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Hybridity within peer production: The power negotiation of Chinese fansub groups

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MSc in Global Media and Communication

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Hybridity within peer production: The power negotiation of Chinese fansub groups

Zongxiao Rong

ABSTRACT

In recent years, technology breakthrough has given birth to a series of online collaborative projects like Wikipedia and the Free and Open Source Software movement. Scholars name these projects ‘common-based peer production’ to distinguish them from their industrial predecessors for their unique features including non-hierarchical structures and non-proprietary systems. Using Chinese fansub groups as a case, this study aims to reveal that the specific form of peer production is not only shaped by potentials offered by technology affordance, but also shaped by the constructive process of institutional powers.

Despite abundant research from both celebratory approaches and critical approaches towards peer production, there is a lack of studies bridging these two poles and offering a more nuanced investigation into complex negotiation processes that shape the form of peer production. Through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study attempts to answer two research questions: (1) What is the specific form of Chinese fansub groups as a peer production project? (2) What kind of negotiation process is shaping such a specific form? Findings suggest that it is the dynamic negotiation process between technology affordance and institutional powers that ultimately determines the form of Chinese fansub groups. The strategies used by institutional powers to shape the development of Chinese fansub groups without killing its productive potentials are explained in three dimensions: First, technology development reduces production costs, rendering Chinese fansub groups production non-market and non-proprietary; institutional power redirects such common orientation into private orientation on an organizational level through competition between groups. Second, the high efficiency of Chinese fansub groups not only results from its decentralized structure, but also results from incorporating advantages of the industrial production model and cooperating with commercial organizations. Third, while digitally enabled participatory culture empowers peer production with great productive autonomy, such autonomy is significantly limited by both policy and market logic. The main limitation of this research lies in data collection. More interviews should be carried out to ensure diversity and representativeness. Additionally, supplementary methods of data collection should be combined with qualitative interviewing to form a more contextualized understanding of Chinese fansub groups.

INTRODUCTION

The technology breakthrough in the past few years has given birth to a series of online collaborative projects like Wikipedia and Linux. Scholars like Benkler (2006) term such projects ‘common-based peer production model’ to celebrate their radical potentials. Based on the collaborative possibilities offered by information technologies, these common-based peer production projects distinguish themselves from their industrial predecessors in terms of their flattened organizational structure, grassroots participants and non-market production orientation. Taking Free and Open Source software (FOSS) for example, unlike the traditional software production that is based on a market and proprietary system, FOSS projects depend on self-organizing communities from the general public to achieve common goals. Software produced by FOSS projects is characterized as a spirit of commons that is not only free for public use, but also permits revision and improvements based on released software codes (Stallman, 1999). The marvellous potentials of common-based peer production in economics, politics and culture make scholars suggest that it may become a revolutionary challenge for the conventional power structures. Generally speaking, in discussing the common-based peer production model, there are two disparate academic approaches, namely the celebratory approach and the critical approach.

The celebratory approach for analyzing peer-production departs from a basic assumption that since we entered the ‘Web 2.0 world’, the digitally enabled peer production models are replacing their industrial antecedents, dramatically revolutionizing the logic of economics, politics and culture. Literature with regard to this approach covers various fields including journalism (Gillmor, 2006; Witt, 2006), politics (Jenkins, 2004), science (Benkler, 2002), library science (Weinberger, 2007), and culture (Jenkins, 2004; Lessig, 2004). Within these literatures, an absolute dichotomy is created between the common-based peer production model and the commodity-based industrial production model (Christian, 2009). Scholars in this camp are confident that this new model of production has a transformational effect on information, society, and individuals alike. Together with the flexibility of digital technologies and the intrinsic socio-psychological motivations for individual participation, the possibility of massive, distributed coordination makes peer production a powerful and attractive replacement to the industrial model. For that reason, Jenkins warned that “producers who fail to make their peace with this new participatory culture will face declining goodwill and diminished revenues” (2004, p. 25).

In contrary to the somehow utopian and technological determinist celebratory approach towards peer production, a more critical approach emphasizing social continuity is developed

by a series of scholars, arguing that contemporary networked society first of all is still a capitalist society oriented towards accumulating economic, political, and cultural capitals. For example, Terranova (2000) coined the term 'social factory' to manifest the exploitative nature of peer production, arguing that the peer production is immanent to capitalism and the applauded digital economy is not a new phenomenon but simply a new phase of the long history of capitalistic experimentation. Generally speaking, this approach criticizes the celebratory approach for regarding the changes connected to new media as radical novelties and ignoring the continuing dominance of capitalist structures (Christian, 2009; Fuchs, 2009). Additionally, this approach criticizes the celebratory approach for lacking a Marxian perspective, which leads to ignorance in analyzing why peer production is constructed in a particular way and the inequity of the nodes that are connected within peer production (Berry 2008).

The confrontation between the two approaches focusing on discontinuity and continuity has mapped two extreme poles for analyzing common-based peer production. However, the space between common-based peer production and traditional commodity-based production model is never a vacuum. As Baym and Burnett (2009) argue, it is too simplistic to create the binary of either celebratory or critical approaches towards fan work in the media convergence age. Consequently, a more nuanced approach towards the peer production model should be applied to examine the complexity within peer production.

In this sense, I use Chinese fansub groups as a case to bridge these two analytical poles and to reveal the complex negotiation process that shapes the form of peer production. Generally speaking, a Chinese fansub group is an online fan community which produces and distributes Chinese subtitles of foreign media products. There are three reasons for my choice of case: First, existing literatures have proven that Chinese fansub groups possess the basic elements of common-based peer production (Lee, 2011a), making it a representative example for the study of peer production. Second, unlike other prominent online collaborative projects such as Wikipedia and FOSS, fansub groups rely on finished products produced by commercial media industries rather than create their own products; which makes it more vulnerable to both commercial and political powers. Third, the specific institutional context of China distinguishes Chinese fansub groups from their counterparts in other countries like Japanese anime fansub groups (Meng, 2012). Consequently, the universality and particularity of Chinese fansub groups make them the best case to investigate the tensions in the development of peer production.

