THE ETHICAL CONTRACT OF USING ONLINE PARTICIPATION FROM VISION VIDEOS IN DESIGN

PETER VISTISEN

AALBORG UNIVERSITY

VISTISEN@HUM.AAU.DK

THESSA JENSEN

AALBORG UNIVERSITY

THESSA@HUM.AAU.DK

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the different challenges and possibilities corporate vision videos pose to the ethical contract, which is–intentionally or unintentionally, deliberately or accidentally—concluded between a corporation and the viewers on the various online communities vision videos are spreading from and to. We seek to initiate the conceptual foundation for ethical considerations needed in using vision videos as a participatory resource. Our findings suggest, that the ethical contract of using user participation from online vision videos both have to account for how the video is rhetorically introduced, and how it is later used by both the user communities as well as by the organisation. The ethical contract consists of two parts: the basic preconditions of a well told narrative and access to platforms which support participatory culture, as well as the company's respect and acknowledgement of the active participation and content creation by the audience.

INTRODUCTION

Vision videos are a genre of moving images, often utilizing a mix of traditional live action video and animated special effects, to portray how an organisation envisions their future value propositions. Through the video medium, such visions are made manifest through imagining how a strategy could result in a specific—and often futuristic—scenario of how the value proposition might look like if the strategy is realized (Buur & Ylirisky, 2007; Bergman et al., 2004). In this regard, vision videos are different from other forms of filmic storytelling, like e.g. science fiction, insofar as vision video is grounded both as a realistic ontology, as well drawing vectors directly from the organisation's hear-and-now values, towards their future vision of how these values can be made manifest through new products or services.

Thus, the assumption behind the use of vision videos is that they provide a systematic outlook at a possible future for the corporation, and thus act as narrative tentpole for what might be. The intent is not that the depicted products, services or use cases are to be realised in their exact normative form, but rather to create a discursive and inclusive space for the organisation's stakeholders to orient themselves towards, when reflecting upon their stake in the organisation. The intent is to demonstrate potentials, and drive the company's initiatives and investments, as well as spark the imagination of what can and should be made.

Even though corporate vision videos can be traced all the way back to the early 1950's, it was with the digital age this genre of moving images began to flourish, and see a more wide-spread use. In fact, early vision videos were often used to explore the potential of new emerging technologies, which were nowhere near feasible to realise at the time. This was the case with the famous vision video series of the 'Knowledge Navigator', released by Apple in 1987 (figure 1), which used a combination of video and animation to tell a series of short stories about how the precursor for an AI-assisted tablet computer might work (Buxton, 2010; Dubberly, 2007).

Figure 1: Stills from the Apple Knowledge Navigator vision video from 1987 (web,1)

In the following years, this trend continued, with intriguing examples from e.g. Sun Microsystems (Tognazzini, 1994), and in the early 2000's brands like Nokia and Microsoft also utilised the approach (Ylirisky & Buur, 2007). As such, within HCI, a programme of using video and animation in design visions has existed for at least 30 years.

MARKETING, RATHER THAN A DESIGN VEHICLE?

A notable trait of vision videos is how they almost always portray their future vision in a rather high visual fidelity - making them clearly different from other types of temporal approaches to explore design visions like video sketching (Zimmerman, 2005), video prototypes (Mackay et al., 2000), and animation-based sketching (Vistisen, 2016). Furthermore, the discourse of vision videos most often resembles that of marketing - attempting to show the vision from its most desirable, viable, and feasible side. They simulate advanced technologies, with people interacting with them in a natural setting, as if it already existed and were part of their practice, to promote either the organisations internal or external brand, and less towards promoting a discussion about said technology.

