Communities of Practice in the Brussels Media Sector: Overview and Preliminary Trends

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Part of Work Package 6: Media workers as communities of practice
Media Clusters Brussels – MCB – is a collaborative and interdisciplinary research project of the Brussels-Capital Region involving the three leading universities of Brussels: VUB, ULB and USL-B. The aim is to analyse the many facets of the media industry in the Brussels-Capital Region and explore the development of clusters.

The Projet de Plan Régional de Développement Durable / Ontwerp van Gewestelijk Plan voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling for Brussels (2013), approved by the Brussels Regional Government on 12th December 2013, identifies the cultural and creative industries as one of the four key sectors of the metropolitan economy, and more specifically proposes a media city at Reyers as the first strategic cluster (Pôle Reyers) to develop. However, despite the fact that the Brussels Region is committed to fostering the development of the media sector, until now there has hardly been any empirical data available regarding the structure and dynamics of the media industry in Brussels. This project is aimed at creating socioeconomic value for the media industry in the Brussels Region and beyond by providing decision-makers with the in-depth knowledge they need regarding the media industry in Brussels, while accompanying the phases of implementation of the Pôle Reyers. The overarching research question is: How can the structure and dynamics of the media sector in the Brussels metropolis be enhanced to improve its social and economic roles?

MCB is divided into six Work Packages. Work Package 1 offers a general overview, definitions and common framework of the project. Work Packages 2 & 3 focus on Brussels media institutions by studying Brussels media clusters from a macro and socioeconomic perspective. Work Packages 4 & 5 focus on the media workers within Brussels from a micro perspective, and Work Package 6, on the communities the media workers form to create interactions and communities of learning from a meso perspective. These three points of interest, i.e. media institutions, media workers and media communities, enable MCB to understand all of the dynamics of media clusters in Brussels.

More information on the Media Clusters Brussels project is available on the internet (www.mediaclusters.brussels).

The project is financed by Innoviris under the Anticipate programme (Prospective Research – Anticipate – 66 – 2014/2018).
Scope of this report

This report is aimed at providing an overview of existing Brussels-based communities of practice for media workers. It is the second deliverable of Work Package 6 on “Media workers as communities of practice”, which is handled by PReCoM (Centre for Research on Communication and Media) at Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles. WP 6 focuses on how and why Brussels media workers create communities of practice in order to interact with each other, share knowledge and develop new practices. In order to do so, WP 6 adopts a meso-level approach, whereas other WPs adopt either a macro and socioeconomic perspective (WPs 2 and 3 on clusters and media companies) or a micro perspective (WPs 4 and 5 on media workers).

The next deliverables of WP 6 will be built on the findings of this report:

Deliverable 6.3 - Detailed report on communities of practice, triangulating quantitative and qualitative results.

Deliverable 6.4 - Workshop for the presentation of findings to relevant researchers and stakeholders.

Key findings

How did we define and identify relevant media workers' communities of practice in Brussels?

• We decided that in order to be relevant to our research, communities of practice need to cut across several media organisations; be open to participants “from outside”; have face-to-face interactions between members (not only online communities); have a defined domain relevant to a media cluster (creating new content, new ways to produce media etc.); be a somewhat lively community (committed members, regular activities); develop a shared practice through joint activities (regular interaction, use of tools to share knowledge, etc.); and be potentially relevant to media professionals working in the identified clusters.

• We identified different Brussels-based communities of practice for media workers through online research, on-site observations (including informal interviews with founders and members of communities of practice) and an online survey.

What are the media workers’ communities of practice addressed in this report?

• Based on the above specifications, we identified a total of eight communities of practice relevant to Brussels-based media workers:
  o Café numérique (innovation and new technologies)
  o Storycode (transmedia and innovative storytelling)
  o Brotaru (video game developers)
  o VRT Sandbox - Creative circles (innovative media technology)
  o transforma bxl (coworking space)
  o AJPro (workshops for journalists)
  o Plan TV (television producers)
  o VR.BE (virtual reality)

What did the field work bring to our initial framework?

• The field work led us to consider dimensions of the different parameters that were not thought of directly when we developed the concepts in Deliverable 6.1. We thus enhanced the original 7P framework by adding these dimensions.
• The field work revealed that each parameter depends greatly on the other parameters. It is important to understand these dynamics in order to find the leverage that could be useful in fulfilling the CoP’s objectives.

What are the preliminary trends and dynamics that emerge from the overview?

• The communities of practice analysed in this report were created in specific contexts related to new technology, which were more connected and changing at a fast pace.

• Two main models can be clearly differentiated:
  o The top-down approach: an impetus coming from a public stakeholder and/or a domain-related institution in order to fulfil a specific need that has been identified. They have dedicated resources that help them to fulfil their mission.
  o The bottom-up approach: an impetus usually coming from a personal initiative, which is the only structure to support the development of the CoP, and with less access to resources.

• The communities seem to work as long as they are pertinent, respond to a need and bring added value to the target audience.

• Resources are a key element in developing a successful community or increasing its performance, whether it is human, financial, material or other types of resources (e.g. legitimacy, visibility, contact database).
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Introduction

This report aims to provide an overview of communities of practice for media workers in Brussels. Communities of practice are groups of people – formal or informal – whose members share knowledge and develop practices (Wenger, 1998). They are of particular interest, as they link workers and companies with each other, and are a valuable asset for clusters, as they are seen as a means of fostering cooperation and innovation. Various works and studies on clusters highlight places, groups or individuals that help knowledge and innovation to spread, and consider these as essential for a working and successful cluster (Porter, 1990, 2000; Hakanson, 2003; Tallman et al., 2004; Cooke, 2006; Chesnel et al., 2013).

This report is divided into four main parts. The first part goes back to the definition of communities of practice elaborated in Deliverable 6.1. It sums up the different aspects and characteristics that communities of practice need to have in order to be relevant for the purpose of this research. It also explains the process used in order to find media workers’ communities of practice in Brussels (on-site observation and online survey).

The second part of this report is a presentation of emerging or longer-established communities of practice in the Brussels media sector. We do not claim to have an exhaustive sample, as communities of practice may be difficult to identify and can be quite ephemeral (Roberts, 2006), but it provides a fair overview of the variety of CoPs that existed in Brussels at the moment of this study. This section of the report is mostly descriptive: it presents the communities of practice one by one, using data that have been collected mainly through semi-structured interviews with the founders or people in charge.

After an enhancement of the theoretical framework of the original 7Ps through field work observations (part three), the fourth part of this report has a more analytical perspective, comparing the trajectories and characteristics of these communities of practice in light of the relevant literature and especially the conceptual framework of the 7Ps. The objective of this analysis is to highlight preliminary trends and dynamics that constitute media workers’ communities of practice in Brussels, thereby providing the basis for the in-depth analysis that will be the focus of Deliverable 6.3.

Acknowledgment:

The authors are very grateful to the informants who accepted to share their thoughts on the Brussels media landscape and their experience of founding and/or coordinating a media-related community of practice in Brussels.
Part 1: Finding, selecting and analysing communities of practice for media workers in Brussels

The project’s definition of communities of practice

In order to study communities of practice, it is essential to define what types of entity the researcher wishes to include in this definition (Lorenz & Barlatier, 2007). As observed in Deliverable 6.1, communities of practice can take various forms, and there is not an exclusive definition to determine whether an entity is or is not a community of practice. This is why, based on the existing literature, we must further delineate our research focus in line with the objectives of Work Package 6 and the Media Clusters Brussels project as a whole.

From the situated learning approach, we borrowed three “main characteristics” of communities of practice as defined by Wenger: the domain, the community and the practice. Based on the sociolinguistic approach, we will focus on groups of people not because they form a sociologically coherent category (i.e. same profession) but because they interact with each other in different ways and thereby create a shared practice. Finally, the knowledge management approach allows us to characterise further the different communities of practice active in Brussels, and provides a framework for evaluating their added value and benefits for media clusters.

We will leave aside the internal communities of practice (inside a company or an organisation and closed to outside members) in order to focus only on cross-organisational communities of practice. This choice is dictated by the fact that we need to see how media clusters are benefiting from communities of practice. Internal communities of practice, in addition to being less visible and having more restricted access, are less relevant for us, as they do not imply an exchange of knowledge between different companies or organisations within a cluster. They are thus less relevant from a cluster perspective than cross-organisational communities, where practices and knowledge are shared, and where innovation can be beneficial for various companies in the cluster. In this respect we are
especially interested in those communities of practice that may be connected to different media clusters.

To sum up, in order for an entity to be considered as a relevant community of practice for Media Clusters Brussels, it must:

- Cut across several media organisations, be open to participants “from outside”;
- Have face-to-face interactions between members (not only online communities)
- Have a defined domain relevant for a media cluster (creating new content, new ways to produce media etc.);
- Be a somewhat lively community (committed members, regular activities) that develops a shared practice through joint activities (regular interaction, use of tools to share knowledge, etc.);
- Be potentially relevant to media professionals working in media clusters.

The definition of “media” for this project is the following: “Media are defined as activities which directly or indirectly support the process from production to consumption of mediated content, as the core that can be differentiated into entities of four key sectors, (1) print, (2) audio-visual, (3) new media and (4) advertising.” (Deliverable 1.1a).

Finding and selecting relevant communities of practice

In order to find and get in touch with relevant communities of practice for our project, we used three different methods: on-site observation (informal interviews with members and creators of communities of practice), online search and an online survey targeting Brussels-based media workers.

At the beginning of the research, we already knew of a few events that might correspond to the definition of communities of practice, such as Medialab Sessions or Storycode Brussels. We also carried out some online research and identified other communities through Facebook, Twitter or other websites (meetup.com, Screen.brussels, etc.), which helped us to identify some other possible communities of practice, such as Brotaru or the Brussels Press Club. From there, we attended some of the events organised by these entities, with an aim to understand the way they were operating, and establish contact with their creators and members. Through this method and by speaking with people there, we were able to identify a few other events and communities that proved relevant to us, such as Café Numérique and AJPro. These discussions helped us to discover different places where media workers in Brussels met to discuss and share their knowledge on media-related topics and issues.
Together with work packages 4 and 5, we then created an online survey aimed at media workers in the Brussels-Capital Region. The first part of the survey focused on the profile of the media workers, i.e. where they work and live, their income, their skills, etc., while the second part was about media-related events they may have attended or communities they may be participating in. This part of the survey started with a list of various events organised by communities of practice and asked respondents if they knew, had heard about or had attended these events. We also gave them the possibility to add similar events they had attended but which were not in the list provided. A couple of months after the survey had started, we identified a few additional events that could correspond to our definition of communities of practice, but needed to be thoroughly double-checked.

Through these approaches, we obtained a list of 18 events that could possibly correspond to the same number of communities of practice for media workers:

- Café numérique;
- Medialab session;
- Storycode;
- Brotaru;
- VRT Sandbox;
- Creative circles;
- Transforma labs;
- Open Tech Schools Brussels;
- UrLab;
- AJP Pro;
- Datanahervest;
- Plato;
- Brussels Press Club;
- Medianet;
- Sensecamp;
- BE EU VR meetup;
- Plan TV,
- Creative Belgium,
- Kikk and Stima conferences.

Once we had obtained them, we had to check each and every one to make sure that they fitted our definition of media-related communities of practice. This process allowed us to discard six of them (Stima conferences, Kikk, Sensecamp, Medianet, Plato, Datanahervest) and to merge two that were the same, only with different names (VRT Sandbox and Creative circles). The ones discarded were events that did not lead to the creation of what we could consider as a community (Datanahervest, Brussels Press Club), were not related at all to media practices\(^1\) (Plato, Stima), seemed to be too confidential or not active anymore, thus not allowing the opportunity to investigate them further (Sensecamp, Medianet, Medialab session), or were not located in Brussels (Kikk).

URLab (hackerspace), Creative Belgium (communication) and Open Tech Schools Brussels (co-learning and workshops on programming and new technology) may correspond to our definition of CoPs, but were not available during the time allocated to complete Deliverable 6.2.

This leaves us with a list of communities of practice for Brussels-based media workers that includes:

- Café numérique (innovation and new technologies)

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\(^1\) Some of the CoPs analysed in this report are specific concepts (incubator, training, coworking space) that can correspond individually, in their entirety or partly, to our definition of a community of practice, which is large enough to integrate a diversity of models worth analysing.
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- BE.VR (virtual reality)
- Storycode (transmedia and innovative storytelling)
- Brotaru (video game developers)
- VRT Sandbox - Creative circles (innovative media technology)
- transforma bxl (coworking space)
- Plan TV (television producers)
- AJPro (workshops for journalists)
Part 2: Overview of the selected communities of practice

In this section of the report we provide an overview of the above-mentioned identified communities of practice, with the aim of understanding the ways in which they are working, what are their dynamics and the challenges they are facing. In order to grasp all these elements, we analysed the communities using the Seven Parameters framework presented in Deliverable (D6.1) and elaborated in collaboration with the authors of Deliverables D2.1, D3.1, D4.1 and D5.1.

