

Professionalization of esports broadcasts

The mediatization of Dreamhack Counter-Strike Tournaments

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“Not eSports. Not e-sports. esports.” - @TwitchEsports

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

DreamHack Summer 2016. After ten days working as a Technical Operation Manager at one of the biggest LAN-parties in the world, I am writing this introduction in a hotel lobby while the rest of the team is getting ice cream in the center of this lovely and relative small town. A perfect time to draft the personal note of this thesis, contemplating about my few years working as a freelancer in esports and visiting different gaming events with Jamiroquai blasting through my headset.

Games are an important part of my life as a casual gamer, producer and researcher, but my connection with esports began in 2009 when I attended DreamHack Winter as an intern, while studying Music Management at the HKU. Solely by coincidence I was asked to do my second internship at Kaos Contingency. A company that started out as a non-profit organization but later became KaosTV, and as we speak already changed its name to Stream Concepts, providing live streams for all sorts of events. My first job was editing short YouTube clips, that were too cringe to watch for their aspiring Dutch gaming channel while they produced a small livestream of Counter Strike 1.6 at Dreamhack Winter 2009. Crazy days filled with energy drinks, awful shawarma and overpriced beers at a nearby hotel. Twitch did not exist, HD streaming on a large scale was impossible and the only thing you got paid for were the travel expenses. Nonetheless it was fun. Just a few youngsters trying to make the best broadcast without any knowledge nor huge budgets, and get things working with mainly do-it-yourself solutions. Every year a bit of technology was added to make the livestream more engaging for the audience. More cameras, better cameras, experimenting with social media, statistics, greenscreen team shots similar as the NFL does, expanding the setup of the area the gamers are seated and much more.

Nowadays I work as a freelance director, producer and editor for a variety of different projects that are not exclusively game related, but my interest of the total esports culture still intrigues me. The moment I realized esports had become real business was at a Twitch after party during DreamHack Summer 2012 when I ordered a beer at their tap, but we were already too late for the party. No more free booze for us kids we thought.... Withdrawing some cash at the nearest ATM figuring out the EUR to SEK exchange rate and back to the party. Ordering and willing to pay for the cheapest whiskeys on the shelf, Justin "TheGunrun" Ignacio shouted in his joyful manner as only he can: "These guys are drinking on us the whole night!" That was the year we did a production of League of Legends with a crew of four people. At

some point we had almost 300,000 concurrent viewers, which were DDoSed¹ because one of us had our Xfire² open (I will not name and shame, but we have a “sharepoint system” in place for crew members ever since, I probably take second place) and had a dedicated area for people that wanted to watch the League of Legends (Riot Games 2009) tournament. Production teams were not a bunch of kids anymore that are fan of the game, but became young professionals that were not tainted by the hardened and settled broadcast establishment. Nowadays esports takes her, a woman touch is mostly absent and should be more present, place in pop culture. It is outgrowing the niche or phenomenon that it once was. While most people saw gaming as something nerds do until dawn with severe pimples as a side effect, is now something widely accepted to do. Not only accepted; The nerd is becoming the alpha male in a community driven by technology, knowledge and outthink one another. The nerd is not the stereotype we once pictured in eighties movies. It still lacks, to my opinion, women truly embracing its potential in the 21st century.

While esports can be viewed as mainstream and is a real business in which different stakeholders are involved, the general public has yet to be conquered. I still have to explain esports at birthday parties and friends I meet in the pub. Most of them cannot understand it and start laughing when I call it an intense sport. Arguing their perception usually goes as follows: people should not get paid for something that is made for entertainment purposes. I get it. It is weird to notice your nephew can play for hours forgetting to make his homework. How the hell is that going to be something that can be profitable for him? After this first argument I start to make the comparison with amateur football, or the inferior word soccer for the Americans, stating that in many ways this is similar. Almost no one gets paid for playing football on Saturday morning at their local club. The parents of these kids even have to pay the club to let them kick a ball. “Yeah that is different. It is more like a physical exercise and good for the kids,” is the general response that anybody working in esports will get. Ok, lets take another approach. What if we compare esports with professional chess. I play chess in the pub, but nobody will get the idea to pay me to play it against somebody else. I probably have to pay the bill after losing, again, from the pub owner. In general people can agree with me that it can be compared with a chess grandmaster. Somebody trained hard to get to a certain level of skills. Still there are some that will not budge for this analogy. Time to throw in the prize money professional players win and the fees they get paid. Nine out of ten times, especially if the person has kids, the reaction will be: “My kid will be the next esports player. He is

¹ DDoS is basically sending packages to another computer over the internet to clutch the line and make it, in this case, impossible to reach the upload speed necessary for a livestream.

² Xfire was freeware messaging software used by PC gamers.

playing for hours a day.” This of course with the right amount of sarcasm in their response. A parent can dream of a gifted kid. At this point most of the conversations end in both taking a sip and the other one saying: “Good for you.” Not only the one-on-one conversations outline this general perception of esports. The mainstream in general is to be oblivious of the scale, but I have to admit this is changing rapidly. One famous example that went viral in the community is when ESPN president John Skipper two years ago stated that esports cannot be considered a real sport. Funny enough ESPN is now investing heavily in the so called non-sport.

Abstract

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ABSTRACT

Esports, and the competitive gaming scene, is a booming business that only emerged in the last decade as an industry with broadcasts, tournaments and offline events. In the past seven years the organizations that produce the broadcasts are professionalizing to accommodate the needs of different stakeholders within the esports culture. On different levels we can see patterns of change when looked at the mediatization of esports produced content. These are not only mimicking existing media and organizations, but also the development of several aspects that are unique to esports itself. One of the organizations of these events is DreamHack that has been organizing Counter-Strike tournaments which are broadcasted since 2009. I have been working or was present at most of these events as a producer or Technical Operations Manager that gave me an unique insight in the way of working and the changes that can be found when looked at the phenomem. This thesis is an autoethnographic account of esports culture at DreamHack Counter-Strike tournaments and the patterns of change that can be found within the production.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports and electronic games were mentioned together in the first edition of MIT University newspaper Decuscope (Edwards and Graetz 1962) describing students competing against each other at Spacewar. A two-player game on the Programmed Data Processor-1 inspired by Doc Smith's sci-fi Lensman novels and made by Stephen R. Russel, Alan Kotok, Peter Samson and Dan Edward. The game can be seen as the starting point of electronic gaming in general, although it is not the first electronic game ever created³. It sparked students to fiddle with the code and create variations of the game that led to the first ever recorded esports event. The *Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics* was held on 19 October 1972 at Stanford University and reported by Rolling Stone Sports reporter Stewart Brand and photographed by Annie Liebovitz (Brand 1972). Trying to introduce the world to the hacker culture and the interesting things people do with computers (Baker 2016). First prize: a year's subscription of the Rolling Stone. An early example of a mainstream medium reporting on esports and an early hint towards commercialization and professionalization of esports. In the years thereafter the trend of competitive gaming rose as a subculture with home consoles and arcade games (Edwards 2013). Advancement in technology made it possible to display engaging and competitive games. Organizations, like for example Twin Galaxies⁴, were established to record the high scores of gamers. More and more personal computers became capable to connect to the internet making the demoscene, multiplayer games and eventually streaming gameplay possible. One of the earliest mentions of esports, or eSports as a term, dates back to the late nineties and can be found in a 1999 press release on the launch of the Online Gamers Association (OGA) where traditional sports were compared with esports (Wagner 2006, 437). Naturally the term was already in use by the online community surrounding different competitive games as Quake and Doom. At this point of time esports is a multi-million dollar business that attracts millions of viewers and is

