

Participation and Advocacy in Community Media

By Robert Watson

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

Community media is less well funded, supported and researched than other forms of media, and yet it holds considerable potential as a transformative experience and as an agent for social change. This thesis explores how the process of participation in community media represents an opportunity for reinvigorated democratic and civic conversations about issues of concern to local communities, particularly in relation to the idea of participation and advocacy.

This thesis contests mainstream media studies discourse by asserting that it is in paying attention to the lived experience and the accomplishments of people acting in lifeworlds and intimate social networks, rather than simply looking at texts, legal frameworks and institutions, that it is possible to develop a wider understanding of changes in media and digital media production situations, particularly those defined by notions of *participation*, *activism* and *agency*.

The study uses an ethnographically-informed mixed-methods design that incorporates participant observation, interviews and reflexive engagement. It is founded on principles of pragmatically informed symbolic interactionism, which suggest that it is possible to attend to the unfolding of human actions and understandings as they are accomplished in the collective expression of community life that are shaped by neutral social processes.

This thesis therefore contributes to an underdeveloped area of media analysis, signalling opportunities for further study and evaluation of the developments of community media at a time of significant change and social reorientation.

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1 Introduction

The question of what motivates people to contribute to community media is an idea that I have been drawn to, both in its general context as a form of civic engagement, and in specific instances in which people experience community media as a set of social practises and roles situated in identifiable community lifeworlds. I wanted to find out if it is possible to establish a model, or models, of goal-driven engagement that would demonstrate the diversity and multiplicity of people's motivations as they volunteer and contribute to different community media projects in diverse situations and circumstances. To do this I used an interpretivist investigation approach founded on symbolic interactionism and ethnographically informed research techniques, which is an approach that I believe is capable of providing insight into the multiple layers of meanings and interpretations that people articulate and enact in their social and community lives. These approaches allowed me to gain insight into the multiple perspectives and interpretations that people take and negotiate in their social engagements, as they undertake socially creative and applied work in different forms of community media. What I have established, as a result, is an empirical model of enactment that is situated in the informal and formal roles and practices of community media volunteers and activists. This is a model that demonstrates the complexity of the social processes that underpin the codification of these social roles. My conclusion, therefore, is that people who volunteer as community media producers and activists are motivated by a range of complex, competing and multi-layered dispositions, impulses and characterisations, which cannot be easily explained or understood by any single theoretical model or framework, but must instead, be grounded in empirical observations that are built-up from the shared experiences represented in the accounts and the testimony of those involved in shaping and generating these practices.

1.1 Addressing the Research Question

I have sought in this thesis, therefore, to give attention to the significance of participation as a social process in community media, and the way that participation is relevant to accounts of social change. In order to account for the role of participation I have applied Herbert Blumer's principle of *neutral social processes* (Blumer, 1990), which has led me to consider the following issues:

1. That participatory processes are neutral and are observable at the lines of entry to group life.
2. That a range of diverse alternative social developments are possible in regard to these processes at the points of entry into group life.

3. That these participative processes do not determine, nor coerce, the alternative routines and dispositions that come into play in the social setting.

The preliminary research question that I sought to ask, therefore, was:

Is participation in community media an agent of sustainable social change?

In answering this question, it was necessary for me to investigate a specific social setting in which issues of community media participation, and the way that participative practices are demonstrated in group life, were apparent. This meant finding out how the individual *stances* and *perspectives* relating to community media participation were established in these situations, and how they might be experienced along the lines of entry into group life. So, and in ascertaining a methodological guide for this investigation, my attention was directed to the following general issues:

- What was understood and accomplished by volunteers and participants, particularly as they sought to use and incorporate forms of participative community media practice in the routines of their group lives?
- How well-suited were the forms of community media practice and organisation to the many and varied tasks associated with participation?
- To what extent were the established models of participation, that are characteristic of community media practice, viable?
- To what extent was community media participation disruptive of mainstream forms of media organisation?
- To what extent could community media situations be conceived as symbolic sites of interpersonal negotiation that allowed for, and facilitated, expressions of identity, community and social accomplishment?

Additionally, the general methodological questions that I sought to address were:

- In what way was it possible to observe the collaborative participatory practices that took place in community media groups?
- In what way was it possible to account for how participants in community media defined and understood their role, their identity and their accomplishments?
- In what way was it possible to explain how these participants reflexively understood themselves?

My intention at the outset of this research project, then, was to develop a pragmatic account of the casual correspondence and contingent relationships that *fall together* within fieldsites of community and collaborative media. I based this enquiry on the assumption that the resulting account might open-up space for further discussion about the basis on which *collaborative purpose*, in the form of community media participation, is arrived at. I did this by following Blumer's five steps for observation and analysis of the neutral social processes associated with participation, what Blumer calls a "research procedure under the new perspective" (Blumer, 1990, p. 150). These steps are:

1. Identification of what is meant by participation [*see literature review*].
2. Identification of the participatory process [*see literature discussion*].
3. Identification of the major points of context of the participative process in group life [*see narrative contextual statement*].
4. General awareness of the larger social process [*see narrative account*].
5. Identification of what takes place at the points of contact [*see narrative discussion*].

1.2 Practical Focus

In addition to attempting to locate this sense of common purpose within Blumer's theoretical and methodological framework, it was also necessary for me to focus on some practical tasks. These tasks included:

1. The practice of observing the behaviour of participants in community media groups and learning to talk and interact with the different agents who operate within these groups, with special attention to the commensurability of their symbolic communication.
2. The practice of developing practical models that participants, volunteers and supporters of community media reflected on to improve the effectiveness, competence and sustainability of their ethical and practical operations.
3. The practice of linking and validating the commonsensical practical imperatives of people who worked in community media groups and networks, with the prevailing ideas and concepts that are associated with the analysis of community media.
4. The process of establishing practical suggestions that helped in pursuing change on the ground – both in the community media groups in practice, and in the formulation of the prevailing ideas and concepts associated with the study of community media.

1.3 Research Summary Statement

My enquiry was therefore founded on an ethnographically informed process of data collection that used reflections, observations and interviews that I gathered and assembled following an extended

period of field study of Leicester-based community media groups during the period October 2012 to September 2014. This was a lengthy period of participant observation that allowed me to work in close proximity to community media activists and informants acting in a number of different community media groups and settings. I was then able to develop an ethnographically informed mixed data collection approach that was aligned with the analysis technique of symbolic interaction. The conceptual underpinning that I brought to this study was an adaptation of Herbert Blumer's assertion that social processes are neutral, which thereby necessitates forms of empirical observation in specific social settings (Baugh, 1990; Blumer, 1990; Lauer & Handel, 1983).

Consequently, it is my contention that the ongoing methodological development of Herbert Blumer's symbolic interaction model provides a valuable framework for analysis that offers a recognisable and examinable set of empirical research parameters, including:

1. How people establish goals in the situation they are located in.
2. How people apply their acquired or emergent perspectives gained from their interaction with significant others or reference groups associated with the situation.
3. How people identify or label themselves (their 'self'), any relevant objects in a situation (for example, the identities and roles of other people, any natural or human-made objects, any shared concepts and ideas, their use of language and descriptive terms, etc.).
4. How people take a role and thus become a recognisable other, either as individuals or as a group as a whole.
5. How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to:
 - a. How we assess what we do in relation to each situation.
 - b. How we assess what is happening in different situations in relation to our sense of self.
 - c. How we ascribe a sense of value or worth to our sense of self in different situations.
 - d. How we articulate or negotiate a sense of identity in different situations.
 - e. How we interpret what we are experiencing emotionally as self in different situations.
6. How people define the future streams of action that are potential in their acts in different situations. These potential streams of action might be perceived to be distant or immediate, tangible or intangible.
7. How people apply their prior acquired knowledge in a situation in the form of memories from the past and apply them to the present situations.

Furthermore, in using symbolic interactionist principles to explain the social situations being studied, I was able to identify evidence that accounted for the way that:

- Agents would act reflexively in defining the situations they were encountering.
- Actors would relate towards one another, and how these actions might be developed or unfold in the situation that these actors defined.
- How these actors might be recognised as social objects, and were defined in relation to one another.
- How any accomplished acts were originated, not from discrete motivations, but from the interaction and influence of actions that were encountered as other actors interact.
- How acknowledged social interaction took place at the intersection points where different actors merge their streams of action, each changing his or her own stream of action according to what others do.
- How interactions led over time to a shared view of reality (a worldview or perspective) that become part of the definition and labelling of social interaction, shaping the potential for decision-making and the direction of future actions.

The systematic framework that Blumer identifies at the entry points of group life, and which I made use of here, was made possible by viewing participation as a neutral process. The insight that I gained from Blumer's approach has therefore been useful and productive in adapting and abridging concepts of participation, particularly as they can be demonstrated to be a neutral phenomenon of community media group life. As a result, I was able to ascertain how we can make sense of participation in group life in relation to each of these related lines of entry:

1. The structure of occupations and positions.
2. The filling of occupations, jobs and positions.
3. The new ecological arrangements.
4. The regime of work.
5. The new structures of social relations.
6. The new interests and new interest groups.
7. The monetary and contractual relations.
8. The goods produced by the manufacturing process.
9. The patterns of income of industrial personnel (Blumer, 1990, pp. 42-46).

Consequently, by examining the specific settings and examples of group life, it was possible for me to look afresh and adapt these parameters, particularly the social conditions under which they operated and how they related to different forms of social, technical, economic and ecological arrangements. These are arrangements that in practice, and upon examination, were found to be distinct and different to those developed by Blumer, so as a result, my overall aim for this enquiry was to **identify a dynamic *framework of evaluation* that would encompass the practical operation of the process of participation as it is embodied in the relative relationships of form, structure and routine of group life.**

1.4 Research Question

After considerable deliberation and adaptation of the broader methodological issues I sought to deal with, I was able to identify this research question:

Is participation in community media an agent of sustainable social change, and is it possible to identify a dynamic *framework of evaluation* that encompasses the practical operation of the process of participation as it embodies the relative relationships of form, structure and routine in group life?

1.5 Thesis Structure

Consequently, I will present this thesis in two parts. First, in sections one to five, I will outline the theoretical and methodological issues and approaches related to this study, starting with a review of representative literature relating to community media studies. Here I locate the field of community media as a legitimate area of academic concern, as it is shaped by issues such as identity, globalisation, representation, civic empowerment, community media's relationship with the mass media, and so on. I will follow this with a discussion of the work of Herbert Blumer and the principle of the neutrality of social processes, and how I believe this principle can be applied to a critique of the concept of participation, as it is expressed in different analytic and conceptual frames, such as the counter-hegemonic approach, the community development approach, or the techno-centric approach. After this, I will use the following section to discuss how Blumer's concept of a neutral social process is played-out in social life, and what the different lines of entry are that illustrate how this might be observed in practice. I will thereby clarify in what way participation might be investigated as a framework of expectation that follows divergent lines of influence and anticipates social change. I will follow this with an outline and summary research question, complete with a specification of my adopted methodological approach to data collection, as informed by symbolic interactionism, and undertaken as an ethnographically informed process of participant observation. I will then follow

this with an overview of how the data that I gathered was coded and analysed thematically, before I provide a summary statement of the methodological issues encountered.

In the second part of this thesis I will provide a presentation of the data and field reports. Section six is a summary presentation of interviews and observations of the main activists and advocates who were involved in the study, relating biographical, practical and conceptual observations as they sought to structure and define their work as leading advocates of community media in Leicester. Section seven continues these observations by summarising issues associated with the practical accomplishments of organising and developing community media practices, and how this was played out with the volunteers and supporters who formed the network of participants. Section eight offers reflections and observations on the field work reports, relating to Blumer's framework for the lines of entry into group life and the general participative processes that are being enacted. Finally, section nine proposes a framework of role dispositions that might be used as a guide in additional and future work mapping participative practices in community media.