This trait is also the root to the critical remarks made by e.g. Buxton (2010), Dubberly (2007), Ylirisky & Buur (2007) and Tognazzi (1995) about the design benefits of the early generation of vision videos. Ylirisky & Buur (2007) states that the fidelity of vision videos is in risk of taking too much time and resources to be feasible compared to building technical prototypes, and thus cautions that vision videos should be used only when a technical prototype is not yet feasible. As such, Ylirisky and Buur note that the role of vision videos were in a state of flux, between being used for sketching or prototypes. Buxton's (2010) critique is a bit more definitive, stating that vision videos fail as design vehicles in being too persuasive and decisive in their visual and narrative rhetoric. That is, due to the high visual and temporal fidelity of the portrayed scenario, the technological concept is at risk being interpreted as finite, and not 'open' to new suggestions. As such,

Buxton's critique summarised the role of vision videos as being 'didactic', and more akin to infomercials of a product not yet in existence, with the risk of being perceived as nothing but so-called vapourware– technology which promises more than it can ever deliver.

Finally, Tognazzi and Dubberly's describe an inside view of the process behind the design of the Apple Knowledge Navigator vision videos. They explain how the vision video was intended as a guide to what the R&D departments operations could result in. However, the management quickly lost control of how the video was being perceived, resulting in a major part of the organisation believing it was an actual product, being actively in production for an imminent launch. In this case, insufficient attention was given to how the vision videos in the organisation could create different levels of participation from the employees upon the potential of the Knowledge Navigators depicted use cases.

The outlined critique, of the role of vision videos in the design process, presents a dilemma. While vision videos have established themselves as an approach in the latest decades within the ICT industry, their value has historically been dismissed as being too persuasive, didactic, and costly for actually supporting design decisions in practice.

A NEW PARTICIPATORY ROLE FOR VISION VIDEOS?

Throughout the late 90's and early 2000's, the vision video saw a decline in usage, perhaps driven by a consensus towards the academic critique of their design value. However, the recent decade's rise of social media platforms combined with access to easier and more affordable tools to create video and animated content, the corporate vision video has seen a resurgence by companies as diverse as e.g. Microsoft, Samsung, Google, Jaguar, Fisher-Price, and IKEA (figure 2). This new wave of vision videos occurred alongside the rising academic discourse of design fiction, "(…) the deliberate use of diegetic prototypes to suspend disbelief about change" (Sterling 2013). Design fiction proposes that diegetic designs, created to tell stories
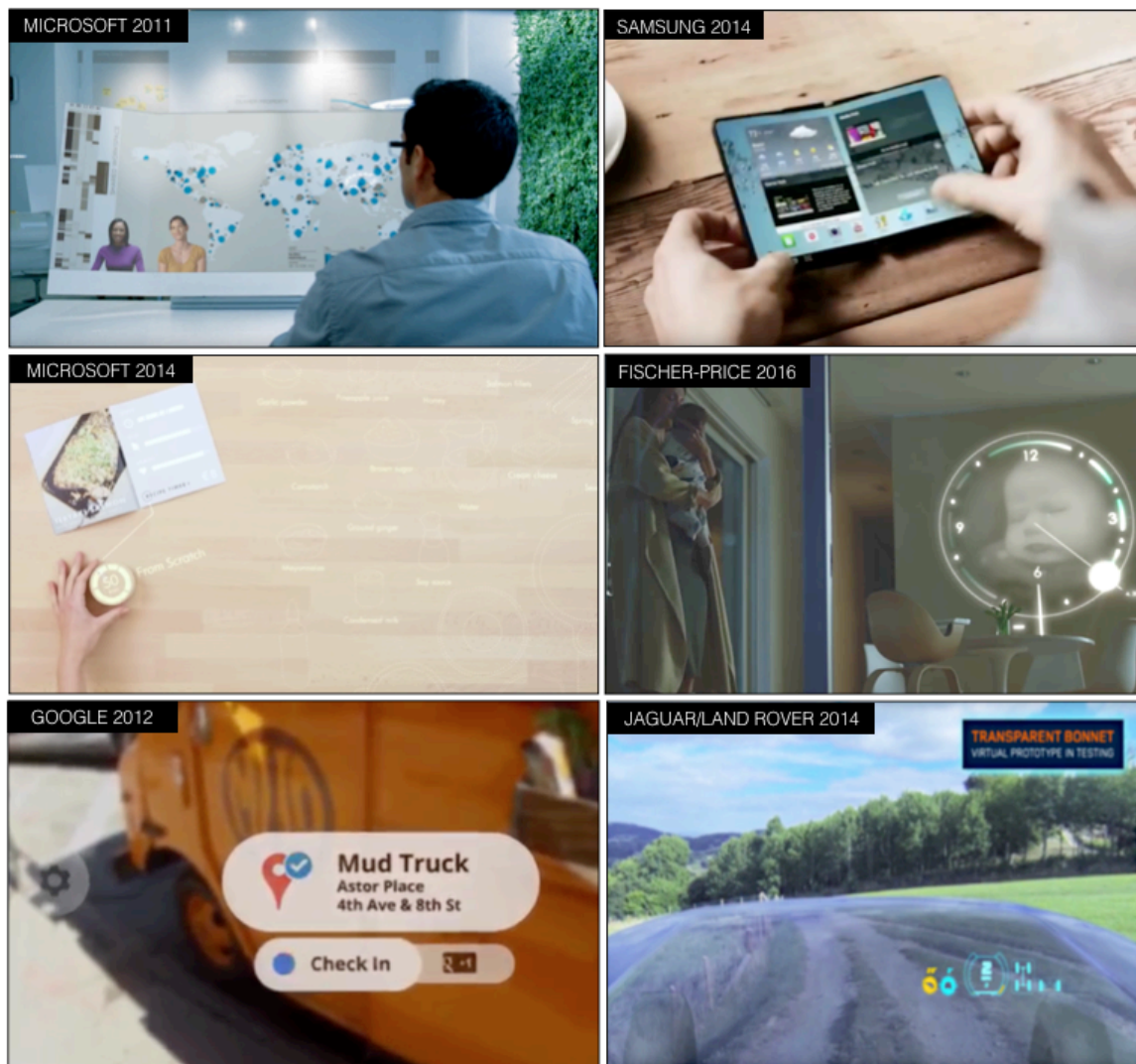
Figure 2: Examples of different vision videos, showing the extended use of the same by various companies during the last decade, from both traditional, as well as more untraditional technology providers.