³ The first patent filed for a video game, not an electronic game, was in 1947 by Thomas T. Goldsmith Jr. and Estle Ray Mann with their Cathode-Ray Tube Amusement Device, but there is no known prototype (US Patent 2,455,992). Alan Turing created an algorithm for the first computer based chess game in 1951 when the capabilities of machines were not advanced enough to actually run code implementing the algorithm. Tennis for Two, not to be confused with Pong, is the first known visual multiplayer electronic game that was created in 1958 by William Higinbotham, but was lost in 1959 when the computer running it was disassembled. Some other examples of early games, variations on Tic-Tac-Toe for example can be found, but these were merely to showcase the capabilities of existing machines.

⁴ Twin Galaxies (www.twingalaxies.com) started out in 1981 as an official highscore platform, but is now a broader organization that also have their own events.

expected to grow significantly in the coming years⁵. To my experience in the last couple of years growth in both online and event participants can be seen.

Multiple stakeholders are part of esports events including players, sponsors, developers, organizers, spectators, fans, etc. which are in need of each other to organize successful events. One important part of esports is the content produced at different offline events by independent and in-house creators which are dependent on the feedback and possible wishes of all the previous mentioned stakeholders. Content is created in the form of texts, images, videos and broadcasts. While there are a few scholarly works (Taylor 2012, Taylor and Witkowski 2010) about esports productions and esports events, many of them do not take an indepth look at the actual content created or are not, as far as I could find, drawn from personal experience working multiple years at these or similar productions. The existing work mostly draws conclusion from being a participant at one event or in some cases a couple of events (Seo and Jung 2016, Taylor and Witkowski 2010). Rarely the changes broadcasts went through in multiple years are taken into account. Changes over a longer period can help understand the professionalization and mediatization of this relatively new phenomenon and helps understanding the esports culture from a production point of view. More on the academic relevance will be explained in the next chapter.

The focus of this thesis is on the in-house created broadcasts with multiple DreamHack, one of the largest gaming event organizations in the world, LANs and esports events are used as case study. In particular the Counter Strike 1.6 (CS1.6) and Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) first person shooter tournaments are used to answer the following research question:

What patterns of change in mediatization of CS:GO tournaments as media events at DreamHack from 2010-2016 can be found?

Mediatization being the double-sided process of high modernity in which the media emerges as an independent institution, but also as an integrated part of other institutions (Hjvard 2008, 105). To answer the research question there will be looked at some, but not all, aspects of the broadcasts produced at Counter Strike tournaments organized by DreamHack in relation to media events, and mediatization. Both concepts will be discussed further in the Theoretical Framework section of this thesis. To get the idea behind the patterns that changed over time

⁵ Newzoo estimates that the esports industry will generate 465 million in 2017.
<https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/esports-economy-will-generate-least-465-million-2017/>

within the broadcasts two questions will help to outline the thesis further:

1. What changes are made to esports as media events from a production point of view?
2. How did the professionalization of esports broadcast made the media events change?

Six years of DreamHack CS1.6 and CS:GO broadcasts are analyzed and further explained with hands-on experience in order to find the patterns of change within the production. Examples are used to outline these patterns.

The structure of the thesis is to start by looking at the theoretical framework that consists of defining esports culture, esports broadcasts, mediatization, media logic and media events. Secondly the methodology used, which consist of an autoethnographic approach with elements of a textual analysis. At last the analysis itself and the conclusion.

2. ACADEMIC RELEVANCE

The first time the term esports was mentioned only dates back to the late nineties of the last century where professional electronic competitive gaming was compared to electronic sports (Wagner 2006, 437). It is a relatively new phenomenon that only spans a few decades (437) and was fairly often neglected until around 2009 by the field of academic game studies. Around that time more researchers started taking professional competitive gaming into account as a subject to investigate with the rise of streaming services and the emergence of multiplayer online games that introduced esports to millions of new players (Georgen et al. 2014). One notable source for research are the eSports Yearbooks that are published almost annually containing multiple papers on the subject. Most of the researches done compare traditional sport consumption (Lee and Schoenstedt 2011) with the new technology that is used to livestream the gameplay, the web communities that were created by it (Edge 2013, Carter and Gibbs 2013), and different notions of fair play (Carter and Gibbs 2013). There are only a handful of research papers that look at the actual esports content that is produced at LAN-parties (Taylor 2012, Taylor & Witkowksi 2010). While there are several reports on the growing scale of esports most of them limit themselves to the numbers and kind of spectatorship. The production side is or neglected or not researched on large scale events. This lack of research on major events and the changes over a long period of time is noted when reviewing different publications on LAN-parties. For example the publication of *Beyond solitary play in computer games: The social practices of esports* by Yuri Seo and Sang-UK Jung (2016) in *Journal of Consumer Culture* draws its conclusion on three two hour visits to tournaments that had 30-40 spectators. This cannot be regarded to be a representation of experiencing the actual esports culture. Multiple researches similar to this example can be found by conducting a quick search.

Most qualitative research within esports broadcasting is done by scholars who are mere observers of the phenomenon without emerging themselves in the production process. In contrast to multiple publications on particular, not esports related, games that see, for instance, playing the game as an important part of understanding the mechanics and choices that were made during the development stage (Aarseth 2003). The lack of submersion is understandable as most scholars do not have the opportunity to work for a lengthy period of time in this line of work. With my almost seven years of experience working in different functions as a crewmember gives me the unique opportunity to use these observations in researching how esports, and the production of DreamHack broadcasts, changed

over time. The observations will help to grasp the changes that took place over time and the implications this has on esports broadcasts.