Through exploring Chinese fansub groups' current practices, this study intends to unveil the complex negotiation process shaping peer production. Previous debates on peer production will be critically discussed in the theoretical part of this dissertation; the conceptual framework and research questions will also be illustrated in the same part. The researcher intends to find out: What is the current form of Chinese fansub groups? What kind of power negotiation leads to such a form? In the methodological part of this study, the justification for the researcher's choice of semi-structured interviewing and thematic analysis will be given. The subsequent results and discussion part will present and analyze the results gained from the interviews. The conclusion will summarize the main findings and implications, which will be followed by an evaluation of this study and suggestions for future research in this field.

THEORY

The confrontation between the two approaches focusing on discontinuity and continuity has mapped two extreme poles for analyzing common-based peer production.

Celebratory approach towards peer production

The celebratory approach regards peer production as a radical novelty which could replace its industrial antecedents. In depicting such discontinuity and its political and economic potential, literature in this camp brings forward three recurring claims.

First, contrary to the industrial model's market and proprietary orientation, peer production is non-market and non-proprietary, which lead to the loss of labour alienation. For Benkler and other scholars (Barabási & Frangos, 2002; Tapscott & Williams, 2006), the decreasing cost of production brought about by digital networks makes it possible for individuals to give up property rights and 'gift' their knowledge and informational labour to the public. Instead of material payments, the only payments participants expect are 'psychological well-being and gratification' and 'social connectedness' (Benkler, 2006, p. 6). Benkler and others focus especially closely on how labourers in collaborative projects lose the alienation characterized by the industrial era and feel "body and soul together, have meanings to their lives as individuals and as social beings" (Benkler, 2006, p. 34). Scholars in this camp argue that participants can bring the full range of their passions, skills, and social and professional interests to bear on their labour and choose to participate on their own terms. (Benkler, 2006, p. 69)

Second, peer production has a decentralized organization structure, which leads to high efficiency and a flattening of hierarchy. Scholars argue that the relationship between media industry and consumer in the pre-digital age was established on the basis of hierarchy, as in 'show-and-tell' advertising or 'telling people what they need to know' journalism (Deuze, 2007). However, the peer production model is touted to embrace a decentralized structure, which can be distinguished from the hierarchical and rigid structure of the industrial era (Shirky, 2008). In addition to its democratic and egalitarian prospect, such decentralization manifests its high efficiency from two dimensions. First, compared with monopolized elite participation in the industrial production model, the increasingly blurry distinction between digital production and consumption enable an unprecedented scale of participation in the production of culture (Jenkins, 2004). Second, resources and tasks in peer production are allocated through decentralized decision-making rather than a hierarchical governance structure. Such decentralization is suggested by consensus scholars (Bauwens, 2005; Valk & Martin, 2006) to be more efficient and more readily adaptive to fast-paced and complex informational environments. The most classic statement of this point of view comes from the software world – "given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow" (Raymond & Young, 2001). Such statement captures the logic of the high efficiency of peer production model that massive numbers of contributors would safeguard the quality of contributions (Weinberger, 2007) because decentralized decision-making process on a particular topic can be more useful than the conclusions of one individual, however qualified he or she may be (Surowiecki, 2004).

Third, peer production will empower consumers by promising individual autonomy and political freedom. Scholars in this camp argue that new digital technology will tilt toward the individual's interests rather than toward those of the commercial or governmental spheres, providing individuals with an unparalleled degree of control over the flow of media (Deuze, 2007) and enabling previously passive consumers to become the captains of their own attention, to focus their interests on their values (Turow, 2005). Coleman (2009) uses the Debian community as an example to demonstrate how FOSS developers reconfigure central tenets of the liberal tradition to defend against efforts to constrain their productive autonomy. Keltly (2008) conceives of peer production participants as 'recursive public' engaged in building and maintaining an infrastructure that allows them to come into being which, in turn, constitutes them as autonomous and creative individuals. Besides individual autonomy and political freedom, peer production is considered to serve not only as a remarkable medium of production for various kinds of information goods but also as a context for the formation of moral and political virtues (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006).

In a word, together with the flexibility of digital technologies and the intrinsic social-psychological motivations for individual participation, the possibility of massive, distributed coordination of effort makes peer production a powerful and attractive replacement for the industrial model. Scholars in this camp are confident that this new model of production has a transformational effect on information, society, and individuals alike. However, a common problem lying behind these celebratory arguments is their hasty and absolute description of technology and economics as determining the milieu (Berry, 2008). Scholars of the celebratory approach tend to declare a revolutionary new era of network production, presuming that those online collaborations have absolute affordance towards non-proprietary production, high-efficiency organization and political autonomy. Such tendency towards technological determinism is highly likely to overemphasize the short-term radical implication of technology and underestimate the long-term effect of social construction. Additionally, discourses in this camp tend to present an idealized binary between the present and the past: non-proprietary versus proprietary, decentralized versus hierarchy, psychological gratification versus alienated. While such binary is useful as analytical framework as it clearly presents the advantages of novelty, it also neglects the complexity and hybridity within the binary (Meng & Wu, 2013). What's more, though scholars in this camp apply a political economy approach to analyze the difference between peer production and industrial production from dimensions like resource allocation and exploitation, most of their analysis focuses on how a peer production project functions rather than how or why it functions in a particular way (Berry, 2008). Such absence may conceal the inequality between different components within peer production: different peer production participants may be regarded as equally connected nodes in the network (Latour, 2005).

Critical approach towards peer production

In contrast to the somehow utopian and technological determinist discontinuity approach towards peer production, a more critical approach emphasizing continuity is developed by a number of scholars, arguing that contemporary networked society first of all is still a capitalist society oriented towards accumulating economic, political, and cultural capitals. The basic assumption lying behind this stance echoes the constructivism theorists' view that technology does not have a momentum of its own to "pass through a neutral social medium" (Hutchby, 2001) and it is the complex relationships between technology and the social circumstances that lead to the shaping and reshaping process of technology. In particular, such a critical approach could be divided into two strands.

The first strand of the critical approach challenges the key assumptions raised by the celebratory approach, arguing that the common-based peer production is not as utopian as scholars claim and that the industrial model is still beneficial to current society. For example, the liberating experiences that Jenkins and others have mentioned are considered by this trend as part of strategies for exploitation (Turow, 2005). Instead of criticizing the industrial model's alienation process, this trend argues that such a process actually protects the workplace from the individual's personal desires and ensures the autonomy of private life. Consequently it is the peer production model that undermines private autonomy by turning formerly private pleasures such as playing games into forms of labour and allowing work to enter intimate domains (Galloway & Thacker, 2007; Illouz, 2007; Kline, Dyer-Witheford, & De Peuter, 2003; Terranova, 2004; Turner, 2009). Another example is that this strand challenges peer production's decentralization assumption by suggesting that peer governance mechanisms may not be as liberating as many theorists suggest because the absence of formal rules, for instance, allows charismatic individuals to determine who is appointed or dismissed (Kreiss, Finn, & Turner, 2011).