These seven parameters (7Ps) are:

- Place: places of activity, online presence, etc.
- Proximity: interactions, joint activities, commitment of the members, etc.
- Pertinence: the domain of the CoP, critical mass, etc.
- Profile: profile of the members: who, what roles, etc.
- Path-dependency: historical and institutional factors explaining how and why this CoP was created and is what it is today.
- Policies: official frameworks, actions and incentives that could shape the CoP.
- Performance: values and benefits for individuals and organisations.

We carried out semi-structured interviews with the person (or one of the people) in charge of each of the chosen communities (see Table 1). The 7Ps framework was used to structure the interview guide and analyse the data. In this section of the report, we provide an overview of the CoPs in our sample, highlighting the key aspects of each CoP one by one. In part 4, we develop a cross-cutting analysis of the CoPs along the different parameters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoP:</th>
<th>Short description:</th>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Role:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Café numérique</td>
<td>Community which organises evening meetings on topics related to innovation and new technologies</td>
<td>Nicolas Goyer</td>
<td>One of the current organisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE.VR</td>
<td>The Belgian Virtual Reality Meetup is a regular meeting organised by the Screen.Brussels Cluster to form a community of people interested in virtual reality (VR). People can try the technology, listen to speeches, share projects and expertise, as well</td>
<td>Marine Haverland</td>
<td>Screen.Brussels employee, in charge of the new audio-visual sectors, among others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Clusters Brussels: DELIVERABLE 6.2</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Communities of Practice in the Brussels Media Sector:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Overview and Preliminary Trends</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Storycode</strong></td>
<td>Community for people interested in transmedia storytelling</td>
<td>Hervé Verloes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brotaru</strong></td>
<td>Brotaru is a monthly networking event for game developers that takes place in cafés in Brussels. It allows people to show and test each other’s games as well as discuss business and everything related to the job, in a casual setting.</td>
<td>Andrea Di Stefano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VRT Sandbox</strong></td>
<td>VRT Sandbox is an incubator programme based on a collaboration between VRT (the Flemish public broadcaster) and innovative organisations. They also organise Creative Circles, which are open events where they offer an overview of the projects they have been working on in the last 6 months</td>
<td>Karel De Bondt, VRT Sandbox manager (VRT employee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>transforma bxl</strong></td>
<td>A coworking space to inspire innovation through the interaction between the different workers (among other things)</td>
<td>Anis Bedda, Co-founder of transforma bxl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan TV</strong></td>
<td>A trimestral event targeting TV producers, centred around workshops and networking, hosted initially by the French Community audio-visual regulator, the Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel (CSA)</td>
<td>Coraline Burre, At first hired by CSA to work only on Plan TV, now member of the CSA communicatio n department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AJPro</strong></td>
<td>A training programme created by the French-speaking journalists’ union, the Association des journalistes professionnels (AJP). AJPro is also a place for meetings and exchange of practices and experiences</td>
<td>Diane Hubert, AJPro coordinator (AJP employee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 - List of the informants*
Storycode Brussels

Storycode Brussels is a community for people interested in transmedia storytelling that organised workshops and conferences in Brussels in 2014 and 2015. They had an online presence on Facebook and Twitter, together with meetings at the IHECS school in the centre of Brussels.

Storycode is an open-source concept which was created in New York in 2013 to gather media workers who are interested in trans-media production. The concept then spread to various cities over the globe. Storycode Brussels was created by Hervé Verloes, a freelance journalist and cameraman who was soon interested in trans-media and cross-format productions. He first attended a Storycode session in Paris, France, saw its potential and decided to create a Brussels-based branch of the concept in 2014.

Storycode Brussels was created for media professionals who are interested in trans-media productions and new ways to produce mediated content. This goes from online long-format investigations to short video clip capsules, including cross format productions (text, video and photo). It is not for journalistic productions only, and addresses anyone creating mediated content, including advertising, cinema and short film productions. "I thought that there was a need to create a community, or at least to gather it," Verloes explains. "There was the ambition to create something unifying for all digital content, whether it was journalistic content, virtual reality content, etc. The Belgian market is too small to be segmented." The main purpose was to stimulate the learning process through case studies, with the help of a participating audience.

Storycode Brussels organises at least two events per year at the IHECS school building. The fact that Verloes is a part-time teacher at the IHECS school allowed him to use this location, which has the advantage of being well located in the centre of the city.

The sessions were organised as conferences and workshops, where members could present ideas and projects in order to create teams, find mentors, funding and opportunities to publish or broadcast their stories. During the sessions, participants came with ideas of projects they had or wished to carry out, and pitched, brainstormed, expressed their needs and interacted. All of the guests presented their projects, pitched their ideas and provided feedback on their experiences. At the end of each presentation (15-20 minutes) a round of questions and answers was organised with the audience. After these formal presentations and Q&A, the floor was given to the audience and anyone with an idea, a project or who just wanted to introduce him or herself could take the microphone and speak. It ended with a drink and some snacks, while members networked and continued their discussions. The speakers were selected mainly
through a “journalistic approach”: using objective criteria such as expertise, language, etc.

Regarding the funding of Storycode, everything was done on a voluntary basis. There was no proper funding to run this community. Meeting rooms were provided for free by the IHECS school, which also provided some drinks.

Members of Storycode Brussels were from various backgrounds. Based on on-site observations and discussions with members and the interview with its founder Hervé Verloes, a variety of people attended the activities organised: journalists, cameramen, sound engineers, web developers, coders and production managers. Members were freelancers, self-employed or employed by various companies in the media sector. There were also students (mostly from IHECS).

The founder of Storycode Brussels identifies three main roles of these members within the community of practice. Firstly, there is what he calls the "heart" of the community made up of three people, including himself, who are at the origin of the events organised. These members run the Facebook and Twitter account of the CoP, organise the regular meeting, look for speakers and guests etc.

Secondly, there are the regular members, whom he calls the "usual suspects", who come to all or almost all of the events organised. According to Verloes, they number less than a dozen. Most of them are currently working on projects and come to share and get feedback on them. They are active participants who either present their work or ask questions and make suggestions.

Thirdly, there are the "occasional attendees" who come because they are just curious or interested in a particular topic during a session. These people come back occasionally or never show up again, and there are usually around 6 or 7 of them per session.

Storycode Brussels had an online presence (Facebook and Twitter) in addition to the events organised. The online accounts were used to promote upcoming events and share news related to the topic. The first purpose of the use of social media is to facilitate the organisation of the events, for instance through the use of reminders.

Regarding the dynamics of Storycode, one of the key factors could be that they gathered people working in various fields and were not restricted to one domain (journalism, advertising, etc.). So its members could be part of other communities, and people attended other events from other communities. The founder of Storycode, Hervé Verloes, was also part of Medialab Sessions, where he made at least one presentation about his work.

There was also a personal reason for Verloes to organise it. "It is good for personal branding," he admits. For Verloes, even if Storycode stopped after four sessions, he feels that it was a success and he benefited from it. It helped him to
expand his network, he got in touch with key players, and he launched projects with people he met during the Storycode sessions. Some of the early organisers of the events now have jobs with similar or related content. But he is more reserved about what other attendees gained from it. "I found what I was looking for, but I don't think that the rest of the people learned much," he says. Verloes expected that people would be more involved in the project, but they were not, even if they enjoyed the sessions. "The feedback I received was always positive and people were always happy to be there, but I don't think I reached my goal and my ambition," he explains.

Undeniably, he had to face a lot of challenges. First, Verloes points out the limitations of the Belgian market: a small market in direct competition with larger markets (such as France and Canada for the French-speaking part) which have better possibilities for subsiding their projects. Taking the example of web documentaries, Verloes explained that their markets are also more developed than the Belgian one, which is still at an early stage: there are only small production companies or solo projects that require external funds. There are not a lot of big stakeholders in transmedia creation, and the sector suffers from a lack of structure.

Funding is mainly obtained by means of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (CFWB) – either directly or indirectly through RTBF – and is relatively limited. He also points out the difficulties related to the CFWB structure in itself, which is not really responsive (slow paced and barely up-to-date with the dynamics of the sector), as well as the risks of having decision-makers promoting projects from Wallonia instead of Brussels). Additionally, the equivalent of a Tax Shelter – a Belgian tax incentive for companies which invest in audio-visual content (cinema and television)\(^2\) – does not exist for transmedia content.

The result of a limitation of the resources available for transmedia projects is an increase in competition between projects, which, according to Verloes, could have a direct impact on the sharing of knowledge: people could be frightened to share their ideas at an early stage. Speakers were only sharing issues which had already been solved, or poor pitches with respect to what is seen abroad. Additionally, Verloes noticed the scarcity of interactions, as the speeches were listened to attentively without direct reactions from the audience. Most of the time, people preferred to interact face-to-face after the speeches had ended. Verloes emphasises a possible "Belgian mentality" that integrates a hierarchical level between experts (i.e. speakers) and the audience. At the same time, he deplores the difficulty with which Belgian people leave home to discuss with other people.

With respect to the critical mass of its members, there were apparently not enough participants in order for it to be sustainable. According to its founder, the community never had more than 30 participants at its sessions, which was not enough. "Having thirty participants coming is not enough," and, according to him, other Storycodes in other cities claim that there should be about 50 participants per session in order for it to be lively and sustainable. Members of the community were mostly freelancers, people developing their own projects, owners of production companies and students, but very few employees from bigger companies. "Big players would not come unless they were invited to speak," explains Verloes. According to Verloes, it is difficult to gather people who work on transmedia storytelling in Brussels, as it is a small and segmented market. "You always had the same ten usual suspects coming. They came once, they came twice, but the third time they knew it would be the same so they did not come," explains Verloes. There was also the issue of finding new topics and new guests to present their projects in such a small market in Belgium, which is also segmented by different languages. Sessions were mostly in French, and the language turned out to be an issue when trying to get interesting guest speakers. According to Verloes, French-speaking people were not at ease with English speakers, and while some Flemish-speaking people made the effort to speak French, it was not possible for all of them.

At Storycode Brussels, two other people were on the organising team with Hervé Verloes, but the rest were guests and participants. They had various profiles but did not have any roles per se in the community. For each event, Verloes had to find guests who would make presentations, and the rest of the members just listened and asked questions at the end, without playing any important roles in the community. The three people at the origin of the community played all of the roles: organising events, finding guests, defining topics, moderating the debates, etc. "It was a real obstacle to find people who were eager to help. We asked but nobody raised their hands," explains Verloes. It is the lack of help from other members that led to the end of Storycode, when the founding members did not have enough time anymore to do everything by themselves, whether it was to keep an up-to-date address book or to improve communications (for example, web visibility).

A particularity of Storycode is in its DNA: as an open-source project, it cannot be sponsored by companies and cannot become a vector of company marketing. Of course, this makes it more limited in terms of revenue, which could be used to rent a venue (which was not a problem in this case, thanks to IHECS), to support communication or to provide incentives for speakers or for the audience through cash prizes or simply food, which Verloes feels is necessary in order to motivate people to come to meetings. It is harder to motivate people in narrative-oriented
content than, for example, technical content such as coding, which can be directly “touched” and interacted with.

Verloes regrets the lack of support from some institutional stakeholders which perhaps could have helped Storycode to reach out to more interesting people. But he acknowledges that it is not an easy thing to do for institutions, which are swamped by requests. He also doubts that it would be good to provide logistic and financial help to all initiatives such as Storycode, and questions the model it is built on. “It may be good for bigger concepts, which meet perhaps once a year and not once a month, to open it to international speakers in order to bring some new blood and make it a real event”. So according to Verloes, there is something to be done and he is not sure exactly what it is, but it cannot just involve giving money. In his eyes, it is easier to develop this kind of community if you have funds as well as people aimed directly at supporting such an activity.

Café Numérique

Described on their website as a “technological event between a bar and a conference”, Café Numérique are communities which gather at evening meetings on topics related to innovation and new technologies, held several times a month (usually once a week).

Created in Brussels in 2009, the concept of Café Numérique is inspired by similar practices such as the “café-philos”, which are organised meetings in public places where people debate about a chosen philosophical topic. The concept in itself spread around the globe relatively quickly: “It doubled each year during the first years,” says Nicolas Goyer, one of the current organising members of the events. “This is not an original concept,” Goyer says. He adds that there are no strict requirements to be called a Café Numérique: every local group is free to organise it as they wish.

“Eight years ago, meetings for bloggers, start-ups and such were non-existent.” Therefore, a group of friends decided to organise such an event. “The events were slowing down towards the end of the first season,” says Goyer. At that time, the original organisers asked the community if there were volunteers to take over the organisation, which has been the case until now.

Although initially the formula was changed several times, the format is currently quite regular, mostly to facilitate the organisation process. The event, lasting approximately two hours, first starts with about an hour of networking before the start of discussions with 3 speakers (around 20 minutes each, plus 10 minutes for questions and/or technical issues), possibly ending with some more time for

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networking for those who still have unanswered questions. The discussions are not a formal class presentation; rather, they aim to ignite a discussion in which people are free to speak. It is not unusual to have people as experienced as the speakers. Sometimes, they also use a “round table” format with four to five speakers and a moderator.

The number of participants may vary from 30 to more than 100 people, with an average of 60 people attending. The web community includes about 3000 members on Facebook and more than 6000 members on Twitter. The audience seems relatively diversified among those who are interested in new technologies: journalists, HR manager, etc. Regular participants represent from a quarter to half of all participants, while the others are newcomers who are specifically interested in the day’s topic (“not only there to see their usual friends,” says Goyer). For now, the community is still growing.