3. FRAMEWORK

3.1 ESPORTS CULTURE & ESPORTS BROADCASTS

Like every other term the definition of esports is still not set in stone and changes from time to time. The first rendition of esports as linking competitive gaming and sport together can be found in the first edition of the Decuscope (Edwards and Graetz 1962) referring to students playing *Spacewar*. The term esports itself was first used in a press release in 1999 when the Online Gamers Association (OGA) was founded. Mat Bettington compared esports to traditional sports predicting that it would not take long to be broadcasted on television and it already aired in that year on a television station in South-Korea. While the term has been around for longer this is the first time that it can be found in written form (Wagner 2006, 437). The OGA was founded to represent professional gamers, to promote this new sport, encourage better sportsmanship in the community and to stamp out cheating. They define esports loosely as professional gaming, but do not state what this means or what the surrounding conditions for players are in order to call themselves professional gamers. According to media theorist Wagner (2006) esports can be defined as an area of sport activities in which people develop, train and compare mental or physical abilities using information and communication technologies (438-439). While Ditmarsch (2013, 4) makes a good point adding “through video games” at the end of this definition in his thesis, it does not take into account the professionalization of the community and leans extremely on the notion of traditional sports. This definition, apart from the word esports, can be extended to a broader field that touches outside of how the general discourse is nowadays that focusses more on the professional side of esports (Tamblyn 2016). Do not forget that Wagner defined esports in 2006 when, for example, livestream platforms were almost nonexistent. The western world had only the opportunity to watch a thirty minute segment on MTV⁶ what may not really be described as esports. Making a living as a professional gamer was almost unheard of in our western culture. When reviewing the annual prizepool earnings⁷ of players in 2006 they hardly qualify as making a living for the most of them and is, with some exceptions, dominated by Asian players. Asia has a rich esports culture, but the

⁶ MTV was one of the first to dedicate a thirty minute segment about esports on their weekly program GameORZ Week.

⁷ According to E-Sports Earnings only 30 people in the world earned enough to have what is considered a decent income. http://www.esportsearnings.com/history/2006/top_players

reason and background of that could be the subject of another research.

At this point of time esports is not solely competitive gaming, but derives its status of the culture surrounding professional gaming with their own celebrities, events, tournaments, etc. People that identify themselves with esports do not have to participate actively in the game itself, but can also be spectators, hosts, journalists, etc. (Schmidt 2015). Therefore it may be closely related of being a subculture in our society like other sports, for example football, that have their own significant cultural aspects (King 2016). While there is some debate what constitutes a subculture, esports can be qualified as such when looking at some aspects (Hebdige 1995, 121). A subculture is a group of people within our culture that conform themselves to their own rules and norms that differ from the general perceived rules and norms. Looking to esports as an industry and at the same time taking in account the sociological approach of esports as a subculture would be more suitable researching the phenomenon as they are intertwined heavily with what Wagner defines as just the act of engaging in esports. To highlight the point of the community aspect, in this case within the esports subculture, being an important part of the actual competitive aspect of esports one lively example springs to mind. During the quarter final of Counter Strike Global Offensive DreamHack Winter 2014 tournament one of the well-known teams Fnatic at that time used pixelwalking⁸ to win the third map. The opposing team LDLC allegedly used another exploit of the game to win some rounds. When the tournament organizers decided that a partial rematch was the most appropriate way to proceed the community was outraged against Fnatic. They took their complaints to different social media platforms⁹ what resulted in Fnatic forfeiting their spot in the tournament¹⁰. While the final decision was left to the team there is no doubt that the not amused community played a role in them forfeiting as some outlets claimed that the sponsors made them do it (Ehrnberg 2014), or maybe the team caved under the pressure they received (Yiji 2014). I was at the event working at another broadcast, but you could feel the hate among the visitors against Fnatic before they made their decision. It was the main topic of the day when entering the hotel bar or making small talk with visitors. While this is merely an example of a community having some kind of involvement in esports decisions, numerous others can be found that ranges from gender issues (Savov 2014), inclusion of spectator modes in a game (Hendo 2015) or the quality of a broadcast (Meek 2016).

⁸ Pixelwalking is an act of using invisible ledges formed by misaligned clipboxes. A row of misaligned pixels incorrectly form an invisible ledge jutting out from two merging clipboxes when the map is compiled, allowing the player to pixelwalk (Yiji 2014)

⁹ During the event I mapped almost 55.000 tweets that were talking about the Fnatic vs LDLC incident. <http://geertverhoeff.blogspot.nl/2014/12/fnatic-cheating-at-dreamhack-winter.html>

¹⁰ Hellspawn, esports coordinator at DreamHack, announces Fnatic forfeiting during the broadcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnNJnN1hKdM>

Seo and Jung (2014) see the importance of the community and accompanying factors in the observations made when researching esports.

..., the case of esports presented in this study illustrates the relevance and usefulness of social practices in exploring new avenues for understanding computer games within contemporary consumer culture. In particular, we draw attention to the social aspects of esports as a coordinated assemblage of multiple practices, where consumers carry and carry out different roles and activities beyond their interactions with the game interface alone. (Seo & Jung 2016, 652)

Esports is more than the previous definition given by Wagner when taking into account the importance of, for example, Seo & Jung's observations and I propose to extend the commonly used definition when looking at esports as a research object. This is necessary to highlight other aspects that have a significant impact on how esports is perceived and how it has consequences on the definition of Wagner. Especially when looking at the mediatization of the major broadcasts. A more complete definition must include the cultural aspect and the professionalization associated in the current discourse of esports culture to understand the extend of the phenomena.

Esports is the phenomenon of paid professional competitive gaming formed by online and offline events that are viewed by spectators and enable the gamers to profit from the surrounding incentives.

In this way the definition covers all of the aspects in esports by taking into account the community and the involvement of developers, sponsors, organizers, etc. It also gives room to use the definition without making the obvious and sometimes unnecessary comparison to traditional sports, while it does not exclude its relationship. What it does not cover is the differentiation between different communities that associate with one genre or even one particular game. Within esports the game or genre defines the social practices of the accompanied community. Focusing on Counter Strike, for example, Wright et al. (2003) argues that the participants of the community can be seen as a subculture on itself that can enter liminoid or liminal like genre that promotes a temporary "limbo" of stateslessness, flow and movement, a refashioning of time and community. One could argue that this applies to every community that holds its status in an esports realm, but for this thesis it suffices to apply it solely to Counter-Strike. Here communities are part of the

esports subculture or, as I will refer to it after this point, esports culture because the communities overlap in their values and norms when compared with each other.