about possible futures, can create discursive spaces for stakeholders to reflect upon not just the technology, but the actual utility, usability and desirability of the technology. From this point of view, the use of narratives is not (just) aimed at creating flashy marketing or hype, but to actually provoke and engage people in reflecting upon the potential of the technology. In other words, to get an empathetic view of what possible consequences the technology might have. From this vantage point, vision videos, as a manifestation of corporate design fiction, becomes an externally oriented design deliverable for obtaining feedback, critique and new insights from a diverse pool of stakeholders - including potential end-users.

It could be hypothesized that the role of the vision video has somewhat changed from something used mainly internally in organisations to a more externally oriented way of communicating a diegetic prototype into the mainstream zeitgeist. Today, corporate vision videos are mostly launched from one or several online platforms, such as Youtube, Facebook, Twitter etc., and from there gets picked up by official media outlets, private blogs,

forums, etc. The organic and viral mechanisms of such online platforms result in a widespread attention towards the vision videos, often becoming trending stories' on blogs, news sites, and social media, sparking further debate among the users online. Thus, the recent year's return of vision videos have amounted millions of views, and fostered thousands of comments and feedback from the various online communities of stakeholders. In a recent case study, we proposed that this new dynamic of the corporate vision video might be seen as an approach to enable distributed participation from user communities (Vistisen & Poulsen, 2017). By examining a specific vision video case, from the carmaker Jaguar/Land Rover (figure 3), we found the majority of the online participation from the users was actually very constructive, with some even suggesting features showing up in later iterations of the corporation's prototypes.

These pilot findings indicated a new form distributed user participation online extending the discourse initiated by e.g. Vines et al. (2013).

