

# Policy Making and Practices of Production Across Contexts of Learning

*Brit Svoen & Øystein Gilje*

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PEER REVIEWED ARTICLE

**Brit Svoen**

PhD Candidate, Lillehammer University College  
brit.svoen@hil.no

**Øystein Gilje**

Post.doc, University of Oslo  
oystein.gilje@ped.uio.no

English abstract

This article explores how policymaking relates to young people's ability to produce moving images in Norway by connecting the three domains authorities' incentives and policy-making, youth production practices and availability of production resources and contexts. First, we give an overview of how policymakers have facilitated formal and non-formal contexts for moving image production. Second, we provide a bottom-up perspective, aiming at understanding youth production practices over time in and out of school. By combining a top-down, policy-oriented perspective with a bottom-up practice-oriented perspective, we illustrate how filmmaking as a distinct culture of digital production has been constituted and elaborated in an era of transition from analogue to digital technologies.

**Keywords:** Contexts of learning, filmmaking technology, filmmaking and policy, digital production practices.

## Introduction

Reviewing the process of filmmaking over the last three decades, it is striking how it has been democratized in terms of affordability and accessibility for amateurs in all age groups and with different purposes (Buckingham & Willett, 2009). Contrary to experience with the photographic camera, which became popular and widespread at an early stage, film recording technology was too expensive for the man in the street up until the 1960s, when the (silent system) Super 8 mm format was launched (Svoen, 2008). When compact video cameras came on the market 20 years later, in the 1980s and 1990s, filmmaking also started to become an option among the young (see Buckingham & Willett, 2009 for details). Venues for showing and distribution were also scarce, both internationally for a wider audience, and for youngsters in Norway. Even if there were certain television programmes (like *America's Funniest Home Videos*, beginning in 1989) and film festivals (like the Norwegian *Amandus film festival for young filmmakers*, from 1988) that showed submitted videos, the opportunities for showing amateur productions publicly were quite limited.

As with the photograph, there was a sea of change when video technology became digitalized. In addition to non-professionals now having relatively easier and ever more reasonable access to equipment for carrying out the process of production, it also became possible through ever increasing bandwidth to make films accessible on personal websites and on video-sharing services such as *YouTube* (founded in February, 2005) and *Vimeo* (founded in November, 2004). Media convergence, with the digitalization of traditionally independent media and telecommunications, combined with rapidly increasing processor power and faster graphics cards, made the computer gradually suitable both as a playback unit for full screen films and for editing and distribution. In less than five years, from 2000 until 2005, more than half of the population of Norway acquired a broadband connection, and schools were given priority due to the authorities' objectives (eNorge, 2002; NHD, 2000). The first digital film archive in the world was also established in Norway in 2004 (Høykom, 2004). Compounding this development throughout the 2000s, a participation culture evolved (Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b), moving filmmaking to new contexts.

This article investigates young people's engagement and learning with moving images in and out of school in the decades when filmmaking became digitized. Over recent decades, stakeholders have been discussing a wide range of approaches to the kind of literacies involved in these cultures of production (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Policymakers have been engaged in discussing conceptual frameworks addressing media literacy and digital literacy (Livingstone, 2003; Williamson & Payton, 2010; Erstad, 2010). Meanwhile, there is growing interest in young people's practices of learning in creative media production (Burn & Durran, 2006; Burn, 2007; Drotner, 1995, 2008; Erstad & Gilje, 2008; Gilje, 2009; Ito et al., 2010, Korten & Svoen, 2006).

Although these perspectives offer conceptual frameworks for understanding media and digital literacy, as well as "snapshots" of production practices in specific contexts, they provide less evidence of how cultures of production and moving images have changed in the transition to digital technologies. In order to investigate these processes over a longer time span, we offer two perspectives on filmmaking across contexts in Norway. First, we give an overview of how policymakers have facilitated formal and non-formal contexts for moving image production. This description mirrors a top-down perspective, focusing on authorities' incentives and policy-making. Second, we provide a bottom-up perspective, aiming at understanding youth production practices over time in and out of school. The *Norwegian Amandus film festival* for young filmmakers is used as a case (no.1) to understand how filmmaking practices have changed among young people due to

technological development and new contexts for filmmaking over three decades. Zooming in, the second case (no. 2), aims at exploring different production practices in and out of school, drawing on two surveys carried out among Media and Communication students in Norway in 2006 and 2012.

Given this top-down and bottom-up perspective, three interrelated research questions guide our inquiry and investigation:

- In which ways have policymakers in Norway contributed to contexts for developing digital and media literacy among young people? (*Authorities' incentives and policy-making*)
- What kind of filmmaking practices can be found among young people, and what are the differences in their in and out of school productions? (*Youth production practices*)
- What role has the transformation from analogue to digital technologies played in these processes of filmmaking? (*Availability of production resources and contexts*)

In the final discussion, we elaborate on the two cases on three diverse, but related, topics: context, genre and gender. Investigating production practices across context and over time, we find it interesting to see how these three topics relate to each other in the survey data in Case 2. We conclude the article with a final remark on how the production practices in one specific medium – filmmaking - can elaborate our understanding of digital literacy in and out of school across a variety of cultures of digital production.