Part of esports culture is spectatorship: the act of observing an event without participating in the event (Ditmarsch 2013, 5). There are different ways to engage as a spectator with esports, but nowadays part of the spectators actively interact with the event using social media and some events encourage participating in some activities. Some esports events try engaging viewers to make predictions, participate in live games between matches and include social media into their broadcast. Martin Ludvigsen and Rune Veerasawmy (2010) describe the new way of participatory spectatorship as:

Participating as spectator or fan includes many activities ranging from every day following and discussing the sports to social activities of engagement in sporting events. In spite of this, most often technological systems at sporting events seek to augment the event in a way that replicates the passive consumption of broadcast television. (Ludvigsen and Veerasawmy 2010, 97)

One of the abilities is to watch the competitive games live on different platforms as, for example, Twitch.tv, Hitbox and Beam. A practice that could find its place within the culture with the invention of Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) (Scholtz 2012). That gave players, tournaments and participants the ability to broadcast gameplay to a larger audience. It was already possible to watch in-game content with commentating in the beginning of 2001 by, for example, connecting to a Counter Strike server and an audio stream (Scholtz 2012). Chatting with other spectators was sometimes possible via Internet Relay Chat (IRC), newsgroups and bulletin boards. Interaction was possible, but was complicated for the vast majority of the audience. With improvements in technology the first IPTV stations started to emerge in 2003, but the majority of dedicated esports channels failed due to a low amount of viewers. The major change came around 2007 with open platforms that allowed anybody to video broadcast their gameplay. Most known for their gaming channels was Justin.TV. Later they would separate gameplay broadcasts from other broadcasts with its now well-known platform Twitch.TV. The most notable aspect of this change was the ease viewers would have to interact with the individual streamers during the broadcasts. This boosted the viewership significantly and the broadcaster not having to be a major organization (Kaytoue et al. 2012, 1184). Not only the platforms made it easier for the viewers and the streamers, the available technology became increasingly cheaper and more advanced which made it possible to improve the quality of a production for individual broadcasters and organizations.

When I was involved in 2010, for example, we used simple Standard Definition (SD) cameras connected to an expensive, in comparison to the present day, video switcher that only allowed four inputs. Streaming in HD was nearly impossible because of the investment that was needed and the bandwidth it would use. Several companies saw an opportunity in the live stream industry developing tools, software and hardware to streamline and professionalize the capabilities of a broadcast without the need of big investments. Viewers and broadcasters are now more limited by the bandwidth high quality streams demand as some platforms are offering the capability to stream in Ultra High Definition^{11, 12}. The main topic on livestreaming at this point, from a technical standpoint, involves the platforms limiting the capabilities of streamers by setting caps on the allowed amount of data send to the servers. The new capabilities of livestreaming was embraced by multiple major players in the esports tournament industry. ESL, MLG and DreamHack, for example, picked up the technology to extend the experience of their events and gain more fans in the process. Later in this thesis I will discuss the particular way DreamHack evolved their events with expanding to the livestream industry.

3.2 MEDIATIZATION & MEDIA LOGIC

To understand media from a conceptual point of view one must look at the different implications it has and how it came to be. Mediatization, as it was developed by Friedrich Krotz, Winfried Schulz, Stig Hjarvard and others, is an attempt to concentrate our focus on a particular transformative logic or mechanism that is understood to do something distinctive to particular processes, objects and fields. It looks at the transformative ways media, in whatever form it presents itself, change the social and cultural life from a single media presentation. The transformative implications work both ways. According to Hjarvard the implications of mediatization being double-sided can be explained as followed.

Mediatization is to be considered a double-sided process of high modernity in which the media on the one hand emerge as an independent institution with a logic of its own that other social institutions have to accommodate to. On the other hand, media simultaneously become an integrated part of other institutions like politics, work, family, and religion as more and more of these institutional activities are performed through both interactive and mass media.

¹¹ HitBox announced in 2015 that they offering Ultra High Definition streams with 60fps.
<http://blog.hitbox.tv/4k-60fps/>

¹² YouTube has plans for 4k video live streaming on their platform.
<http://wersm.com/youtube-has-plans-for-4k-video-streaming/>

The logic of the media refers to the institutional and technological *modus operandi* of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources and make use of formal and informal rules. (Hjavarð 2008, 105)

To clarify this notion: Mediatization not only takes place within the media institutions, but is affected and affects different actors and agents (Lundby 2009, 215). For example: politics adopts the logic of media institutions to make use of the benefits they offer for their own cause, but the media institutions also conform to the implications of newsworthiness offered by politics and society (Korthagen 2015, 43). The introducers of the term 'media logic' mainly focus on media formats that bare the characteristics how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behaviour, and the grammar of media communication (58). The logic can be described as institutional practices or a set of rules regulating actors behaviour (44). Identifying the formats makes it possible to understand what lies behind complicated processes of media production and the changes it brings to mediatization (Lundby 2009, 8). One way to understand the mediatization from an institutional point of view is to understand media logic.

Mazzoleni, according to Lundby, states that media logic consists of several different logics where a combination of them form the media logic (220). Commercial logic is formed by the media institutions as the way they make money and the society that is being commercialized. Technological logic are the capabilities of the applied technologies that make the process of production possible. Cultural logic is the implications media has on cultural practices (223). All logics are formed by the previously described double-sided process on how media create their activities. Korthagen (2015) basically uses the same dimensions of logic, but categorize them slightly different by looking at the institutional practice of media logic. She breaks the logic down in *professionalism*, *commercialism* and *media technology* (43-44). While there is a clear similarity between the dimensions of media technology versus technology logic and commercialism versus commercial logic, there is a difference between journalism versus cultural logic. Her definition of journalism leans more on the idea of the ethics, by which producers of media must account themselves for. Cultural logic looks at all implications on society and the effects media has on its culture and society has on the media and not only consists of accountability of its producers. The three different logics or dimensions may also clash with each other as there are clear tensions between, for example, cultural logic and commercial logic. Producing media will inherently come with the need of cash money or other currency, not forgetting the media run by volunteers that need an incentive to

produce it, for its existence there is the need to question the integrity or cultural needs of the society in order to succeed as an institution. Within this thesis the different logics are used as one aspect to categorize the analysis of the content. This will be explained in depth in the part on methodology.