Figure 3: Stills from the Jaguar/Land Rover vision video of the 'Transparent Bonnet SUV System', showing an SUV driving up hill, prompting the augmented reality display in the window to make the front grill seem transparent (web 2).

Such online participation builds on the fundamental idea of participatory design that people outside the formal design team can contribute to a design process through various means (Bødker et al 1995). When releasing a vision video online, the user participation might be seen as an effort from the organisation to both gather feedback, and survey the public discourse, before investing more R&D resources in building actual technical implementations. Through the web 2.0 communities, potential users are given a voice, and also potentially an influence on the design process, by providing an early public discursive space around the technological use case. This is in line with what Hagen & Robertson (2009) label as 'opening up' the design process for participation.

We regard the creation of online discourses based on vision videos as aligned with the values of participatory design (e.g. Halskov & Hansen, 2015). That is, politically involving the potential user, democratization through being open to a variety of perspectives, and thus co-creating the framing of the potential of the depicted diegetic prototype. This constitutes an example of large scale participation, mediated through online media, where stakeholders have a potentially global access to engage in the design process of a given organisation. This extents upon similar studies from the participatory design research from e.g. Simonsen & Hertzum (2008) and Oosterveen & van den Besselaar (2004).

AN ETHICAL CONTRACT FOR USING VISION VIDEOS TO CREATE PARTICIPATION

As stated above, we argue that using online social platforms as a third space for introducing new ideas and design visions holds numerous possibilities for organisations to utilise. The user reactions and the

online reach of the vision video can provide valuable data for both development and marketing of how organisation realise their technological visions.

However, some major questions with regard to using vision videos on social online platforms remain unanswered. If design researchers use these communities and their participation as a resource for the design process, are designers then obligated to state this as their explicit goal in e.g. the description text on Youtube? Furthermore, should the organization act as peers, ethically responsible for guiding the users reception of the visual representations of not yet existing designs, towards realizing the diegetic nature of what is being presented—or should they just listen passively?

Accumulated, this forms our broad research question for the remainder of this paper: *What constitutes the ethical contract of using vision videos for creating participation?*

We argue this to be a relevant issue in regards with the use of vision videos as a visual representation in participatory innovation, since little research has been presented as to the ethical contract between organisation and user communities, when said corporation facilitates distributed forms of participation. We discuss this ethical dimension by discussing a series of recent vision videos, and the different rhetorical situations they establish in terms of connecting the organization's vision with an online community, through the use of diegetic prototypes in a video narrative. We build upon our initial studies (Vistisen & Bolvig, 2017) of a specific instance of a vision video from Jaguar/Land Rover, in which we collected and categorised the 310 comments it gained from being shared on Youtube.

We extend on these findings by initiating the conceptual foundation for which ethical considerations are needed when using vision videos as a participatory resource. We analyse the ethical dilemma based on the ontological ethics of Løgstrup (1997), while framing the ethical contract through Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical communication situation. The three rhetorical appeals are the basic elements of this communication: ethos as the trust put in the producer by the audience; pathos is the emotional engagement of the audience; logos providing the factual and logical argumentation of the argument. Finally we define the ethical contract as the relationship between the designer of the diegetic prototype, the corresponding vision video, and the particular participant reacting with a comment or reusing said video, as a dyadic encounter between two peers, in which the vision video in itself forms one half of the ethical contract, with the context of promoting a user generated discourse around the video forming the other half.

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION & ETHICAL CONTRACT IN PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

A vision video creates a two-part challenge regarding its audience. The first part concerns the storytelling combined with the rhetorical situation and setup. A vision video is built on a narrative structuring of how a proposed use-case might play out. It might be an elaborate story like the different episodes of the Apple Knowledge Navigator, or a very short glimpse of a world as seen in the Land Rover vision video. This narrative creates what can be labelled as a 'rhetorical situation'. Bitzer (1968) shows how ethos, pathos, and logos create a strategic communication situation between the communicator (in Bitzer's notion an institution) and the audience. Depending on how the material is presented, the audience engages or disengages with the narrative–as a narrative layer on top of the rhetorical situation (figure 4).