## Media Education and moving images in Norway: policy and incentives

For many years, films in education were basically synonymous with film - and from the 1960s also (school) television - used as a teaching aid only. Film and media education was a marginal activity in the school; though it had its proponents, it lacked significance relative to other activities and subjects (Diesen, 1995; Gilje, 2002; KUD, 1974). However, this began to change during the 1970s. In 1971, a forum for film education enthusiasts was established, named the National Team for Media Education (*Landslaget for medieundervisning - LMU*), and, in the new National Curriculum from 1974 (*“Monsterplanen” M74*), the subject *Film and Media Knowledge* was first introduced in Norwegian schools as an optional subject (Diesen & Svoen, 2011; Gilje, 2002). Media literacy had become an option, but was still not mandatory.

In 1985, the then new Minister of Education – and later Prime Minister – Kjell Magne Bondevik, declared media education and electronic data processing (EDP) as main priority areas. With the National Curriculum that was introduced in the mid 1980s (KUD, 1987) the position of film and media education was strengthened, both as a component in mandatory subjects like Norwegian and Social Science, but also in a (at the time) new elective subject named “Media and EDP” (*Medier og EDB*) (KUD, 1987; Werner, 1997). The first White Paper about data technology in school came in 1983-84, before computers were suitable for film objectives, and film and video was only mentioned in it as an educational aid (St.meld. nr. 39, 1984). From the 1990s, the work on information and communications technology (ICT) in Norwegian education has been followed up in quadrennial governmental action plans. The White Paper in 1994 and the follow-up action plan for the years 1996-1999 focused on technology, including the convergence of technologies and its democratic potential, and gave directions for development over the years to come, placing strong emphasis on digital literacy. “Multimedia” and “interactive video” were only mentioned as presentation forms in school, and the Ministry of Education supported various pioneer classroom projects (Erstad, 2010;

Sefton-Green, Nixon & Erstad, 2009; St.meld. nr. 24, 1994). The next action plan, 2000-2003, was more ambitious and placed emphasis on educational challenges and the integration of ICT as a tool, administrative issues and skills-upgrading for teachers – on the whole, a more overall school development. In addition, this period was characterized by experimental activities and large national development projects aimed at broadband penetration and prioritizing schools (Diesen & Svoen, 2011; St.meld. nr. 49, 2003). Again, more attention was given to technological development and the use of computers in school, than a more media specific focus. Indeed, the massive interest in effort on information technology overshadowed any focus on visual media, and media education as a context for moving image production still did not have a very solid foundation in schools.

This may explain why the plans that emerged in the late 1990s for a new vocational educational programme for *Media and Communication* in Norway were primarily due to pressure from the printing and graphic design industry and not from overall education. In 1998, the *Ministry of Education* started the formulation of a curriculum for this vocational programme. Two years after, in 2000, *Media and Communication* started up in 17 schools. The programme designed to offer “a platform for a manifold of professional prospects within Media and Communication companies”, and the curriculum was oriented towards cultures of production. In 2006, after the “Knowledge Promotion Reform”, the National curriculum and the structure for Media and Communication were changed; however, most of the content and associated production-based practices continued. Right from the start, the programme became very popular, and was, at its height, offered by more than 120 upper secondary schools with more than 10,000 applications from pupils (Erstad & Gilje, 2008).<sup>1</sup> This programme is, therefore, interesting to look into, as we will with survey data from 2006 and 2012 in Case 2 below.

A comprehensive school reform, the Knowledge Promotion (*Kunnskapsløftet*), followed the previously mentioned actions plans in 2004. This reform included a special programme for digital competence for the period 2004-2008 (UFD, 2004), and introduced the ability to make use of information and communication technology as a new basic skill (the traditional basic skills are the abilities to read and write, to do arithmetic and to express oneself orally and in writing) (KD, 2006; St.meld. nr. 30, 2004). Film production, – at last, had a pronounced and clear position in the National Curriculum, and was also a subject that pupils could choose in their school presentations as an alternative to written communication. Media literacy was no longer optional, but had become a compulsory aim in the National Curriculum.

## Film policy and initiatives in Norway

During the 1990s, two national projects were initiated by the authorities to strengthen film’s position among young people. “Moving images, children and young people” (*Levende bilder, barn og unge*), run by the Norwegian Cultural Council (*Norsk kulturråd*) and the National Film Institute (*Norsk filminstitutt*) among others, stood behind many nationwide film-related activities. In addition, such activities were supported by the Project Media Workshop (*Prosjekt medieverksted*), run jointly by the National Centre for Educational Media (*Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter*), the Norwegian Cultural Council (*Norsk kulturråd*) and the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) (St.meld. nr. 38, 2003). By establishing six regional media workshops for young people all over the country, equipped with cameras, editing tools and skilled instructors, many film productions were created. Evaluation of these media workshops (see Gilje 2005, 2008 for an overview) indicated that they primarily became an equipment depot and a competence centre, and not the media milieu they were aiming to be, unless the workshop was linked to a school. The workshops were closed down in 1997, and were

later replaced by an *online* media workshop, named *mzoon*, initiated by the Norwegian Film Institute, Screen Education Norway (*Skolefilmutvalget*) and the National Centre for Educational Resources (*Nasjonalt Læremiddelsenter*).