3.3 MEDIA EVENTS

The inherent first question that has to be answered before investigating mediatization of a media source is to establish an implicit description of that medium. One way to determine the status of DreamHack as a medium is to describe its content and impact as a media event. Media events are a genre on television that demand and receive targeted attention (Katz and Liebes 1990, 49). By definition those events are not routine and differ from the established genres we see in daily television (Dayan & Katz 1992, 5). Media events are characterized by the elements of interruption, monopoly, being broadcast live and performed on a remote location. According to Katz & Dayan the broadcast must electrify a very large audience and stand out as a unique event that interrupts every other regular expected program. Katz & Dayan meant electrifying a nation or the world, this could be extended to major events in the esports culture as IPTV which was non-existent during the time they defined media events. They solely focused on events that are unique, but the concept of media events could be extended to pre-planned events as long as to a certain extent they remain limited (Kramer 2008, 910). A more updated definition that covers the subject is stated in *The Economy of Media Events* by Benjamin Kramer:

Media events are extraordinary incidents or performances covered or staged by the media, breaking routines on the part of the media organization, the public (at least the media seek to create an event that the public regards as something exceptional) or both, as opposed to the routine production and consumption of media content. This definition includes such varying events, for example, football championships, the Pope's visit to a country, terror attacks or reward shows. (Kramer 2008, 910)

Kramer's indication of football championships as sample of breaking the routine of conventional media programming, the same could be said about esports events, but in the instance for the content on Twitch this can even be extended. The vast majority of broadcasts on this platform consist of content created by its platform's users that stream their own gameplay or creative process. Tournaments are not unusual, but gives the community something else to tune into. Besides that the main focus in this thesis is on the content created at offline events, only that will be analyzed.

DreamHack also facilitates online events that are not centralized at one location or they are just merely broadcasted from their studio in Stockholm. Considering DreamHack as a media event gives the advantage of analyzing the bigger streams of the company that break with the usual programming that the organization provides and which Twitch users are familiar with. In this way the analyzed broadcasts can be classified as media events and patterns could be defined more clearly as the broadcasts have greater intervals between them. The changes will become more visible that way in order to analyze them.

4. METHODOLOGY

Autoethnography is writing about a researcher's personal relationship to culture that can be seen as a genre of research which displays multiple layers of consciousness (Ellis 2004, 37). The method combines different characteristics of autobiography and ethnography where the writer uses selective epiphanies that stem from being part of a culture or particular aspects of that culture (Ellis et al. 2011, 276). Autoethnography has seen a growth in the past fifteen years within different sociological research and is seen as a relevant research method (Anderson 2006, 373). Autoethnography has, according to Anderson, five key features to be implemented correctly. The researcher must be a complete member of the subject he or she is researching (379), has to have analytic reflexivity (382), narrative visibility of the researcher's self (383), must have dialogue with members of the field (385) and must include some kind of theoretical analysis (386). Within this thesis autoethnography is used to examine the mediatization of the DreamHack Counter-Strike tournaments. In my personal introduction I tried to reflect my involvement in the field of esports broadcast and culture what is described in the analytical part of this thesis.

To look at the subject in a more structured way, aspects of textual analysis are used to lay a better foundation of understanding the media. While it is a different method at first sight it also has characteristics of, in this case, examining media and its context on a personal interpret basis. Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world (McKee 2003). Researchers make an educated guess, by using contextual evidence, of some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of a particular text.

We interpret texts (films, television programs, magazines, advertisements, clothes, graffiti, and so on) in order to try and obtain a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them. And, importantly, by seeing the variety of ways in which it is possible to interpret reality, we also understand our own cultures better because we can start to see the limitations and advantages of our own sense-making practices. (McKee 2003, 1)

The underlying theory of this method, in the way I will use it, is mediatization that points to societal changes in contemporary high societies and the role of media and mediated communication of these transformations (Lundby 2009). In a sense the text says something about the culture it was made for or by. In this thesis the text focused

on tournament broadcasts of Counter-Strike (including Counter Strike 1.6 and Global Offensive) at DreamHack from 2010 to 2016. To analyze and interpret my autoethnographic analysis a categorization is made in order to look at the changes of different aspects of the videos and the implications it has when looked at from the point of mediatization. These categories are formed by the previously mentioned logics that form the media logic and help to understand the mediatization of the DreamHack Counter Strike Tournaments.

The logics are merely a categorization to create more structure. Within the logics subjects as technical production, commercial stakeholders, social media engagement and the influence of the crowd will be reviewed. The observations described are part autoethnographic, but most of the facts are confirmed by the crew of DreamHack while discussing the matter during DreamHack Winter 2016. Using the different logics as main subjects it is possible to understand the different forces at play during the events. The logics sometimes overlap as they are intertwined in many ways.

4.1 COUNTER STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

Counter Strike is part of the corpus researched as it is part of the esports culture within the broadcasts that are used for the analysis. A short understanding of how the game was developed and changed over time without going in depth on the actual game will help to understand part of the patterns that are found within the corpus.

The popularity of the game in 2011, created in 1999 by two avid Half-Life players as a mod (Ondrejka 2004, 86), was not comparable to nowadays, but it was a pillar in the esports community for the previous decade. The rights for the first mod were acquired in 2000 by Valve, the developer of Half-Life, after it spread virally and was embraced by the Half-Life community that helped shape the game (Te 2014). The original modder, Minh “Gooseman” Le, joined Valve to work on the first follow up which was built on the engine used for Half-Life 2, but the community was not pleased with the newer version. The terrible hitbox registration¹³, the bad conversion to the Source engine¹⁴ and community outcry made Valve switch its approach to the game for the latest installment which Le described in an interview with Gamespot.

“I think Valve got to the point where they were like, ‘Yeah, it’s impossible to please everybody’.” Le said. “So they just focused CS:GO as good as a product as

¹³ YouTuber 123the345 showcases the bad hitbox registration in Counter Strike Source.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnNJnN1hKdM>

¹⁴ Rock Paper Shotgun highlights the issues with the game and its conversions to the Source engine.
<https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/forums/showthread.php?9315-Why-does-Counter-Strike-suck-so-much-now>

they can for whoever chooses to play it.” (Te 2014)

Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) was officially released in 2012 and revamped the competitive scene of the game with multiple esports tournaments around the world due to the involvement of Valve in esports and adding custom weapon finishes in 2013. DreamHack Winter 2013 hosted the largest CS:GO tournament in the fourteen year history of the game with a prize pool of 250,000 dollar. Nowadays it is one of the most viewed first person shooters on the internet.

4.2 DREAMHACK & COUNTER STRIKE

LAN (local area network) parties are not uncommon in the history of computers and nowadays vary in sizes from just a few friends spending the weekend together to thousands of people coming together in a physical space with their own gaming hardware. LAN parties were a way to share files and to game against each other without having to worry about latency that would normally be limited by the early home internet connections. Fast paced shooters as Unreal Tournament and Quake were some of the earlier games that are seen as the beginning of competitive gaming at LAN parties. Many games at that time used to offer a LAN mode that did not require every gamer on the event to purchase the game itself allowing it to be played on a local network. Nowadays the most played games in competitive play need an internet connection to keep record of the progression of a particular player. The speed of internet and the games that need a continuous online connection changed the shape of LAN parties enormously to the point that the motivations to attend a LAN are, to my experience, more about the social aspect. I was not present at the earlier days of DreamHack but one could imagine, and by talking with several DreamHack veterans, that they went to a similar change.