Figure 4: Bitzer's rhetorical situation with our addition of how the narrative structure of the vision video, and the participatory culture online, creates a rhetorical relation between producer and audience.

In terms of engaging the audience in the institutional storytelling, which encompasses vision videos, this rhetorical situation becomes a transformative process from creating belief (suspension of disbelief) to actually support reflection and active participation. In this rhetorical situation, ethos, which is given by the

audience to the institution, should create the initial suspension of disbelief. The audience needs to acknowledge the possibility of the vision presented in the video, because of the authority and sincerity of the sender, the company as an institution. This should be accomplished by being sincere regarding the shown design in fact being a diegetic prototype, together with the narrative and visual quality of the vision video itself.

Through this initial, and primary, engagement interest from the audience can turn into passion or empathy, pathos. The audience begins to relate to or oppose the use-case of the technology, comparing it to their own respective experiences and opinions about the depicted technology, and the company's vision regarding its possibilities.

Now, the audience is ready to engage in the third step of the rhetorical situation. By reviewing and participating in the discourse of creation and use of the given vision the audience becomes a stakeholder, both in the prototypical design as well as in the communication strategy surrounding it. The audience becomes part of the argument by endorsing, cautioning or re-mixing the vision given by the company. This is the logos appeal, articulated not by the company itself, but through the participating audience, which needs to be acknowledged and recognised by the company if it in turn will keep and enhance its ethos.

ONLINE MEDIATED PARTICIPATION OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

The rhetorical situation of the vision video does not exist in a vacuum. The organisation should know how different online platforms give rise to different modes of engagement (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Baym, 2015; Jensen, 2017). It needs to acknowledge the audience as the creator of the logos appeal, and not the other way around.

The audience provides meaning and importance to the vision video via social media platforms, which are part of the participatory culture found on the Internet. This culture consists of people participating for the sake of creating and acknowledging new content within a particular group of users. While these groups can develop around different tent-poles like celebrities, do-it-yourself communities, or certain brands, the principles within participatory culture remain the same. Members of the group believe their contributions matter, and they mentor each other. The culture is enabled by the easy access to and use of various websites and programmes, as well as the strong support for creating and, most importantly, sharing of creations (Jenkins et al., 2009).

In this regard, participatory culture differs from the traditional notion of participatory design, where the people involved are members of an already established community of practice. In participatory design (PD), the particular community as well as its members, are chosen by the designer or company conducting the design

process. PD requires a framing, a legal contract between participants and company or designer. This contract can be anything from a non-disclosure agreement to an employment contract. In other words, the participants are committed to be in the PD process from start to finish. Finally, PD requires a certain end result from the design process. Again, the framing gives a clear idea of the goal. None of this is present in participatory culture. The members participate voluntarily and for free. Neither the company nor the designer can be sure about any kind of outcome. If the design fiction is unable to receive traction within an online community, nothing will come of it. Despite the framing through the vision video itself, the community and the individuals responding might end up with surprising results–or none at all.

As an example on how participatory culture and vision videos can interact in the interest of all parties, we consider successful crowd funding campaigns on platforms like Kickstarter or Indiegogo, as best case scenarios for creating an inclusive and engaging rhetorical situation, engaging potential users as audience prior to them becoming stakeholders.