The aim of Mzoon was twofold: to offer online courses in media production and analysis as well as being a showroom for young people's productions. The website ran from 2000 until the end of 2004 as a media educational project, in a time characterized by the transition from analogue to digital technologies and broadband penetration. Similarly to the media workshops (that in practice turned into video workshops), film also became the most popular online medium for young people. About 5000 users in total registered on the service, and they came up with around 500 contributions. The most frequent contributors were pupils in the Media and Communication programme; thus, the connection between this objective and school seemed to be close.

Mzoon was succeeded by another online service, *dvoted*, in 2004. This website was a cooperative Nordic venture, financed by the Scandinavian film institutes, Iceland's film centre, the Finnish school cinema initiative and the Nordic Council of Ministers. This was a website for young filmmakers with the intention of being a showroom and a community where the users could discuss and obtain advice from professional film producers (Gilje, 2008). The service was closed down in 2011 under the pretext that the number of users was too few compared to the resources involved. A Norwegian social networking site, *Filmport*, has continued the ideas from *dvoted*, and offers much of the same functionality. However, the Nordic cooperation was no longer a part of the stated goal. Instead, regional actors became active partners administratively and practically. The latter was related to the growth of regional film workshops for children and young people towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, usually under the auspices of local authorities and financed by delegated funds from the government.

The film report submitted to the Storting, named "The Pathfinder for the Norwegian Film Effort" (*Veiviseren for det norske filmloftet*), which was delivered in 2007 and was approved the same year, provided important guidelines on film policy for the years to come (St.meld. nr. 22, 2007). One stated goal was to inspire children and young people to produce their own films, and this aim was followed up two years later by an ambitious "Action plan for film for children and young people" (*Handlingsplan for filmsatsingen på barn og unge*). This plan was developed by the two institutions that had been placed in charge of national film cultural measures for children and young people: the *Norwegian Film Institute* (NFI) and *Film & Kino*. The NFI was given special responsibility "for children and young people as producers of own film expressions and young talent development (...)". It was decided that *Film & Kino* should be in charge of financial support for teachers' courses, media workshops and festivals (Film & Kino/NFI, 2009, p. 4). The action plan gives detailed and age-specific lists of activities for school (including increasing competence for expressing oneself with moving images), leisure (giving the young people opportunities for individual initiatives and good film experiences), and for the "Cultural Rucksack" – a national scheme and joint initiative of the *Ministry of Culture* and the *Ministry of Education* with the objective of enabling school children in Norway to be familiar with various professional art and cultural expressions (St.meld. nr. 38, 2003). The action plan also defined the Amandus film festival as a national actor for regional film festivals for young filmmakers.

## Digital literacy and moving image production in and out of school

As illustrated, the implementation of digital literacy in the 'top-down' policy perspective is rather well carried out in the Norwegian educational system. Due to the implementation of digital literacy

‘standards’ and goals across all school subjects in Norway, digital literacy has become a central educational competence and has been defined as the ability to use digital tools as a basic skill, alongside reading, writing, numeracy and oral presentation. In regard to filmmaking, several scholars place emphasis on digital literacy as the learner’s ability to communicate, cooperate and create (Erstad, 2006).<sup>2</sup> These competencies, as stated in the curriculum are, in particular, in line with international findings, found in subjects like literature and language, as well as social science and art (Burn, 2007; Burn & Leach, 2004).<sup>3</sup> In Norway, questionnaires trying to capture these production practices have been conducted in two years (Erstad, Kløvstad, Kristiansen & Soby, 2005; Kløvstad & Kristiansen, 2003). However, these production aspects of digital literacy are no longer included in the new surveys (Arnseth et al., 2007; Hatlevik et al., 2009).

A slightly different perspective is found in research studies looking at cultures of production in and out of school. Here, there is a wide range of practices related to how young people use new technologies to seek out new opportunities for use, communication and creativity, although the term ‘digital literacy’ is seldom used. Most of the qualitative studies on filmmaking have been small case studies focusing on a particular process in a specific context (Buckingham, 2007; Buckingham & Willett, 2006; Burn, 2007). These perspectives are also dominant in Scandinavian research on youngsters and moving images, both in a formal context (Danielsson, 1998; Erstad, et al., 2007; Erstad & Silseth, 2008; Erstad & Gilje, 2008; Öhman-Gullberg, 2008; Frølunde, 2009; Wikan, Mølster, Faugli, & Hope, 2010) and in a non-formal contexts (Drotner, 1995; Lindstrand, 2006; Hertzberg & Lundby, 2008, Svoen, 2012). In general, these studies have provided insight into production practices in one specific context, but offer insufficient insight into how production practices change over longer time spans and across context. In their review of the notion of digital literacy, Sefton-Green et al. (2009) point out three diverse discourses: in (1) policy making, and (2) in school and (3) out-of-school settings (Sefton-Green et al., 2009). While the first is often invoked in ‘top-down’ government policy documents, the two latter perspectives represent a ‘bottom-up’ perspective, building on what young people actually do with digital media in and out of school. Sefton-Green and colleagues argue that: “The identification of these digital literacy practices is still in its infancy, and studies of cross-over practices are undeveloped” (Sefton-Green et al., 2009, p. 120). In the two cases below, we aim at tracing practices of production in and out of school over time, in order to prepare for more qualitative evidence gathering in future ‘bottom-up’ research on cultures of production across contexts.