DreamHack, with their Summer and Winter edition as the major events, started out in a small town in Sweden with a handful of friends, but has since grown into an event that attracts thousands of attendees (Taylor and Witkowski 2010, 195). 2010 marks, for some and me, the unofficial start of professional gaming and broadcasting at this event with the first studies and articles referring to the players as pro-gamers (197). It was one of the earlier editions of DreamHack that dedicated livestreams and some matches in the DreamArena Extreme that could accommodate around a thousand spectators. Not the first broadcast to be produced at DreamHack, but the first time it was embraced by the organization and the start of professionalization of this aspect on the LAN. One of these games was Counter Strike 1.6 what is regarded as the best version for esports at that time with different versions of its own. Nowadays multiple events across the world are being held and in 2015 over 190,000

people participated in one of them¹⁵. While DreamHack did not started out as an esports event, but rather as the traditional LAN for casual gaming and file sharing, it now accommodates some of the largest tournaments with a significant number of online spectators. DreamHack was one of the first in Europe to incorporate esports in their LAN events that started out with small tournaments for Starcraft II and Counter Strike in 2010. This thesis will only focus on the first person tactical shooter Counter Strike, but noteworthy is that other esports tournaments are part of the DreamHack experience as, for example, the LCS tournament in 2012 that contributed to the huge popularity of the game and esports for MOBA in general when looked at the concurrent viewers and total views. In the second year of the DreamHack Counter Strike tournament they asked different small production companies to provide a livestream on Justin.tv. The predecessor of Twitch. At that time I was part of the Counter Strike stream that only consisted of three people. One producer, one Video On Demand editor and one caster.

¹⁵Numbers are shown in the official 2015 aftermovie that showcases all the DreamHack events in that year.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8GEqoNIYi4>

4.3 CORPUS

As research material the following events are used to look at the different patterns that emerge.

Event	Version of Counter Strike	Year
DreamHack Winter	Counter Strike 1.6	2010
DreamHack Summer	Counter Strike 1.6	2011
DreamHack Winter	Counter Strike 1.6	2011
DreamHack Winter	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2012
DreamHack Summer	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2013
DreamHack Winter	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2013
DreamHack Stockholm	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2014
DreamHack Tours	Open Counter Strike Global Offensive	2015
DreamHack Valencia	Open Counter Strike Global Offensive	2015
DreamHack London	Open Counter Strike Global Offensive	2015
DreamHack Stockholm	Open Counter Strike Global Offensive	2015
DreamHack Cluj-Napoca	Open Counter Strike Global Offensive	2015
DreamHack Winter	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2015

	Offensive	
DreamHack Leipzig Zowie	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2016
DreamHack Masters Malmo	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2016
DreamHack Austin	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2016
DreamHack Summer	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2016
DreamHack Bucharest	Counter Strike Global Offensive	2016

5. ANALYSIS COUNTER STRIKE DREAMHACK BROADCASTS

5.1 TECHNOLOGICAL LOGIC

The technological logic is in my case the most straightforward of the three logics. I was involved in some of the productions and worked with the technology for a longer period of time on other productions. All observations stated in this section were confirmed by different crewmembers that worked on the productions over the years. Main patterns that emerge is the professionalization of the technology used and the capabilities that were expanded over the years. The effect on the esports culture has been immense by just looking at the research material I will present in this chapter.

Broadcast technology in esports, and with the Counter Strike tournaments at DreamHack in particular, have made a great leap in the past six years. The first time DreamHack streamed a Counter-Strike tournament in 2010 the setup could be described as amateurish compared to established broadcast companies at that time. One of the main reasons for this were the costs that came with the need of renting the necessary equipment. The technology made it possible to use one camera, one ingame feed and overlays were done with an early version of Wirecast that was recommended by Justin.tv on their website. A program that encodes the video for streaming and made it possible to switch between overlays, but was limited to the provided overlays, that came with the software. All the streams using this software would use similar textual overlays as no one figured out how to hack the software and implement their own designs. The stream was already in 720p High Definition, but could only be done in 30 frames per second. The 2010 final was totally different as a professional broadcasting company facilitated the production in the DreamArena Extreme which was in another part of the venue.

The broadcast at DreamHack Summer 2011 changed a bit compared to the technology used at DreamHack Winter 2010 as the video switcher was not in use anymore. Capture cards and a webcam were used to get every feed into Wirecast and cut them, together totally relying on the software. In total there was one extra camera which was basically just a webcam as the computer used could only support one extra USB input. One of the biggest issues during this event was syncing the sound and video as the encoder would drift them apart due to the use of an external audio mixer that did not embedded every videofeed with the audio. We will not dig deeper into the technical aspect of this particular problem, but later on these problems were solved by adding a delay on the audio within Wirecast. One of the things the viewer

noticed on this event was the primitive implementation of tweets that were shown during the broadcast by screencapping a hashtag search which was opened in a browser. During 2011 Twitch was introduced and the winter edition made use of it, but that did not change much as the capabilities were comparable with the functions Justin.tv had at that same time. The biggest change from a technological standpoint for the production crew of the DreamHack Counter Strike tournaments came in 2012 when all the bigger productions at the event started to use the Blackmagic Design Atem Television Studios that allowed video switching on hardware for a cheaper price than regular broadcast equipment. Regular switches costed mostly in the range of 20.000 dollar in contrast the Atem was under 2.000 dollars. The switcher was controlled by a separate computer with dedicated software. The Atem could be extended by a broadcast panel which is used in current productions at DreamHack, but was not necessary with the capabilities that were sought for. The use of the Atem made things possible that were not possible with the old setup. Cameras could be connected with a SDI cable that allowed distances of around 50 to 100 meters, depending on the resolution, the previously used HDMI cables could only cover 10 meters without losing signal. The other big change at that time was the use of a custom overlay system that was directly fed into the composite for streaming. The software, which was changed to Xsplit, was only used for streaming the entire feed to Twitch.tv without having to add overlays on the same computer. This allowed the stream to be more stable from a production point of view. DreamHack built on the Blackmagic hardware by expanding the hardware to allow more cameras, better audio and more usability that mimic regular broadcast production nowadays. The final major change for all productions came somewhere in 2014 when the whole overlay system was redesigned around CasparCG. Free software that can send out another kind of signal to get overlays into the Blackmagic Atem. With regard to the Counter Strike broadcasts, DreamHack implemented player cams, called pip cams in the production area, in May of 2015. With the help of custom software the cameras will show the accompanying player when the observer shows him or her on the stream. Trying to get a more emerging experience by watching the players being ingame. Not the first time done in esports as it mimics the earlier Starcraft II broadcasts that had a playercam on both players, but having ten players makes it more difficult to show the players with the accompanying ingame feed.

