for *Britain in a Day*, Muller's (2009) concept of 'quality discourse' is instructive. In his account of the 'quality discourse', Muller (2009: 131) suggests that 'tutorials can be read as professional interventions into amateurs' and dabblers' home-movie practices'. Implicit in relation to *Britain in a Day* is that the content and practices of dabblers and novices are only suitable for certain applications, and that more public usage and circulation require a more professional approach, guided through tutorials. The irony or uncertainty arises that a project emphasising self-representation provides guidance on the mode of self-representation.

With the *Britain in a Day* tutorials, there is a tension in, on the one hand, making the professional world more accessible and, on the other, encouraging established standards and conventions to be followed. There is a case to be made that avoiding shaky shots and seasick zooming is to be encouraged. Indeed, Muller (2009) suggests that tutorials

in video making are crucial for those whose aims are not just sharing moments and experiences, but also contributing to and participating in a broader audio-visual culture – such as those contributing to *Britain in a Day* presumably seek to do. That said, the relationships that Free Scott Productions and the BBC have with *Britain in a Day* present continued tensions around the nature of participation, the boundaries of expertise and the evaluation of quality. On this, Muller’s (2009: 128) comments are relevant:

the participants have to achieve some skills that enable them to contribute to online cultures in meaningful ways, but wherever a cultural elite starts to train and thus to ‘professionalize’ new ‘ordinary’ users, those traditional barriers and hierarchies that have been questioned by emerging participatory cultures are rebuilt.

The *Britain in a Day* guidance films assign the technical and creative (in)expertise of the ‘non-professional’ filmmaker. While the participation of a *crowd* is sought, what stands out is the aim of securing potential contributors to provide a *source* of usable material. The following section continues to address the prefigurative approach of guidance materials by specifically focusing on the editing guidance set out by the *Life in a Day* production team.

Editing sourced content

The ‘how to’ films of *Britain in a Day* share best practice within the context of a ‘quality discourse’. There are similar guidance materials for *Life in a Day* collected together through the YouTube channel, including Matthew Herbert on the four sounds that should be used if contributors want to appear in the soundtrack and Ridley Scott placing the emphasis on personal content. With *Life in a Day*, the guidance materials on editing are particularly significant as a heightened form of quality discourse intervening in the repertoire of filming and creative techniques available. This is less about instructing inexperienced potential contributors on how to hold a camera, and more about ensuring that all potential contributors – experienced or not – provide materials in prescribed ways. This section considers how the prefigurative extends to comments on what potential contributors *cannot* do. At stake in the editing guidance for *Life in a Day* are issues of power dynamics, forms of equality and the different possibilities for participants’ contributions and roles.

Clearly, with the volume of footage submitted for the ... *in a Day* projects, there had to be editorial processes if a publicly available production sharing (a selection of) contributions was to be possible. In the ‘making of’ video titled *Life in a Day: A New Type of Filmmaking*, the processes by which content is encountered, evaluated and selected are revealed. According to the editor, Joe Walker, this involved hiring ‘loads of great people from film schools, filmmakers and documentary makers’ who, as director Kevin Macdonald further describes, were ‘trained up to watch the clips and give them star ratings’. Similarly, Morgan Matthews, the director of *Britain in a Day*, describes the challenge of building a film with coherence, and outlines the editorial processes through which materials were selected and stitched together (*How the Documentary was Made by the Team*). This tension around editing has a longer standing place in debates around documentary, with Dovey and Rose (2013: 370; emphasis in original) noting how ‘the producer’s need for access leads to a carefully negotiated arrangement with filming but the human subjects have no involvement on what meaning is made from the content after the rushes have been *captured*’. Perhaps a distinction regarding the ... *in a Day* crowdsourcing projects is that the filming arrangements mean participants have a say about – and indeed actually provide – the content. In turn, a shared concern

across these crowdsourcing projects and the social documentary addressed by Dovey and Rose (2013) is the lack of involvement in how materials are dealt with after they have been captured or sourced.