The topics are very diversified as long as they can be addressed from the angle of new technologies (whether it is science, cooking, the development of associations, etc.) or directly linked to the digital world (smartphones, internet, the sharing economy, start-ups, etc.). The approach is not technical but more attached to the societal aspects of the technology. The organisers try to touch as many fields as possible. They only bring back topics that were already covered when enough time has elapsed in order to observe an insightful evolution. The selection of the topic is relatively intuitive, as all organising members can suggest ones that they think of. Some topics are suggested by their partners (see infra) or by the community members (individual or companies). After trying to have a formal yearly planned agenda, they decided to adopt a more intuitive approach - first for an organisational matter (events booked too early were often spoiled by last-minute cancellations), but also to stick more easily to the day-to-day news.

The location of the event depends on the opportunities. Sometimes it is linked to the theme, sometimes to the partners. According to Goyer, having a meeting inside Google or Microsoft’s building can also draw attention to the events thanks to brand recognition. From time to time, they find sponsors who provide them with a location and/or some drinks and food for the public. Nonetheless, Goyer says that they plan to find a regular place to hold the meetings.

Some of the monthly events are organised with partners. For instance, the first Wednesday of each month is dedicated to the user experience professionals in association with FLUPA, the association of UX designers, while the second Wednesday is centred on video games in partnership with the eSports bar “Meltdown”.

The organisers are grouped within a de facto association. The only reason to go through the (heavy) process of creating a legal status of non-profit organisation
would be linked to a possibility of having direct counterparts such as grants or sponsoring contracts (something Café Numérique Liège has done).

They defined different informal roles in the organisation, which has no hierarchy. There is a president, who takes care of anything that is not dealt with by someone else. The core members (5-6 people) organise the events without explicit roles, but usually according to their profiles (ex: a graphic designer would take care of the graphic design). Other members ("satellites") provide useful contacts through their networks. The organising members communicate mostly by chat on Facebook. At first they were organising regular meetings, but it took too much time for not enough added value. The same applied to having a lead for each event – it did not bring a lot of added value – and allocating tasks to everyone, which ended up to be a waste of time.

As for the dynamics of the project, Goyer attributes the success of the initiative to the good timing of its creation, which filled a need at the time. He stresses the necessity to make the project evolve continuously, to associate with other people, and to try to reach other communities in order to spread and reach every opportunity linked to the concept. It is also necessary to bring new blood regularly in order to keep the concept alive. People who are motivated to spend their free time organising the events do it for different reasons: the love of event organisation, their strong interest in the digital world, etc. It brings them personal benefits such as being kept up-to-date with the technology and staying highly motivated. Professionally, Goyer says, his involvement in Café Numérique does not bring him opportunities because he is already a full-time employee and does not seek any.

We touch here one of the challenges of the organisation of such events: at first, most organising members are young with little or no responsibilities (family, job, etc.) and enough free time to invest in the project. After a while, more responsibilities and less time available lead to a risk of stagnation. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate new people constantly in the structure. For the project’s sustainability, Goyer also points out the necessity to secure a well-placed location that allows them to remain independent (no validation of the speakers or mandatory topics).

Another threat is the rise of competition: a lot of similar events exist nowadays. Potential speakers, some bloggers for instance, become hard to reach, says Goyer. Beyond that, it is really difficult to ensure strong publicity and to be sure that the audience will attend the events. Communication is a big part of the time they spend organising the meetings. Goyer regrets the lack of public support for associations (in opposition to start-ups), which would be welcome mostly to help them reach their audience. There is some support from politicians, although it does not lead to tangible actions – and sometimes local politics can also be an obstacle to the community’s development. Goyer also points out the complexity
of the political landscape of Brussels, which makes it hard to find someone who can really help. For instance, the support from municipalities is rare because the association is not specifically attached to one. Such associations are also not recognised as well as they would like to be in regards to their personal investment. This is a problem not only for potential subsidies but also for the moral support aspect as well as for the possibility to have a voice in the public debates related to their subject of expertise.

**transforma bxl**

On its LinkedIn page, transforma bxl is described as a “coworking and innovation space hosting a community of entrepreneurs, innovators and creatives”. Its ambition is to promote entrepreneurship, to allow people to develop their project and ease their growth but also to help already established companies to develop innovative methods such as new methods of project management, NWOW, dynamic decision-making, collective intelligence, “putting the human being back at the centre of the company”, etc. Coworking is seen as an enabler of such types of innovation.

Anis Bedda, co-founder of transforma bxl, worked at HUB Brussels, the first co-working space in Belgium which closed at the end of 2012. Based on this experience, Bedda and his partners tried to recreate a similar type of space in 2014. After a prototype on the former grounds of Solvay Sport in Boitsfort, allowing them to test the brand and the viability of the project, they settled in Evere where they are currently expanding their activity.

Besides the co-working aspect, transforma bxl tries to inspire innovation, such as through the stimulation of the interaction between the different workers, seen as a whole community.

For this purpose, the architecture is thought to encourage social interaction, first through an open space for lone workers or small teams (larger teams can use private offices), but also through common spaces such as a communal kitchen, a cafeteria, a cosy corner and a garden. They also rent co-creative spaces. There is a big emphasis on the values shared by transforma, which encourages the collaboration, the proximity and the exchanges between its members. “People who decide to work here are already open to this type of idea,” says Bedda. Incidentally, transforma’s staff share the same working space with the other workers. To promote more interaction, the staff schedule events, mostly involving food and drinks, such as barbecues, which can easily occupy around 30 or 40 people out of around 80 workers currently working at the location. transforma also tries to organise regular events on the topic of innovation, such as conferences and workshops, that are open to people outside the community.

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There is a Facebook group to share information among the community (and a Facebook page for external communication) as well as a Slack group (which is less used because not everyone has the use of this tool).

Amid the workers and organisations, there are (but not exclusively⁶) media workers such as journalists, web developers and PR agencies. Groups are interacting and, regularly, collaborations happen, whether it is between content creators and other companies looking for content, or between complementary profiles (e.g. a PR agency with a web developer).

According to Bedda, the people who work at transforma – most of whom are relatively young – appreciate its dynamics and what it brings to them: a possibility to avoid isolation and increase the possibility of exchanges, a stimulating environment as well as a better and larger infrastructure at a relatively modest price (transforma does not position itself as a high-end place). The off-centred location does not seem to be a problem in terms of easy access to the location (close to main roads and transport networks) and the proximity of other companies. Plus, there is not a real competition and the coworking sector is still growing.

Bedda explains that they want to focus more on the community aspect of their project but that it is not a priority at this early stage. The project’s expansion focuses mostly on the enlargement of the co-working place. Organising regular events involves a lot of work, such as finding interesting content to communicate to internal and external audiences while trying to keep them motivated to come. It would imply people dedicating their time especially for the community aspect. When asked if there is public funding to help such initiatives, Bedda replies that it is very hard to obtain public support because of the lack of money available and the difficulty to fit into the funding schemes (and the corresponding administrative forms) with this kind of innovative project. Thus, the priority is to find a functioning and independent business model.

Plan TV

Plan TV is mostly known to be a trimestral event targeting TV producers, centred around workshops and networking, hosted initially by the French Community audio-visual regulator, the Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel (CSA), which launched the initiative in 2014.

At that time, CSA developed the project in collaboration with SGAM (the Service général de l’Audiovisuel et des Médias of Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles) in order

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⁶ There is a wide variety of profiles (freelancers, entrepreneurs, startups) working in a wide range of domains (e.g. technology, web, diverse innovative projects such as new forms of pedagogy, societal impact, etc.).
to reinforce the sector of the television production, which did not benefit from incentives which were set up to support the film industry.

The initial Plan TV funded by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles for two years, was based on three dimensions: training, funding and meetings/networking. After two years, there was no renewal of the funding, budgets were used differently to support the sector through project funding via Wallimage. Therefore, to continue Plan TV, CSA narrowed down its focus mostly on the third pillar (meetings and networking), which seemed to be the more successful dimension, and the CSA associated for one year with three partners: mediarte.be (the Belgian social fund for the audio-visual sector and film production), the cluster Twist (the Walloon cluster for audio-visual stakeholders) and Screen.Brussels (see below).

Strictly speaking Plan TV is outside of CSA’s regulatory field. Nevertheless, its expertise and network legitimated CSA as an essential stakeholder to support television production. It was then reinforced by the other partners. The sector needed support and its stakeholders were unaware of their surroundings. The objective was to inform people from the sector, train them, create new connections and boost synergies: “to sow seeds and see creativity blossom,” says Coraline Burre from the CSA.

Plan TV was at first focused on television producers (*programmes de flux*), but faced with the fact that media barriers are being broken down (“people do not produce only for television anymore, but also on social networks, etc.,” says Burre), the organisers decided to target a larger audience, consisting of all creative people working in the audio-visual sector.

The structure of a typical event consists of different stages: the reception, the speeches and the networking. The arrival of participants around 5.30 pm is followed by an introductory speech around 6 pm. Then, for around two hours, there are three lectures in a row from the invited speakers (one hour per lecture, sometimes two, in English or French) on a main topic. The speeches must inspire local producers, illustrating good and bad practices (from here or elsewhere), and what is possible in Belgium (funding, diversification, creative ideas, etc.) with regard to the particularities of the sector (lack of budget and funding, competition from outside the borders, small size of the market, etc.). The Q&A session either happens after each lecture or at the end, depending on the topic. This is when the audience can share their experiences with the speakers. If not during the session, they can still discuss the topic afterwards during the networking session that follows for one or one and a half hours, accompanied by food and drinks.

The majority of the events are held in Brussels, where most of the production companies as well as three of the four partners are located (easier for the organisation). It is also a central location.
The audience is mostly, but not only, composed of people located in Brussels. Usually, around 80 to 100 people attend the events. There is a regular audience who come to each event as well as people who come especially for the topic of the event. The existence of a core audience may be related to the fact that historically, it was an event dedicated mainly to a specific target (television producers from the French-speaking part of Belgium). These people do not have time to meet otherwise. Even TV Prod, the professional union for television producers in Wallonia and Brussels, does not host this type of meeting and relies on Plan TV. For certain topics, such as the one on diversity held in early 2017, there were a variety of people, for example from the film industry and/or Dutch-speaking people. This is also due to collaboration with partners with a larger reach (mediarte.be is federal for example). The contact database used for sending invitations to the events is constantly growing and diversifying: technicians, authors, creative people, producers, directors, press as well as some politicians and academics. Burre notices that the regular interactions between people may be leading to collaborations or practice sharing outside of the events (but they do not follow up).

There is a clear distinction between the audience and the organising staff. Originally, Burre was hired as a part-time employee (50%) working specifically on Plan TV. She was taking care of every aspect of the Plan, from the organisation of the events, to the communication. Now, each event organisation is led and financed by one of the partners, with the others working as a support and a relay of communication. The topics are chosen jointly, with a focus on relevancy and attractiveness: it can be about production methods, ways to attract distributors, good practices or specific topics such as diversity in audio-visual content. Depending on the topic, they make a list of potential international speakers who are open to the discussion and exchanges with a Belgian audience. They contact them, and allocate a budget to cover their costs (travel, accommodation and potential fees). Once the programme is established, the invitations are sent to the potential audience, generally some weeks before the event. The events are free of charge but require registration in order to help in the organisation (catering, etc.).

There is a website containing interviews, exclusive content, speakers’ presentations, calls for proposals from the field, etc. There is also a regular newsletter, which seems to be read and appreciated. These aspects are managed by the CSA. The web presence was originally more significant but was slowed down due to the lack of someone who is entirely dedicated to the task, as Burre’s role has been integrated in her new position in the CSA communication department. Regarding social networks, communications are shared by the partners’ general accounts. There are no specific online groups for the community and communication goes mainly in one direction only.
Plan TV seems to fulfil its role and respond to the specific need that was identified: the lack of support for TV producers in the French-speaking part of Belgium. According to Burr, it is still the only event dedicated to this audience. It allows them to keep up-to-date with the evolution of the sector, nationally (contacts with peers) and internationally (without having to go to events such as MIPTV Media Market). It has also evolved in accordance with the changes faced by the sector, enlarging its domain beyond traditional TV production and reaching out to new audiences. The partnership, even if it complicates the organisation somewhat, also – and more importantly – brings the possibility to reach a larger audience and to get in touch with new ideas and contacts. It also allows the new partners to use an already established structure and reach out to a specific audience.

Nevertheless, the formula only works with financial support, which needs to be stabilised. Plan TV has already needed to refocus on the events, at the expense of the other two original pillars (training and funding of audio-visual projects). The events could also be expanded if additional resources were allocated: for example, pitches in front of international distributors (they did that once). To make Plan TV live beyond the events, it is also necessary to communicate and to provide the website and the newsletters with content, which also requires workers to have time allocated for that.

**Brotaruu**

Brotaruu is a monthly networking event for game developers that takes place in cafés in Brussels. It allows people to show and test each other’s games as well as discuss business and everything related to the job in a relaxed atmosphere.