## Contextualizing method and data

The first case (Case 1) draws on an extensive work, gathering and systematizing documents and films for the Amandus film festival over 25 years. The annual number of contributions has been collected from earlier and current film festival managers, from press releases, and from Amandus archives at *Norsk filminstitutt* and *Lillehammer University College*. This material has never been systematized before. We find the data, which cover a time span of 25 years, particularly interesting because of the transformation from analogue to digital technologies in filmmaking during this period of time.

The second case (Case 2) draws on two substantively identical online questionnaires conducted in media education classrooms in 2006 and 2012.<sup>4</sup> We asked questions concerning the use of software, semiotic material used in their films (and if they recorded or found this material online), and how

the films were circulated for a wider audience. In addition, we asked the students in the survey the same question about genres in filmmaking with regard to their leisure time activities.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of technological development, the first study was conducted when *YouTube* was a relatively new service and *Facebook* (publicly available from September, 2006) was still relatively obscure. On the other hand, many students on this level were already editing their films on digital software like *Final Cut Express* and *Video maker* in 2005-2007 (Gilje et al., 2010). In terms of technological development for editing films, there was little from 2006 to 2012; however, in terms of sharing and publishing moving images online, a number of changes have occurred.

### Case 1: Technology, genre and format: Amandus Film festival in the Age of transition

The Amandus film festival for young filmmakers has run continuously since the first announcement in 1987. The main actor behind the initiative was the NFI (until 1993 “Statens filmsentral”) in close collaboration with the LMU.<sup>6</sup> The festival has been located in three different places; it started out at Haugesund Int. Film Festival as a side programme to the Amanda Award Ceremony, it was moved to Ringve secondary school in Trondheim in 1994 and became an independent festival before moving to Lillehammer five years later and being linked to the local cinema and film and television studies at Lillehammer University College. In the following, we will bring in two particular perspectives from this festival; the number of contributions over time, and what kind of film categories, or genres, the festival has supported.

During the 1990s the number of films submitted to the festival increased from 30-70 to over 100 (1999). During the early 2000s, the number of films increased from 100+ to 200-365<sup>7</sup>, and more recently the number of submitted films has become constant at around 200 submissions each year. Figure 1 below shows these developments in contribution numbers to the festival during its first 25 years:

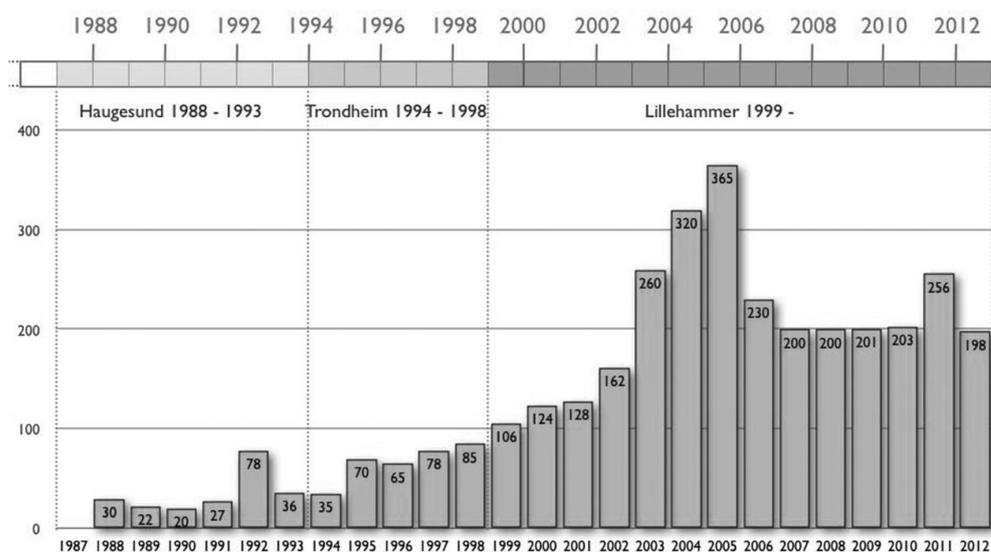


Figure 1. Submitted film contributions to the Amandus film festival for young filmmakers from 1988-2012.