The second strand of the critical approach is more radical than the first one, arguing that regardless of its seemingly revolutionary potential, the peer-production model will be ultimately tamed and incorporated into the current capitalistic system (Berry, 2008). Scholars in this trend criticize the celebratory approach for its abstraction of peer production from economic institutions within which it is embedded. For example, Meijas(2013) points out that the fact that the social network contains thousands of distributed participants producing content gives us the wrong impression that the ownership of the social platform is also distributed. However, evidence collected for the media industries by Jenkins(2004) proves that much of the consumer co-creation is in fact instigated in corporations and "is taking place within the same appliances [...] within the same franchise [...] within the same company [...] and within the same fandom" (p. 34). Additionally, both macro and micro studies in a variety of fields consistently show how and why formal organizations utilize digital peer production. At the macro level, scholars of the network economy suggest how the free labour of peers is commoditized by those formal organizations that, through their relationship to capital, extract value from them (Terranova, 2004). Schäfer (2008), for instance, even argues that peer production is better conceptualized in terms of an 'extended cultural industry' (p. 17). At a more micro level an emerging body of literature examines the mechanics by which for-profit institutions engage with and make use of technologically enabled social worlds. For example, Langlois and Elmer (2009) investigate the circulation of Wikipedia entries on the web in an effort to determine the integration of its collaborative model into existing proprietary web formats. When discussing the confrontation of corporate

media and digital commons, Coleman and Dyer-Witheford (2007) also put forth a set of progressive positions from rejectionists to reformers and radicals to describe different strategies taken by corporate power towards participatory culture.

While the critical approach contributes to rebalance the excessive optimism of the celebratory approach, there is one problem in their discourses: authors in the critical camp seldom decide what kind of peer production at what form and in what scale they want to investigate. Instead of basing its criticism on concrete empirical cases, most of the criticism in this camp is built on existing theories of the celebratory approach (Berry, 2008; Kreiss et al., 2011). Such theory-to-theory strategy turns this camp into the metaphysics of peer production.

Tendency to connect celebratory and critical approaches

There are many suggestions in the literature that the overlapping between these two models would create a hybridity. For example, Berry (2008) assumes that any form of networked digital technology will be hybrid, combining the advantages and disadvantages of both industrial mass production and networked peer-production. Instead of simply choosing one side of argument and unthinkingly attacking the other side, a more nuanced approach is put forward to reject such reductionism. Jenkins suggests that we should regard various peer production cases brought about by media convergence as “both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom up consumer driven process” (2004, p. 37) and analyze each specific situation where these two forces either reinforce each other, creating closer, more rewarding, relations or conflict with each other, resulting in constant renegotiations of power.

Such a nuanced approach makes scholars re-examine the assumptions made by both critical and celebratory scholars. As a result, complexity is found within each battlefield between critical and celebratory scholars. Instead of taking celebratory scholars’ view that there is a flattening power relationship among peer production or critical scholars’ view that hierarchy still exists, Bergquist & Ljungberg (2001) argue that participants do execute power hierarchy in the gift economy through giving or receiving more or less attention but the giver–receiver relationship also changes over time and must be understood as a dynamic process with no fixed dependencies. In peer production motivation analysis, Shah (2006) builds a framework to illustrate the association between governance structure and the evolution of participant motives, arguing that motivation varies for different participation stages and different open source community governance structures. By analyzing organizational structure, studies of governance mechanisms in the Linux and Wikipedia communities suggest that hybridity

characterizes the cultural norms and formal rules of these communities such that there is a benevolent dictatorship and that the norms of meritocracy are present in these peer production projects (Berdou, 2011; Elliott & Scacchi, 2002; Mockus, Fielding, & Herbsleb, 2002; Raymond & Young, 2001; Shah, 2006; S. Weber, 2005). In analyzing peer production's relationship with its 'enemies', Berdou (2011) examines the links between learning, division of labour and commercialization, creates a typology of commercial involvement in FL/OSS. The analysis reveals the diversity and evolution of FL/OSS communities and their connections with other socio-economic networks and institutional practices.

All these studies suggest a necessity of reconsidering various peer production models and taking a nuanced analytical approach. In this sense, I'd like to use Chinese fansub groups as a cross-section to manifest the inner complexity of peer production and to modify the reductionism brought about by either celebratory or critical approaches.

Chinese fansub groups

Within the current literature, there are broadly two perspectives in the discourses of fansub groups: the first one is the culture perspective, which positions fansub groups as a pivot for transcultural communication; the second is the peer-production perspective, which positions fansub groups as a hyper-mediated way of production that enables collaboration among large groups of individuals to provide information, knowledge and cultural goods. In this dissertation, my study on fansub groups will start from the peer production perspective.

The current literature on fansub groups from a peer production perspective could also be categorized according to the above framework. The first group positions fansub groups as a discontinuity from the traditional production model, arguing that the practices of fansub groups are modifying the exclusive understanding of copyright (Lee, 2011a) and unsettling industrial model of global distribution (Lee, 2011b). The second group takes a critical approach towards fansub groups, arguing that fansub groups are subject to capitalism. For example, Leonard (2005) argues that fansub group activities constitute the demand formation phase necessary, but ancillary, to capitalist activity. However, there are flaws to the above approaches. First, they are to some extent descriptive and limit their scope within the fansub group itself and do not examine the phenomenon under a broader picture (Boyko, 2012; Qiu, 2010). Second, these two groups follow an either/or logic that depicts the peer production either as a celebratory novelty or a disguised continuity for capitalism. What's

more, a nuanced analysis is absent in all of these trends, the complexity and heterogeneity within peer-production is overlooked.

However, there do exist literatures suggesting a more nuanced approach towards peer production. Denison (2011) suggests that as fansub groups increase in number and spread globally, it is their heterogeneity that seems to rest at the heart of discourses around the ethics of fansubbing. Meng and Wu also suggest that the Chinese fansub group is a hybrid of commons-based and commodity productions, which is negotiated through Chinese institutional power, community norms and individual subjectivity (Meng, 2012; Meng & Wu, 2013).