Besides the technological changes within the actual production there have been some noticeable changes in the way interaction changed the broadcast itself. Showing the tweet onscreen in 2011 was already briefly mentioned, but there is more to it with regards to Counter Strike tournaments and the affordance the platforms expanded over the years. DreamHack has established an exclusive contract with

Twitch, we will come back on that in the commercial logic section. The only way to watch the event live is on the platform of Twitch. Twitch changed over the years by adding more features to the product with the main focus on paying members while watching the stream. Chatting was possible from the start, but in 2013 Twitch added the Turbo user function that allowed paying members of the site to get access to more emoticons for the chat and advertisements were reduced. While the perks for Turbo users are accessible on all the channels Twitch later changed this model by having people to subscribe to individual channels or to a bundle of channels and split the revenues. The broadcasters can give their own subscribers extra features. In the case of DreamHack you can subscribe to all their channels for one set price, this includes a separate chatroom, less advertisement, a customized badge that shows in chat and some exclusive emoticons. Subscribers can show off their affinity with the brand DreamHack in this way. DreamHack does notice that these users are recurrent viewers as they get a notification when any of the streams start. Being a partner it also allows the organization to take down so called restreams easier which indulge in copyright infringement by using the official stream and broadcast this on their own channel. This is not yet automated at this point of time compared to for instance YouTube.

The changes in Counter Strike itself had an important influence on the popularization of the DreamHack Tournaments. Counter Strike 1.6 was a community driven game that was developed as a mod of Half-Life, but when Counter Strike Global Offensive was launched the developer Valve changed this. It was still possible for gamers to make their own maps or some other modifications. The competitive side of the game was embraced implementing a competitive mode and a ranking system that showed players how good an individual is at the game. This competitive mode made it more attractive for players to watch tournaments and trying to increase their skills to get a higher overall ranking. The major update in 2012 was followed with the Arms Deal Update in 2013 that would give an enormous boost to the popularity of the game and esports in general (Holden Et al. 2017).

Some patterns can be discovered when looking at the used technology. Like most emerging technology, in this case livestreaming, it is a combination of factors that allows a medium to grow in a technological sense that is heavily intertwined with commercial logic. The means are a mix of mimicking traditional broadcasts and embracing new technologies to accommodate the needs of the different actors involved while keeping the costs affordable with the perceived revenue. We also see a direct impact on the esports culture as the technological changes affords the audience to participate on different levels of the broadcast.

5.2 COMMERCIAL LOGIC

Taking commercial logic as the next subject in this research some observations can be made on how money is an important factor on the esports culture and how this changed the look of a broadcast. Over the years organizers invented different ways to make a profit that will help them to develop better broadcasts. Again a pattern of professionalization can be found when looked at, for example, how sponsors are influencing the content of a broadcast and thereby the esports culture.

DreamHack used to be just a LAN without the esports component, but this rapidly changed and at this moment the broadcasts can be seen as the main business of the company. In the early days the streams were done by independent and upcoming livestream companies which had to look for their own funding. This was also the case at the first stream of Counter Strike in 2010 when Kaos Contingency, now called Stream Concepts, provided the production and got most of their funding from sponsors. In this case the Dutch division of Medion, a computer hardware company, 4Launch, a webshop, and ICI-Multimedia, an online ICT service. Sponsorship changed when DreamHack took over the production process and sponsors were sought which could reflect the content and the image of the events. Some of the past and present sponsors are Monster, G2A, Steelseries, Zowie, etc. They all want to gain from the image of esports in general and sponsor in multiple ways different esports organizations. The way sponsors are incorporated can be compared to the way traditional sports have done it for decades. Most of the time a broadcast has one or sometimes a few main sponsors and a number of participating sponsors which contribute less. In return for their sponsorships the companies may get airtime for commercials or special segments exposure on the event itself. For the main sponsor there is the possibility to get the tournament named after the company as happened with the Zowie open series in 2015. Every sponsor deal is tailor made to fit the need of the organizer and the company. It influences the broadcast significantly as the sponsor brands may be seen as a representation of esports. Sponsors are focused on a certain level of professionalism in relation to the recognition of their brand. Next to the sponsor most of the time the developer of the game will contribute to the prize money as they see the tournament as advertisement of their game. A few examples from personal experience underline this level of professionalization that had an effect on the nature of the stream. One such example is the music played during breaks between matches. At early tournaments the music was selected by the producer of the stream by just using common sense. The only goal was to entertain the viewers of the stream and that could be done with funny or catchy songs without consideration of possible copyright infringement. Professionalization changed this and during Counter Strike tournaments at

DreamHack you can only use music of the label Monstercat that uses gaming streams as their promotional channel because they do not charge the user. Another example is how sponsors are portrayed and named in a stream. During the breaks their advertisements are shown and their names mentioned multiple times by the presenters this in contrast to the earlier days of the tournament.

What differentiates esports broadcasts in a monetary sense from traditional sport broadcasts is the way it earns money online. Traditional television sells time slots to advertisers, besides the earlier mentioned sponsor deals which they often also implement. The costs for these timeslots are dependent on the estimated number of viewers it will attract during the broadcast. There are two main reasons this will, for this moment, not work for esports. One is the difficulty to determine the time it will take for teams to finish a match. When looking at football, for example, we know that the match will take 90 minutes with some possible extra time which is calculated in with the programming by the television station. In the case of esports the time a game is finished is less accurate to predict as most formats work with a best of system. For instance Counter Strike tournaments are commonly played in a best out of three or best out of five what means that, in the case of a best out of three, the winner could be determined within two maps with a maximum playtime of 180 minutes. When there is the need to play a third map it could be as much as 270 minutes to determine the winner. Another aspect that will not occur in most traditional sports broadcasts are the technical difficulties that are inherently related to esports. Most broadcasts within esports have technical issues which are mostly related to server or player computer issues which often delays the broadcast. One of my last encounters during a production was at the Overwatch Championships at DreamHack Winter 2016 when the servers for the game were not working due to a, probably, patch issue. This resulted in postponement of a part of the upcoming matches till the next day. The way esports has to rely on making a profit are the partnerships online video platforms offer to their users. The regular way it would work is that the platform pays for the amount of clicks on advertisements or the view count. In the case of DreamHack Twitch pays an amount in order to have almost exclusive rights to host the matches of the events. The DreamHack esports broadcasts are inevitably linked to the brand Twitch that could be compared to how regular television companies buy programs for their channel.

The need for more streamlined revenue earnings as described above are caused by several reasons. Noticeably the costs of the production has gone up when looking at the advanced technology that also needs additional staff to work on the production. At DreamHack Winter 2016 a total of eighteen people were working directly on the Counter Strike stream while this started with only two people in 2010.