The event’s founder, Andrea Di Stefano, based the concept on a similar type of event that he saw in Tokyo: a weekly meeting between game developers in a bar named Otaru that started 15 years ago. The same name preceded with the “Br” of Brussels was used for the Belgian event. At that time, Di Stefano, who had worked in game development companies, was in between jobs and had some thoughts about where to continue to work. Living in Brussels, he had no clue if there was a game development sector in the city (he worked mostly in Mons).

What a better way to find out than creating an event that gathers game developers together? At first, in August 2014, it gathered about 20 people, mostly friends, but it quickly grew over the next months and is still gathering people monthly after almost three years of existence. A similar concept also exists in Toronto, named Torontaru.

While the first reason for the setup of the events was for Di Stefano to meet people and possibly create new projects, it was also meant to bring together people who do the same work, in order to have easy feedback on their projects,
which seems difficult yet critical to put in place in this industry (large companies usually have a quality assurance staff fully dedicated to software testing). The regularity of the event also stimulates people to work on their projects in order to have something playable to show every month (which, according to Di Stefano, is also nicer for developers than having a non-playable prototype for months). Beyond feedback advice on games and game development, Brotaru is also an occasion to talk about the business aspects of the industry: how to publish a game, how to export a product to the US market, etc. Finally, it provides good support to the professionalisation of the Belgian video game development sector.

Di Stefano tried to incorporate each of these aspects in a casual, friendly and not too serious type of event, in opposition to traditional networking events. The events happen throughout the year, and some are organised in collaboration with the regional associations of developers, for example.

The monthly events are very easy to organise, says Di Stefano: they only need a Facebook invitation one or two weeks before the meeting, which usually takes place in a café on a Monday and starts around 7-7.30 pm. Di Stefano arrives early (he never misses an event) and encourages people to socialise, discuss, enjoy a drink and try some games. Tables may be used for the participants to set up their laptops and show their projects. In case of VR setups, it takes a bit more preparation because of the space required for that type of presentation. The number of projects being presented varies from 2-3 to 6-7 games that can be played. Di Stefano emphasises the importance of the atmosphere: a relaxed atmosphere helps people to share information more easily and motivates people to come not only as part of their job but also (and mostly) as a chance to spend time with friends. Since it takes place early in the week, most people leave around 11 pm (in any case, cafés close around midnight, as Monday is not usually a busy day).

While the places chosen (Potemkine, then Maison du peuple at the time of the interview) are mainly influenced by circumstances (e.g. Di Stefano knows the owner or manager), they are thought to be nice and “regular” cafés – which must be differentiated from gaming cafés (Di Stefano had some offers from gaming cafés as well). The rationale behind the choice of regular cafés is twofold: firstly, Di Stefano wants to make a clear difference between game developers and gamers, who are not part of the same audience, and secondly, the setup of gaming cafés (dark, with neon lights, etc.) contrasts with the warm and friendly mood which Di Stefano seeks for the event. Since it is an event that is supposed to attract people from all over Belgium (there are not a lot of video game development companies in Brussels), Di Stefano considers the proximity to a train station to be a priority. For now, the meeting place is a bit far from stations, says Di Stefano, but, at the same time, it is close to his office, which allows him to devote time to the project.
In the same spirit of inclusion, Di Stefano tries to motivate people to speak exclusively in English, in order to avoid communication problems between the different linguistic communities in Belgium as well as to get people accustomed to the use of English, which is the main language used in this truly international sector. The community is a mix of amateurs and professionals. Most of them are game developers who attend the meetings regularly. Besides the small size of the market (and the lack of new companies being created), the structure of the industry, which consists of relatively stable teams working on the same project for two to five years, explains the limited turnover for most of the members. Di Stefano considers that it can be an advantage because of the accumulation of experience and thus the better sharing of knowledge among the audience. Students also come to the meetings, which brings some new blood. This is made easier by the fact that Di Stefano is a teacher in video game development schools.

The number of participants varies from 30 (during summer, exam periods) to 70-80 people, with an average of 50 people. Di Stefano does not perceive any problem of a lack of trust due to competition between members, since the real competition is at international level (for example, some Chinese team could easily copy a game concept and release it between its presentation and its actual launch). At local level, says Di Stefano, it is smarter to stick together. Nevertheless, Di Stefano could imagine a situation in which there could be competition, such as developers trying to obtain the same local deal (which does not occur due to the state of the Belgian industry) or if they were on really close segments (such as a similar game as a service), but for now there is plenty of variety, with original games, mix between games and services and games as services.

Di Stefano is the only organiser of the events. According to him, it consists only in finding a nice café where he can welcome the community, sending a message to invite them and finally, ensuring a nice atmosphere. The rest comes from the community, through exchanges and projects to present. He has support from Screen.Brussels, which offered him a budget (around 200€/event) to cover free drinks for the participants.

Besides the invitations, Di Stefano shares everything related to the industry of video games in Belgium on Facebook. Members can ask him to share specific news on the Facebook page provided that it is written in English. Di Stefano sees this source of information as a small landmark, though he probably cannot do as well as regional associations of developers for example, because of the time it takes. Another time-consuming task is to animate social networks in order to motivate interaction between members. Consequently, there are not a lot of interactions on the internet. Either way, according to Di Stefano, the community is not really active on social networks, although sometimes he has some feedback.
about job offers that he has shared and were fulfilled, for example. Di Stefano also points out the difficulty to keep the neutral language position (use of English) on social networks: most of the French-speaking people switch to French relatively quickly.

One of the advantages of Brotaru seems to be its relatively simple setup, which allows only one person to handle all of the organisation without the real extra cost of time and money. According to Di Stefano, whose objective is to keep it simple, it helps to keep the events on track without a risk of giving up due to the work load. The other key element is the atmosphere: focusing on the "friends with drinks" state of mind helps people to keep coming and to share their practices more easily.

The events also respond to clear needs for game developers, whether it is through the possibility of having feedback on their productions or sharing advice about the business side of game development. Networking also allows people to find jobs or to create new projects together in a sector where CVs do not seem to be the best way to find work. Brotaru also structures the community, making it more professional and more up-to-date. In this respect, Di Stefano and a colleague from his game development studio participated in other projects targeting the same objectives, such as the presence of Belgian games at the Gamescom (the world’s largest gaming event) and the Belgian Games Awards. Some companies were created thanks to all of these initiatives. At personal level, Di Stefano says that it is always self-rewarding to see that you are part of something’s development. It also gave him opportunities (classes to give) and enlarged his network.

After three years of monthly events, Di Stefano feels the lassitude setting in and would like to find people who are motivated and skilled enough to continue the organisation of the events. But, unfortunately, it seems difficult to find someone who is available to take over. People do not want to have binding responsibilities, says Di Stefano. He thinks that if he decided to stop, no one would continue the events.

A renewed staff could help to bring new ideas or develop the events beyond simple meetings. But it requires personal investment to have quality events such as talks or lectures. Di Stefano has considered that type of more formal event, but perhaps on a less frequent basis (twice a year for example). He is aware of the time and stress involved in organising larger projects, which cannot be sustainable without proper remuneration.

According to Di Stefano, public funding could help improve the events and reach higher targets, but it would lead to more pressure to meet the commitments, and could perhaps lead to a loss of conviviality.
Other challenges are to try to renew the community somewhat, which could be a source of innovation and motivation, as well as to continue to defend and even reinforce an inclusive approach to the community, in order to avoid setting apart some members because of language differences.

BE.VR

The Belgian Virtual Reality Meetup is a regular meeting organised by Screen.Brussels Cluster to gather a community of people interested in virtual reality (VR). People can try the technology, listen to inspiring speeches, share projects and expertise, as well as meet the VR community of Brussels. Screen.Brussels Cluster, Fund, Film Commission and Business are parts of Screen.Brussels, which is an institution funded by the Brussels-Capital Region in order to “support and grow the Brussels-Capital Region audio-visual industries”. Screen.Brussels Cluster is specifically in charge of reinforcing the visibility of the Region for the audio-visual stakeholders, accelerating the growth and boosting the competitiveness of audio-visual companies, as well as creating and supporting a dynamic ecosystem through the development of interactions between the stakeholders in order to position the Region as a centre of excellence for audio-visual and related innovative technologies. Screen.Brussels Cluster is also a part of Impulse.Brussels, which focuses on entrepreneurship and economic development in Brussels. It is aimed at supporting the growth of an ecosystem for innovative enterprises, “in which they can acquire and share skills, meet partners and benefit from dedicated coaching throughout their growth cycle”. Screen.Brussels Cluster (simply called Screen.Brussels hereunder) supports the traditional audio-visual sector (movies, television, post-production, etc.) but also develops a prospective approach by supporting new audio-visual sectors, such as gaming, transmedia, web series and VR. Marine Haverland, one of the 2,5 FTP of Screen.Brussels, is especially in charge of these sectors. She handles the BE.VR meetups, which were created at the end of 2014 by the Screen.Brussels manager Juan Bossicart, a VR enthusiast.

The meetups try to respond to the objectives of both Screen.Brussels and Impulse.Brussels by aggregating the stakeholders from innovating sectors in audio-visual production and animating the community in order to develop a viable ecosystem. The aim of BE.VR is to gather together people related to the VR sector to help them to know each other, to encourage them to work together and/or to share good practices and demos. Haverland says that the VR sector in Brussels is energetic but it is going in all directions. The meetups help to structure the sector and to support people on the business side as well as in creating connections and synergies.
The meetups occur every two months. Meetups start around 5-7 pm (depending on the place and the topic) with one hour of reception, where people can meet, discuss and provide/try VR demos. It continues with a good hour of speeches or lectures, which they try to keep interactive, with the audience reacting, asking questions and sharing practices. Finally, the meetup ends with a drink allowing networking in an informal way while the demos are still available.

There are some variations but most of the time they keep this model, which works well according to Haverland, especially because of the informal and casual atmosphere: a nice place to have drinks and to meet people. Parallel to the meetups, they organise a hackathon twice a year and are involved in two big events occurring once a year: EXPERIENCE Brussels Virtual Reality Festival (targeting a large audience, in order to increase interest in VR) and Stereopsia (a more scientific conference involving international experts talking about VR, 3D, immersion, and with awards).

The meetups always take place in Brussels but the location varies depending on the event: the organisers actually try to blend the meetups into other events in order to develop partnerships, reduce the costs and simplify the organisation. Such partnerships also create opportunities to reach out to new audiences that are usually at the partner’s locations or events. The choice of a topic can depend on the context. Sometimes the community, in some informal exchanges, comes with specific topics that they find relevant. The language used is English, which is perceived as being more informal than requiring people to speak French and Dutch. According to Haverland, it does not seem to be an obstacle because people are used to speaking English in the VR sector and because they can still talk with each other in another language if needed.

According to Haverland, Brussels has the third biggest VR community in Europe (around 1300 people, according to her estimation), behind London and Berlin. The meetups gather a big part of that community, and people who work in this sector are usually aware of BE.VR meetups. The number of participants in at meetings can vary from 30 people to up to 200 people, with an optimum number of around 100. There is a core group of VR enthusiasts who come to every event and new people come as well because of the location or the specific topic covered (some events are very specific, for instance one event was focused on the use of VR in the health sector). There is a diversity of profiles, from developers working alone or in small companies to managers and employees of bigger companies as well as people who do not work directly in the VR sector but who are interested in it. Haverland says that in the VR sector there are a lot of young people with little experience of the business side. Ultimately, all of these different profiles have an interest in VR as well as a culture of sharing.

There are always some members of the community who are involved in the organisation, share information or help find some equipment when it is
necessary. The organisation in itself takes more or less time depending on whether it is linked to other events or not. When there is a specific topic, Haverland has to find relevant speakers, directly if it is a topic that she is familiar with, or indirectly through her network if she needs some guidance or advice. They choose international speakers regularly with a view to provide inspiration and spread good practices among the VR community. The travel and accommodation costs of the invited speakers are covered by the BE.VR budget.

BE.VR has a page on Meetup.com, which is a website used to facilitate the organisation of regular meetups and to communicate on the events. The number of subscribers is growing constantly. There is also a Facebook page where people exchange news regularly. Haverland also sends a newsletter with information about the VR sector every two or three weeks.

According to Haverland, with regard to their objectives, the events seem to be a success, with a range of collaborations which have come out of the meetups and the efficient sharing of practices and information. BE.VR is not in competition with other similar events because its role is to support the Belgian VR community as a whole and every kind of initiative that fits this objective. Despite a limited budget, BE.VR seems to fulfil its role, even if – as always – it would be better to have a larger budget and/or people working full time on VR, says Haverland.

AJPro

AJPro is a fee-based training programme created by the French-speaking journalists’ union, the Association des journalistes professionnels (AJP). It aims to train journalists in wide range of domains, whether is it technical, content-oriented or related to their personal and professional development. AJPro is also a place for meetings and exchange of practices and experiences.

Between 2010 and 2014, the parliament of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles hosted the *Etats généraux des medias d’information*, a general assembly of news media professionals where the question of the lifelong learning of journalists – among many other important issues – was addressed. In 2012, the AJP presented the results of a survey among its members, which showed a need for training among journalists. AJPro was created in 2013 in order to fulfil this need. The purpose was to respond to the evolution in the work as a journalist, which requires people to continuously develop new competencies that they did not acquire at university or in a higher education institution.