Conceptual framework and research question

Generally speaking, this study follows two interconnected steps: first, the researcher will explore the specific form of Chinese fansub groups as peer production; second, the researcher will investigate the reason for such specific formation. These two steps utilize two different sets of frameworks.

First, in order to answer the ‘what’ question, this research is strongly framed by Benkler’s (2002, 2006; Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006; Berdou, 2011) works on peer production in which he declares that the highly mediated network production is superior to traditional industrial production in terms of production, governing and ownership. However, although Benkler’s analysis on peer production has already given out a clear and operable framework, the research does not exclusively depend on only one scholar. Analysis from other scholars on peer production, including both the celebratory and the critical approach, is also used as supplementary framework in this study. Consequently, assumptions from both sides will be tested in the case of Chinese fansub groups. By identifying the extreme ends occupied by two academic approaches and the spectrum within them, this study aims to confirm the accurate position of Chinese fansubs in different dimensions debated by the two camps such as ownership, productive autonomy and organization. Additionally, while these dimensions were only discussed on the individual level in previous peer production studies, this study will also include an organizational level. Questions like motivation for production and awareness of copyright will not only be investigated for individual Chinese fansub group participants, but also will be investigated for the whole group. Additionally, inspired by Latour (2005), the competition between different Chinese fansub groups will also be examined to reveal the unequal power relations within peer production.

Second, based on the ‘what’ question, the study takes one step further to investigate the ‘how’ question to explain the specific form of Chinese fansub group. Instead of applying an extreme realism approach that emphasizes the constraining power of technical capacities or a constructivism approach that emphasizes the shaping power of human agency, this study uses a framework suggested by Hutchby (2001) that offers reconciliation between these two opposing poles. Hutchby suggests that technology could be understood as “artefacts which may be both shaped by and shaping of the practices human use in interaction with, around and through them” (Hutchby, 2001, p. 444). In this sense, the specific form of Chinese fansub groups would be understood as the result of both technology affordance and Chinese institutional power. Ultimately, the objective of this research is to answer a two-part question:

Q1: As a peer production project, what is the specific form of Chinese fansub groups?

Q2: What kind of power negotiation leads to this specific form?

While the first question tends to be descriptive, the second question tends to be exploratory. By looking at the case of Chinese fansub groups, the researcher hopes to contribute a nuanced empirical study to bridge the extreme poles of peer production study and to reveal the complex negotiation process that is shaping peer production.

METHODOLOGY

Addressing the above research questions requires the analysis of Chinese fansub group participants’ daily practice and the reasons behind their specific choices. Consequently, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate way to “map and understand the respondents’ life world” and to introduce “interpretive frameworks to understand the actors’ accounts in more conceptual or abstract terms” (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p. 39). The data from the interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis to reveal the key issues from the transcripts. This part will first justify the methodological choices and then summarize the methods and procedures adopted in this study.

Prior to this research, many studies on fansub groups adopted qualitative interview as methodology. As a frequently used qualitative research method, interviews could provide the researcher with profound understanding of both the manifestation and reason of current Chinese fansub groups as a specific form of peer production. Bauer & Gaskell (2000) argue that the aim of qualitative interview is “a fine-textured understanding of beliefs, attitudes,

values and motivations in relation to the behaviours of people in particular social contexts” (p. 39). Such purpose is relevant because the research questions in this study focus on issues like Chinese fansub groups’ proprietary awareness, production motivation, and attitudes towards commercialization. Additionally, the ‘thick description’ advantage of qualitative interviews mentioned by Gaskell (2000, p. 39) could help the researcher to investigate the complex negotiation process that is shaping the specific form of Chinese fansub groups.

According to Berger (2011), there are four types of interviews: informal, unstructured, semi-structured, and structured. This study chose the semi-structured type to avoid the disadvantages of other types. First, the informal and unstructured interviews could create potentials for a variety of opportunities by offering a spontaneous and free-flowing conversation (Esterberg, 2002). However, since previous studies on peer production have already offered a preliminary analytical framework for this study, it would be inefficient and digressive to apply an unfocused methodology. Second, structured interviews are planned and prescribed with no variety in the questions (Bryman, 2004), which is not suitable for probing “important and unplanned information” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 117) that is not part of the research plan. Consequently, it is appropriate to make the interview semi-structured, modifying each interview according to different situations to enable “both model-building and model-testing” (Wengraf, 2001, p. 5).

A pilot study was conducted in April 2013 in order to test the capability of interviews for answering the research questions. It should be noticed that semi-structured interviews are not without flaws. The first flaw lies in the interviewees’ perspective. Interviewees’ willingness and capability to communicate with the interviewer have great impact on the quality of data. As it is impossible to assume that “everyone is equally capable of expressing his or her thoughts” (Seidman, 2012, p. 4), the quality of interview is instable.

The second flaw of qualitative interviewing results from the difficulty for interviewers to maintain neutrality in the interview (Esterberg, 2002). Researchers’ complex social experience makes it difficult to avoid “creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 114). In this study, the researcher’s experience of being a former Chinese fansub group member is both an advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, it provides the researcher with a relatively comprehensive understanding of fansub groups; on the other hand, it prevents the researcher from playing a neutral role in interviewing even with a topic guide designed to prevent it.

Sampling

Snowball sampling was used in this study. As a frequently used strategy for investigating closed and hard-to-reach communities, snowball sampling begins with several individual samples and then develops into a larger sample which is sufficient for analysis (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002). As a former fansub group member, the researcher is aware that the legal ambiguity makes Chinese fansub members to be cautious and low-profile. Worrying about too much exposure may harm their fansub group, participants may choose to reject a stranger's interview. Thus, since snowball sampling requires friend's recommendations, interviewees will have a better trust in the researcher and talk more.

In order to avoid the similarity of the sample and to broaden the social context (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011), the researcher started the snowball sampling with 3 disparate respondents and asked them to recommend more fansub group participants that meet the criteria of this study. In order to reveal "the range of opinions, the different representations of the issue" (Gaskell, 2000, p. 41), the researcher carefully filtered the respondents to guarantee the diversity of sample. Finally, 15 interviewees covering different indicators like group scale, position, years of experience were selected for this Chinese fansub group study.