The trailer for *Life in a Day* outlines those associated with key roles – Ridley Scott as producer, Kevin Macdonald as director – and the filming being undertaken by ‘you’. The spread of these ‘production roles’ speaks to a collaborative process. For some potential contributors, however, this allocation of roles limits other forms of participation and the opportunities for engagement beyond providing the raw materials. In assessing the roles made available and the possibilities presented for editing, useful comparison can again be made between the ... *in a Day* crowdsourcing projects and the digital storytelling projects discussed earlier. As Meadows and Kidd (2009) make clear, participation in the *Capture Wales* process extended to both production and editing. Similarly, with *Video Nation* there was an editorial veto (although this level of involvement was not common – see Carpentier, 2003). Issues of power remain in both these projects, and Kidd (in Meadows and Kidd, 2009) questions the extent to which dialogue was achieved through the one-off interactions of *Capture Wales*. She argues that ‘the creative opportunity on offer is pre-scripted and necessarily limited’ (Kidd, in Meadows and Kidd, 2009: 115). This point of critique is even more pronounced with the ... *in a Day* projects as, unlike *Capture Wales*, there was no involvement after submitting the content. Postings in the comments section in response to the YouTube video *Film Editor’s Guide to Life in a Day* articulate this tension regarding how guidance materials on editing are seen as limiting the creative agency and scope of potential contributors.

In this 1.48-minute *Film Editor’s Guide*, Joe Walker introduces himself by saying, ‘Hello, you don’t know yet, but you’ve hired me to cut your video.’ Without unduly unpicking Walker’s choice of wording, these opening comments immediately signal the questions of power and decision-making being critically examined in this article – in short, the potential contributor to whom Walker is speaking did not hire him. Walker outlines how his message was created ‘to remind you of some important things about making your film for inclusion in ours’. Again, tensions emerge around the ownership of the project and the editorial voice. Indeed, elsewhere Macdonald expresses regret in not sending out filmmakers, ‘who could have taught people how to use the equipment and, more crucially, how to make what we wanted’ (cited in *The Guardian*, 2011). The main message Walker conveys is that he ‘does not want edited footage’. He goes on to say that, ‘for me to do my job, I’d like raw material to work with’. Walker requests on behalf of ‘we’, the production team, that there be no added soundtrack or no fully graded pictures, and urges contributions to just be ‘real’. This clip and the following comments provide insights into the expectations and agenda of the production team, and highlight tensions in how some potential contributors see a difference in the way they want to develop their materials. The phrase from the film, ‘making your film for inclusion in ours’, strongly indicates an invitation and curating approach to interaction, rather than participation. To explore how potential contributors identify and articulate tensions in the *Life in a Day* participatory media project, the following considers responses to this clip.

For this analysis, YouTube is approached not just as the platform for the sourcing/ collection of content and broadcasting guidance materials, but also as a site where potential contributors can enter into conversation with the poster of the video and other commentators. Existing approaches to analysing YouTube user comments include Madden et al.’s (2014) content analysis and classification scheme for categorising types

of comments and the purposes of commenting – for example reminiscing and giving advice. Griffith and Papacharissi's (2010) analysis of video blogs provides instructive methodological pointers that this article follows in approaching comments threads as part of the potential interaction and exchange between the poster and their audience. By looking at the comment thread specifically for this guidance video, debates around editing are arguably selected at the exclusion of different aspects raised in the other *Life in a Day* YouTube videos from the producers. That said, there was no assumption before analysing the 408 comments (at time of writing, with the last entry '3 years ago') that there would be such a concentrated critique concerning the guidance on editing. Of course, caution must be expressed regarding assumptions around how 'audiences shape themselves by interacting with particular media texts' (Hermes, 2009: 113). From this analysis, it is not possible to consider whether and how contributors to this comments thread adapted their potential contributions. Some did, however, articulate how interactions with Walker's guidance video would lead to changes in how they were approaching their filming, and this analysis does present insights into how the 'crowd' identifies 'sourcing' as a shared issue. It is not possible to include all comments here as 'evidence'; rather, a more productive approach to engaging with the lived experience of the comment thread is to access it directly to find comments and associated replies. The following provides user names to guide such a search, with a few illustrative comments also included.