AJPro’s main means of action is a training class taking place during the day. It varies from half a day to several days (at first, some courses lasted a week but it was not compatible with the schedules of freelance or salaried journalists). A class usually starts at 9.30-10 am with the welcoming of the participants by Diane Hubert, coordinator of AJPro, and a reception for participants to be able to
speak with each other. When arriving, the instructor introduces him/herself and starts a roundtable during which all participants are invited to explain their goals, which can greatly vary from one person to another. The training starts, with a big emphasis on the practical aspects: the instructor tries to respond to the goals set by the audience, and some training sessions have a two-week hiatus in order to let people develop their project before providing an effective support. There is a short break during the morning session and a lunch at noon, which is included in the price. It is a convivial moment making it a good opportunity to exchange with peers. Training sessions finish around 5-5.30 pm.

According to Hubert, training sessions are for sharing knowledge but also experiences between the instructor and the participants and between the participants themselves (except if it is more technical training, which would usually be more conventional). Instructors are usually dedicated and people communicate openly about their projects and problems in order to have practical answers. It happens regularly that some people exchange contact details with other participants in order to keep in touch, and sometimes to develop projects together.

While some basic training sessions are the same from year to year, the training catalogue is reconsidered each year in order to evolve at the same time as journalists’ needs. These needs vary constantly, due to technological as well as societal changes. In order to stay relevant, in 2016, AJP put together an expert committee with journalists from different media – who can also be members of AJP’s council or actual AJPRO’s instructors – to estimate which training sessions should be appropriate for the next year. It also depends on the subsidies that they receive from the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. It is renegotiated every three years. In 2013, the budget was provided for a general continuing education programme (radio, TV, press, deontology, photography, etc.). In 2016, the requests from the minister’s office were more focused on web journalism (software, editing, web content, social networks, etc.). An annual report is created for the minister’s office. It includes the number of training sessions, participants, their profile as well as an evaluation. They also use feedback from instructors and participants to find new relevant themes. Some topics are determined by their relevance with regard to the context: social elections, Russia’s geopolitics, safety of journalists in hostile environments, etc. Fifty-six different training sessions were offered this year. They develop partnerships with universities but ensure that they do not step on each other’s toes with clearly differentiated offers.

The training sessions usually take place at the Maison des journalistes, in the centre of Brussels, where AJP’s offices are located. When some specific software is needed, the training is organised at IHECS, where they have fully equipped computer rooms. Not only journalists from Brussels come for the training: the
place is relatively easy to access by train from Wallonia (not so far from Central and South stations). Flemish journalists can come too but are not part of the target audience (the sessions are fully in French). It is also possible for groups of minimum six people to ask for a specific training session in their region but this is relatively rare. Since 2016, thanks to a subsidy, AJPro has also offered training sessions directly in the offices of press editors or press groups.

While some training sessions welcome 10-12 people, most of the time, they try to keep the groups small (4-5 people) in order to develop a more in-depth and personalised approach. A large part of the people coming to the training sessions have specific goals that they want to achieve (in some cases people attend because they are afraid of losing their jobs, for example, but in such cases the training works less well according to Hubert). Members of AJP have a preferential rate but are not the only journalists who come to the training sessions. According to Hubert, there are no signs of competition among journalists from media organisations that are direct competitors: they get along really well. While journalists represent the target audience (96 in 2016), there are also students in journalism (15) as well as people working in the communication sector (14) who participate regularly. Hubert says that there is more and more demand from sectors that they did not think of, such as the communication staff of municipalities, who also need to learn the same types of practice. The instructors are open and available and do not hesitate to share their contact details to follow the progress of projects or to answer specific questions. Most of the instructors are also journalists who come to share their knowledge on specific topics. It is not uncommon to have instructors and participants who already know each other or to have instructors who are participants on another day.

Besides the training sessions, AJPro, along with IHECS, organises workshops named “data-crypto parties”. They consist of informal meetups in a café somewhere in Brussels or at their offices, where journalists meet to share knowledge and practices about data journalism and cryptography. Each participating journalist brings his or her laptop and tries some practice used by another one. The initiative is supported by a Google Group where they exchange information and tips. There is also a Summer school, which consists of four days of training in a green location in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre. The atmosphere is relaxing and an emphasis is put on networking (between journalists and with the instructors), either during a drink at the end of the training (around 5.30 pm) or during special activities in the evening (a food truck night for example). One of the activities consists in speed-dating between editors-in-chief or media executives and freelance journalists (in 2016, there were 11 media for 70 freelancers), which allows the former to explain what they are looking for and the latter to show what they worth. It also finishes with a drink. The event brings
together around 70-80 people in total, with around 12 participants a day (some people come every year).

Hubert’s role is to coordinate everything that is related to AJPro. Nevertheless, she does not work alone on it, but works together with the rest of AJP staff who help, for example, with the emails and the coordination of the brochure, including all of the training sessions. She works with the expert committee to define the new trends for the next year’s training sessions, find instructors (sometimes helped by other instructors through their networks), put people in contact, monitor registration, etc.

AJPro has a website, with general presentation, agenda, news, presentation of the instructors, etc. AJPro is also on Facebook, which is mainly used to spread information about the training sessions and respond to the practical questions asked by the followers.

They value feedback from the participants and AJP journalists, in order to offer a better experience in terms of content (what training is needed? did they value the training/the instructor?) and organisation (how should the training sessions evolve?). More and more journalists know about the training offers, thanks to the communication with AJP members as well as media executives and HR managers, but also thanks to word of mouth. According to Hubert, feedback is mostly positive. People say that the training sessions fulfil their needs, which Hubert feels could be due to the small group format and the focus on responding to people’s personal goals.

Hubert emphasises the importance of being up-to-date with the needs of the sector and of evolving constantly. Some training sessions are reaching their maximum potential and soon will not be needed by anyone. It is important to understand what the next step is for journalists with respect to learning, in order to remain relevant, says Hubert. A decrease in participation is also seen in some training sessions, which is related to the fact that they started to offer them to big groups inside media companies (as noted above). The possibility of having competitive prices thanks to subsidies raises the question as to whether the training sessions should continue to be offered if the FWB stop funding them. When asked about the development of other initiatives such as workshops in the same spirit as “data-crypto parties”, Hubert says that they have not yet found the right formula to open it to other topics, as the workshop is coping with some difficulties such as how to reach out to new people outside of the core group of journalists specialised in that area, which makes it go in circles.
VRT Sandbox

VRT Sandbox is an incubator programme consisting of a collaborative approach between VRT and innovative organisations in order to boost media innovation and allow the Flemish public broadcaster to aim at a competitive advantage.

The initiative was launched three years ago and is one of the innovation mechanisms established by the VRT R&D department. The key objective is to guarantee VRT up-to-date technology thanks to innovative collaborations with media technology companies.

The idea is to be effective quickly. VRT Sandbox has antennas inside the organisation to know which production team is struggling with what or what they would like to do for their next production. At the same time, they scout consistently for new projects and partners, looking around at events, and developing their network to find start-ups that could fit their approach. At one point, they bring parties in contact with each other (production team and technology companies), and “when the stars are aligned”, says Karel De Bondt, VRT Sandbox’s manager, they start the project.

The startups have the opportunity to use VRT’s infrastructure and resources to develop their technology. They keep it really lightweight on purpose: no heavy studies or heavy integration needing a lot of development. The goal is to implement the product of the start-up as easily as they can and then start to use it. They put the technology directly in the workflow of the production, thereby ensuring that production teams do not put it away and go back to their old fashioned ways. De Bondt insists that it does not just end with demos or prototypes: the technology has a real use that we can see on the screen somehow. They target a win-win situation with limited expense: they do not pay the start-ups but give them a real case and a production team that will use the technology (as well as a project manager) in exchange for the product in question and at least one of the start-up’s specialists, who will implement it. It can result for example in the creation of a specific social platform linked to an entertainment show or in a studio with three wide-angle 4K cameras managed by only one person on the computer, who can easily create movements and zooming. The start-ups get a lot of feedback on their product: what is good, what is not, or new functionalities that they should develop. Using VRT Sandbox as an intermediary also allows them to open the right door and not lose time trying to reach someone who might need the technology. The dissemination of the information that follows gives them publicity.

For now, they work together with more than 80 companies on more than 60 projects. Inside VRT, they work with almost all the departments. De Bondt says that VRT Sandbox is getting well known, and is becoming a household name in
the small world of media start-ups. People come to see them, but they are also attending big events (Tech Startup Day, Hack Belgium, IBC in Amsterdam, etc.), talking about the projects, sharing good practices as well as continuously building up a network of entrepreneurs.

Twice a year, they also organise Creative Circles, which are open events where they offer an overview of the projects they were working on in the last 6 months. Start-ups can present what they did in 10-minutes speeches. It takes a hands-on and organic approach. They usually do not invite innovation gurus or trained speakers but start-up members showing their technology. They also have a demonstration room (for example, in the VRT Sandbox offices where they show their products on laptops).

The amount of people attending the Creative Circles is growing gradually. The last event gathered about 150 people, from at least 50 different companies. All of the competitors are there, as well as companies such as Telenet or Proximus. There are also a few people from RTBF, even if in general it is mostly Flemish and Dutch people who come. De Bondt guesses that they come to get inspired and stay up-to-date with what VRT is doing. Half of the audience come to the events regularly. They seem to be an organic network that can also be found at the MediaNet Flanders event or at networking events related to technology or start-ups. The other half of the audience are refreshing themselves, sometimes depending on specific projects such as LiveIP, a first live studio that was fully equipped on network rather than SDI, and attracted a lot of people. De Bondt says that he can imagine that start-ups can also bring their own audience, who are there to see their product. To be sure that there is a good refreshing rate, they try never to show the same presentation in two events.

De Bondt and two half-time colleagues organise the events. He says that they enjoy the luxury of having easy access to an operational TV team that is also used to deliver camera, lights, PA system, etc.

According to De Bondt, VRT Sandbox is a sort of incubator that really helps to bring about directly usable technology. It avoids big, costly and risky developments and products that do not fulfil the needs of the production teams. Being a public company that cannot make profit at the end of the year helps to adopt an open-minded attitude, says De Bondt. Most of the money used by VRT Sandbox comes from European budgets, with the part coming directly from VRT accounting for only about five FTE out of the 20 fixed employees in the department. They recently won a European call for projects, which will allow them to develop Sandbox at European level and to connect with other similar incubators across the continent.

Thanks to the European budget, they are able to invite people from all over Europe, which could keep events fresh and attractive to the audience. They are
also thinking about improving the talks at the Creative Circles, which are perhaps currently a bit too technical. De Bondt emphasises the need for them to keep going to events and promoting their activities: as soon as you stop, says De Bondt, your network becomes less relevant and the information less easily accessible. People understand the positive effects of being open and sharing ideas but they expect something in return, which De Bondt feels is normal.
Part 3: Enhancing the framework of the 7Ps

In this section of the report, we will come back to the theoretical framework of the 7Ps, which was enhanced at the contact of the field work. The on-site observation and semi-structured interviews with founders or people in charge of communities of practice allowed us to reach perspectives that were not directly foreseen when we developed the theoretical framework.

While this framework, constituted by seven parameters (referred to as the 7Ps), was useful to collect the data and structure the information about the CoPs that are the focus of this report, the field work helped us to consider dimensions of the different parameters that were not directly thought of when we developed the concepts in Deliverable 6.1 and that seem to have an impact on the trends and dynamics of the CoPs that are addressed in this report. Hereunder we thus come back to the 7Ps in order to elaborate on the initial framework by integrating insights from the field work (see table 2).

We also observed that the parameters are related to each other in a dynamic interaction. For example, the CoP’s choice of a location for a meeting (Place) can be directly influenced by the type of interaction that they try to develop (Proximity), the audience that they target (Profile & Pertinence), or the historical legacy of the organisations (Path-dependency). We will develop these interactions further.

Place

In Deliverable 6.1, the parameter Place was thought to answer questions such as: Where do CoPs gather? Why these places? Are they moving or stable? Do they need to be physically close to the companies and the media clusters? Can we notice a specific concentration of communities of practice in some areas of the city and how can we explain it? To answer these questions and develop the parameter a bit further, the scale of the CoPs should also be considered: do they meet in a specific neighbourhood or do they target a larger zone to meet in, and why? We also added, as another dimension of Place, the influence of logistic constraints.

This parameter also concerns the online aspect of the communities: whether and how communities of practice extend their place through different online platforms, and whether it helps them to gain greater participation, recognition and visibility. We decided to list every online tool used by the CoPs to understand where their online presence is.
Proximity

The proximity parameter emphasises the interactions within the community as well as the commitment of its members. In the initial framework of the 7Ps, we were interested in the different activities organised by the communities of practice, the value they bring to the life of the communities, and the rhythm at which these interactions occur.