Interview schedule

All of the interviews were conducted online through the software QQ (a popular instant messaging service in China) and Skype. There are reasons for online interviews instead of face-to-face interviews: first, the geographical dispersion of fansub participants makes face-to-face interview highly inefficient; second, online interview may protect participants' privacy as the legal ambiguity of fansub groups is quite sensitive. Before each interview, a consent form was emailed to the interviewee to ensure that respondents could decide whether and how to engage in my research based on a comprehensive understanding of the risks and benefits of the study (Endacott, 2004). After interviewees signed the consent form and emailed them back, an interview would be scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher would remind the interviewee of recording and asked for permission to record the interview. At the end of each interview, the researcher would thank the interviewee for the cooperation and asked for oral permissions for follow-up interviews.

Interview guide

An interview guide was used as reminder of the discussion topics. In the pilot study, the interview guide was exclusively constructed on Benkler's (2002, 2006; Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006) discourses on common-based peer production. However, results from the pilot study suggested that such an interview guide was not sufficiently useful because the complex practice of Chinese fansub groups could not be merely explained by Benkler's framework. In this sense, based on discourses from both celebratory scholars and critical scholars, the researcher modified the interview guide to manifest the main points of both camps' debates. The new interview guide includes three research topics: 1) the non-proprietary and non-market feature of Chinese fansub group production; 2) the efficiency of Chinese fansub group production; 3) the productive autonomy of Chinese fansub group production.

Based on the researcher's previous experiences in fansub groups, the abstract themes were turned into tangible questions regarding fansub groups' routine practices. For instance, the research topic of productive autonomy was operationalized into several questions about the regulation and rules of different phases of fansub group production. In addition to the three topics covered in the interview guide, sufficient flexibility was guaranteed in each interview according to different answers and responses.

Thematic analysis

In this essay, a thematic analysis was applied to "analyze classifications and present themes related to data" (Alhojailan, 2012, p. 10). Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model was used as a guideline for analysis. The researcher first transcribed all the 15 interview records into written forms. Based on discourses from both celebratory and critical scholars on the topic of common-based peer production, the researcher generalized three deductive codes: 1) Chinese fansub group's non-market orientation and non-proprietary attitude 2) Chinese fansub group's efficiency strategy 3) Chinese fansub group's productive autonomy. Then the researcher read the transcripts line-by-line and tried to put the data into categories based on the initial codes. After all data was initially coded and examined, the researcher started to sort codes into themes according to research question. The researcher initially identified six themes and after comparing their similarities and differences, the researcher combined them into three themes. Then the researcher reexamined these three themes to see whether they were coherent, distinctive and able to accurately reflect the whole database (Braun & Clarke,

2006). Finally, the researcher gave names to these themes according to their association with the research question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the results of 15 interviews will be critically discussed in the context of the research questions and the conceptual framework. This part is divided into two parts: first, three recurring themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews are discussed in turn; second, a concluding discussion is given to reveal the interconnection between these three themes. While the discussion of the three themes aims to depict the current practices of Chinese fansub groups and to identify fansub groups within academic debates, the concluding discussion focuses on revealing the negotiation process that shapes the specific form of Chinese fansub groups.

Theme of proprietorship and motivation

One of the key assumptions held by celebratory scholars is that the peer production is ‘non-proprietary and non-market’. According to Benkler and other scholars (Barabási & Frangos, 2002; Tapscott & Williams, 2006), the dramatically declining cost of producing and distributing digital information enable such online collaboration to free itself from proprietary strategies that emphasize market compensation. Since participants contribute their labour to peer production projects with mere expectations for “psychological well-being and gratification” and “social connectedness” (Benkler, 2006, p. 6), such a production model is regarded as a kind of ‘gift economy’ in contrary to the ‘commodity economy’. Results from interviews substantiate that Chinese fansub groups do match celebratory scholars’ non-market and non-proprietary description in terms of participants’ motivation and attitude towards proprietorship. However, it is found that such assumption is only valid on the individual level. When it comes to the overall organizational level, Chinese fansub groups exhibit strong commodity economy characteristics through inter-group competitions. Such a contrast would be discussed through two sub-themes.

Attitudes towards proprietorship

As in the case of FOSS, the resources created in peer production projects are held in common and no individual or organization could claim ownership on them. Such non-proprietary attitudes towards resources are claimed by scholars as a ‘third mode of ownership’ which is

different from private property or public property (Bauwens, 2005). However, in the case of Chinese fansub groups, the picture is much more complicated.

On an individual participant level, none of the respondents felt that they had the ownership for the subtitles they produced. Every respondent were happy that their works could be downloaded by thousands of users for free. However, when it comes to the organizational level, there is a strong sense of proprietorship between different fansub groups. Words like 'steal' and 'rob' were frequently used when respondents described the occasional subtitle misappropriation behaviours between fansub groups.

In 2011, our group was the first to finish transcribing the first series of 'Black Mirror'. To our surprise, we found that RenRen (one of the biggest fansub groups in China) fansub group stole our subtitles without any change! Who gave them the right to do so? It is our work! If you (RenRen fansub group) want to attract followers, you should work on yourself, don't steal our work! (Respondent 8)

Several mechanisms are applied by Chinese fansub groups to protect their subtitle ownership. For instance, members in one fansub group are strictly prohibited from participating in other fansub groups at the same time; an access limitation system is established between different departments within fansub groups to prevent members giving away subtitles that are being transcribed by other departments.

Such proprietorship awareness not only manifests itself in each groups' attitudes towards their products, but also manifests itself in group resources like human resources, infrastructures and opportunities for commercial cooperation. All these resources are regarded as private properties rather than common properties by each fansub group. Respondents confirmed that while there was much cooperation between fansub groups and commercial organizations, there was little cooperation between fansub groups, not to mention sharing production resources.

I think Chinese fansub groups are isolated from each other. Instead of cooperation, we compete with other for better newbies, more cooperation with commercial companies. I don't think it is possible for different groups to share resources. We only mind our own business. (Respondent 11)

The contrast between individual participant and organization in their attitudes towards proprietorship suggests that while a 'peer property model' dominates the intragroup practice

(Bauwens, 2005), it is the logic of private property that dominates the competition between fansub groups.

Motivation for production

Similar to fansub groups' attitudes towards proprietorship, their motivation for production also differs between individual level and organizational level.

The analysis of the interviews suggests that though motivations for participating in a fansub group differ from each other, none of them refers to monetary incentives. The motivations of sharing, mutual leaning and personal interest were frequently mentioned in interviews.