It is striking how the number of contributions suddenly increases a few years into the new millennium. One explanation is the digitalization and the increasing availability of production technologies. This is also reflected in the delivery format of the contributions, which, in the festival's first years, were Super 8 mm film and VHS video.<sup>8</sup> Approaching the millennium, we find the first signs of advanced 3D programming in some of the contributions. The year 2001 might be considered a “turning year” in the sense that the contributions were a real mixture of analogue formats like VHS, S-VHS, Beta, Hi 8, and digital formats like AVI and DV. Subsequently, digital delivery formats dominated more and more.<sup>9</sup>

A second explanation, supported by the survey conducted among Media and Communication pupils from 2006 (Erstad, Gilje, & de Lange, 2007), is the advent of the Media and Communication educational programme (see also above). While Amandus, for many years, was more or less the only alternative for public screening of young filmmakers' productions in Norway, this changed with the increased availability and popularity of digital and networked media, especially with the social video sharing websites YouTube and Vimeo. This might be one explanation for the partial decline and the stabilization of the number of contributions after 2006. Another reason for this decline could be found in the increasingly renowned high standard of the contributions.

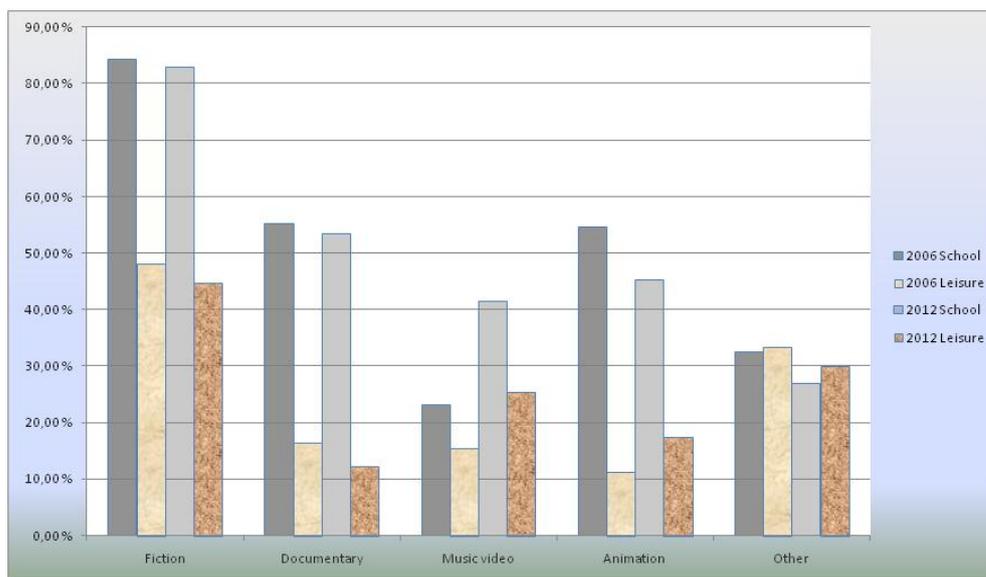
Concerning genre, the contest had a specific theme in the first years: fantasy (1988), future (1989), the adult's world seen through your eyes (1990) and humor (1991). Later, the categories *fiction*, *animation* and *documentary* were used until, in 2001, the jury no longer operated with predefined categories, but instead nominated the 20 best films independently of genre. Henceforth, the categories were decided after the films had been sorted.<sup>10</sup> These genres, indeed broad, are also the most common ones reported on in the survey, and we will return to this below. We argue that these three genres of production have been ‘institutionalized’ across the government-initiated contexts for moving image production over the last three decades. We are aware that these categories include a wide range of different styles and techniques. However, by looking at the survey data, we are able to identify how production practices within these categories relate to in and out of school productions over a shorter period of time.

## Case 2: Schooling, genre and gender; media education as a context for filmmaking

The two surveys, conducted in 2006 and 2012, offer, among other things, the opportunity to compare filmmaking practices over time and in different contexts. As indicated in the section where we contextualize the data, we asked the students what kind of genres they had produced in school as well as in their leisure time. We are aware of that many students devote many hours of their leisure time to working on school projects, so the boundaries between these two contexts are blurred. We first report on the production practices as leisure time activities over time, and then we compare genres across context in the two surveys (2006 and 2012).

In 2006, 53.4 per cent (n=390/735) made films as a leisure time activity, while in 2012 (n= 310/633), this figure was 50.5 per cent. The students who have experience of filmmaking in their leisure time are drawing on a restricted repertoire of genres. For many individual genres, the leisure time activity percentage is lower, which indicates that the students are exposed to a greater variety of genres worked with during school hours than genres worked during their leisure time. Short fiction films are the most common genre in leisure time activities, as in school. In addition, genres such as

documentaries are engaged in by many youngsters in school (over 50%). Such genres are less represented during leisure time (between 10-20 %).



**Figure 2. Comparing genres (Fiction, Documentary, Music Video, Animation and others) in and out of school in the 2006 and 2012 surveys.**

Nine out of ten pupils have worked on short fiction films, and the percentage of students with experience from such school projects does not seem to differ from 2006 (84.2%) to 2012 (82.9%). In other words, short fiction films, the genre that receives most submitted films at the Amandus film festival, is the most common genre in Media and Communication classes. These figures indicate that working with fiction films is considered a mandatory task in Media and Communication classes in upper secondary schools in Norway. Other genres, like documentaries, seem to be “institutionalized” in terms of how usual it is to work with these genres in the subject Media and Communication, and the number of students who have worked with these genres does not change over time (according to the two surveys). In general, we can identify a pattern of production practices, related to these genres, which are sustainable and do not change over time in Media and Communication in upper secondary schools.