Crowdfunding campaigns often make use of diegetic prototypes to create a discussion, engage the audience, fans, and other stakeholders, and might at the campaign start only have crude technical prototypes to provide ethos for them actually being able to realise the potential of the technological concept (figure 5).
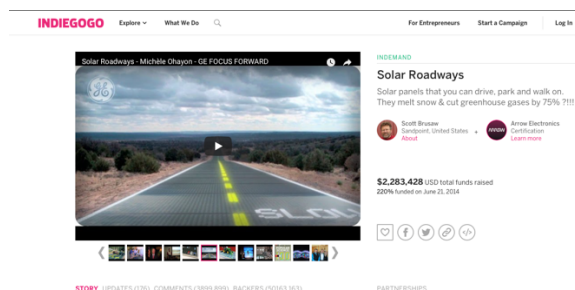

Figure 5: Web-site snapshot from the 'Solar Roadways' crowdfunding campaign on the web-platform 'Indiegogo'. The campaign promotes a vision of creating solar energy through a new kind of panels integrated into roads. The technical proof of concept existed, but the idea was described as being so radical, that the company needed to 'show it' in a more realised use-case to effectively communicate and gain community support for the idea (web 6).

Through the online discourse created during the initial launch of their campaigns, the concepts have sometimes been modified to better reflect the feedback and critique created by the members of the online community.

THE ETHICAL DEMAND FOR THE RELATION BETWEEN COMPANY AND AUDIENCE
This discourse and participation gives rise to the second part of the challenge for the use of vision videos. This part deals with the ethical demand posed by the audience towards the producer, i.e. the company, of the video. Both parts have to be taken into account in our

definition of the ethical contract. Furthermore, we need to stress that the ethical contract is not a legal contract. The two parties of the ethical contract might not even be aware of having entered into a contract, since it is based on the ethical theorem Løgstrup (1997) called the 'ethical demand'. This is based on the unspoken demand, posed by the audience to be respected and acknowledged when engaging with the company's materials.

Watching a vision video and commenting on it can be seen as a meeting between two people, the producer of the video and the particular user who commented. This meeting entails an ethical demand (Løgstrup, 1997) as the commenter expects the recognition of his comment by his peers. This recognition (Honneth, 2005; Jensen, 2016) can be achieved by other users replying, or liking the first user's comment–or by the producer of the video liking, replying, or otherwise interacting with the commenter. While both relations are covered by Løgstrup's ethical demand, it is the last one we will focus on in our definition of the ethical contract. Further, we claim that the interactions between users and producers should be seen as a dyadic meeting (Vistisen & Jensen, 2012), that is a meeting between the 'I' as the producer and the 'other' as the user.

The ethical demand is put on the 'I', the producer, in this meeting. The producer has a responsibility towards the 'other', the user. This responsibility can be seen as an unvoiced ethical contract between the two participants. For Løgstrup, this demand or contract is based on a mutual respect, understanding, and acknowledging of the other. It is unvoiced, because it is inherent in the nature of the meeting and recognition between the two parties. As soon as the demand is posed as a demand, e.g. by asking for feedback or explaining why a certain kind of feedback is unwanted, the nature of the relationship between the I and the other shifts. The I demands something from the other, while the other is reacting spontaneously to the fulcrum of the meeting, the vision video. The reaction from the other becomes the end, the other merely turning into a means. For Løgstrup, this poses a significant disturbance in the very nature of the dyadic meeting. The other should always remain the end never become the means of the meeting (Pahuus, 1995). Of course, Løgstrup is aware of this being an unreachable ideal. Yet, it shows the importance of the relation between producer and audience.

For the producer of a vision video, the ethical demand entails the recognition of the other, who comments, likes or just watches the video. This recognition has to balance between the producer's need to get knowledge and data about the reception of the video, and the user's need to be recognized as a human being with valued meanings and experiences. Like the unspoken ethical demand, the principles of participatory culture are understood tacitly by the members of the group, and any failure to adhere to them might cause shitstorms and heated discussions within the groups (Allesøe

Christensen & Jensen, 2018). This happened e.g. in 2014, when Samsung launched a vision video depicting their vision for using curved OLED display in future smartphones (web 5). The video shows a scenario with a young man who tries to chat up a young woman with his new smartphone. However, the woman is being depicted as clearly less technology literate than her male counterpart, and the video in general shows a clear gender stereotyping. In this case, almost all users on Youtube commented on the sexism inherent in the video, rather than the potential of the technology depicted. This goes to show, how a bad thought out narrative will trump even the most interesting and promising technology vision, by derailing the discourse.