The reason I want to participate in a fansub group is that I love American TV series. After watching the subtitles provided by fansub group for several years, I think it is time for me to contribute to this selfless community. (Respondent 1)

An interesting finding is that though there is considerable interaction between Chinese fansub groups and commercial organizations, it does not erode their non-monetary motivations. None of the respondents felt their motivations were changed by such commercial cooperation. They only regarded their work as 'playing' though they were aware that there existed some commercialization in their fansub group.

I don't think cooperating with those commercial organizations means our motivation is not 'pure'. Yes, I know those companies make money with our subtitles and we do receive some money from them. But compared with the effort and time I contribute, the money is nothing. After all, what I care about is only transcribing the movie I like; that money is only a by-product. (Respondent 4)

It is true that on an individual level, fansub production is not for-profit and its product is only use-value for users (Bauwens, 2005). However, when it comes to the organizational level, Chinese fansub groups resemble for-profit enterprises for their strong emphasis on their products' exchange value. Interviews suggest that Chinese fansub groups compete with each other in their transcribing speed and quality for both material and immaterial payments. When the researcher asked interviewees about the reason for competition, the word 'influence' was frequently mentioned.

All fansub groups are crazy about publishing the subtitles for those popular movies first. I think the milestone for our group to be recognized as one of the best fansub groups in China was to publish the subtitles for 'Prison Break'. We gained much influence from that. (Respondent 2)

Such influence should not be merely regarded as a psychological achievement because it could be easily transformed into material resources that are essential for fansub group development. One thing is recruitment. Influential groups tend to attract more and better applicants than small groups.

When I first decided to do fansub group activities, the first name that came to my mind was Renren. After all, it is RenRen's subtitle that I always watch. (Respondent 3)

Respondent 2 who took charge of the recruiting in an influential group also admitted that he never felt worried about the lack of group members because he received applications every day; every time members quit, it was easy for him to find a replacement.

Additionally, a high influence will bring more cooperation opportunities with commercial organizations and such cooperation will in turn increase more exposure and monetary payments to this group. Respondents 5, 8, and 11 frequently expressed their envy towards the RenRen fansub group because it monopolized the majority of commercial cooperation.

Finally, high influence also means more bargaining power with commercial organizations. Due to legal ambiguity, Chinese fansub groups are vulnerable in their negotiation with commercial organizations. Consequently, a high influence will ensure safety.

Theoretically speaking, if those commercial organizations steal our subtitles, we have no way to prosecute them because our own practice is just on the edge of breaking the law. However, if we have 3 million followers on our social media account, no one dares to mess with us because we could simply publish a negative post on our website and that company's reputation will be ruined. In this sense, the better choice for those companies is to sit down and sign contracts with us. (Respondent 2)

Generally, though fansub groups appear to adhere to a non-market motivation on the individual level, the motivation manifested in competitions is clearly not merely symbolic or psychological. Considering the scarcity and material nature of resources that fansub groups compete for, it is reasonable to argue that a quasi-market motivation is embedded in fansub groups on an organizational level.

Theme of efficiency

The decentralization structure of peer production is suggested by scholars to be more efficient and more readily adaptive to fast-paced and complex informational environments (Bauwens, 2005; Valk & Martin, 2006). However, interviews suggest that the high efficiency of Chinese fansub groups not only resulted from its decentralized structure, but also resulted from absorbing advantages of the industrial production model and cooperating with commercial organizations. Three sub themes are used in this part to reveal such hybrid efficiency strategies of Chinese fansub groups.

Flexibility and modularity

Findings from interviews resonated with Midha and Palvia's (2012) study of the Open Source community which found that the increase in modularity will lead to an increase in technical success and helped attract contributions from developers. First of all, Chinese fansub groups utilize ICTs like Skype or QQ to enable scattered participants to cooperate with each other to deal with complicated tasks without the need to meet each other, which saves considerable transaction costs described by Benkler (2006). Second, digital technology makes it possible for a subtitle document to be divided into segments and delivered to participants immediately. Technically speaking, a subtitle document could be assigned to as many participants as possible and the accomplishments of each segment are independent from each other. Instead of being forced to work, participants get their assignments according to their personal interest and capability, which brings the full range of their passions, skills, and social and professional interests to bear on their labour (Benkler, 2006).

The flexibility and modularity of Chinese fansub groups make it possible for them to operate on a rather flattened organizational structure. Though there do exist 'benevolent dictatorships', leadership in fansub group is distributed and flexible.

In our groups, we do have positions like 'group directors'. But we don't think there is much difference between us. After all, they may be directors in this translating work, but they may be ordinary translators in other translating work. (Respondent 14)

Learning from industrial production

However, the analysis of interviews suggests that flattened organizational structures are not sufficient for Chinese fansub groups to overcome their inherent flaws and to stand out in fierce competitions. A respondent stated:

At first, our group was merely a loose interest group. However, when our group grew bigger and received more translating tasks, we found our management system was not strong enough to handle complex situations. The high brain drain in our group also made our transcribing work very instable. (Respondent 5)

In order to improve the efficiency and stability, Chinese fansub groups incorporate some features from their industrial ‘enemies’. Such incorporations mainly manifest themselves in three dimensions.

First, Chinese fansub groups incorporate rigid rules and regulations which celebratory scholars think is the very element that prevents collaborators to realize ethical relationships. One senior respondent told the researcher that it was the group leader that controlled everything at the initial stage of the group development. However, when the group grew bigger, a series of regulations and rules regarding translating and organizing were enacted. Such impersonal rules help to facilitate authority within the fansub group to be distributed in a stable way that constrained by rules concerning the “coercive means, physical, sacerdotal, or otherwise, which may be placed at the disposal of officials” (M. Weber, 1998, p. 96).

Second, although peer production projects are characterized by ‘anti-credentialism’ and inclusivity, which means that there is not a prior selection to participation, the high access qualification of Chinese fansub groups suggests the existence of exclusivity. Interviews suggest that applicants for fansub groups not only need to prove language proficiency but also need to possess profound understanding and enthusiasm in a certain field. Such credentialism ensures that individuals have the skills and knowledge to meet routine needs of fansub activities, thus contributing to efficiency.