However, this picture changes when comparing other genres between the two surveys. From 2006 to 2012, there is a slight decrease in the percentage of students reporting on the production of animation films in schools (down from 54.5% to 45.3%). On the other hand, an increasing number of students in Media and Communication classes report making music videos as a school project, as well as making moving images in this genre in their leisure time.

We might indicate that, while genres change or are stable as part of a formal learning context in school, production practices during leisure time are less organized (Gilje, Frölunde, Lindstrand & Öhman-Gullberg, 2010; Maher, Phelps, Urane & Lee, 2012). Looking at the free text data (the students were allowed to write 140-200 characters about films made during their leisure time), a considerably high number of the students report that they just made ‘something’ for fun with friends, a video from their holiday, or spoofs to put on YouTube.

There are also interesting issues with regard to gender in the data. In 2006, 62 per cent of the boys and 38 per cent of the girls reported that they had made films during their leisure time as middle school (grade 8-10 in Norway) students as well as alongside their studies in Media and Communication. In 2012, these numbers changed dramatically, showing that 53 per cent of the girls produced films during their leisure time as well as at school. Among boys, 48 per cent reported the same. Looking at gender and genre differences, 5.4 per cent of the girls and 16 per cent of the boys reported that they had made animations during their leisure time in the 2006 study. Six years later, in 2012, 10.9 percent of the girls and 26.3 percent of the boys said the same. This implies that animation as an institutionalized genre in school has become less common, while outside school both boys and girls produce more animations. Looking at music videos, this has been a favorite among girls in both 2006 and 2012, with an increase from 19.2 to 29.3 per cent, and for boys from 12.3 to 20.3 per cent during the same periods. On the other hand, a genre such as ‘Jackass’, hardly noticeable in the school data, had declined from 24.5 per cent to 16.5 per cent among the boys from 2006 to 2012 and from 11.4 to 5.7 per cent among the girls. Consequently, the context of media education in schools seems to offer a context for cultural production that equals the differences between production practices found in an out-of-school context. This finding is in line with what we know about other practices in school, and mirrors the democratic and social role of schooling in society.

## Discussion

During the Amandus festival’s 25 years, two periods have been worthy of investigation. The first is the five years from 1996 to 2001. During these years, the number of films submitted to the festival increased, congruent with increased accessibility and the availability of new camcorders and formats. In this sense, the development of the Amandus film festival is an indicator of how young people started to participate using the new technology available in non-formal contexts like media workshops. The second and more significant increase in the number of submitted films took place in 2003-2005. This development correlates with that of Media and Communication classes and school settings. Starting out with 17 schools in 2000, this subject was offered by more than 80 schools in 2005. In this year nearly 6000 students applied to study this subject. By linking the number of submitted films with policy-initiated new contexts for digital production, we would like to elaborate by making three points on the relationship between these initiatives in and out of school. These three points illustrate how cultures of digital filmmaking in Norway have been ‘institutionalized’ during the last three decades.

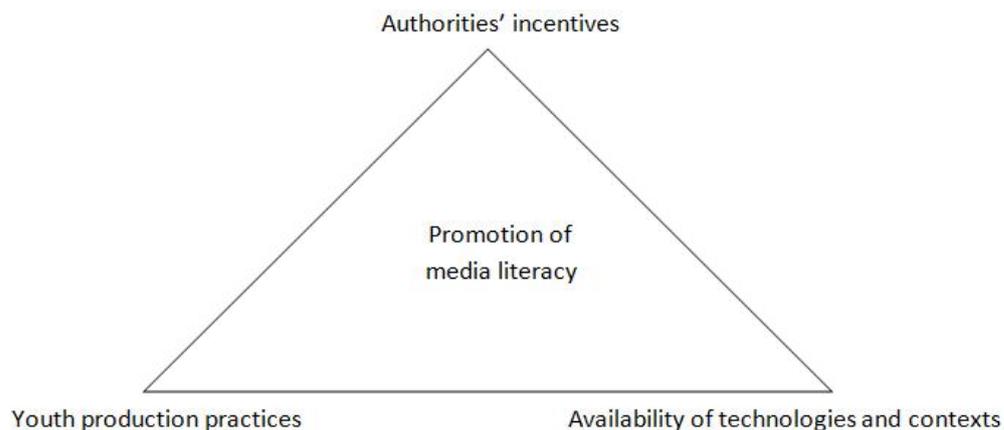
First, context matters. In earlier discussions on the relationship between the Amandus film festival and moving image production in classrooms, several researchers have mentioned how the award winning films in many cases are made with the classroom as a context. The non-formal context of the Amandus film festival in combination with the formal context of schooling, as well as media-workshops, seems to give young people opportunities to work with moving images for specific purposes and with concrete goals. These goals differ from those of making moving images during leisure time. Although we can identify some (mainly boys, see point three below) who take an interest in making moving images for specific purposes, (being what Leadbeater et al. have termed Pro-Ams (2004)), we see that most youngsters in Media and Communication classes make films ‘just for fun’ during their leisure time. In other words, the Amandus film festival has over two decades given young filmmakers a specific goal, and the diverse contexts of production have provided youngsters with resources in terms of time, structure and scaffolding in addition to technology (an important issue from the mid-90s to around 2006).