1.6 Findings

To summarise the main issues that are highlighted in this study, it is my contention that to better understand community media it is advantageous to investigate conversations that take place between agents, and thus identify the patterns of vocabulary realignment that occur within community media situations, as informed by pragmatic concepts of the displacement of presently congruent frames of reference and language use. As a consequence, any assessment criteria that are developed in future studies should be empirical and ethnocentric, as they are based on the interaction of agents who take on roles within community media situations, i.e. role-taking, role-making, role definitions and role negotiations. Therefore, the use and practice of symbolic interaction methodologies and ethnographically-informed participant observation research approaches are a suitable way to go beyond category views of media practice and participation, providing rich and detailed accounts of lifeworlds that are not available from other forms of investigation. This means that the framework of evaluation that is encompassed in the role-profile frameworks of community media participants, as it is understood in relations to Blumer's principle of social process neutrality, can be related to empirical observations of social practices that are characterised in the lines of entry into group life and how people make sense of them. So, while the social process of participation is neutral, it is vital to recognise that people's objectives are goal driven and therefore divergent, and this is what qualifies as social change.

In this study I will demonstrate, therefore, that by observing the behaviour of participants in community media groups and learning to talk and interact with the different agents who operate within these groups, it is possible to give attention to the commensurability of their symbolic communication. And that by developing practical role-based models that participants, volunteers and supporters of community media can reflect on, it is possible to improve the effectiveness, competence and sustainability of the ethical and practical repertoires of operation that are at hand. This means that by linking and validating the commonsensical practical imperatives of people who work in community media groups and networks, with the prevailing ideas and concepts that are associated with the analysis of community media, it is possible to account for the range of alternative frameworks that are at hand. Perhaps most importantly, I have been able to demonstrate that by establishing practical suggestions that help in pursuing change on the ground – both in the community media groups in practice, and in the formulation of the prevailing ideas and concepts associated with the study of community media - it is possible to direct forms of future activity and role-taking in more sustainable forms of operation.

1.7 Recommendations

As a result of this enquiry, I am therefore able to offer a set of recommendations that relate to future research activity concerning community media. My recommendation is that further investigation should focus on the role definitions, functions and accomplishments of community media participants and advocates, especially if we are to develop a purposeful and pragmatic account of the challenges of civic and community development. This will entail looking at how these role definitions are defined *in situ* in different community media circumstances, and other emerging social situations. It will entail considering how we are able to account for and understand the motivations and dispositions of different actors as they engage in these activities in different situations, especially in the way that volunteers, participants and advocates *feel* about what they do. To achieve this, we must conceptualise participation as a neutral social process that encompasses a wide range of divergent and complex activities. As a result, we must look again at how concepts and practices of advocacy in the context of community media come to form a legitimate community development approach, one that is linked with sustainable community activities that need to be better understood and applied. Leadership and advocacy training, therefore, can be viewed as something that can be more purposefully developed and supported by education institutions, civic authorities and government policy makers, as leadership and advocacy training is recognised as something to be embraced and supported by community media volunteers and groups themselves.

1.8 Contribution to Knowledge

In this thesis I have used a unique set of observations derived from first-hand encounters, experiences and reflections, which were based on extensive fieldwork undertaken during an extended period of study with Leicester's community media groups. I have drawn inferences and recommendations from the observations and reflections described in my experiential account. These inferences could not have been obtained in such a thorough and situated manner from other methods, and so this thesis demonstrates how I have applied the principles and concepts of symbolic interactionism as an adaptable empirical working methodology and process of enquiry and analysis that can be applied in order to gain insight and understanding of community media practices. My thesis therefore makes a focussed set of observations and recommendations that should form the basis of further study, and that if applied more generally, can influence the approach to policy making and civic planning for community media activities and practices.

2 Literature Review – Why Study Community Media

Community media is a varied set of practices and routines that are related to civic and community concerns which, on the one hand, encompass media production practices that are *local* and founded in *grassroots* activism (Carpentier, Lie, & Servaes, 2003), while on the other hand, they are conceived as a set of social practices that function as a *counterweight* to ideologically founded, corporate, national and mainstream media interests. However, as Kevin Howley suggests, “community media is a notoriously vague concept” (Howley, 2010, p. 5), and so these definitions are not easy to affirm. Those that do participate in community media, moreover, are said to do so because they have a deep sense of disillusion with conventional media practice and content, and want to act out their commitment to the values of free expression and participatory democracy (McLeod et al., 1996). It is through this ‘have-a-go’ ethic of community media that volunteers seek out and fulfil a principled and political rebalancing of the inequities of public communication and representation.

This rebalancing is achieved by encouraging, supporting and enacting alternative media practices, which raise the profile and presence of marginalised voices in the everyday routines of community life (Howley, 2005; Stefania Milan, 2008). Community media is able, therefore, to augment community relations and foster community solidarity. Community media, however, is not just concerned with its own operation within the social, economic and political mediascape, but is said to be a sustained and measurable act of *cultural struggle*. As Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpenter suggest, community media is concerned with a “wider set of notions and practices, such as participation by communities in their self-controlled media,” while at the same time “producing content for the communities they serve” (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpenter, 2008, p. 54). Community media, therefore, is an interdependent set of social practices that are separate from the state and the market, which support the “articulation of alternative media as part of civil society” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 20).

Chris Atton suggests that community media can be understood by its commitments in three ways. Firstly, by the “validation of a marginalised cultural activity;” secondly, in the “formation of community;” and finally, in regarding “publishing as political action” (Atton, 2002, p. 56). There are many “umbrella terms” (Order, 2012, p. 65) and “terms in vogue” (Jankowski, 2003, p. 7) that encompass community media’s scope and activities, such as: alternative media, citizen’s media, radical alternative media, democratic media, emancipatory media, independent media, participatory media, citizen’s journalism, social movement media, community radio, fanzines, and so on (Traber, 1985). Per-

haps the most commonplace and recognised characteristic of community media, however, is the desire to “provide news and information relevant to the needs of [...] community members,” thus engaging these members in “public discussion” while contributing to their “social and political ‘empowerment’” (Jankowski, 2003, p. 8). On the one hand community media volunteers and activists emphasise the value of citizenship, while on the other hand they “emphasise the progressive nature of the participants and the organisational structure” that they are integral to (Order, 2012, p. 68). Perhaps the most basic gesture of community media, however, is that

The *ownership and control* of community media is often shared by local residents, municipal government and community-based organisations. [So] the *content* is locally oriented and produced (Jankowski, 2003, p. 8).

The Community Media Association captures this approach in their mission statement, noting that as a representative organisation for the United Kingdom community media sector,

Community Media is rooted in an ethos of inclusivity and universal access to opportunity, and that it is sourced and produced by organisations, by individuals and by informal groups, whether characterised by geography, interest, ethnicity, age, gender or social background (CMA, 2012).

Community media involves non-professionals and volunteers in the production and the distribution of content: either through open-access broadcast media, such as community radio or community television; through alternative forms of publishing, such as newspapers and local magazines; and increasingly through the internet by using social media platforms and communication technologies (Dagron, 2006; Deuze, 2006; Ewart, 2000; Stephania Milan, 2010; Murkens, 2009). Moreover, community media most often takes the form of non-commercial work, with funding coming from social sponsorship, limited advertising, government subsidies or direct fundraising activities (Pearson, Kingsbury, & Fox, 2013; Radcliffe, 2012; J. Tacchi, 2000). What defines community media groups above all else, however, is the commitment that “these media are ‘of, by and for’ members of the community.” Community media is therefore generally concerned with, and committed to, “some form of community action or development[,] contributing, in a phrase, to social change” (Jankowski, 2003, p. 8).

In addition, community media is also regarded as a medium for “cultural and creative expression, community development and entertainment,” because in recognising the “production, practice and content” of community media, it is possible to “foster greater understanding among communities,

including those most marginalised and support peace, tolerance, democracy and development” (CMA, 2012). Nicholas Jankowski has noted that “five general themes dominate much of the research undertaken with regard to community media: democratic process, cultural identity, the concept of community, and an action perspective to communication” (Jankowski, 2003, p. 11). The discussion in this overview will attempt, therefore, to summarise these debates, though it will be widened to include (and even challenge) views and explanations of community media that have themselves become the standard accounts of community media development (Myers, 2011), and which are therefore in need of review.

This discussion will approach these issues pragmatically, and will identify concepts that are themselves circled by a range of wider and related issues that we might show awareness of when we seek to understand community media, including:

- Media, democratic processes and the concept of the public sphere (Couldry & Dreher, 2007; Lax, 2009; Vuuren, 2006).
- Cultural identity and expression through local, transcultural and fragmented forms of community (Liu, 2010).
- Globalisation and cultural marginality (Stephania Milan, 2010).
- The dominance of virtual community utopianism as shaped by emerging media and communication technologies (Bimber, 1998; Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 2004; Kennedy, Naaman, Ahern, Nair, & Rattenbury, 2007).
- How collaborative and creative communities prefigure participation (Gauntlett, 2011; Vogl, 2016).
- How social capital and media literacies are shaped by reflexive experience (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Opubor, 2000; Price-Davies & Tacchi, 2001; Vuuren, 2001).

2.1 Methods and Structures

According to Ellie Rennie “community media is distinguished by its aspirations and motivations as much as by its methods and structures” (Rennie, 2006, p. 4). Thus, any account of community media must look at the different ways that content is produced and circulated, and what the expectations are of the producers and the collaborators who engage with audiences, their families, their friends, their social groups, and the myriad of other networks of association that bring people together around culturally shared and mediated experiences. Rennie points out that “community media holds a promise of a different way of doing things – not just in terms of aesthetic qualities and production practices, but in terms of organisation” (Rennie, 2006, p. 16). So, in this sense, “a conception of community media that is generative rather than oppositional” (Rennie, 2006, p. 11), will be more fruitful for the observer who wants to make sense of what is being communicated or experienced. However,

for a pragmatic observer this will involve holding back on judgements about the form, standards and quality of the symbolic products or texts that are associated with community media.

2.2 Community Media Scholarship

A simple starting point in accounting for community media, then, might be to assess the way that community media accommodates and negotiates the rules and repertoires of mainstream and commercial media, and the extent to which community media groups seek to define themselves in *opposition* to the normative values of commercial and mainstream culture. Meanings, competences and capabilities are disputed by community media practitioners and volunteers every bit as much as they are guarded by mainstream, professionalised media specialists, it's just that they are contested in different ways and for different reasons (Hallett, 2008; P. Harris, 2007; Humphries, 2003). As Kevin Howley points out, community media tends to "underscore the creativity, pragmatism, and resourcefulness of local populations in their struggle to control media production and distribution" (Howley, 2005, p. 3), offering instead, an alternative set of self-defined concepts as to what might be in the interests of these differing social groups acting within overlapping communities, and who are themselves engaging in different types of media production and civic activity. As Ellie Rennie proposes, "community media offers an alternative idea of the public interest and this sets it apart from public service broadcasting" and commercial media (Rennie, 2006, p. 10), thereby holding out the hope, as Kevin Howley suggests, that "another media is possible" (Howley, 2010, p. 284).