Popularity of the game also required bigger stages every event starting from having no stage at all to a stage with seating for over a thousand people. More important the professionalization of the players required the tournaments to make more money. Counter Strike teams would only exist out of five players and maybe a manager back in the early days that would recoup their costs out of the prize money they won, nowadays they are part of larger companies that have their own demands and wishes. Teams noticed the popularity of the broadcasts and started to ask for more prize money and expenses paid. In general the players and the teams have no monetary risk when participating at offline tournaments such as DreamHack. Last year Alexander Kokhanovsky representing the top ten organizations wrote a letter to the major tournaments with their demands regarding several games. The teams demand when participating in offline Counter Strike tournaments that all expenses are paid for, the prize pool should be at least 75.000 US dollars and, probably the most controversial for offline tournaments, a team will only play a maximum of two matches a day with a limit of three days in a row. This resulted in the number of matches and the total broadcast time, compared to earlier years, has gone down. Tournaments and DreamHack are now forced to professionalize the content to get more viewers and revenue from the sponsors and advertising.

For the future things might change even more as developers may charge the tournaments to use their games. At this moment this is not the yet the case for Counter-Strike, but several games already ask the tournament to pay a license fee in order to host the games. This is outlined in non-publicized contracts that are part of several non-disclosure agreements. When this will happen DreamHack would be inclined to professionalize their broadcasts even more to make it profitable.

Taking the commercial approach we see changes happening all over the place with a lot of professionalization. Not only the sheer amount of money involved increased, but also the way it is handled with more care. Regulations and contracts are not only shaping the business, but limit organizers in setting up an event. For example the cost of it will take to let a team participate in a tournament. As discussed with some staff at DreamHack most of my observations here are limited by several non-disclosure agreements as the business is still developing. What I can tell is that the overall business, not limited to DreamHack, will be an exciting venture with several companies trying to get a piece of the pie.

5.3 CULTURE LOGIC

The technological logic and commercial logic are mainly about running a business that is engaging for their viewers while making sure there is a profit to be made. What must not be forgotten is that the viewers have a big influence on the Counter

Strike tournament. One example, that I mentioned in my personal introduction, that clearly shows the direct involvement of the community. During the quarter final of Counter-Strike Global Offensive DreamHack Winter 2014 tournament one of the famous teams Fnatic at that time used pixelwalking¹⁶ to win the third map. The opposing team LDLC allegedly used another exploit of the game to win some rounds, but when the tournament organizers decided that a partial rematch was the most appropriate way to proceed the community was outraged against Fnatic. They took their complaints to different social media platforms¹⁷ what resulted in Fnatic forfeiting their spot in the tournament¹⁸. While the final decision was left to the team there is no doubt that the not amused community played a role in them forfeiting, different outlets however claimed the sponsors made them do it (Ehrnberg 2014) or the team caved under the pressure they got (Yiji 2014). What we see clearly here is the pressure the crowd can have on a tournament when they are not pleased with the outcome of the organizers decisions. This is just one of the many examples that can be found within esports culture as celebrity status becomes more important for the viewers. Not only the players, but also the people around a tournament production are affected by the involvement of the public. A notable example is what happened at the DreamHack Winter 2015 Counter Strike tournament. The incident happened outside the broadcast itself and took place within closed doors backstage. The accounts of the events leading up to the incident differ and can be dismissed as gossip, but it all ended with Richard Lewis, one of the talent working on the stream, allegedly physically attacking one of the players backstage that resulted in a permanent ban for Lewis working at future DreamHack events (Thursten 2015). This was one of the most talked about topics at the event as it was unheard of, but it also span a large discussion on different social media forcing the organization to make a statement of the incident. There is no relation with the Swedish code of conduct that was released this year how organizers and players should behave at esports events, but it shows a clear need for guidelines on what is acceptable on a LAN-party. Besides the incidents on the event itself the tournament is also partially affected by the previous mentioned Arms Deal Update. The popularity of the game increased significantly by allowing players to bet their ingame items on professional matches. Betting in esports is not uncommon anymore, but it changed how the organizers set rules for participating teams in order to make sure the matches are played fair.

These rules can be described as the ethics rules Korthagen mentioned as the

¹⁶ Pixelwalking is an act of using invisible ledges formed by misaligned clipboxes. A row of misaligned pixels incorrectly form an invisible ledge jutting out from two merging clipboxes when the map is compiled, allowing the player to pixelwalk (Yiji 2014)

¹⁷ <http://geertverhoeff.blogspot.nl/2014/12/fnatic-cheating-at-dreamhack-winter.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnNJnN1hKdM>

professionalism aspect of mediatization. Ethics rules set by DreamHack and other esports organizations differ every year as new ways of circumventing them present themselves on different levels. It can be the previously mentioned pixelwalking, match fixing, social behaviour, etc. Most notable is the impact the culture can, and has got more when time passed, on tournaments and eventually on the production itself that should be explored more to get a sense of the scope this presents itself.

7. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

In this thesis I described the process, mediatization and the patterns, in my experience, that can be found within esports broadcasting by looking at previous productions at DreamHack offline events. The professionalization of the broadcasts has developed rapidly from a more amateur type of process to a fully streamlined organization that takes different aspects from traditional broadcasts, but also creates their own merits. For example the way esports organizations have to make money to assure a level of professionalism and the way teams, unions, developers and sponsors present themselves in relation to the production company. Also the rules the organizations have to implement that are unique to esports and are seldom found within the traditional sports as they are inherent to digital play. On the other hand they grab to more traditional methods to professionalize the organization and produced content as we have seen with offline spectators, sponsor deals, license fees and the used technology. The above are mere examples that I experienced of the course of seven years, but could be several subjects of their own when researched in depth.

In the future esports will develop further by providing content to their fans. Different technologies, faster internet speed and the constantly evolving community will probably show some interesting innovations on multiple fields. The professionalization also has its downside. In the case of Counter-Strike it used to be a thriving community based game embraced by the professional players. With the monetary incentives it could lead to a less reachable concept for most people and that it will be dominated by a handful of companies. Time will tell if this will have a negative effect on the community.

Using the different media logics as a categorization I showed the major aspects within the mediatization of the DreamHack Counter-Strike tournaments as I have experienced them. In describing the matter I laid down the major epiphanies in my autoethnographic approach that, in my opinion, can be seen as patterns of change within the professionalization of the productions between 2009 and 2016. The impact it has on the esports culture and the productions cannot be claimed by one category, but is something that goes hand-in-hand with each other. Keep in mind that these observations are mere my own and are constrained within the limits of confidentiality and the way autoethnographic research is conducted. There are many communities and tournament organizers that hold other norms and values within their esports culture that should be looked at when researching the subculture as a

whole. Someone else could experience another event or even the same events in a different way, which could be an interesting thing to compare.

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