Our second issue relates to genres and how they vary in and out of school. This topic underlines how contexts, initiated by policymaking, have placed emphasis on some genres and over time institutionalized some specific genres which constitute practices of production. As indicated in the data from the *Amandus* film festival, short fiction films, documentaries, animation, and, more recently, music videos are the main genres to be identified in the survey data. In this sense, this festival has made it possible for young people to develop their understanding of genre as well as of working with digital tools in their filmmaking. Even though the curriculum of the subject of Media and Communication was revised considerably in 2007/2008, the genres made in school remain more or less the same. As regards questions about genre and projects, there were few changes from 2006 to 2012. For instance, in both 2006 and 2012, genres like short fiction films and documentaries were the most common projects genres in Media and Communication classes. Thus, we argue that some specific genres have been institutionalized over the last two decades. This point illustrates how specific practices are appreciated in school, while others are not.<sup>11</sup>

Lastly, the survey data, as well as the overview of submitted films to *Amandus*, reveal some interesting differences in relation to gender, an area quite seldom problematized in studies of digital literacy (Mills, 2010; Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). In general, more girls than boys are Media and Communication students in upper secondary schools in Norway. The gap between boys and girls has also increased from 2006 to 2012. In 2006, approximately 2700 boys and 3200 girls joined the study. However, in 2012 the statistical data shows that more than 4200 students are female, while the number of male students is still around 3000. Gender issues are specifically articulated in the film policy white papers.<sup>12</sup> When it comes to gender issues and strategic regulations in the film business, it is a pronounced aim in the film report to the Storting that the female percentage in what the Government defines at key positions in Norwegian film production should be at least 40 per cent (St.meld. nr. 22, 2007) (see the endnote for more details).<sup>13</sup> This is maintained in *Amandus Talent*, which is a national talent development programme involving fifteen young people recruited from all over Norway who participate in a one-week “master class” during the festival. The survey data indicates that the subject of Media and Communication in upper secondary has provided a context for female filmmakers, where they can work across a wide range of genres which they would usually not work with out of school.

## Concluding remarks on digital literacy and cultures of production across contexts

In the present article, we have combined a top-down, policy-oriented perspective with data that shows how young people participate with their films in diverse contexts. We started out by describing how policy makers have provided new contexts for filmmaking for young people and have thus adapted to media literacy contexts – both in their school policy (formal education), but also in the Government’s film policy initiatives. In order to understand more about production practices over time, we have presented two cases that describe production practices across contexts. The development of digital technology has been underpinning the argument, and is related to the described top-down perspective and the bottom up perspective. In the introduction we posed three interrelated research questions, which connect three related domains; authorities’ incentives, youth production practices and the availability of production resources and context. The relationship between these three research questions is illustrated in Figure 3:



**Figure 3. Promotion of media literacy as an interplay between various incentives from the authorities, young people's interest in filmmaking and available resources and contexts at the time.**

By understanding media literacy, as well as digital literacy, as an interplay between authorities' incentives and filmmaking practices among young people, we argue that filmmaking as a distinct culture of digital production has been constituted and elaborated throughout the last two decades. In order to illustrate these changes, we have been concerned with young people's engagement in moving images across different contexts, arguing that the policy within formal and non-formal contexts has been important in regard to young people's opportunities for filmmaking. We have used the Amandus film festival as a rather unique context for illustrating how young people have been involved in cultures of production and moving images over 25 years.<sup>14</sup> Even if issues relating to digital literacy are not directly addressed in the ways in which we have investigated filmmaking practices, we argue that it is important to analyze this medium in order to understand abilities and literacies in young people's engagement with digital media. Filmmaking is complex: students draw on a wide variety of literacies, using a great variety of diverse equipment and software. By combining a top-down, policy-oriented perspective with a bottom-up perspective, we have illustrated how policymaking is related to technological development and young people's production practices in various contexts and over time.

The *visual turn* (Kress, 2003) has led to increasing attention being devoted to a new understanding of literacies. In this sense, some argue that there has been a shift in semiotic power (Kress, 2010; Kress et al., 2005). More to the point, there has been a growing awareness of and attention to media literacy and digital literacy in this new digital and visual culture. Different disciplinary approaches and polarized points of view have marked these discussions. Livingstone (2003, 2004) has summarized these debates as revolving around 'the manner and purposes of public participation in society', or put otherwise, who has the power and the possibilities to extract some use from the information and communications in a technologically-mediated era.<sup>15</sup> We believe that the Amandus film festival in tandem with authorities' incentives on formal education as well as filmmaking initiatives have provided a unique context for the ability to develop a wide range of literacies through practices of digital production. The perspective provided here enables us to understand how equal opportunities for filmmaking in a new context relate to the shift in semiotic rather than technological developments as such. Digital literacy in cultures of production is always embedded in the historical development of new contexts. We have provided some perspectives on the story relating to the first three decades of young people's filmmaking in Norway.