According to Howley "community media is a significant, if largely overlooked, feature of contemporary media culture," and as such "warrants scholarly attention" (Howley, 2010, p. 2). On the one hand it is possible to pay attention to community media on its own terms, and to view the "hopes and contradictions" of a "neglected aspect of media history;" while on the other hand, it is equally possible to use community media as a way to "help us to understand the media at large" (Rennie, 2006, p. 5), and to contextualise both community and mediated experiences more generally. Thus, in whatever way scholars choose to scrutinise community media, it represents, as Howley states, "a significant, but largely untapped site of analysis into the dynamics of media culture" (Howley, 2005, p. 4). Community media is a phenomenon, according to Howley, that offers "distinctive contexts" through which media scholars are able to test different "theoretical propositions," and draw different "analytical insights to the everyday lived experience of their local communities" (Howley, 2005, p. 269). However, the study of community media suffers, consequently, from "assumptions of marginality" (Rennie, 2006, p. 16), which means that in terms of research and scholarship, "community

media is a surprisingly underrepresented area within media studies” (Rennie, 2006, p. 6; Rodriguez, Ferron, & Shamas, 2014).

Part of the reason for this is because the terms of debate are often disruptive, leaving observers to wonder if the discussions about alternative media, community media, citizens media, and so on, are really about the same set of social phenomena? Community media is not easy to clearly define or to account for. It has many different procedures of formal and informal regulation, many different motivating criteria for volunteers, and it has numerous procedures of production that generally function through *ad hoc* and makeshift practices (Buckley, 2001; J. A. Tacchi, 2002). While state regulated broadcasting and commercial publishing are more often than not managed and controlled through centralised mechanisms of administration and policy enforcement, community media is more often characterised by configurations that are “more random, messy, and ‘natural,’” and thus, emblematic of the emergent social “configurations of the community media sphere” (Beresford, 2002; Rennie, 2006, p. 25). So, while community media is valued in principle for its role in reflecting a diversity of opinion, different cultural values, different languages and different models of community life, it does this against a backdrop of weak and indeterminate “evaluative tools” that ensures that the “value” and “social impact” that community media achieves often remains an “intangible notion” (Faris & Meier, 2013; Order, 2012, p. 64). It is commonplace enough to make this claim, but community media really is a “highly contested terrain” in which “dominant themes are transient” and hard to pin down (Order, 2012, p. 65).

2.3 New Media Challenges

In recent times the challenges presented by digital and online media have opened opportunities for the study of community media to be looked at anew (Fernback, 2007). The potential for new ideas, new policy approaches, and innovation in the forms and practices of media engagement, have been noticeably refreshed, particularly as media has shifted from the broadcast model to the network model, complete with dynamic and interactive forms of socialisation and decentralisation (Cross, Liedtka, & Weiss, 2005; Rheingold, 2000, 2010, 2012, 2013). Community media has frequently been regarded by scholars as an area of study relevant to the role of media in the *public sphere*, however, the “efforts to ‘democratise’ the media,” that have characterised much of the community media sectors ambitions, have placed constraints on the way that community media is perceived (Ndela, 2010; Wallace, 2008). Any attempt, according to Ellie Rennie, to challenge the “domination of the corporate media and the economic and political media structures that [have] favoured some interests

over the others” (Rennie, 2006, p. 17) will always gain some purchase in academic circles, but as Rennie explains, “it does not make sense to ignore community media when the starting point of media studies is the way in which the media represents our own – or others’ – reality” (Rennie, 2006, p. 20).

Therefore, by questioning the role and the function of community media (i.e. pragmatically) as a *viscerally lived social experience*, and noting the *difference* that it makes to the activists engaged in media production practices and organisations, it may be possible to come to an understanding of the individual *stances* and the *perspectives* that are experienced by the people who volunteer for, and get involved with community media? What might be gained by these volunteers and participants, as they engage in these alternative forms of media, is a basic question that ought to be asked frequently in community media studies. How adequate are the forms of organisation of community media to the many and varied tasks that volunteers seek to undertake? What are the models of engagement and participation that are characteristic of community media, and how can they influence policy debates? In what way might community media “disrupt the rise of transnational media conglomerates and provide an alternative to the mainstream media” (Rennie, 2006, p. 7)? Furthermore, to what extent is community media able to resist the prevailing governmental and policy orthodoxies and forms of social administration, and to what extent can community media be accounted for as a symbolic place of negotiation that allows for and facilitates expressions of identity?

These, and many questions like them, are frequently put forward in the hope that community media participation might take on an aura of a unified agent of social change. However, and in so doing, these questions may have helped maintain the distance that studies of community media have experienced from mainstream media studies opinion. This is because the association with “advocacy efforts to democratise the media” are practically oriented, and can fly in the face of theoretically and textually oriented forms of research. Rennie describes how many of the earliest studies of community media depicted an ethos of *opposition* that “kept community media out of touch with developments in media studies at large” (Rennie, 2006, p. 9). Traditional forms of media studies can be characterised by a search for a cohesive and structured theoretical grounding that can unmistakably give a role in *history* to media technologies and systems (Dagron, 2006; Deuze, 2006; Ewart, 2000; Hill, 2013). What is confounding, however, is that community media is clearly far from a cohesive force, as it is too often dysfunctional and resistant to strategic development, either economically, politi-

cally or culturally. Dominant principles in media studies, moreover, tend to look for cohesive theoretical groundings in the “social, cultural, and political dynamics” of community life. But as Kevin Howley clarifies, this overlooks the “fundamental but paradoxical relationship between communicative forms and practices and popular conceptions and articulations of community” (Howley, 2005, p. 10).

2.4 Structuring Principles

The task, then, might be to disregard the structuring principles found in theoretically cohesive approaches to the study of community media, what Jankowski calls the “construction of theoretically-grounded models for understanding the place of community media in society” (Jankowski, 2003, p. 5), and instead, contemplate and observe the rapidly changing, fluid and dynamic experiences of people who are situated in community media lifeworlds. Kevin Howley’s challenge to media scholars is to put aside concept-driven appreciations of “local cultural production,” and affirmations of “popular forms of resistance” (Howley, 2005, p. 3), and instead, suggests that we should seek out the “wider contours of our rapidly changing communication environment” (Howley, 2005, p. 5). Howley argues that this changing communication environment defines the “fundamental, yet enigmatic relationship between communication and community: a relationship that stirs the popular imagination and stimulates academic debate” (Howley, 2005, p. 258). Hence, understanding contemporary media culture and community life as a dynamic lifeworld, constituted by expressions of participation and practice (or accomplishment), offers observers of community media the chance to guide further investigation by focusing on the local orientation of the participants and the meanings that they draw from their experience (Forde, Meadows, & Foxwell, 2003; Kanayama, 2007).

Furthermore, Rennie stresses that community media may have already made an “unrecognised” set of contributions to the wider debate about “alternative models of organisation and information distribution” (Rennie, 2006, p. 37), because in the “flow and exchange of information between the educated and uneducated,” as Bruce Girard contends, community media acts as a “conduit for the flow and exchange between new knowledge resources and traditional knowledge systems, in which both are able to express their full potential.” This exchange of information is transcultural and international, it crosses boundaries and borders, it crosses languages and literacies, and is, according to Girard, a “force for community cohesion” (Girard, 2003, p. 9; Lewis, 2008b; Potter, 2013). Community media groups, for example, are often allocated public funding with the expectation that they are pursuant to social change, either by bringing new skills to a community, for example, or by “helping

community members to participate in the knowledge economy” (Rennie, 2006, p. 37). This is a model of community media that recognises wider political and social ambitions that are often built-in to the principles and the forms of community media practice; practices that are clearly different from the (arguably) *out-dated routines* that are inherent in legacy and mainstream broadcast industries, in which the effective passivity of audiences is generally equated with imitations of participation (Livingstone & Lunt, 2013). As Rennie asks, “what does it mean to implement communications policies that involve the unknowable and ‘messy’ domain of community” (Rennie, 2006, p. 7), especially as those communities might themselves have high expectations about the participation and involvement of non-traditional and marginalised people?

2.5 Notions of Utility

Context is therefore a necessary factor in understanding the function and the role that community media organisations play. Simon Order suggests that it is possible to “examine the concept of value” (Order, 2012, p. 62) in these differing contexts, since a clearer understanding of the sense of utility that a community media organisation has, means that it can promote its own function more clearly. As has already been stated, however, producers and participants in community media are often keen to offer access to media resources and facilities to those who eschew instrumental notions of utility because they are “marginalised or demonised by mainstream media” (Order, 2012, p. 66). The question that arises, therefore, is not *what* the objectives are that a social media group should aspire to meet, but rather, *who* gets to decide on the objectives (Order, 2012, p. 65)? The participation of amateurs, activists and ordinary citizens in community media is highly regarded, but as Rennie explains, a note of caution should be expressed, because it is clear also that “community media is not always intended to be an alternative to the mainstream or alternative in its values,” and that descriptions and analysis of community media need also to “encompass its conservative, ordinary, and mundane elements and not just that which is radical or alternative” (Rennie, 2006, p. 9). In this climate, moreover, it has been difficult for community media organisations in the United Kingdom to define and represent their role as one that has social utility that goes beyond the principle of the market (Dreher, 2010; MRC, 2014; Radcliffe, 2015).

2.6 Grassroots Media

One such area of challenge to the radical agenda of community media is found in forms of citizen-generated media and grassroots journalism. Dan Gillmor describes this as a “global conversation that is growing in strength, complexity, and power” (Gillmor, 2006, p. xv) based on the notion that

Tomorrow's news reporting and production will be more of a conversation, or a seminar. The lines will blur between producers and consumers, changing the role of both in ways we're only beginning to grasp now (Gillmor, 2006, p. xxiv).

This does not mean, by itself, that grassroots journalism is aiming to dissolve or confront the prevailing order of community life. In fact, community media and grassroots journalism may do more to support and enhance the traditional roles of local “knowledge-brokers” who are already participating in community conversations. But as Bruce Girard notes, it is often more important to a community that local media and programming is “trusted” at times of general change, so that they can help, as professionals do now, by acting as gatekeepers to “shape larger conversations – and to provide context.” This is an approach to community media that recognises that the tools inherited from established forms of media will not be entirely “consigned to history” (Gillmor, 2006, p. xxv), but may well become, instead, a varied set of *core values* that are more widely shared. As technology is changing, so is the need for people to adopt and gather new practical tools that will facilitate their interpersonal, their local, their regional, their national, and their international conversations.¹ As Dan Gillmor suggests, this gives rise to the “realisation that putting the tools of [media] creation into millions of hands could lead to an unprecedented community” (Gillmor, 2006, p. 14). And it is how these forms of *community-through-conversation* are fostered that attention must be given (Kautsky & Widholm, 2008).

2.7 Quotidian Media

An immediate question that arises, however, is what are the *differences* that we will see that enable participants and observers of community media to recognise the *shifts* and the *redefinitions* concomitant with existing media and communication routines, and the social and cultural practices that are allied with them? Is there a requirement to redraw and change the theoretical standards and models that form the basis of accounts of community media? Is it a burden on policy institutions to explain how the *experiences* and the *practices* that are represented in community media might undermine the existing infrastructure of civic participation and mainstream media markets? Is it a question of establishing a wider picture of the community media landscape, as was suggested earlier, or assessing how the “individual characteristics and community media use” (Jankowski, 2003, p. 9) are shifting between boundaries that have previously been designated and affixed (Cottle, 2000)?

¹ “Whereas the term technology is often associated with modern ‘equipment’ and ‘devices’, a more fundamental sense of technology would include all wisdoms and ‘tools’ (conceptual and physical) that people use to shape or manipulate aspects of their situations, including their interactions with other people” (Prus, 1997, p. 91).