The field work showed us different dimensions that are related to the kind of interactions in a community, such as the level of formality of the event and the type of atmosphere that is created (Wenger et al., 2002, p.37). People interact differently at an official event or a drink with friends, or if there is a friendly mood or a more serious/result-oriented one. The type of interaction that was predominant in the sharing of the practice is also relevant: the relations are treated on a hierarchical basis or are more democratic (Wenger et al., 2002, p.37)? Is it a transmissive approach with people giving one-way insights to the others, a more interactive approach with an exchange of information about practices, or a more collaborative approach with people trying to solve problems together?

We also noticed that certain elements related to the other parameters could have an impact. For example, regarding Pertinence, in some domains the development of a project usually takes several years, which has an impact on the turnover of the teams and therefore on the CoPs. Another example, related to the Profile, is the importance of taking into account the availability of the type of audience that is targeted. In Brussels, the question of the language used in the activities has a link with Path-dependency (the complexity of Belgium’s institutions and its different languages) and Pertinence (some domains have a preferred language, others not). The complexity of the organisation of the interactions also has an influence. Also worth considering is how complex the organisation of the activities is and what impact it has on the way they are set up, which is also linked to the Path-dependency parameter (who organises, how and with which resources?).

We tried to understand the type of interaction that can be found online on the platforms that are used by the CoPs. We determined their use (a share of practices, of information, a place of networking?) as well as the scale of the online interaction of the community. Is it a “pure” online community (i.e. a virtual community)? An extension of a real-life community? Is it just an organisational tool mostly used to communicate about the events?

Regarding the commitment aspect, we are interested in the forms that it could take: some people are part of a community of practice because they care about the domain, they are passionate about it and want to develop it further. Others are interested in being part of a community in which they seek value in terms of knowledge and networking, while some participants can just be curious and want
to learn about the practice, what standards have been established, which tools are being used, etc. Do these different types of commitment have an influence on the dynamics of the CoPs? This is linked to the Profile parameter, which establishes the type of people who are in the CoP. We try to understand if there is a sense of belonging and if people take an active part in the CoP, frequently collaborating and not simply attending the events, for example.

**Pertinence**

In Deliverable 6.1, the Pertinence parameter was centred on the question of the relevance of the community of practice for media clusters. The pertinence was captured through the lens of the domains that are addressed by the communities of practice and the critical mass engaged in the communities.

We enlarged the scope of this parameter by adding two layers that seem insightful in order to understand the pertinence of communities of practice. First we will focus on the pertinence of the CoP in the domain that it covers: does it fulfil (at first and currently) a need in that domain, respond to an issue (Wenger et al., 2002, p.32), purposely or not? What are the particularities of this domain and its dynamics (specialisation level, competition scale, etc.)? Is the community well-known enough in the domain?

We are also interested in the relevance of the community of practice to guarantee its own survival condition. Are there enough people coming to the event in order to be relevant and efficient ("critical mass")? Are there too many people, leading to a division into subgroups (Wenger et al., 2002, p.35)? What are the relations with the other communities? The question of the turnover, which is important for the pertinence of a community, will be integrated in the Profile parameter.

**Profile**

The Profile parameter focuses on the profile of the community members and on their relevance for the dynamics of the community. We have tried to get an overview of the different types of people who are part of a community, in terms of their professional profile or the role that they play in the community. We have tried to understand why they are interested in the community and what need it fulfils for them (linked to the Pertinence parameter).

The literature on communities of practice identifies different roles that are important for the development of a community: implementers or leaders, “brokers” (Wenger, 1998), “gatekeepers” (Chesnel et al., 2013), technicians, guests, administrators, mentors, and a few others such as animators, moderators, etc. We tried to identify these types of profile in the communities of practice that we analysed, in order to understand what profiles seem to be relevant and/or necessary in a functional community.
We also relate the different profiles to their commitment (linked to the Proximity parameter) as well as to the possible causes of the community’s attraction for certain types of profile (linked to the Path-dependency parameter): for example, an organiser who is also a lecturer in a higher education institution can motivate students to come to the CoP events that he or she organises. We try to understand the dynamics of the turnover and the reasons why there are regular changes (or not) in community membership.

Also related to the Path-dependency is the profile of the organiser(s): who are/is the organiser(s), how many of them are there, do they have incomes and time dedicated to their role?

**Path-dependency**

The path-dependency parameter looks at the historical and institutional factors that can explain why the communities of media workers in Brussels are how they are today. Through these contextual aspects, we can get a sense of the peculiarities of the birth and development of the communities of practice. These elements can be related to different factors linked to economy (e.g.: an emerging market), technology (i.e.: new ways of working, new media), the media sector (e.g.: evolution of the profession of journalist) or Brussels (e.g.: the presence of European institutions).

We thus try to track the reasons and circumstances that led to the creation of the communities of practice: is it a bottom-up initiative from scratch? Is it a top-down initiative from stakeholders or from an external impulse? Is it an already existing concept that was adapted to the reality in Brussels? Is it related to a media cluster? Does it target an audience at local level, a specific linguistic group? Is it an informal initiative? Is it coming from an institution fully dedicated to the development of this type of initiative, an initiative from the stakeholders to structure their sector?

These elements can have an impact, among others, on the budget size and the resources available (a contact database for example), which in turn can influence the CoPs (the Proximity and Profile parameters for instance).

**Policies**

The Policy parameter looks at the official frameworks, actions, incentives and legal statutes that encourage and regulate communities of practice in the Brussels media sector. This parameter is examined on different levels such as regional policies, community policies and organisational policies.

We try to understand what the direct and indirect positive and negative impacts are of policies on the communities. Incentives and help for media clusters and communities of practice can come from policies implemented at the level of the
Brussels Region. The Brussels Region ministry of economy is directly responsible for the economic attractiveness of the Region. The community level (French-speaking community and Flemish community) also has a part to play, as they are in charge of promoting media and cultural aspects. The organisational policy dimension can also be relevant in the case of organisations which have a particular influence on some communities of practice. We also raise the question as to the funding opportunities and difficulties.

**Performance**

One way to provide insight on the performance of the communities of practice is to look at the benefits that media workers and organisations (and even clusters) gain from participating in communities of practice. The literature provides some relevant dimensions and indicators that we can use to evaluate the short-term and long-term values of communities of practice, both at the members’ level and the organisations' level (cf. Deliverable 6.1).

We are also interested in seeing if there are potential benefits at the sector’s level or at other levels that were not taken into account (for the Region for example). We try to get a sense of whether the CoPs are fulfilling their objectives, although our data for addressing this question are limited here (this is something that will be elaborated further in Deliverable 6.3, using the data from the online survey). Ultimately we ask what improvements the CoPs imagine for the future.

**Table of the dimensions of the 7Ps**

Table 2 details the main dimensions of the different parameters that were used to analyse the communities of practice. Some examples (not exhaustive) are added in order to easily understand what type of information these dimensions are related to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>A café in St-Gilles, Maison de la presse, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>A neighbourhood of Brussels, Brussels, Belgium, International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movements</td>
<td>Stable, moving (due to circumstances), moving (purposely)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media place/cluster</td>
<td>Close to a media concentration, close to a media, no relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logistic</td>
<td>Space needed, dependent on hardware or material, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Media Clusters Brussels: DELIVERABLE 6.2

**Communities of Practice in the Brussels Media Sector: Overview and Preliminary Trends**

### Online tools

- Facebook, website, Twitter, Meetup, etc.

### Online scale

- Virtual community, real life community’s extension, communication tools (two ways), communication tools (one way)

### Online use

- Share of practices, share of information (sector related), share of information (organisational), networking, etc.

### Proximity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of activity</th>
<th>Lectures, workshops, training, after works, formal meetings, informal meetings, other, diverse, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Trimestral, monthly, weekly, depends on other factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Collaboration in the community, frequent collaborations between organisers and participants, few or no collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of formality &amp; atmosphere of the events</td>
<td>Serious/result oriented, friendly, &quot;Gathering friends for a drink&quot;, sector’s official event, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of interaction</td>
<td>Transmissive, interactive, collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactional peculiarities</td>
<td>&quot;projects take two years of development&quot;, &quot;journalists cannot be available a whole week&quot;, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
<td>Organisers and participants seen as a community, regular participants seen as a community, no feeling of a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Passionate, part of a community, curious, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation’s complexity</td>
<td>Hard to organise, no special difficulties, easy to organise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English, French, diverse, not important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pertinence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media sector (&amp; activity type)</th>
<th>print, audio-visual, new media, advertising, etc. (core entities, Supporting entities, Facilitators and peripheral entities, External entities from other sectors).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Domain, domain’s depth & CoP organisers | Journalism, video game development, etc.; Large domain, specific domain, niche; not really }
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>domain's definition</strong></th>
<th>determined, a clear specific domain targeted by the CoP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain’s competition scale &amp; CoP’s target</strong></td>
<td>Local, national, international competition; targeting Brussels Region, French community, Belgium, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of topic</strong></td>
<td>Content related, Peripheral (organisation, financial, etc.), diverse, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialisation level &amp; professional profile targeted</strong></td>
<td>Specialised, open to domain’s stakeholders, open to everyone; Fully Dedicated to a specific job type, targeting a specific job type, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need covered &amp; objectives of the CoP</strong></td>
<td>Training for journalists, feedback on productions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain’s evolution &amp; CoP’s adaptation</strong></td>
<td>Domain stable, domain quickly changing; CoP still relevant (adapted to the changes), CoP relevant, lack of relevance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CoP’s position/image &amp; visibility in the domain</strong></td>
<td>Well known inside and outside the domain, most of the people in this domain know the CoP, average, known by a small part of the domain’s people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical mass</strong></td>
<td>Enough people to keep the CoP working, not enough people coming; Number of members, participants, people in the domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation with other CoPs</strong></td>
<td>Coexistence, competition, collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Profile**

- **Profile of the participants**
  - Game developers (Core participants), students (volatile participants), etc.
- **Turnover**
  - Too much turnover, a lot of turnover, enough turnover, small turnover (not a problem), small turnover (problem)
- **CoP’s peculiarities to attract certain profiles**
  - Linked to a school (attract students), represent a profession, etc.
- **Organising capacities**
  - Number of organisers, their role, their resources (time, funding)

**Path-dependency**

- **Creation factors**
  - Implication of a fully dedicated institution, a sector-related institution, sector’s structuring, informal (no institution), a bottom-up initiative? A top-down initiative? Inspired by an existing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Activity period</strong></th>
<th>Since 200X, 2012-2014, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources available</strong></td>
<td>Contact database, HR, budget, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements of context</strong></td>
<td>Economic, technological, institutional (Media sector or Brussels related) elements of context: new media, changing profession, related to a cluster, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public policies &amp; subsidies</td>
<td>A public debate on the evolution of a sector, funding for media projects, a tax-cutting law etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational policies &amp; subsidies</td>
<td>Paid hours to organise CoP, open policy, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other policies &amp; incentives</td>
<td>Other potential type of incentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisers’ short- &amp; long-term benefits</td>
<td>Better network, recognition, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ short- &amp; long-term benefits</td>
<td>Acquisition of new knowledge, collaborations, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector’s short- &amp; long-term benefits</td>
<td>Structuring, better quality of the workers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other benefits (Region, etc.)</td>
<td>Increase in the region’s appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfil its objectives?</td>
<td>Yes, according to the organiser, not yet, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements?</td>
<td>More interaction outside of the events, better lecturers, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 - Dimensions & examples of the 7Ps*
Part 4: Preliminary trends and dynamics

The fourth part of this report will analyse the communities of practice that were discussed in the second part. In order to do so, we will use the framework enhanced in the third part to establish a cross-cutting approach to understand how these parameters impact the dynamics of the communities of practice. Based on these dynamics, we will ultimately develop preliminary thoughts on the type of support that communities of practice in Brussels could benefit from.

A cross-cutting view of the CoPs using the 7Ps

In order to have a better view of the data collected, a table was created to compare the communities of practice according to the dimensions of the different parameters. A cross-cutting comparison of each parameter for all communities of practice analysed helps us to understand the dimensions that could be significant. Some similarities and differences between the dimensions of the communities could give insights that could help to develop a better way to understand their dynamics. It also allows us to compare some dimensions in order to understand the potential relations between the different parameters.

Place

If we look at the locations of the last activities of the communities of practice, they seem to be located in various places in Brussels, but mostly close to the centre or slightly to the south or southeast (Figure 1). The only exception is transforma bxl, which is located in a business park in Evere, the reason being that it fits the core activity of the organisation (coworking space). Nevertheless, transforma bxl’s location is still easily accessible, due to the presence of main roads and transport networks. The preference for places that are easily reachable (close to stations, to the city-centre, etc.) and have logistics facilities are dimensions that account for the choice of a location.