We do not only require candidates to master the foreign language well. We also need him to prove he is really interested in the field he is translating. We have a series of very detailed movie-related questions to examine his understanding. If he is not really enthusiastic about that, he could not answer them. (Respondent 11)

Third, Chinese fansub groups apply different levels of promotion systems to ensure stability and efficiency of production. For instance, a very rigid promotion system exists in Renren fansub group in order to preserve its stability and competitiveness.

Even though you have passed the access examination, you are only considered as an ‘apprentice’. In order to become a formal member, you have to translate at least 300 minutes’ of movie and get permission from four of your directors. You will be kicked out if you receive more than two complaints from your director. For a member who wants to promote to a director or a group leader, there are also implicit requirements regarding number and qualities for his work.
(Respondent 1)

Like commercial companies, holding a high position in a fansub group’s promotion system means that you need to contribute a huge amount of time and energy. Such arrangements not only help to eliminate those unqualified and disloyal participants, but also help to build strong emotional connections between individuals their group. Considering the high brain drain of Chinese fansub groups, such loyalty and emotional connection is crucial to make the production sustainable.

Consequently, these three strategies are considered as important strategies for maintaining the efficiency and stability of translating work. Formal rules and regulations ensure that the development of fansub groups is not at the mercy of individual leaders. The access system prevents fansub groups to be ‘held back by unqualified participants’ while the promotion system is used to tell ‘who really wants to make contributions to the group and who only wants to kill time’ by setting different barriers to test members’ loyalty and capability. However, such efficiency strategies also bring a certain degree of hierarchy to fansub groups by dividing fansub groups into core and periphery sub-groups. Senior members in core groups will be allocated more important tasks, consequently possessing more access to community resources.

We have a general QQ group which includes every member. But I know there is an ‘elite QQ group’ which only includes those directors or senior members. While ordinary tasks are discussed in the general group, important tasks are discussed in those elite groups. The tasks of translating those most popular movies are always assigned to senior members. So they can always watch them first. For those movies we cooperate with companies, group leaders also tend to give them to senior members. (Respondent 4)

More access to community resources in turn further enhances senior members’ status and reputation in the group, which deepens the dichotomy between core members and periphery

members. It is also interesting to notice that this feature of hierarchy is more obvious in those 'big groups' that are much more productive in translating subtitles, while the organization structure of 'small groups' tends to be more of a non-hierarchy. Generally, although the technology affordance of Internet technology brings a non-hierarchy structure to a fansub group, a hierarchy structure is also applied as a complementary organizational mechanism to ensure the group's efficiency and stability.

Cooperation with commercial organizations

Jenkins argues that commercial organizations "who fail to make their peace with this new participatory culture will face declining goodwill and diminished revenues" (Benkler, 2006, p. 69). However, findings from interviews suggest that it is peer production that 'surrenders' to commercial organizations in order to improve its productive efficiency. Instead of being exploited, cooperating with commercial organizations actually brings a lot of benefits to fansub groups.

First, the most common reason for Chinese fansub groups to cooperate with commercial organizations is to gain influence. In transcribing movies for video sites, fansub groups normally put their group names and recruiting information at the end of the subtitles. With the help of the large audience of video sites, such information could be easily spread, bringing significant visibility and influence for fansub groups. Such visibility and influence could be transformed into more and better recruits, enhancing groups' transcribing ability, and helping fansub groups stand out in the fierce competition.

Another result of cooperating with commercial organizations is the change in organization and production. In order to meet companies' high requirements for speed, quality and quantity, Chinese fansub group has to alter its production and organization:

Since we signed a long contract with commercial organizations to translate Japanese movies, we altered our organizing and production models. Though the nature of interest group has not changed, the whole organizing of Rijing is becoming more and more systematic. (Respondent 11)

At the beginning, our members' transcribing ability was not so good. So I got in touch with a transcribing company and used the work to train my group participants. After one year, I thought such training is enough, so I stopped the cooperation. (Respondent 5)

The third result for cooperation is safety. Since the fansub group work is on the edge of breaking the law, they are fragile for law prosecution. Cooperating with commercial

companies could free fansub groups from legal disputes, thus preventing their production from interruption.

The issue of copyright is like a time bomb for Chinese fansub group. I think cooperating with video sites is the best solution for this problem, video sites buy the movie from legal channels and we translate them. In exchange, they will allow us to put the movie together with our subtitles on our website after a period of time. (Respondent 3)

Theme of productive autonomy

Celebratory scholars argue that peer production may empower consumers with unparalleled productive autonomy by providing them with an excessive degree of control over the flow of media (Jenkins, 2004, p. 26). Findings from interviews partially substantiated such argument as Chinese fansub groups significantly differ from official transcribing in terms of their work allocation and language style. However, other findings suggest that such autonomy is highly limited by policy and the logic of market. Three themes are used here to reveal such limitations.

Productive autonomy

The interviews suggest that the allocation of tasks is never mandatory but based on personal interests. Everyone in a fansub group could choose the task that best suited their passion and capability.

Another manifestation of such productive autonomy is the unique language style of Chinese fansub groups in translating. While official subtitles are characterized as rigid and stiff, fansub group subtitles are characterized as flexible and interesting.

I always encourage my group members to use language with personal style. When I am translating, I like to use language that is humorous and witty. In a word, I want my audience to recognize my work at the first glance of the subtitle. (Respondent 11)

Market limitation

In terms of deciding which movie or TV series to transcribe, Chinese fansub groups not only pay attention to group members' interest but also to market expectations. Considering

limited time and resources, fansub groups tend to focus on products that are most likely to hit the market.

There are thousands of new movies coming out every year. We tend to transcribe movies that have popular stars in it or have already succeeded in previous series. (Respondent 1)

In RenRen, there is even a voting board for audience to vote for the movie they most want to watch. Both mechanisms ensure that the products of fansub groups may attract maximum audience, and thus gain maximum influence. Additionally, when it comes to subtitles that they cooperate on with commercial organizations, the autonomy of production is minimized.

Commercial organizations have standards on our language. So instead of using personalized language, we tend to make our transcribing stay faithful to the original text. And they have restricted requirements for our speed too. Every time we receive tasks from video sites, we have to mobilize everyone to finish it in time. (Respondent 8)

Policy Limitation

Another issue limiting production is state policy. Interviews suggested that Chinese fansub groups are highly aware of the existence of state policy. One respondent said they would try to keep away from those movies that are sensitive in politics to avoid any political risks. State policy also changes the form of fansub group production. While in the past, fansub groups could combine the subtitles and original movies together as their product for downloading, the strict copyright laws promoted by commercial companies are now forcing fansub groups to merely provide subtitles.