Chris Atton reports how Steve Buckley [at the time of the interview the director of the Community Media Association], responded to this perceived change in the role of community, radical and alternative media. According to Buckley there is a “‘dual strategy of co-option and marginalisation’ that has led to the de-radicalisation of the community media sector.” So, instead of presenting society with an aggressive agenda of transformation and challenge, Buckley now “looks for co-operation and networking across the entire range of alternative media, erasing the polarities of advocacy/activism and local community/global struggles” (Atton, 2002, p. 142; Timebanking-UK, 2011).

What was once conceptualised as a *radical political approach* is now more likely, and perhaps unavoidably, to be perceived as a *service network* in which the role of the citizen is enacted largely as a private matter. This social process, what Zygmunt Bauman calls *liquid modernity* (Bauman, 2012), heralds the primacy of the individual, while discharging the idea that there is any social benefit in collective structures that promise collective emancipation. This is a social model that is resolutely concerned with the empowerment of individuals as consumers, rather than the consequences of acting as members of a community. Simon Order describes how “Clemencia Rodriguez’s preference is for the term ‘citizen’s media’” rather than community media, for she believes that “value and empowerment lies less in a battle with the mainstream and more in the power that comes from quotidian citizen participation in restating and reshaping of participant’s cultural codes.” According to Order, “Rodriguez believed that citizenship is not a passive legal right but something to be enacted on a daily basis via participation in media production” (Order, 2012, p. 67; Rodríguez, 2011).

2.8 Communities or Publics?

So, in examining the scope of community media, attention is usually given to the role of the citizen and the sphere in which they operate. Typically this is defined in terms of the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas, 1989, 1994), but crucial disparities can be identified which suggest that this concept has a number of limitations, because community media goes beyond the formal classifications that are often offered in the language of the public sphere, classifications such as: the state and the market; for-profit or not-for-profit; democratic and corporate, and so on (Barlow, 1988; Livingstone, 2005). Usually, community media studies reflects on the ‘scarcity’ of resources in relation to community media, and the sense of “marginal priority” (Rennie, 2006, p. 5) that community media is given when spectrum allocations are made by different national governments (Chambers, 2003; Wall, 2000). Often, however, when community media is discussed, it is done so as a practical matter of

utility, and as a way to encourage “subtle and context-sensitive political change” (Rennie, 2006, p. 7). As Rennie explains

Democracy – meaning to rule in the interests of the people – is also a central concept in community media studies as access and participation have been pursued out of a belief that people have a right to directly represent themselves within the media. This has an impact upon how power – symbolic and political – is circulated (Rennie, 2006, p. 6).

Hence, community media promotes *access* and *participation* as a way of challenging otherwise closed-off professional discourses, in which the control of the apparatus of communication, and the mediated messages that emerge from that apparatus, is limited to a few narrow voices drawn from limited set of social circles (Markus, 1987). The primary instrument of community media, therefore, is to celebrate the role of the *volunteer* in the practices of community media production, because *anti-professionalism* and *amateurism* often form the distinctive core of community media practice (Trust, 2012; Wenger, 1998). And while this might be occasionally frustrating, it does point towards a form of innovation that challenges the “patterns in work and consumption” (Rennie, 2006, p. 11) that are otherwise closed to people in their every-day lifeworlds. So, community media is rooted in the aspirations and values of “free speech, the public interest, access, and social change,” all of which are political concerns generated in wider debates of community life, and therefore are “deeply rooted in democracy’s intellectual traditions,” and which are “often at odds with the dominant system” (Rennie, 2006, p. 16).

2.9 Beyond Mass Media

As an alternative to mainstream media, then, community media is sometimes thought capable of “doing things which mass media systems cannot do” (Lewis, 1984a, p. 1). According to Peter Lewis, community media differs from the mainstream media in the following ways:

- Either by the motive or purpose of its practices, because community media often rejects commercial motives and assertions that people are best served in relation to economic ends rather than human, cultural or educational ends.
- Either by community media’s reliance on alternative sources of funding, such as state or municipal grants that reject advertising, and commercial models that would leave them subject to the marketplace.
- Either by regulatory privilege, through which community media is overseen by agencies different from those who are typically concerned with the regulation of media economies.
- Either because community media prioritises autonomous and local organisational structures, which provide scope for more pronounced local remits.

- And finally, by adopting a critical stance to established professional practices by encouraging amateur volunteers whose primary concern is the experience that they gain from participation, and the control that they exercise by being involved and acknowledged for their involvement.

This means that community media generally applies different criteria for the development of programming, articles and news features, as there is a desire to express a range of points of view that are not necessarily complementary to what is more widely available in commercial and mainstream media (Ang, 1996; Livingstone, 1998; Walker, 1997).

2.10 Social Needs

Consequently, the relationship with the community media audience, and its perceived desires, may be very different from commercial and public service media audiences. The use of technology and media platforms may also be very different from established broadcasting and commercial operations, leading to a diffused view of the make-up of the audiences for community media, along the lines of age, gender, urban or rural identity, and so on (Mhlanga, 2011), and as communities of identity and interest, rather than marketing oriented demographics of purchasing potential or taste (Bourdieu, 1984). There is less emphasis in community media, therefore, on the so-called *needs of the consumer* and more emphasis, instead, on *social needs*. These might be: community solidarity, cultural representation and civic education, particularly as these are tied with the aims that the community itself wishes to achieve (Cankaya, Güney, & Köksalan, 2008). Consequently, any attempt to observe and account for these practices, also needs a different approach to research methodologies, as the picture that is generated through scholarly or critical analysis cannot be entirely accounted for by traditional media effects and discourse models (Lewis, 1984b; Order, 2012, p. 69). As Simon Order summarises, “the field is far from unified in its objectives” (Order, 2012, p. 70), and therefore the definitions that are put forward must view community media in its “widest sense” and take account of the “massive array of activities and outcomes” that it offers, and which means, as Rennie suggests, that “not all of which are small or non-profit” (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Rennie, 2006, p. 22).

2.11 Citizens Media

Hermida & Thurman suggest (in relation to community news), that this set of wide-ranging principles means that community media cannot simply be defined by a “rather static core set of news practices,” but should instead be thought of as a set of “journalistic practices at its margins” (Hermida &

Thurman, 2007, p. 3). These are communicative practices that use technologies and forms of production that have an ambiguous relationship with mass and commercial industries, but which are given increased capacity by transformations in the technical affordances of things like smartphones, the internet, and other increasingly low-cost media production and distribution tools (Lewis, 2008a). For example, the prevalence of citizen news that is captured on portable media devices by non-professionals is nothing new, whether it is the beating of Rodney King, or the more recent riots in Baltimore following the killing of Freddie Gray.² What is giving a greater sense of urgency, however, is the expectation that these forms of citizen media are now part of the *information landscape* that people use to “manage their lives,” a landscape that is formed through an opening-out of the type of people who can be “part of those conversations” (Gillmor, 2006, p. 45). As Dan Gillmor suggests,

First, outsiders of all kinds can probe more deeply into newsmakers’ business affairs. They can disseminate what they learn more widely and more quickly. And it’s never been easier to organise like-minded people to support, or denounce, a person or cause. The communications-enabled grassroots is a formidable truth squad (Gillmor, 2006, p. 46).

And while Gillmor would like to see broad agreement maintained on what the standards and values are that citizen-journalists should abide by, he raises the point that while the hazards in departing from the established legal and regulatory systems of traditional media and news publishing are considerable, in the end the “advantages outweigh the risks” (Gillmor, 2006, p. 122). The question of *who* and *how* citizen journalists are responsible for the content that they produce is still largely administered under the legal and regulatory frameworks of the mass-media age, even though, as Gillmor points out, the internet and the “use of camera-equipped mobile devices by just about everyone” means that we must “assume that people are constantly taking pictures in public places” (Gillmor, 2006, p. 48). This means that these previously restricted practices are now widespread. Gillmor, moreover, would like to see citizen reporting cover broad features of public life, but accepts that this is not a simple process, and that many questions remain about how endorsements are given and defamations dealt with. This model sees the reporting of community news, either online or in alternative and independent publications, as a “street corner” in which communities occupy a virtual space to which other members of the community are invited. Thus community reporting takes on a dynamic aspect and “becomes far more communal” (Coyer, 2005; Ferne et al., 2009; Halavais, 2013, p. 112).

² <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/16/baltimore-police-prepare-freddie-gray-trial-verdict-protests>

2.12 Access to Resources

Historically the challenge of community media in the UK has been to provide access to the established resources of broadcasting, in both radio and television. Downmunt notes that,

In the UK much of the struggle to satisfy this need has been focused over the last twenty years on 'access' television, which seeks to give a voice to sections of society that have been ignored or misrepresented on television (Downmunt, 1993, p. 12).

The access model of community media is generally defined as groups and organisations that are run on a not-for-profit basis, and who provide community members with opportunities to participate in the process of producing and disseminating broadcast media content (Everitt, 2003; Ofcom, 2009). These access projects are wide and varied and have many different governance and management approaches, in addition to many different ways to identify and respond to their audiences (Ofcom, 2013, 2016; Scifo, 2012; Wall, 2000). This presents problems for policy makers, who generally look for normative criteria for comparing and assessing the impact of different elements of cultural and communications policy. Generally, regulators and funders look to measure the *effect* that different community media groups have on different social policy issues (Beresford, 2002). But because community media, as was noted earlier, is so often disruptive, it means that any fixed criteria are difficult to establish, as the "boundaries get challenged all the time" (Rennie, 2006, p. 3).

This is clearly a recipe for misperception, as policy objectives often start from the principle that communities lack skills and capabilities for 'successful' communication, leaving them at risk of manipulation, and that these communities need expert guidance from external social policy advocates, in the form of professional administration, policy development, education and training (Johnson, 2007). It is these same professional experts who are often brought in to help guide these groups to strategically develop services and objectives that operate in alignment with wider governmental social policy initiatives. Tension is found, however, in the relationship between these competing models of development (Foxwell, Ewart, Forde, & Meadows, 2008; Ocwich, 2006). One model sees communities as in need of support and guidance, and the other, alternative model, posits that people operating in these communities are more than "capable of participating in, and defining, their society in a meaningful way through their shared collective interests" (Rennie, 2006, p. 25). However, as Rennie pertinently asks,

Is community media capable of improving the world in which we live? Does it matter? Should we devote resources to it, and if we do, what will be the long-term consequences? Once it is established, is it capable of serving all interests or should it just cater to those who decide to get involved? (Rennie, 2006, p. 25).

Furthermore, and rather than trying to model community media as embedded in a watertight concept of community, it might be better to ask how notions of community are deployed and used to “reach certain cultural and political ends” (Rennie, 2006, p. 28). Community is too often presented, according to Rennie, as a “space beyond politics, ‘a kind of natural, extra-political zone of human relations’” (Rennie, 2006, p. 40), but as with all social phenomenon, it is possible to examine the traces and the footprints that elucidate the mechanisms and relationships through which the ideals and culture of community media are accomplished (Cammaerts, 2009). Seeing community media *in context* and *in practice*, then, is the priority here, but to what extent does this *fit* with all other forms of media and communications policy? For as Rennie attests, community media is “the product of social and political choices, not of accident or impersonal economic or technological forces alone” (Rennie, 2006, p. 41).