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- 1 In addition to the academic-oriented programme, the elective subject *Media and Information Knowledge* (“*Medie- og informasjonskunnskap*”, MIK), with ancestors back to the 1980s elective media subject, has continued as an offer for pupils taking the education programme for specialization in general studies.
  - 2 A slightly different perspective is offered by Tornero and Varis (2010). In their model of media literacy as a system of competences, they locate communicative competence at the top of their hierarchy of abilities that enable an individual to create and produce messages using different codes and to disseminate them through different platforms (2010, p. 76).
  - 3 For an overview of goals related to filmmaking in the Norwegian curriculum, see: <http://gammel.nfi.no/barnunge/lareplanene.html>
  - 4 The survey in 2006 was sent to 80 schools; 64 participated (n=735). The 2012 survey was sent to 96 schools; 60 participated (n=633). The survey is organized in clusters of queries. About half of the questions are detailed inquiries about the youngsters’ production practices when working with moving image production.
  - 5 First: have you any experience with making moving images in your leisure time; second: what kind of genres have you worked in, in your leisure time?
  - 6 Since 1978, Norway had contributed films to an international film contest, “Decima Musa”, initiated by the *International Council for Educational Media* (ICEM). By also establishing a Norwegian contest, the aim was to increase interest in filmmaking among young people and hopefully recruit more high quality films to the international contest. In this respect, the film festival could also work as a door opener abroad. The idea came up to link the new youth film contest as a “little brother” to the *Amanda Award* and the *Norwegian International Film Festival* that had been instituted in 1985 – thus, the name *Amandus*. With the LMU as the head of the jury, the first prizes were awarded in Haugesund in August the following year. 30 contributions were submitted, and one of the winners in this opening year was the 16-year-old John Andreas Andersen who later became one of Norway’s leading directors of photography. (Information provided by Trygve Panhoff and Vigdis Lian.)

- 7 The "all time high" number of contributions in 2005 was partly caused by an extra grant given by the Norway 2005 Jubilee (100 years since the Norway-Sweden disunion) to a side contest and marketing.
- 8 Of the three award-winning films in the Amandus film festival's pioneer year in 1988. One was on a Super 8 mm film format while the two others were VHS video.
- 9 From 2012, it became for the first time possible to upload videos online, an opportunity almost all of the contributors chose.
- 10 In the festival's early years, there were three age specific groups (10-13, 14-17, 18-20), then two (10-14 and 15-19) before they ended up with only one group with an upper age limit on 19 years.
- 11 There are, however, two challenges involved in looking at these reported data. As mentioned above, genres are a question of interpretation and definition. In the context of school production, the task given is quite often genre-specific. However, when asking about genres during leisure time, the concept is quite problematic. The findings in other projects indicate that many youngsters make spoofs and short video clips just for fun. The ability to post these small videos on YouTube as well as other sites has fuelled these cultures of production among youngsters during their leisure time (Buckingham & Willett, 2006; Willett, 2009).
- 12 In the Media and Communication curricula, gender questions are not an issue, although equality and equal opportunities in formal education are emphasized in the White Paper on school reform (St.meld. nr. 30, 2004). In 2010, the Norwegian film industry itself (*Bransjerådet for film*) came up with a package of measures in an attempt to neutralize the gender differences in order to reach the 40 per cent goal. With the exception of establishing the gender balance in schools, the above-mentioned reports do not have a specific focus on young people.
- 13 This aim was the result of several reports from 2004 and 2006 that documented that, despite gender balance in educational institutions (including The Norwegian Film School), a significant imbalance could be found in recruitment to the film industry in Norway (*Når menn velger menn og kvinner velger menn* from AFI, 2004; "Recruitment to the Norwegian film industry" from AC Nielsen, 2006; and *Tallenes tale – Den offentlige pengestrømmen i norske film i et kjønnsperspektiv* from Kulturmegeterne, 2006). Several means were specified from the Government's side to reach this 40 per cent goal, especially linked up to public grants for film development projects. One of these means was that when grants were given to talent development, in mentor arrangements and in film scholarships, at least 40 per cent should go to each gender.
- 14 The overall aim of the festival has always been to stimulate young people to express themselves when working with moving images, and to contribute to a higher level in their productions. Winning the contest should be a boost, and (to paraphrase the organisers) the jury has always aimed at being encouraging, positive and constructive in its feedback (Jonassen & Lindrup, 2002; Panhoff, 2007). Another important dimension was the opportunity for screenings and publicity. Amandus as a meeting place has also always been essential for networking with peers, but also for meeting and being inspired by professional filmmakers and "big shots" from the industry. Obtaining professional feedback on productions has been of great value to participants. However, primarily, the Amandus film festival seems to position itself as an arena for learning and talent development through the many workshops and seminars held for pupils and media teachers during the three-day festival.
- 15 We can find here the criticisms that consider literacy as being a source of inequality because it is a normative, divisive and elitist construction; such criticisms are critical of the view on literacy within the tradition of Enlightenment, which views literacy as a tool for the democratization and empowering of 'normal' people (Livingstone, 2004).