To avoid a negative reaction, from the community the company wants to engage with through the vision video, the company needs to address the community in the same way as the I meets the other. Acknowledgement should be given not necessarily through a direct interaction with the individual member of the community, but rather through the provision of material, the community can use for their interests. As our previous study of the Jaguar/Land Rover vision video shows (Vistisen & Bolvig 2017), it provides ample material for the community to discuss serious design ideas as well as problems of feasibility (figure 6). While Land Rover chooses not to address the community directly, by either answering the commentaries or acknowledging the feedback coming from the
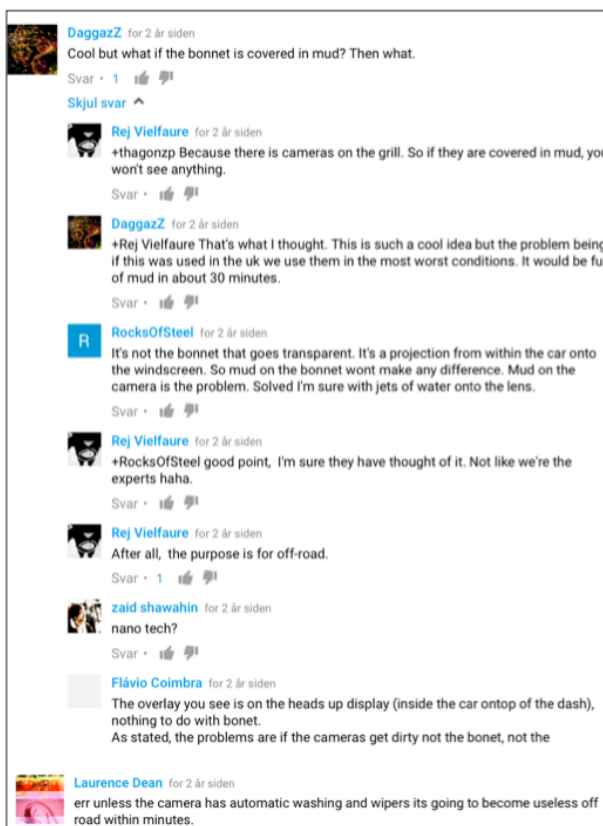

Figure 6: Example of one a Youtube comment thread, with the audience debating issues of the augmented reality concept in different weather conditions (appendix 1).

participation, the new vision video (web 3), posted a year later, shows a new way to implement the original idea–apparently taking some of the suggestions into account. In this case, multiple ideas, proposed through the online communities a few days after the release of the vision video, are actually included in the newest iteration of how Jaguar/Land Rover proposed their vision for an implemented state of the art mixed reality technology in their cars.

THE ETHICAL CONTRACT OF PARTICIPATORY VISION VIDEOS

Looking at the study of the Land Rover vision video, the constructive feedback given by participants (figure 6) shows how the viewers of the video react seriously and constructively to the initial comment. This follows the principles of participatory culture, giving support, or constructive criticism, to new ideas and possibly sharing relevant content with each other. The viewers of a youtube video can like or dislike the video, that is, participate in a very rudimentary way. While the producers have access to a long list of statistical data, the audience depends on the overall visible traits of other users, who took their time and efforts to create a comment or share their experience with the video.

We assume that the producers of a vision video are interested in users who actively support their vision, or who can provide them with insights into the blind spots they might not have considered. The way a producer can support the participatory culture of a certain group of users varies. Replying to each and every comment and share of a video in the scope of the Jaguar/Land Rover instance would be impossible, or at least not economically feasible from a participatory design point of view. Instead, the video shows how the organisation could support the community discourse by sharing new content, indirectly giving new input to existing discourse. Jaguar/Land Rover in fact uploaded a video which seemingly took part of the suggestions from the audience into account (web 3).