2.13 Patterns of Representation

What, then, are the options that communities have in terms of their representation and their civic status? How might these options be enacted in order to overcome existing patterns of representation, rather than simply follow them? What are the conceptual frameworks that are needed to foster and support discussion about these differences? What happens to audiences when they engage with community media and why is it different from when they engage with commercial and mainstream media? How do audiences identify with communities that they are familiar with? How aware are communities about the way that media in these forms are produced? How central or marginal is community media when it comes to making effective public policy, and to what extent is access and participation encouraged (Livingstone, Lunt, & Miller, 2007)? What are the limits of these policy approaches and to what extent do they need to be “carefully controlled and predetermined [as] cultural objectives?” (Rennie, 2006, p. 114).

Furthermore, what is the status of local content and how can its operational and symbolic meaningfulness be evaluated in the production practices that form the basis for these embedded services (Bosch, 2005)? Should it be access and participation that “drives local content as much as need?” (Rennie, 2006, p. 121). Should access be afforded greater value in public policy, so that it becomes more than a “concession to what is left over rather than a positively defined means to diversity” (Rennie, 2006, p. 129)? Governance of community media is therefore of considerable importance, as the licencing and regulation of community media operations, and particularly broadcasting, is compounded by community media’s fit within the “third sector,” which is aligned with charities and

other voluntary initiatives (Hallett & Wilson, 2009). In placing community media in this alignment, it is at least possible for issues of access and participation to gain traction within these debates. The question that arises, however, is to what extent this model of media, that encourages direct participation in media production by members of those communities, is able to remain unchallenged by resistant commercial and political forces (Kleinstauber & Sonnenberg, 1990)? How *does* community media, as a result, gain recognition that it is part of a legitimate civic and political process (Carpentier et al., 2003)?

2.14 Access Media

Access, as Rennie describes, has become emblematic of a “new type of politics” (Rennie, 2006, p. 167) that aims to keep discussions about these community platforms open and part of a “guaranteed pathway to the development of new ideas,” and is itself, therefore, a vehicle for the “reinvigoration of political life” (Rennie, 2006, p. 168). Moreover, community media has always sought to articulate the existence of “multiple publics” (Rennie, 2006, p. 173) in its rationale, and as such is able to legitimise its approach as one that can “stimulate innovation” through the intra- and extra-cultural representations that it produces. Community media asks, therefore, to be valued for “what it can achieve, rather than negatively, by what it opposes” (Rennie, 2006, p. 176), and is hence a better fit with models of the public interest that are presently met only through “monopoly or oligopoly public service broadcasters” (Rennie, 2006, p. 177). Community media, moreover, has to innovate in the way that it connects with its audiences and the way that platforms of communication are used (Wall, 2014). As Henry Jenkins notes,

The spreading of media texts helps us to articulate who we are, bolster our personal and professional relationships, strengthen our relationships with one another, and build community and awareness around the subjects we care about. And the sharing of media across cultural boundaries increases the opportunity to listen to other perspectives and to develop empathy outside our own (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. 304).

The challenge for observers of community and collaborative media, subsequently, is to examine the “motivations behind and the ways in which local populations come to make use of various technologies – radio, television, print, and computer networks – for purposes of community communication” (Howley, 2005, p. 2). What is it about forms of community communication that are autonomous, and which operate on the basis of promoting widespread participation in civic activities, and which maintain and promote relations within a community and between different communities (Ewart, 2000)?

Hence, community media has the potential to be regarded as a rich field of activity that enables observers and participants to recognise how democratic practices can be undertaken on a widely held basis, and from within local communities, rather than being imposed from the outside by non-aligned commercial or political interests.

The challenge of building and sustaining communities in a world of increased globalisation, in which community fragmentation and restrictions in market diversity are considerable, mean there are many ways that community media might be seen as a contradictory response to these issues (Fontes, 2010). But as Howley suggests, community media might also serve as “an implicit, cross cultural, and timeless understanding of the profound linkages between community cohesion, social integration, and communicative forms and practice” (Howley, 2005, p. 7). Therefore, thinking about community media as part of a wider movement of social action and “struggle for ‘communicative democracy’” (Howley, 2005, p. 2) means that it is possible to reflect on how

Community-oriented media provide an exceptional vehicle to move beyond cultural imperialism without losing sight of the asymmetrical relationship between transnational media corporations and local populations, and to interrogate the contradictory tendencies and countervailing trajectories associated with globalisation (Howley, 2005, p. 33).

The principle of access in these circumstances, therefore, is an uninhibited way of challenging established forms of exclusivity and otherwise alienating forms of media communication. By promoting practice and participation, different conceptions of community life are themselves being promoted (Cammaerts, 2009). Therefore, recognising the *dynamic of exclusion* that structures many aspects of community life is a useful starting point in forging alternative orientations and articulations of the lived experience of many. These articulations may even help to suggest and work out other, alternative ways of life that might be possible. This is not a question, however, as Rennie suggests, of community media’s innate “ambitions to change wider patterns of ownership and control,” but rather because community media is “made to exist within overall policy arrangements that are antithetical to its design” (Rennie, 2006, p. 167).

2.15 Community Belonging

Community media still serves a significant purpose, which is to overcome and counteract a “climate of political apathy and social alienation that confounds a sense of belonging in local communities” (Howley, 2005, p. 35). In this respect, then, attention should not solely be given to the messages that are carried, but instead, attention should be paid to the thoughts, feelings and expressions of the

people who are articulating, making, sharing and accomplishing them (Gauntlett, 2011; Ke, 2000; Spencer, 2005). Besides, what are the forms of cultural appropriation that community media producers undertake that allow them to work in parallel, and apart from the dominant and mainstream conventions of commercial or public service media? What are the routines of *bricolage* that community media participants articulate and accomplish as they invest in narrative and representational forms of identity and self-expression (Stuart Hall, 1990; Shi, 2005; Wissenbach, 2007)? As Kevin Howley suggests:

Like textual poachers (e.g. Jenkins, 1992), community media producers glean bits and pieces of media culture and invest this material with their own social experience in attempts to make sense of their lives. And, like the fan culture commonly associated with textual poaching, community media represents distinctive cultural practices that create and nourish affective relations (Howley, 2005, p. 34).

Community media, therefore, is embedded in lived experience in very different ways to mass media. Community media plays a different role and demonstrates some very distinctive cultural ideas that are separate from the dominant conceptions of traditional cultural identities. The histories that accompany community media are very different, and the perspectives that are gained from the production processes, as they are driven by lived-experiences in embedded and situated life-worlds, are also very different. By adopting a view that community media groups and associations are themselves “important sites of confrontation and exchange between the culture industries and local audiences” (Howley, 2005, p. 35), and also between agents and participants in these lifeworlds, it is possible to build-up a complementary picture of the role and function of community media, a view that pushes aside the dismissive attitude of technical superiority, or professional competence, or economic dynamism, that is often presumed to be the norm by insiders of mainstream media (Williams, 1980). As Kevin Howley explains,

All too often, the work of ‘amateurs’ is marked as esoteric, frivolous, and apolitical. Rarely do commercial or public service broadcasters even acknowledge the existence of community media organisations. More often than not, when community media is acknowledged, it is invariably depicted as a refuge for outsider artist, hatemongers, pornographers, and the radical fringe: a perception some community media producers enthusiastically embrace (Howley, 2005, p. 36).

The concentration of media ownership, and the undermining of civic routines of autonomous responsibility, that accompany many forms of globalised commercial communication, therefore, are challenged by ideas of self-governance and democratic accountability. Community media is often

celebrated for its “‘emancipatory potential’ (Enzensberger, 2000; Howley, 2010, p. 4), and for its potential to denote a fundamental reorientation of the “social, political, and cultural mediations that take place within and through communicative forms and practices.” But this reorientation is only possible because community media, arguably, represent “strategic alliances between social, cultural, and political groups mounting and organising resistances to the hegemony of dominant media institutions and practices” (Howley, 2005, p. 33).

2.16 Enacted Identities

This *dominant ideology* or *hegemonic* account of community media emphasises the strategic purpose of community life, but it does not easily explain the *interpersonal* and *intersubjective* operations of lived and community experience. Community media advocates, on the whole, therefore, seek to develop

Resource for local social service agencies, political activists, and other whose missions, methods, and objectives are antithetical to existing power structures, community media publicise oppositional messages that are either distorted by or altogether omitted from mainstream media coverage (Howley, 2005, p. 34).

In this way, attention might also be given to the way that people *use* these resources to build and maintain their community relationships, and thereby enact their identities within their lifeworlds. For it is always possible to propose an *instead*, as Kevin Howley suggests, and in a twist to the well-known McLuhanite adage, we should perhaps consider that *instead* “the mediators are the message” (Howley, 2005, p. 12). This gives community media volunteers and participants their due prominence in academic and policy discussions. This prominence can be achieved on the basis that the enactments, thoughts and feeling of what they actually *do* when they are producing community media content, volunteering in community media services, and forming community media-based relationships, is meaningful, vital and matters.

2.17 Summary – Community Media Issues

To summarise then, community media is considered a “significant intervention into the structural inequalities and power imbalances of contemporary media systems,” (Howley, 2010, p. 4), and as such, community media can be seen to enable local groups of people that want to attempt to correct these imbalances through their own access to the systems of communication (Hallett & Hintz, 2010). Community media therefore

Encompasses a range of community-based activities intended to supplement, challenge, or change the operating principles, structures, financing, and cultural forms and practices associated with dominant media (Howley, 2010, p. 2).

Community media, however, has to be considered within the context that it operates, and the interplays and negotiations that are made by agents acting in real-life community media groups, as they seek to shape and inform their “disparate efforts” (Howley, 2010, p. 2). As observers of community media the challenge is to consider the “value and importance of community media in an era of global communication” (Howley, 2010, p. 3), while providing rich and context-bound information about what it means to be a *participant*, an *activist*, a *citizen* and a *producer* of alternative and community content. This means that studies of community media have to

Capture the multidimensional character of community media through an examination of a geographically diverse field of countervailing structures, practices, and orientations to dominant media (Howley, 2010, p. 3).

Notably, this means considering in what way it is possible to interrogate how the repertoires and the forms of communicative practice that are undertaken are exchanged, accomplished and are understood by the people involved. This means more than simply theorising community media as an *outcome* or *effect* of “community structures, social and economic relations, and political processes” (Howley, 2010, p. 3). Instead, the need is for a procedure that can raise questions about the *collective organisation* of community media groups, the types of *localised structures* that they are based around, and the types of *behaviours* and *performances* that participants and volunteers undertake. As an exceptional vehicle for study, then, community media throws up a number of revealing and contrasting views of the way that mainstream, corporate and professionalised media operates, particularly with their hierarchical and executive management structures, their consumerist conceptions of audiences, and an antithetical disregard for voluntary association, participation, democratic decision making, and selective regard for the rights and role of citizens who wish to otherwise maintain a *deliberative* and *contemplative* presence within the pluralist mass communication and civic systems of modern societies.

Community media, therefore, offers the opportunity for reinvigorated democratic and civic conversations about issues of concern to local communities themselves. These opportunities can be studied either by looking at texts, their content, and the way that these texts are received, i.e. the traditional media studies methodology (Gauntlett, 2015; Merrin, 2014); or, attention can instead be given

to the *lived experience* and *accomplishments* of people living in communities and networks, as practitioners, and as self-identified community members. The outcome of these studies, furthermore, will add to otherwise “underdeveloped areas of media history” (Howley, 2010, p. 6), and therefore provide an opportunity for further study and evaluation of the potential developments of media and communication technology at a time of significant change and social reorientation, particularly as this focuses on ideas of access, participation and agency.