The question of editing was addressed in a number of comments as an interlinked issue of control and creative agency. Explicitly addressing Walker's video as the exercise of control that places limitations on the content sourced, MyScreeningRoom claimed 'they just want our lives captured and nothing else', and Simme808 replied to Walker, 'you just want our footage so you can edit it'. For other participants, the limitation on editing was seen as an intervention in their creative process. Lambarini and YozCreative also made comments along these lines. Fred Bouchal articulated this concern by stating, 'If you say "no editing" & "no grading" then the film I'll be uploading won't be mine with my "vision".' A further commentator, KRAZYCorps, considered this as an issue of different roles and contributions. While recognising Walker's 'job', they raised the question of their job in participating and contributing: 'In order to do my job in this production, I need to show what a day in my life is (the same job as most everyone else) and in order to do that, I'm going to implement a few effects and tricks.' Across these comments posts, the guidance in this video was regarded as an attempt to control and limit the terms available for self-representation and participation.

A further aspect raised in this thread concerns authenticity. In comments from Massimiliano Pizzulin, editing was a vital aspect of how contributors would show their life in a day. For the *Life in a Day* team, though, editing marked interference with their ability to use the material sent it. As Craven (2013: 69) argues, spontaneity is equated with the amateur and 'a certain intrusion of the unpremeditated element is thus seen to function in principle as a kind of guarantee of amateur authenticity'. In this respect, the danger of receiving edited footage is the removal of the authentic intrusion or undermining the authenticity of the intrusion. The extent to which limits on editing were regarded as a barrier to participation comes across from ForeverFire, who almost rebuked Walker for not facilitating their participation: 'What are you saying about dont do this and dont do that ... you are a editor! ... you should work with wherever material you got.' A similar concern is made by scoutthedoggie, who suggests a lack of understanding on the part of the producers concerning how and why potential

contributors should contribute. For scoutthedoggie, Walker's guidance contrasted with their understanding of the YouTube approach and how editing was a part of this.

Potential contributors did not seek a post-production editorial role alongside the production team, nor did they veto power over the content and what was shown. At stake here is editorial practice as part of their creative agency. A number of contributors recognised that somebody had to deal with all this material, and the issue was not so much about certain voices being silenced (Dovey and Rose, 2014). The overwhelming concern and critique were not about inclusion, but rather focused on steering the authorship and production of content. Meadows (in Meadows and Kidd, 2009: 116) suggests that 'tools of empowerment' are of most relevance in giving people 'tools to make their own media'. With the ... *in a Day* crowdsourcing projects, there was as an assumption that the technological tools (the video equipment) were readily available. There did, however, seem to be little in the way of tools of empowerment, such as confidence and self-belief. Indeed, prescriptive criteria and standing against the wider storytelling possibilities of participants – namely through editing – would seem to offer little in the way of promoting self-belief.

The concern around content sourcing, collecting and curating seemed to arise in part from the way production teams expressed their investment in how the materials were generated. Arguably, workshops that followed the digital storytelling approach (Lambert, 2013) could be said to provide a greater level of guidance and control over the process. However, the face-to-face nature of these multiple-day workshops translated into a space for conversation and negotiation about such guidance, rather than a checklist on how to provide suitable content. Similarly, Spurgeon et al. (2009) examine the ways in which digital storytelling workshop facilitators modify their approach and engage with participants. With digital storytelling, there are specific principles and methods (see Lambert, 2013) that explore individual authorship and question creativity as the province of experts – aspects absent from the crowdsourcing approach.

Conclusion

Efforts to collect and share stories on everyday life and self-representations would seem like a comfortable fit with the possibilities and practices of participatory cultures and crowdsourcing. As this article has examined, tensions around power and expertise previously explored separately in relation to digital storytelling and participatory culture can also be found at their meeting point.

In critically exploring the production dynamics of the ... *in a Day* crowdsourcing participatory media projects, this article employed the notion of quality discourse (Muller, 2009) to consider the guidance materials produced to prefigure and steer potential contributions and content creation. Analysis of the 'video from the editor' guidance materials revealed an approach that not only sought to steer creative practice, but also to provide definite statements on the (unedited) nature of materials to be contributed. Analysis of the comments thread in response to this guidance video highlights the negotiation of participatory practices and aspirations. The comments made in response to Walker's *Life in a Day* guidance video identified editing as a key point for contesting the terms of (self-)representation. Potential contributors were cynical about their involvement as 'sources' providing content for media professionals to use, and saw the guidance from the production team as attempt to limit their creative agency and the possibilities for self-representation. While critically considering how 'sourcing' content came through as a production agenda priority, this article also hopes to highlight,

through the responses to these guidance materials, the critically savvy voice of the ‘crowd’ when it comes evaluating the possibilities for (self-)representation.

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