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7 The last three events starting from the end of June 2017, are located when it is pertinent. Some CoPs are located in specific places, not depending on events (AJPro, transforma bxl, VRT Sandbox). Plan TV, Brotaru and Creative Circle did not move for their last three events. As Café Numérique is a more frequent event, we decided to add one more event. See Figure 1 for the map and Table 3 for the selection’s details.
### Communities of Practice in the Brussels Media Sector:

#### Overview and Preliminary Trends

**Figure 1 - Map of the last activities of the communities of practice (Google Maps).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storycode (last location)</td>
<td>IHECS Rue de l’Etuve 58-60, 1000 Bruxelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café Numérique (Apéro UX Flupa, 29 June 17)</td>
<td>Silversquare, Square de Meeûs 35, 1000 Bruxelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café Numérique (Meltdown, 28 June 17)</td>
<td>Meltdown, 263 boulevard General Jacques, 1050 Bruxelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café Numérique (Girleek Event, 21 June 17)</td>
<td>Rue de la cible 50, 1030 Schaerbeek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café Numérique (Civic Tech, 17 May 17)</td>
<td>Centre Dansaert, Rue d’Alost 7-11, 1000 Bruxelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transforma bxl (current location)</td>
<td>Avenue Jules Bordet 13 B1140 Brussels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond that, there seem to be many types of rationale behind the choice of a location, and they are strongly related to the other parameters. Regarding the Path-dependency parameter, we can see a difference between communities of practice that are created in a top-down perspective (AJPro, VRT Sandbox, Plan TV), and which usually have specific resources (buildings, budget) allowing them to choose the place where the community can meet, whether it is in their own buildings or elsewhere, and bottom-up communities that often struggle to find a place for their activities (which could have an impact on their Performance). Partnerships, which can be more easily implemented if resources are available (legitimacy or other resources), are another way to choose a location. BE.VR, which was also created in a top-down perspective (Screen.Brussels being regionally funded to develop this kind of initiative in Brussels - i.e. Policies parameter), chose to blend into other events for practical reasons (small budget, easier to organise) but also to reach out to a larger audience (linked to the Profile parameter). Partnerships also seem to be used by bottom-up communities of practice to counter the lack of resources or increase their recognition. The search for a location can be helped by a contact database, whose availability is often dependent on the Profile of the organisers (their occupation, their institution).

We can also differentiate among different kinds of CoPs depending on their initial approach. If the community is not the core activity of the organisers (Path-dependency), it seems more likely that they use the place of their core activity if it fits the format that they try to have or out of necessity (VRT Sandbox, AJPro, Plan TV, transforma bxl). On the other hand, the will to reach a larger audience can also be a strong incentive to move the location of the meetings to another place, even for communities that usually have a stable location. This is the case for example for Plan TV, which is planning its next event at the FIFF, and AJPro, which can offer training sessions outside the “Maison des journalistes” under certain conditions. According to the interviews, the specific profiles that are targeted can have an impact on the choice of location, Brussels being a centre for media professionals: for TV producers for example (Plan TV).
The last three events of each CoP seem to be located mainly in the neighbourhood where media places are the more concentrated (see the blue areas in Figure 2). Nevertheless, the concentration of the communities of practices in the centre of the city and in the south and southeast may raise some questions perhaps linked to the socioeconomic profile of the participants (mostly media professionals).

Figure 2 - Map of the CoPs related to the concentration of the media organisations (source: Komorowski M.)

The Proximity parameter can affect the choice of location. The degree of formality and the atmosphere that the organisers would like to create seem to have a strong impact in some cases. The atmosphere is for example a key element in the choice of location for meetings in the case of Brotaru: it has to be a place where people come to have a drink with friends. On the other hand, the places chosen by Brotaru also have to be different from the places where gamers meet, in order to make a clear difference in the community targeted (“game developers are different from gamers”). Thus, Place is also related to Pertinence. The spatial design of the buildings may also have an influence, but it was not investigated during the interviews and observations.

When it comes to the online presence of the CoPs, the online tools used are usually websites, newsletters, Twitter and Facebook. Some also use Meetup.com, Slack, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google + or Instagram. While all of the communities of practice are active on online platforms, the intensity of their use seems to depend on the human and financial resources that are allocated to the project (Path-dependency, Profile).

**Proximity**

Interaction seems to be a key element in order for the community of practice to be effective (Performance). In the communities of practice that are analysed, we can see a type of format that is used regularly: meetings with lectures, Q/A, and then a moment dedicated to networking. If there is the possibility, some tests and demos are also added (at the start and/or during networking). In relation to the Pertinence parameter, this regular interaction pattern is found mainly in situations where the objective is to gather people around a common theme to share practices (Storycode, Café Numérique, Plan TV, BE.VR, Creative Circles from VRT Sandbox). The importance of each stage changes depending on the priorities. The lectures can sometimes be a pretext for gathering people and starting the interaction (BE.VR, Café Numérique) or be nonexistent, like in Brotaru’s meetings where the priority is the networking and the direct exchanges regarding the demos (direct exchanges are also simpler to organise for individual volunteers, cf. the Profile parameter).

In other cases, the types of activity are closely related to the core activity of the organisation. AJPro’s training classes do have a practice sharing component through the dynamics of the exchanges: the instructor (usually a journalist) takes into account the concrete objectives of the participants, and the training sessions consist in sharing knowledge and experiences between the instructor and the participants, as well as among the participants themselves. Informal networking also exists and people often stay in touch and/or know each other. transforma bxl’s coworking space is designed to stimulate informal interactions (collaborations, sharing of practice, etc.) between workers. There are also dedicated networking events to motivate people to meet each other. VRT Sandbox’s incubator put people from inside and outside the organisation together in order to integrate new technological tools in the organisation. They capitalise regularly on this work to expose it through the “classical” format presented before (Creative Circles), which is a way to keep the system working – networking being a key element in finding new partners (Profile, Pertinence, Performance). Some interaction models are based on already existing models

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9 Screen.Brussels has been created in order to develop this kind of interaction (Policies parameter).
(Path-dependency): Storycode, Brotaru, and, in a certain way, Café Numérique (inspired by the “café-philo”).

Among the CoPs that use the lecture format, Plan TV, a more formal event, has opted for a more transmissive approach (same for Creative Circles) with international speakers being invited to share their practices. The attendees can nevertheless interact with the speakers via Q/A or during the networking moments. Most of the time, other CoPs with lectures try to motivate people to interact directly, having a more horizontal, interactive approach. People are encouraged to share their problems or observations (Storycode, BE.VR). A more collaborative approach can be found in Brotaru and VRT Sandbox, both having a technological aspect that could be handled more easily (while transmedia content for example is harder to interact with directly) and support a more “result-oriented” approach (Pertinence parameter). In their training sessions, AJPro’s instructors also seem to develop a more collaborative approach with a preference for tangible projects that can be worked on. Café Numérique covers a larger domain, aims at a larger audience and addresses different topics at each meeting, which leads to less precise “result-oriented” discussions.

As regards the “usual” format of interaction as outlined above, the frequency of the communities’ meetings is variable, from weekly to semestral events. Nevertheless, most of them try to stick to the frequency that they have chosen (changes are due to specific circumstances). According to Wenger (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.62-63), there is a necessity to pay attention to the rhythm of the community, making it not too fast (people could give it up) or not too slow (to keep the community interested). On the other hand, there are some elements that have an impact on the frequency of meetings. First, there is the complexity of the organisation: you can have more meetings when you just have to post an invitation on Facebook and add some tables in a café (Brotaru) than when you have to choose a topic with partners and invite international speakers. It also depends on the availability and the motivation of the audience (Profile). The domain (Pertinence) also has an impact on what can be shared and at what refresh rate (some organisers experienced a difficulty to find brand new content for the lectures on a regular basis).

The communities analysed in this report do not seem to experience real collaborations between the organisers and the other participants. There is a clear difference between these roles, and only a few participants play an active role (some CoPs try to encourage this but it seemed really difficult to motivate people) other than being a mediator to find interesting contacts (Café Numérique, BE.VR) or hardware (BE.VR). Perhaps depending on the type of domain and its structure, some collaborations can happen between members of the community to develop projects together, but the organisers do not keep track of these initiatives specifically. When asked, some organisers say that the participants do feel like
members of a community, but this is obviously something to ask the participants themselves. In general, more extensive field work is needed in order to better understand the commitment of participants.

It seems that it is important to think about the general atmosphere at the meetings. Several interviewees highlighted the significance of having an appropriate atmosphere to motivate people to share information and have better exchanges. Among others, the Place (the location as well as the spatial design) can have an impact on the mood. In the meetings analysed, the degree of formality of the events did not seem to impact people's interactions and commitment. Another key element is the context (Path-dependency, Pertinence): people could be less open to sharing information on their projects if they struggle for the same funding source or are in direct competition on the market. According to Wenger, it is important to find a balance between familiarity and excitement in order to let people develop relationships, while being continuously motivated (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.61-62).

As seen, the complexity of the organisation can have an impact on the frequency of the meetings as well as on the type of event that is developed. Regarding Path-dependency, the more the resources are allocated to the meetings (HR, funds, contacts, etc.), the greater the capacity to develop the desired type of event.

For the events that target people from Brussels or Belgium in general, the language used is often English. This is to avoid language issues between French and Flemish (Path-dependency), but also because English is commonly used in certain domains (new technologies for example) that might also have an international scale of competition (Pertinence).

In most of the online interactions, organisers use Twitter or a Facebook page as a tool to communicate about the planned events. A number of organisers also try to share sector-related information but it seems to be strongly dependent upon the resources allocated: people who do not have time or money, being volunteers, seem to have a real difficulty to feed the online community with a continuous flow of information (which could be a key element in keeping people interested). Most of the time, the communication is unidirectional, with the organisers giving information to the community, while there are few exchanges among the members or between the members and the organisers). Though, it happens in some cases but seems be a direct consequence of the real life interactions of the community rather than boosting interactions. Nevertheless, not all the organisers try to fuel the online exchanges, and some focus only on the communication aspect (Plan TV, AJPro). The necessity to fuel online interactions could be influenced by the size and the legitimacy of the organisers, as some are “natural” sources of information and centres of attention do not have the necessity to try to stay relevant (Path-dependency). It could also be linked to the CoP's visibility and
the pressure of competition in the domain (Pertinence) as well as to the type of interaction that the participants are expecting.

A real online extension of the community can be found only in two particular cases: transforma bxl’s Facebook group, which brings together most of the community of coworkers (not dedicated to the share of media related practices), and AJPro’s “data-crypto parties”, where the participants use a dedicated Google + group to share practices and information. The literature emphasized the importance of not focusing only on public events but also having private spaces to continue working on issues between the events (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.58-59).

**Pertinence**

Our selection of communities of practice for the purpose of this report seems to be centred on domains that are relatively new (new media, VR, video games, transmedia, new technologies) and/or are responding to (fast) changes in domains such as journalism (AJPro). In that regard, even Plan TV, which was at first responding to an identified need in a traditional sector (TV), was rapidly extended to a larger domain which also included new media, in order to adapt to the new reality of television production. The changing technological and societal contexts (Path-dependency) may be a logical context for this type of initiative, whether it is in a top-down or bottom-up perspective. Most of the CoPs in our sample are content-related. Some CoPs are directly related to public policies that were targeting a specific need (AJPro, BE.VR).

Some communities target a very specific domain with a need that is clearly identified. They generally aim at a specific Profile (VR stakeholders for example), sometimes a profession (journalists, game developers, show producers). Outside the core profile, most are more or less open to a larger, more peripheral audience, sometimes because it also responds to these audiences’ needs (AJPro\(^\text{10}\), Plan TV), as well as because of the increase in the visibility of the event (to keep attracting people) or the sector. For the community to stay relevant (and keep being attractive to people), most of the organisers try to be up-to-date and closely related to the needs of their audience.

Café Numérique and its large and non-specialised audience, could benefit from the first-mover advantage (having benefits due to the fact that, according to the interviews, they are the first CoP related to the digital trends), though they currently feel the pressure from the competition and have a fragmented community (which could have had an impact on Storycode). Their response is to continue to expand to include the largest possible audience (as well as developing specific partnerships in a narrower domain). We could argue that in 2009, the

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\(^{10}\) AJPro has universities as partners. The interviewee says that they are not a direct competition because they both stay in their own field of competence.
year of its creation, Café Numérique was ahead of a specialised and narrow audience (the digital enthusiasts), in a market that since then has been enlarged and then segmented. The moment of creation could have an impact on the relevance of the community, depending on the maturity of the sector and/or its size.

At the same time, the size of the community in itself is significant with respect to its pertinence. It seems that there should be a minimum viable number of participants for a community to work. Storycode, a “core” community that had an average of 30 participants, did not survive. There was also a lack of participation from the “big players” (Profile). In such dynamics, we can see that there could easily be a vicious circle: according to Wenger (Wenger et al., 2002, p.35), it seems necessary to reach a critical mass to sustain regular interaction (Proximity) and offer multiple perspectives (Profile). A sufficient size for the community will make it more pertinent and known enough for people to come (which will increase these dimensions), the event being pertinent only if there is a sufficient number of people with enough material to exchange. The turnover could also have an impact here (see Profile).

**Profile**

The number of organisers varies but most of the time there is one main organiser (sometimes two or three, five to six for Café Numérique), who has the lead. Other organisers can provide support (contacts, specific tasks).