3 Discussion – Frameworks of Participation

As noted previously, participation is one of the dominant concepts on which our understanding of community media is founded. Media participation, to adapt Herbert Blumer, “seems destined to shape increasingly the framework of human group life” (Blumer, 1990, p. 3), with participative media forms, and the participative media economy, undergoing prodigious growth and spreading into all parts of social life. Indeed, it might be said that participation almost has the characteristics of an ideology, in that participation represents actions and goals that are given precedence as a working set of procedures, almost in the way that articles of faith might be said to be dependent on fundamental principles that form and shape modern society. As a ‘quasi-ideology’ participation can be supposed to proceed on the basis of its own motivations, guided by a set of supporting policies that call on the dynamic resources of technical innovation and development. Participation is accordingly assumed to be a major agent of social transformation. However, in order to understand what the participative process is, and in what way it is relevant to concepts of community media, we must first be able to identify it comprehensibly and make reliable observations and statements that produce a clear sense of what the concept and the practice of participation actually refer to.

3.1 Adapting Blumer

According to Herbert Blumer [on whose analysis of industrialisation this discussion is drawn and adapted (Blumer, 1990)], there are two essential considerations to be accounted for when examining social processes such as participation.

- Firstly, we have to understand the scholarly task by studying, analysing and explaining the social role of participation.
- While secondly, we have to make clear how the study of participation as a social process can guide us through the practical problems of social change that develop in the midst of group life.

This means, according to Blumer, recasting our fundamental approach to participation as it involves challenging the traditional scholastic approach that views the mechanisms of participation as “a causative agent that produces specific kinds of social consequence” (Blumer, 1990, p. 145). This is no easy task, as it would seem that many scholars regard the character of modern life as being the *consequence* of the participative process.³ These processes are usually seen in the common view of society, as mediated and structured through processes of media engagement, thus setting the terms for

³ “At the heart of the sociological enterprise is the idea that human behaviour is the product of community life; that people’s behaviour cannot be reduced to individual properties. A major task facing sociologists (and

group life to unfold. Participation, therefore, is held as a fundamental set of ideas that are the agents and authors of specific social consequences. Moreover, participation is predominantly studied on the basis that it is possible to identify the representative characteristics of participation, and thus to ground these characteristics into a general set of social conditions and occurrences that take place as the products of the process of participation.

In this regard, and according to Blumer, research and scholarly concern are more often focussed on the beginning and endpoints of a process of social change, but tend to ignore, or fail to account for, the social processes that lie between. Typically, forms of social study give an account of what participation is in principle, and as it can be linked with various end products, but there is little that accounts for, or explains, the features that exist in between. As Blumer suggests,

If positive relations are found... it is believed that the study has established the causal influence of [participation]. The given conditions that are found are regarded as the product of [participation] (Blumer, 1990, p. 46).

The hazard, according to Blumer, takes the form of two basic deficiencies:

- Firstly, a failure to account for the factors that may provide, by themselves, the social conditions that are attributed to participation.
- And secondly, a failure to understand what happens when the participative media process enters into contact with existing group life.

As a consequence of these deficiencies, Blumer suggests that a shift in the research process is necessary, one that pays attention to the wider range of social factors that might otherwise be contributory to social change, rather than the determinative idea that it is the factors associated with participation alone that regulate social change.

3.2 Causative Conditions

Blumer advises that when we study early instances of participation as a social process, we have to take care to separate the participative forces from the non-participative forces, thus avoiding misidentifying what the participation process is. Likewise, we have to make a clear distinction between

social scientists more generally), therefore, revolves around the study of *the accomplishment of intersubjectivity*; that is, indicating how people become social entities and how they attend to one another and the products of human endeavour in the course of day-to-day life" (Prus, 1996, p. 2).

causative issues and associated issues, thus avoiding *post-hoc* rationalisation. When studying participation, it is not uncommon that our ideas and the sources of these ideas will be hazy. The challenge, according to Blumer, is to be diligent about what other social factors might be at play, and to avoid attributing these factors to a causative condition that are either inherent in the process of participation, or the social conditions in which they are played out. This requires a rejection of conventional ideas of classical (i.e. linear) research procedures, and involves an uncoupling of the attributions of the process of participation from the assumptions of what constitutes the product of the process of participation. According to Blumer, it is possible to pay attention to the demands and opportunities for new forms of social activity and social relationships that emerge, but which cannot be inferred in the operation of participation alone. The study of the situation, according to Blumer, is therefore the only mechanism by which we will ascertain any knowledge of the interplay of ideas and practices associated with participative media, rather than simply relying on hearsay or supposition.

Studying the social situation in which the process of participation is practiced means that we are able to see how “people respond to the demands and opportunities that are set in the situation” (Blumer, 1990, p. 157). As Blumer points out, these situations vary, and they are suggestive of a range of responses and demands. These responses, however, are not coercive, nor are they uniform or follow fixed patterns. Instead, people bring multiple sets of views, different values, different expectations, and thereby, different definitions and interpretations of the situations that they are associated with.⁴ The engagement with forms of participatory media practice may be met with enthusiasm, or they may be met with anxiety. Participants may be reluctant, dismayed or resentful, or they may be supportive, hopeful or appreciative. Some may be motivated to pursue change, others to hold-the-line based on what they know to be common and shared. What we cannot do though, according to Blumer, is to assume that those differential responses are determined in the situations, and therefore inferred in the process of participation itself.

As Blumer notes, if we study the process of participation through the social instances that are in play, then we also need to study social instances where participation is not in play, or in which it takes different forms. Primarily, we should avoid attributing to participation any “social happenings that may be due to other factors” (Blumer, 1990, p. 160). This means overturning the expectations that we can simply compare a given set of features of participatory practices, and note the social

⁴ “The interpretivists are centrally concerned with the meanings people attach to their situations and the ways in which they go about constructing their activities in conjunction with others” (Prus, 1996, p. 9).

consequences of those practices, as if the relationship between them is structured into a logical progression of outcomes. This mode of procedure, as Blumer notes, “would be legitimate if the larger social process did not share in the relation” (Blumer, 1990, p. 160). However, and much to the consternation of many scholars, the relationship between what is inferred in the social process of participation, is only comprehensible when it is accounted for in the experience of group life. Therefore, and according to Blumer, the task of scholarship is to study how social policy helps to shape social developments as forms of participation are enacted and played out. Scholarship would thus be able to advise and inform the development of social policies that can be realistically applied to different social situations. As Blumer argues

The situations that arise under early [instances of media participation] should be scrutinised to see how the application of divergent policies structure the situations and set lines of response to them. Careful and sustained study of this sort should lead to a valuable body of knowledge (Blumer, 1990, p. 166).

3.3 Empirical Observation

The accepted view of participatory practice, to further adapt Blumer, can either be attributed to careful and meticulous analysis, or it can arise as a “vivid impression” that is spontaneously attributed to a wide variety of “social happenings” that have not yet been accounted for in the way they induce specific social effects (Blumer, 1990, p. 5). If our concern is to paint a picture of participation as an agent of social change, then it is necessary to do so from specific empirical instances, including those elements or features that reflect the way that participation as a social process is operated in ongoing group life. There are many different ways of looking at participation, which means that there are many different kinds of things that we can select that might represent participation as an agent of social change. These include:

- The basic elements of the media production/development process.
- The process of technological infrastructure that enables this process.
- The essential conditions that are necessary for its enactment.
- The logical demands that give these instances character.
- And the set of generalised forces that make up the climate of operation.

When describing the elements that go to make up the media development/production process, we need to break down the process in terms of how it ties into group life, so that we can view it properly as an agent of social change. A view that simply passes from the development/production process, to the supposed social consequences, will not be sufficient, as it implies that we can skip the intervening detail of how the participatory process plays out in group life.

If we seek to explain participation as a social process that is formed by the interfacing of different technologies, innovations and improvements to social participation mechanisms, then we will benefit from tracing the historical development of these technologies, such that it is dynamic and transformative, and thus demonstrates an attribute of modern social interaction. This does not, however, offer insight to our study and understanding of what the participative process does to group life. If we seek to identify the essential conditions that are necessary for the occurrence of participation, then we run the risk of accounting for participation as a product of these conditions, according to Blumer, and not as an agent in their transformation. This again fails to relate to social group life, its lines of entry, the on-going activities, and the particular dynamic of the setting. Thus, accounting for media participation as organised and constituted by a set of logical demands which are intrinsic to its function, they would constitute the conditions of operation as indispensable to the process of participation, and by which the people who are acting out these processes are bent towards them - which would be determinative. These elemental pressures might help us to map out the terrain of social group life, but they do not coerce or mould us into particular patterns or lines of action. There is just too much indeterminacy and churn in social life to be definitive or final about what gives social life form. Therefore, implying that it is the logical demands of participation that shape how participation is played-out in practice, is circular. Consequently, we might want to account for the participatory process using higher levels of generality, but then we would also be accepting that participation is only one process among many, and that these processes, each or combined, would have different effects, and thus give rise to different configurations.

In undertaking any study that accounts for participation, then, producing a typology of these processes would be inordinately complex, and almost impossible to comprehensibly list and sort. Thus, we may find advantage, instead, by identifying the lines of action that these general processes exert influence on, seeking in practice the empirical evidence that would be accounted for in the specific examples identified. Though the problem, if we follow Blumer's line of thought, is that our concept of participation would lose its sense of neutrality, becoming instead a co-partner along with the social setting. This would require a process of variable elimination that seeks to identify the fixed relationships between the process of participation and the observable social setting. As useful as the comparative approach is, and as Blumer notes, the subsequent challenge would be to find enough good examples that will allow us to interrogate these processes in action.

3.4 Critiquing Participation

It will be useful to consider, therefore, how participation has been accounted for from a number of different viewpoints associated with community media and its social practices, before identifying how we can move to an empirically grounded and pragmatic view of participation, as it is enacted in group life. We can divide this into corresponding models, or alternative frames of reference, each linked to a representative approach that outlines the main features of each view of participation, thus helping to evaluate the relative practical application of each. The first view to be considered can be summarised in Margaret Ledwith and Jane Springett's *Participatory Practice – Community Based Action for Transformative Change* (Ledwith & Springett, 2010), which is associated with counter-hegemonic approaches to issues of social participation. The second approach is Jim Ife's *Community Development in an Uncertain World* (Ife, 2013), which is associated with an ecological view of community development. This is followed by Porta and Mattoni's view of civic participation (Porta & Mattoni, 2013), then by Henry Jenkins, Ford and Green's *Spreadable Media* model (Jenkins et al., 2013), which offers a techno-centric approach to participation and media distribution. Finally, this is followed by a brief overview of the concept of rhizomic and arborescent forms of media as associated with Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013). Many other forms of analysis are relevant, such as regulatory, policy, discourse or content analysis approaches, which would also offer noteworthy grounds for comparison if space allowed. However, the examples selected here should be sufficient to open up space for discussion from which we can consider how other, alternative or competing frames of reference, might be appraised in practice.

3.5 Counter-Hegemonic Approaches

Ledwith and Springett offer a view of community participatory practice that is founded in counter-hegemonic critical theory. They advocate that autonomy and agency are awakened through the process of "critical participation in society" which forms the "basis of collective action" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 116). The establishment of a critical mindset is able to question, according to Ledwith and Springett, the "ideas that construct everyday life" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 158), and as such make it possible to come to terms with the "reality that transcends neoliberalism, individualism and consumerism" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 190), which they claim are the hallmarks of our current times. Ledwith and Springett account for participatory social practices from a critical perspective that is founded on Gramsci's ideas of hegemony, and Foucault's concepts of discursive power (Foucault, 1970, 1972; Gramsci, 1971). Firstly, hegemony is maintained within society through the "collective will of the people," who are locked into a false view of their consciousness. How people perceive the world is directly related to the way that people act in the world, so consequently, if

people are able to change the way that they understand the world, they will be able to change the way that they behave in the world. This process of change, according to Ledwith and Springett, requires a *counter-hegemonic-force* that is able to overturn the dominant hegemonic ideas that support the status quo, thus keeping people in subservient positions (Chomsky, 2008).