Figure 7: Stills from the second Jaguar/Land Rover vision video - launched one year after the first in 2015 (web 3). The use of augmented reality has changed from the front grill of the car to the A, B, and C columns in the car - an idea articulated one year prior by the user communities giving feedback on Youtube.

Another way to support participation design, through mechanism borrowed from participatory culture on the Internet is the acknowledgement of the user by the producer. An example of this is how the so-called 'fandoms' are acknowledged and nurtured in the participatory culture around pop-culture. As an example, the TV-series 'Sherlock' by BBCone developed a huge fandom on Twitter and Youtube shortly after its release in 2010. Fans created flashmobs and fan videos which were shared on Youtube. A few select events of this kind were liked and shared by the producers of the show, giving positive acknowledgement of the fans and their works (Jensen & Vistisen, 2012). While this example is from a TV-series, it shows how recognition might be possible. Still, providing new, interesting content to the community is more important than actually engaging with each participant on a one to one basis. The needed acknowledgement of the individual member is provided by other members while new content is harder to come by. Making it possible for the members to share their own ideas and creations, as well as being able to edit and rework existing content without fear of prosecution enables the creation and maintaining of a community.

The Jaguar/Land Rover case shows how a narrative, however simplified and everyday-like, can engage an audience and subsequent give new ideas in the design process. To show what happens when the audience is not acknowledged in its discussions of a given prototype, Google Glass provides a negative example. Six months prior to the launch of an early consumer version of their head-mounted augmented reality display, Google launched a vision video showing a user case of a young user going through his daily routines with the help of the augmented reality glasses (web 4). The Google Glass vision video is an elaborate narrative, creating suspension of disbelief which can be seen in the strong response by the audience. Within days the notion of the 'glass hole' was coined as a definition of a person using Google Glasses to secretly film or otherwise engage in inappropriate behaviour without people around them knowing. Six months later Google marketed Google Glasses to consumers, experiencing a severe backlash, with users quickly adopting and spreading the discourse of the 'glass hole' to become a dominating discourse of how actual users of the hardware were perceived. The resentment was strong enough to have some conferences and other kind of meet-ups explicitly banning the use of Google Glasses. Google was unable to sell their product as a viable consumer offering, and had to redevelop and remarket the glasses to be sold as an enterprise product instead.

Here, the narrative was elaborate enough to create the needed suspension of disbelief and have the audience engage with their own experiences in the diegetic prototype, step one and two in the rhetorical situation. But, the third step, creation of logos by the audience, failed mostly because of Google's failure to acknowledge the audience's objections. This failure

resulted in a damaged ethos and mistrust from the audience towards Google. Thus, the ethical contract consists of two parts. The first part being the basic preconditions of a well told narrative, which initiates the rhetorical situation and strategic communication, together with easy access to and use of online platforms to support participatory culture. The second part being found in the company's respect and acknowledgement of the active participation and content creation by the audience.

CONCLUSION

Our findings suggest using user participation from online vision videos has to account for how the visual representation is rhetorically introduced. The mediated dyadic meeting between the user communities and the company has to account for the ethical demand and need for recognition of the participatory culture of the user communities. The company should support its audience by providing content and if possible, acknowledge certain events within the particular group.

Our definition of the ethical contract between a company and an online community within the realm of participatory culture takes the preconditions of a well-told narrative as well as access to online platforms which support participatory as their basis. The philosophies of Løgstrup provide the ethical groundwork for understanding the relationship between company and community. The company has to provide for the needs of the community by giving access to new material, which can be discussed and reworked by the community members. This work has to be acknowledged and respected by the company, either by directly engaging with part of the community or by further providing new materials.

While the ethical contract can be understood as tacit and unspoken, a company has to acknowledge both parts of the ethical relationship that develops between a company and the audience of a vision video–where only the first part can be designed through the video itself, and the latter must arise from allowing and acknowledging the formation of the user generated discourse online.

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