The Profile of the organisers is often directly related to the Path-dependency parameter. We can see two clear typologies of organisers, depending on a top-down or a bottom-up approach. On the one hand, organisers who are already in structures (AJpro, Plan TV, BE.VR, VRT Sandbox) are professionals who have dedicated resources to organise events, such as time, funds and support from other colleagues as well as contact databases, legitimacy, access to facilities and greater visibility. On the other hand, bottom-up CoPs (Storycode, Café Numérique, Brotaru) usually have volunteers who are related to the sector (Pertinence) and/or have organisational capacities. They are quickly limited in their resources and most would prefer having organisers with them. These Profile differences can have an impact on the way organisers develop interaction

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11 Same for Medialab that also had around 30 participants per meeting.
12 Again, similar for Medialab.
13 i.e. known by enough stakeholders among the target audience.
14 In the literature, Wenger says that a healthy community does not depend entirely on the leadership of one person. It is better to have a distributed leadership (Wenger et al., 2002, p.37). A number of studies also show that the most important factor in the success of a community is the vitality of its leadership (Wenger et al., 2002, p.80).
(Proximity) and on the CoP’s general Performance. The contact database seems to be essential here and vital for bottom-up communities, as it can be an asset to compensate for the lack of resources (find location, sponsors, etc.).

When professional workers are not totally dedicated to the community of practice, they also emphasise the fact that “core business” remains a priority (transforma bxl, Plan TV which had a dedicated professional at first).

As seen above, there are usually “core participants”, who are the audience directly targeted by the CoPs. They come to the events regularly, which seem to fulfil their needs. In some cases, people who are not the direct target seem to have the same needs and are also likely to come. According to the informants, the “volatile participants” come according to different reasons such as an interest in the specific topic of the day or partnerships leading to the participation of other interesting profiles. The profile of the volatile participants seems to be very diversified, but the more the CoP is specialised (AJPro, Brotaru for the more specialised), the less distant these participants are from the core participants’ profile. Depending on the objectives of the CoP, some will be more likely to attract new audiences (BE.VR). According to Wenger, diversity is a good thing, as long as it stays in a group with common objectives: “With enough common ground for ongoing mutual engagement, a good dose of diversity makes for richer learning, more interesting relationships, and increased diversity” (Wenger et al., 2002, p.35).

According to the interviews, the turnover has more or less importance depending on the community of practice. It can be essential in some situations to keep the system working (VRT Sandbox) or to bring new ideas or concepts (Storycode, BE.VR). In some cases, the new ideas come from invited speakers (Plan TV for example) or the objectives of the CoPs do not necessary require new participants (Brotaru’s QA), resulting in the stability of the community (which is not seen as a critical issue). Nevertheless, most of the informants consider that a certain turnover is an asset for keeping the community attractive and alive. It is necessary for a community at a mature level according to Wenger (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.104-105).

The Profile parameter will be further investigated in the next deliverable using the data from the online survey.

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15 The lack of time seems to be a critical factor in terms of failure for the coordinator (Wenger et al., 2002, p.83)
Path-dependency

We saw above that Path-dependency is a significant aspect of the CoPs as it sheds light on the circumstances in which the CoPs emerged, developed, and became what they are today. Moreover, Path-dependency has an important impact on the other parameters.

The communities of practice in our sample were born in a similar context. Most of the CoPs have been active since around 2014, Café Numérique being the exception and the first to have that type of digital-related initiative according to the interviews. The fast technological evolution of this decade, which has societal and economic consequences (different ways of doing journalism or producing shows, new ways of working, emerging markets, etc.), might have led to the development of such initiatives, whether it is in a top-down or a bottom-up perspective. The fact that we have CoPs mostly from that period might also be explained by the limited lifespan of CoPs (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.109-111) – and thus we only have in our sample recent CoPs, while the newest ones are perhaps not mature enough to be detected.

As seen, two main models can be clearly differentiated. The top-down approach consists in an impulse coming from a public stakeholder (Policies) and/or a domain-related institution that has legitimacy in its domain in order to fulfil a specific need that has been identified. They have dedicated human, financial and material resources as well as other types of resource (legitimacy, visibility, contact database) to help them fulfil their mission. The bottom-up approach usually comes from a personal initiative, sometimes based on an already existing concept seen in another country (e.g. Storycode, Brotaru). The organisers’ Profile is essential here as they are mostly the only structure to support the development of their CoP. Their motivation is not always clear but some interviewees talked about the will to discover new things, network with stakeholders and practitioners, strengthen the domain, support their professional activity or the share on common interest and organise events. They have access to less resources than in the top-down approach and it seems harder to keep the community viable beyond the voluntary organisers’ motivation. It is also harder for them to have access to public funds (see below). Some CoPs are also limited by the concept that they duplicated. Storycode was for example an open source project, which limited its possibility to develop commercial partnerships.
Policies

Public policies have a direct or indirect impact on the development of some communities that we analysed. The context (Path-dependency) led to public initiatives that helped some CoPs to get established. AJPro is funded by the FWB (in charge of promoting media and culture, among others) to respond to the need of training that was pointed out at the parliament of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles’ *Etats généraux des medias d’information*. The FWB also funded Plan TV at first, and the CSA, which was organising it, is also a public stakeholder, though not supposed to play that type of role. VRT Sandbox is part of VRT, which is the Flemish public broadcaster. Nevertheless, most of this project’s money comes from European level.

At regional level, some policies are developed in Brussels in order to foster the city’s economy. As explained in BE.VR’s presentation in part 2, Impulse.Brussels focuses on entrepreneurship and economic development in Brussels, while Screen.Brussels aims to support the Brussels-Capital Region audio-visual industries. They both fund Screen.Brussels Cluster, which is specifically in charge of reinforcing the visibility of the Region for the audio-visual stakeholders, accelerating the economic growth and boosting the competitiveness of audio-visual companies, creating and supporting a dynamic ecosystem through the development of interactions between the stakeholders in order to position the Region as a centre of excellence for audio-visual and related innovative technologies. In other words, it supports the development of clusters and related types of initiative. This institution created BE.VR but also supports other communities, being a partner of Plan TV and giving a small budget to Brotaru’s drinks.

If most of the top-down CoPs directly or indirectly have support related to public policies, it seems less easy for the bottom-up communities to have access to these funds. Some stakeholders point out that the framework of these funding opportunities could add possible complications to the organisation that they try to keep as simple as possible, because of the lack of time and resources. They also point out that they do not have the experience, knowledge and resources to apply to funding opportunities. In general, the complexity/lack of intelligibility of the Belgian institutional landscape is pointed out as a difficulty.
Performance

It is the combination of the different parameters that has an impact on the CoP’s overall performance. To have an operational community of practice, and therefore a positive impact on media workers, organisations and possibly the sector or more (e.g. the Region), the whole dynamics should be taken into account (see below).

According to our informants, most CoPs that target a specific job seem to have participants who find the help they need and the expertise they seek (AJPro, Brotaru, VRT Sandbox, Plan TV). Some CoPs bring especially efficient networking (BE.VR, transforma bxl, Plan TV, Brotaru, AJPro, Creative Circles) or help to keep up-to-date (Café Numérique, Plan TV, VRT Sandbox, Brotaru, AJPro). The organisers can benefit from the same kinds of effects, as well as from greater recognition and legitimacy. It is worth noting that, at the organisational level, VRT seems to benefit directly from its CoP (innovation, new technology at low cost, ahead of competitors, visibility). Even if we did not see communities developing tools to measure their value (which could be worthwhile according to Wenger et al., 2002, pp.102; 167-178), some communities of practice organisers notice that they see a clear improvement on their sector: a better structure (BE.VR, Brotaru, Plan TV) or increased quality (AJPro).

The Performance parameter needs to be investigated further in Deliverable 6.3 using the data from the online survey.

Conclusion

With the help of a comparative table integrating every dimension of the seven Ps, the analysis of the data offered insight that helped us understand the dynamics of the selected communities of practice for media workers in Brussels.

After a description of each community of practice, we analysed them in a cross-cutting approach in order to clarify what their key dimensions are, what the noticeable similarities and differences are, and what the priorities could be in order to lay the ground for functional communities of practice.

We saw that each parameter depends heavily on other parameters (Figure 3). It is thus important to understand these dynamics in order to find the leverage that could be useful for the decision makers to weigh in on the development of such initiatives, and therefore to support the Brussels media industry.16

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16 When talking about the domain, the community and the practice (the three elements of his model, see Deliverable 6.1), Wenger also points out the necessity
The communities of practice analysed in this report were created in specific contexts related to new technology, more connected and fast changing. This is the type of context in which they might be useful (Wenger et al., 2002, P.6), as they adapt to quick changes and are oriented towards the resolution of problems, with perhaps more adaptability and flexibility than other approaches (studies, training sessions, knowledge database\textsuperscript{17}), combining tacit and explicit aspects of knowledge that are involved in practice (Wenger et al., 2002, p.9). The timing and the scope are essential, with a domain – even an emerging one – strong enough for the community to be relevant. A well-defined domain will have an influence on its legitimacy and visibility (Wenger et al., 2002, p.32). Wenger defines three criteria that help define the scope of the domain: being significant for the business, having aspects that people can be passionate about, and having a wide enough scope to bring new people and ideas, while narrow enough to take into account the dynamics of each of these elements without leaving one aside (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.45-46).

\textsuperscript{17} The strength of a whole community can also overcome the rigidity of some organisations that are not easily willing to change (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.156-157).
interest the members (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.75-77). The communities seem to work as long as they respond to a need and bring added value (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.59-61), which, in these moving contexts, may lead to a necessity for the person(s) in charge of the community to take the pulse of the domain regularly, understand its needs and adapt continuously in order to stay relevant (if these changes do not come spontaneously), which is indeed a requirement for established institutions like AJP and CSA. It seems useful to combine a dialogue from an inside and an outside perspective, one bringing a deep understanding of the community, the other bringing a possible new perspective (Wenger et al., 2002, p.54). Nevertheless, sometimes communities come to a natural end, whether they are not relevant anymore, merge, split or transform into a social club or an institution (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.42; 109-111).

We saw that the resources were a key element in order to develop a performing community or to increase its performance (through the different parameters). CoPs need funds, but can also benefit from a dedicated staff, access to facilities and to a relevant contact database as well as from support to increase their legitimacy and visibility. The public support should be continued or increased and the procedures simplified in order to be more widely accessible. The bottom-up communities that are the more fragile structures might need a flexible way to support them, which does not create additional complications, and which is compatible with their dynamics (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.53-54). It might be important to have a proactive approach to detect and support the bottom-up initiatives, which could also be a good source of information on the dynamics of the media sector in the Region at its deeper level (and on the value that the community is adding, Wenger et al., 2002, pp.169-170). These CoPs can also be seen as flexible structures that could easily fit where more formal and heavy structures are hard to put in place. Partnerships seem to be useful for the communities to have easier access to resources or to share resources (e.g. location, legitimacy, etc.), and to reach a larger audience. Therefore, creating synergies with different types of partner (universities, other CoPs, media companies, etc.) can be critical. A structure such as Screen.Brussels Cluster seems pivotal to develop this kind of action (public support and developing partnerships). In some cases, beyond their recognition, their institutionalisation, with the respect of the internal drive in mind, can help communities to have resources and legitimacy (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.27;106). Regarding the top-down initiatives, the support of relatively centralised domain-related institutions that have legitimacy in their respective domains seems to work. It does not prevent these CoPs from reflecting upon their development, not resting on their laurels. It is also interesting to take a look at the structures that can play a role as a community of practice even if it is not their core activity.
When developing a community of practice, it is essential for it to be pertinent, which, as said before, consists in fulfilling a specific need. But it is also crucial to think of the better way to fit the target audience. Each audience has its own peculiarities that should be taken into account to choose the place, the time and the type of interaction developed. It can also be interesting to reflect upon the level of specialisation of the community as well as the necessity of a turnover as part of a strategy for attracting these audiences (Wenger et al., 2002, pp.106-108). Some interactions are more or less effective (what frequency? find new content from outside or inside? where to meet? what atmosphere? etc.) depending on the profile but also on the targeted domain, its size, its content (if content-related), its peculiarities, the market size and its scale of competition. Thus the kind of proximity that one would like to develop within a community should be related to the other parameters.

It is also essential to support communication to create virtuous circles and to reach a critical mass necessary to make the community pertinent and well known in its sector. The communication has to be clear in order for the target audience to understand the purpose of the community and the benefits for the participants (of course, the purpose has to be clear first for the community itself, Wenger et al., 2002, p.45). If the CoP does not benefit from an already established position, it becomes a critical issue. The internet, which is poorly used in our sample of CoPs, can be used as a support for communication as well as an extension of the community, but the web presence needs to be treated with enough resources to stay relevant for the audience. For communities, mainly the bottom-up ones, in order to be more sustainable, it seems essential to find a way to develop the commitment of participants, which was lacking in most of the CoPs that we have analysed. The stronger the commitment, the stronger the community might be (not depending on a few people, more interesting content, etc.).

All of these elements are interconnected, but sometimes not compatible. It means that, for every situation, choices have to be made, priorities have to be defined, and a certain equilibrium has to be found. The framework that we have developed in this report might be useful for this purpose.

The analysis carried out in this report was based on on-site observations and individual interviews with CoP organisers. The aim was to provide a preliminary overview of a selection of media-related communities of practice based in Brussels, which was the main objective of this deliverable. The next stage of this research is to supplement this analysis with new, in-depth qualitative and quantitative analyses.
References