Similarly, the pervasive nature of power as a structuring force in social relations, as depicted by Foucault, suggests, according to Ledwith and Springett, that a lack of consciousness of the power relationships that are practiced on an everyday basis, define the interactional nature of social operation. Not only is power to be accounted for at “mega-level,” in the operations of the state, but power is inseparable from the enactment of the self and the community norms that shape the “micro-relationships of everyday life” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 168). Power and knowledge are inseparable, according to Ledwith and Springett, so any attempt to change the established social order needs to be built on a transformative change in consciousness. Therefore, if we change the way that we understand the world, and have a conscious sense of the power relationships that structure social organisation, we will be able to alter and change the form of those relationships based on a growing and multiplying way of knowing (epistemology), and ways of acting (ontology). This, according to Ledwith and Springett, “inspires by hope that change for a better world is possible, and this change begins in grassroots communities” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 175).⁵

This ideologically founded interpretation of social organisation grounds Ledwith and Springett’s concept of participation, and the potentialities for participation, as a counter-hegemonic force. The concepts of empowerment that are tied with participative actions are linked, according to Ledwith and Springett, to the process of critical awakening that occurs when people start to make their own forms of ‘common sense,’ and stop taking for granted the norms and the inequalities that are regarded as givens in everyday life. If we understand the way that power is exerted in social life, through the adoption of critical consciousness schemes, then we will be able to begin to make changes to the taken-for-granted logic of our daily interactions. Ledwith and Springett draw on the work of Paulo Freire, who they describe as an influential figure in the community development

⁵ As Marx asserts, “philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx & Engels, 1998). Whereas, Prus asserts that, “the central objective of the interactionist enterprise is to understand the ways in which people deal with one another in all manifestations of the human condition” (Prus, 1999, p. 124).

movement, and who suggested that participation is itself a necessary component of social transformation, which is worked out in Freire's influential pedagogical approaches (Freire, 1970, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2013; Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 15)

3.5.1 Challenging Subordination

Participation in this model, then, is founded on a desire to address the negative consequences of our present social arrangements (Downmunt, 1993), questioning issues of alienation and unhappiness, challenging economic inequality and social injustice, and opposing the industrial processes that leads to environmental degradation. These are all necessary prerequisites for a general analysis of the political and economic factors that are otherwise detrimental to our social sense of wellbeing. Ledwith and Springett propose that the process of participation *itself* implies democratic reform, because it gives a voice to the powerless over social arrangements that they are subject to, thereby tackling relationships of subordination in an inequitable social order, and thus seeking to challenge the dehumanising and discriminating practices enforced against subordinate social groups who are marginalised and oppressed. Minority groups in these oppressive regimes are often excluded from civic decision-making processes, and often blamed, or even scapegoated, for the failure of the dominant social order to reach its goals. However, the practice of participation, according to Ledwith and Springett, implies a democratic process in which people work towards common goals, in which everyone has a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Moreover, they suggest that "a participatory approach calls for us to acknowledge the ways in which our own life experiences have shaped the ideas that we share" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 1), and thereby gives us a sense of how hegemony works in practice.

Critical reflexivity, then, is bound into this view of participation, which means that in looking at the relationships and the partnerships that we form in our communities, we will be able to trace and map how power reinforces the "same divisive structures" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 18) that we are familiar with. According to Ledwith and Springett, participatory practice is a critical tool for knowing the world that is based on practical knowledge (i.e. praxis), shaping forms of knowledge that are inherently political and which structure the decision-making process, denying or giving voice to those who are marginalised, and power to those who wish to influence policymaking and governance. Indeed, so strong is this impulse for participative accountability, that Ledwith and Springett suggest that the critical approach is "central to all forms of participatory practice, not only those overtly labelled community development" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 15). Therefore, if we fail to

understand how power is enacted in our communities, we would be complicit with the acts of suppression that dominate those relationships. Indeed, as Ledwith and Springett suggest, “participatory practice treads the fine line between transformative change and maintenance of the status quo” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 15). We might suppose, however, that the abiding question is how do we know for certain which side of the line we should be on?

3.5.2 Critical Transaction

So what underpins Ledwith and Springett’s belief that “critical theory provides a passionate and motivating force that empowers people to act” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 19)? Firstly, the central preoccupation with the idea of power as an independent force within this critical model, suggests that participation is an emancipatory practice, and that empowerment is itself a “product of being critical.” As Ledwith and Springett claim, we cannot understand one without having insight into the other. In this sense “the self and society create each other” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 21). This is a transactional approach to social subjectivity that links both consciousness and social practice together, i.e. as praxis. However, it does so in a way that assumes that the application of participative actions can be taken at face value, such that participation is afforded a *natural* and *fundamental* status in the “nature of our being,” or in other words, that participation is an “ontological given” (Reason & Bradbury-Huang, 2001, p. 8). For example, when Ledwith and Springett underpin their claim to ontological certainty, they do so from a perspective that suggests that participation acts as an independent, or superior force. They cite Jurgen Habermas, who says that

As historical and social beings we find ourselves already in a linguistically structured life-world. In the forms of communication through which we reach an understanding with one another about something in the world and about ourselves, we encounter a transcending power (Habermas, 2003, p. 10).

For Ledwith and Springett, this transcendent power encompasses the hegemonic self, and they regard it as a pervasive force that is threaded through our lives, from the times of our births and onwards. However, with the right form of external intervention in the practice of critical consciousness awareness raising, they believe that it is possible to challenge, make visible, and demystify the vital powers that act on us.

Ledwith and Springett’s commitment to (perhaps) heroic emancipatory social goals is estimable, and is focussed on peaceful forms of mutual living, cooperation, social justice and sustainability, as well

as an accommodation with the possibility that there may be “many diverse truths, many ways of seeing the world from different realities” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 23). All of which fit well with the tradition of accounts of community media. Above all, however, they argue that the function of the participatory process of ‘truth-telling’ is integral to the process of emancipation and transformation, because without it, the process of participation would lack a critical edge. Participatory practice is therefore located, according to Ledwith and Springett, at the intersection of liberation and subordination, thus making the choices and the enactments of community participation “profoundly political” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 24) within the routines of everyday life. This is the dominant approach of the alternative media tradition (Atton, 2004). However, if we fail to challenge the inequities and discrimination of everyday life by using suitable counter-hegemonic and critical tools, then these oppressive forces that are threaded through our daily life experiences will reinforce the structural inequalities and delineated social boundaries that maintain the oppressive attitudes that are presented as common sense. Ledwith and Springett propose that it is possible to challenge this taken-for-grantedness of everyday life, using critical approaches to see what is happening beneath the surface, looking at the causes of social division and conflict, rather than attending only to the symptoms.

Moreover, the supposed inherent alienation from our natural state of being is continually exacerbated in the practices found in modern society, such as managerialism, hierarchical bureaucracies, risk management cultures, and the erosion of autonomy for practitioners who are subjugated by a policy-led approach to social organisation. Ledwith and Springett suggest that the participative process is about teaching people to ask questions, rather than merely answer questions, because if we stop asking questions then we “cease to see the contradictions acted out in everyday life” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 22). A healthy community, therefore, is a community that is aware of its interconnectedness, in which ideas flow freely and with a creative flourishing based on diversity, founded on cooperation and knitted together with a critical appreciation of the contested spaces within our communities in which divergent beliefs and cogeneration rather than competition are the norm. As Ledwith and Springett summarise

By making sense of our social reality, understanding the critical connections between our histories, cultures and differences, gaining insight into the relations of power that have shaped who we are in the world, we begin to grasp the links between ideology and alienation, and this helps us to dismantle the ‘common sense’ that has led to a dominant ideology that divides and alienated us from our natural participatory place in the web of life on earth (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 33).

3.6 Community Development Approaches

The second theme of participation in community media comes from the tradition of community development work. This locates community media within a social development context that relates actions and real-life practices with practical solutions for the renewal and provision of sustainable community development. Jim Ife suggests that what passes for theory in this model is often inadequately positioned in terms of the social, political and ecological contexts that shape the practices that are enacted. As Ife points out, “many of the stated principles of practice are fragmentary and context-free, and often the goals of community work remain vague, uncharted and contradictory” (Ife, 2013, p. 9). The imperative, according to Ife, is to locate community-based services within the broader context of community development, and to demonstrate the role that the tradition of community development can play in “establishing, or re-establishing, structures of human community within which new, or sometimes old but forgotten, ways of relating, organising social life and meeting human need become possible” (Ife, 2013, p. 9).

Community development processes, therefore, are aligned with the needs of people forming those communities, and offer a set of practical approaches that draw on the at-hand resources of the community itself, rather than drawing on the technical proficiency of outside consultants and experts. This goes against many of the traditional approaches to policy development that are employed in the bureaucratic techniques of civil administration, and suggests that it is possible to develop alternative approaches to social change that are better suited to the diversity of human associations that are the foundation of community life (Hughes, 2003). The aim of these divergent approaches, according to Ife, is to produce policy and practice that is consistent with a “truly sustainable society” (Ife, 2013, p. 14), particularly given the challenges that are faced by the established social models, such as the welfare state and the free-market, which themselves are under pressure to change and adapt to emergent conditions such as globalisation, information and communications networks, consumerism, and so on. Community development, according to Ife, has to be able to offer a consistent view of community life under the emerging economic, political and social structures, particularly as they are shaped by the ecological pressures of a planet that is suffering from man-made traumas. Community development approaches seek, therefore, to provide both an analysis of the process of human services delivery, and also a framework for practical techniques that can be used to implement an alternative approach that will meet the sustainable needs of independent communities. However, as Ife notes, “policies of community-based human services have the potential for both progressive and regressive change” (Ife, 2013, p. 18).

The tradition of community work, with its focus on issues associated with welfare delivery, the provision of public and private services, the associations of the family, gender roles, localism and inequality outcomes, means that there is a strong disposition towards social justice and progressive value positions (Hess, 2016; Isaacs et al., 2015; Lanham, Jordan, & Jr, 2016; Moore, 2016). However, Ife suggests that in recent years there has been a renewal of the impetus behind community development preoccupations that follows the green and ecological agendas, as sustainability has become a more central concern, and the mitigation of environmental damage has become a more pressing problem. Not only in terms of issues like global warming, urbanisation and resource depletion, but also in terms of social welfare, civic democracy and community renewal. As Ife points out, community responses to these issues can have a profoundly conservative rationale supporting them, as there is an “element of conservatism in all of us,” particularly as we “value certain things about the present that we would wish to preserve or conserve; and not wish to see set aside by social change” (Ife, 2013, p. 20). These conservative arguments, however, are not sufficient by themselves, according to Ife, so they need to be grounded-in, and shaped-by, an approach that links environmental and social conservation with social justice concerns, concerns that seek to address issues of class, gender, ethnicity, and so on. Ife suggests that the green agenda is often dealt with in only superficial terms, thus reinforcing the socially conservative structures and discourses that maintain relative inequalities that are founded on economic and political advantages, and which are structured into the present form of social, economic and industrial relations. If we do not incorporate a working model of economic *and* environmental social justice, according to Ife, we are unlikely to address the issues that most cause worry and social dysfunction.