An interesting finding is that such sensitivity to policy is more obvious in large fansub groups like Renren. While small groups dare to violate copyright law or publish sensitive content, Renren cares more about policy issues.

Big groups are more vulnerable than small groups for legal issues. If government decides to deal with the copyright issue, big groups will be the first targets. (Respondent 1)

Discussion

The previous analysis depicts the complex and hybrid nature of current Chinese fansub groups in three dimensions: proprietorship and motivation, efficiency and productive

autonomy. It is clear that the current form of Chinese fansub groups is shaped by the negotiation between technology affordance and institutional power.

The bottom-up shaping process reveals how technology impacts the current form of Chinese fansub group in three dimensions. First, in the dimension of proprietorship and motivation, the innovations in information communication technologies dramatically reduce the production cost for fansub group production. Chinese fansub group participants are willing to give up property rights and 'gift' their knowledge and informational labour to the public in return for 'psychological well-being and gratification' and 'social connectedness' (Benkler, 2006; Deuze, 2007). Second, in the dimension of production efficiency, technology functions two-fold: first, advanced communication technology provides individuals with a virtual platform to turn their passion into dramatic production efficiency; second, technology makes it possible for fansub groups to base their production on a high degree of flexibility and modularity, which leads to high efficiency and a flattened organization. Third, in the dimension of productive autonomy, technology breaks the monopoly of elite media and empowers consumers with unprecedented control over the media flow.

The top-down shaping process reveals how institutional power impacts the current form of Chinese fansub groups in three dimensions. First, in the dimension of proprietorship and motivation, institutional power impacts Chinese fansub groups on an organizational level rather than on an individual participant level. The fierce competition for scarce resources and strong awareness towards proprietorship suggests that institutional power modifies fansub groups by the pervasive ideology of capitalism. While technology turns fansub group into a gift economy on an individual level, institutional power turns gift economy into a commodity economy on an organizational level. Second, in the dimension of production efficiency, institutions function more like a generative power than a repressive power (Foucault, 1980). In order to improve their efficiency due to fierce competition, Chinese fansub groups are encouraged to 'surrender' to institutional power by absorbing industrial production models' features and by cooperating with commercial organizations. Third, in the dimension of productive freedom, institutional power undermines Chinese fansub groups' productive autonomy in two ways: first, it forces Chinese fansub groups to change their form by enacting copyright laws; second, it bribes fansub group production into the commercial world by instilling the logic of market. In a nutshell, the strategies institutional power used to 'tame' Chinese fansub groups echoes with Lukes's (1974) discourses on dimensions of power: power not only manifests itself in directly modifying individuals' choices, but also in shaping the agenda and individuals' preferences.

The form of Chinese fansub groups is largely determined by the negotiation between technology and institutional power. However, individual subjectivity also plays an important role in shaping the form of Chinese fansub groups. Chinese fansub groups differ from each other in terms of production and organization. Individual subjectivity was considered as an explanation for such inner complexity of fansub groups. For instance, respondents from TLF fansub group insist that ‘their group will never put advertisements on their websites because it will ruin fansub groups’ purity while respondents from Renren thought it was reasonable to cooperate with commercial companies in order to survive. Another instance is that while respondents from Renren thought it was important to make their group as big as possible in order to attract more followers, respondent from TLF group (one of the biggest fansub group in China) just wanted to ‘maintain their group as a small interest group’ because ‘once it is bigger, everything will change’.

CONCLUSION

By focusing on a unique case of peer-production, the study revealed that online collaboration projects like Chinese fansub groups are neither a ‘technological revolution’ touted by celebratory scholars nor a ‘capitalism puppet’ criticized by pessimistic scholars. It is the dynamic negotiation process between technology affordance and institutional powers that ultimately determines the form and practice of peer production.

Through investigating Chinese fansub groups from both individual level and organizational level, the researcher argues that while the technology affordance offers Chinese fansub groups revolutionary potentials in economics and politics, such potentials are constantly negotiated and modified by institutional powers. The strategies used by institutional powers to ensure that they could shape the development of Chinese fansub groups without killing its productive potentials are explained in three dimensions. First, technology development reduces production cost, rendering Chinese fansub groups production non-market and non-proprietary; institutional power redirects such common orientation into private orientation on organizational level through competition between groups. Second, the high efficiency of Chinese fansub groups not only results from its decentralized structure, but also results from incorporating advantages of the industrial production model and cooperating with commercial organizations. Third, while digitally enabled participatory culture empowers peer production with great productive autonomy, such autonomy is significantly limited by both policy and market logic.

The analysis of the formation of Chinese fansub groups illustrates that though the arguments from both celebratory and critical camps towards peer production provide us with robust analytical frameworks, it is important to base the peer production study in a concrete institutional context to avoid both extreme realism and constructivism. Different equations between technology affordance and institutional power lead to the diversity and complexity of peer production.

Limitation

This research could be improved in terms of data scale and data collection methodology. First, limited by time and resources, this study only carried out 12 interviews. Although the researcher tried to make the data as representative as possible by ensuring that interviewees come from different kinds of fansub groups and different positions, the complexity and diversity of current Chinese fansub groups make the scant data collection in this study far from reaching the saturation point. Second, the methodology for data collection in this study is only interviewing. However, interviews heavily rely on interviewees' willingness and their capability to communicate with the interviewer has a great impact on the quality of data (Seidman, 2012). Supplementary methodology for data collection should be combined with interviews to form a more contextualized understanding of Chinese fansub groups.

Further research

If research on a similar topic is to be carried out in the future, more attention could be given to the institutional power side. Rather than merely being based on the perspective of fansub groups, future research could start from the perspective of institutional powers such as video sites and national copyright policy makers to investigate their strategies of 'disinfecting' and 'taming' the peer production. For instance, what is the reason for video sites to cooperate with fansub groups? What is the logic of enacting copyright laws regarding fansub groups? Furthermore, future research could involve a much larger sample to include more demographic diversities. Participants from different scales of fansub groups and different positions should all be represented. Finally, it is highly suggested that participant observation be adopted in future research. The personal engagement in fansub groups could provide researchers with profound understanding of the nature of Chinese fansub groups.

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