3.6.1 Renewing Community Structures

However, community development advocacy need not get locked into a solely conservative attitude, suggests Ife, but can instead be a catalyst for alternative social and community arrangements that are based on “social justice as well as on ecological sustainability” (Ife, 2013, p. 20). This means looking at ways to mitigate and reverse the erosion of community structures that are intertwined with present forms of industrial capitalism, and which are leaving many people with a sense of loss, both in terms of community, but also in terms of identity (Robert D. Putnam, 2000; Robert D Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2003). The erosion of the community structures that previously held a social sense of identity can be renewed, according to Ife, if services that are aimed at supporting those communities are run in a way that is sustainable and developmental. As Ife points out, the feeling of loss of community can be easily dismissed as nostalgia for an ideal that was never real, especially

when we consider that former models of community life were in reality quite oppressive. Community development, therefore, has to avoid the ever-present danger that ‘authentic’ or ‘organic’ forms of community are ideal states to be aimed for, but instead, should seek to understand how ‘social capital’ can be understood as one measure of civil and social participation (Lesser & Prusak, 2000). The ability of individuals and groups to take part in the shared interactions of a community is central to an understanding of community development (Goodwin, 2010; Timebanking-UK, 2011). Social capital is regarded as a parallel form of practical and symbolic investment in social life that offers returns beyond the simple economic exchange models, but is instead founded in models of mutual and common exchange (Delwiche, 2013). As Ife describes

Social capital might be seen as the ‘glue’ that holds society together: human relationships, people doing things for each other out of a sense of social obligation and reciprocity, social solidarity and community (Ife, 2013, p. 22).

The feeling that the reciprocal social obligations that hold society together are being eroded is widespread (Bauman, 1998, 2007, 2011, 2012; Bauman & Donskis, 2013), and is seen as one of the main challenges of Western democracies, as the standard and quality of life of the people living in many communities are seemingly going into reverse. Community development advocates argue, therefore, that it is possible to reverse these trends, both in the formal civil structures that have given rise to them, and in the looser forms of association that have changed as people deal with issues of the Great Disruption (Fisher, 2016; Gladwell, 2000). Moreover, the focus on social capital is a useful metaphor and associated principle of participation, giving community development advocates a model of social exchange that ties with the wider economic models of consumer choice, economic rationalism and technical resource provision. What the social capital model does not challenge, however, is the climate of managerialism and bureaucratic instrumentalism that ensures that accountability is only viewed as a uni-directional process, with accountability in businesses, community organisations, public authorities, and so on, only moving in one direction, i.e. upwards towards the executive boards who actively eschew the development of accountability models “‘downwards’ to the consumer or ‘outwards’ to the community” (Ife, 2013, p. 29).

3.6.2 Ecological Sustainability

Ife’s primary focus, therefore, is to underpin the community development process with a foundation in green or ecological concepts of social change and development. The framework that is offered by the ecologically sustainable critique is, according to Ife, a powerful and fundamental challenge to the

current social, political and economic order. This challenge necessitates that the fundamental norms of social and economic discourse have to be brought into alignment with the realities that human society is having profound and embedded negative effects on the planet and the ecosystems that all life is dependent on. This is a challenge that cannot be ignored, suggests Ife, as the results of the changes that are happening in our environment are substantial, and will have to be managed if they are not to have a detrimental impact on future generations. The impending crisis of the Great Disruption means that Green thinkers are searching for radical alternatives to the social and economic problems that we have to deal with (Monbiot, 2016). As Ife explains

From a Green perspective, change is not a luxury that can be postponed until the time is right; the problems are urgent and immediate, and failure to act could place the future of human civilisation, and indeed the very survival of the human race (as well as many other species), at risk (Ife, 2013, p. 33).

Either we find direct and discrete solutions to these problems, or we look to a more holistic and integrated view that seeks wider forms of change in a more fundamental way. If we follow the first approach then we isolate each problem and look for specific technical solutions as a way of mitigating them. If we follow the second approach, then we have to undertake a wide-ranging change to the nature of the existing social, political and economic order, changing the nature of society, and the nature of the way that we participate in it, so that we build the capacity for participative problem-solving at local levels, as much as we do at national and international levels (Cohen, 2017; Croucher, 2017; Isaacs, 2017).

3.6.3 Managed Disruption

The question, therefore, becomes one of reform *versus* radical transformation. Do we wish to engage in a root-and-branch reform of our economy and social relations, and run the risk of losing those things that provide stability and security? Or, are we content to explore and experiment with new structures and policy approaches that allow for change, but are achieved with a manageable degree of disruption? Either we rely on technical solutions and technical expertise, or we seek to embed sustainability practices at the lowest levels of social organisation possible, in a distributed and dispersed approach, i.e as a form of distributionism. (Woods, 2012). What is thrown up by this conundrum, however, is the ongoing tension between centralised and normative social controls of a technocratic and bureaucratic nature, or the dispersed and distributed social controls that are enacted in practice *in situ* in community life. The green and ecological critique asks, therefore, if the

existing social order is capable of meeting the sustainability needs of the future by a process of reform, or if this order needs radical transformation in order to displace the values that are inherent and built-in to the capitalist-industrial process, but which are incapable of engaging with these problems. Put simply, the faith that is placed on technical and instrumental solutions to environmental and social sustainability may not be up to the job, given the scale and the nature of the challenges that are coming. As Ife points out, “in an era where technological progress and expertise are so highly valued it is not surprising that sophisticated new technology should be expected, often implicitly, to solve all problems” (Ife, 2013, p. 34).

The Green and environmental response, however, takes a more fundamental and radical approach to participation. It is one that questions the foreseeable consequences of the established patterns of behaviour and relationships that are maintained in the economic and social structures that are dominant in the early part of the twenty-first century. The Green response is to point out that the consequences of maintaining the social, economic and political structures of consumerism, industrialism and speculative capitalism, are not only undesirable, but practically unsustainable. Hence the Green critique calls for fundamental change before it is too late, and the cost of change after the crisis has become prohibitive. Is it better to act in a precautionary manner now, than to be forced to act when it is too late and the damage has been done?

3.6.4 Ecological Perspectives

If it is problematic to balance the short-term requirements of environmental problems with available technical solutions, then it is perhaps even more problematic to find long-term technical solutions to these problems. Instead, solutions may have to be found in a more fundamental social, economic and political shift. The Green movement does not see environmental problems as being separate from individual problems, but as an interconnected and related series of potential causes and consequences that undermine the sustainability of the social order. The response to this, according to Ife, is to develop solutions from a holistic perspective, and to eschew the linear techno-managerialist solutions that have bedevilled modern society. In redefining social and economic problems as the result of environmental degradation, then our fundamental understanding of these problems also changes. The ecological perspective views social problems as a product of the failure of contemporary society to understand the nature of the environment, and the mutual needs of the interlinked ecosystems that structure it. The kind of solutions that we need to deal with these challenges, ac-

ording to the ecological critique, will not necessarily come from the standard repertoires of expertise that we rely on at present, but instead, will be drawn from alternative sources of wisdom, especially those that are able to comprehend and identify the source of our troubles, and not just the symptoms.

Table 1 An Ecological Perspective

Ecological Principle	Consequences
Holism	Ecocentric philosophy Respect for life and nature Rejection of linear solutions Organic change Relational reality
Sustainability	Conservation Reduced consumption No-growth economics Constraints on technological development Anti-capitalism
Diversity	Valuing difference No single answer Decentralisation Networking and lateral communication Lower-level technology
Equilibrium	Global/local Yin/yang Gender Rights/responsibilities Peace and cooperation
Interdependence	Critique of the ideology of 'independence' Importance of relationships Analyse relationships, not component parts

(Ife, 2013, p. 49).

The ecological crisis is only likely to be resolved, according to Ife, through economic, political and social change, rather than at the hand of forms of scientific rationalism and managerialism that presently prevail. The community development ethos is one potential way to achieve change effectively, according to this argument, and is therefore linked with the theoretical accounts that the Green analysis has to offer. If we have reached a turning point at which the dysfunction of the present system has become readily apparent, then a new account of these general social and ecological paradigms must be considered, one that incorporates alternative views which at present do not get a hearing in wider civic and political discourses. The Green analysis, according to Ife, suggests that the pressing and immediate problems of sustainability will push this way of thinking to the forefront of social change anyway, with the aim of avoiding the ecological catastrophe that is threatening us.

The ecological perspective is comprised of a set of unifying themes, according to Ife, that focus on a broader interaction. These are: “holism, sustainability, diversity, equilibrium and interdependence” (Ife, 2013, p. 49). They apply to both to the natural world and to the social, economic and political order. Diversity of thinking, diversity of practice, and diversity of organisation, are therefore central to both the analysis and the solution to these problems. The Green perspective, according to Ife, sees inherent value in diversity, and virtue in ideological pluralism. Therefore, the community development perspective, and the process of participative engagement, is opened up to a range of contested and re-contextualised viewpoints, which though may seem contradictory and exclusive, can actually be resolved and incorporated on the basis of the need to develop social systems that are not monological, and which do not offer simple, normative solutions.

3.7 Citizen Media Forms of Engagement

Following from this view of community development as an ecologically informed practice, it is possible to map out how community media shares a sense of enthusiasm for *civic engagement* and *participation*, a view that presumes that each individual has a valuable role to play in the community development process, and who can be seen as active citizens contributing to a wider sense of community identity (Editors, 2012; Tehranian, 2002).⁶ Central to concept of community media, therefore, is an overriding sense of *citizenship* and the attendant accomplishments that are wrought by active citizens who undertake meaningful actions within a community lifeworld, and who engage in meaningful collaborative deliberations that help to resolve contentious social issues that might otherwise lead to disruption and antagonism, rather than social solidarity (Merrifield, 2002). As William M. Sullivan suggests, the “key variable is the willingness and capacities of citizens to cooperate actively in the strengthening of their associational life” (Sullivan, 1995, p. 180). This means that, as Kevin Howley notes, “to be effective [...] democratic communication demands active and engaged civic participation” (Howley, 2005, p. 19); and as Robert Putnam suggests, “citizenship is not a spectator sport” (Robert D. Putnam, 2000, p. 341). Instead, citizenship is a form of social engagement that is grounded in an awareness of shared experience and community solidarity (Thompson, 1998).⁷ Community media, furthermore, operate a democratic model of participation in which citizens are

⁶ Underpinning this is the idea that “People have great unrealised capacity to think, to be informed, to debate, and to learn from discussion. They want to be more than selfish individuals and to join a public community. What they need is an opportunity” (Booth, 1995, p. 89).

⁷ “The basis of democracy is not atomistic individual autonomy. Participation in democratic life and the exercise of real freedom in society depend on the strength of the communal relationships that give persons a measure of real power to shape their environment, including their political environment” (Hollenback, 1995, p. 148).

regarded as embedded in “one of many (micro-) spheres relevant to daily life,” and hence are responsible for organising “different forms of deliberation” that allow them to “exert their rights to communicate” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 24).

Jo Freeman maps out seven principles of democratic structuring that are essential to a functional and working citizenship. These include:

(1) the delegation of authority; (2) taking responsibility for the authority; (3) the distribution of authority; (4) the rotation of tasks; (5) the allocation of tasks along rational criteria; (6) the diffusion of information; and (7) equal access to resources (Atton, 2002, p. 101; J. Freeman, 1972-73, pp. 163-164).

Underpinning this sequence, moreover, is a process of deliberation and discussion that allows citizens to communicate and share ideas about what might constitute a *good life*, and what might constitute unwarranted intrusions into the private sphere. This is a model of “communicative democracy” (Howley, 2010, p. 10), something that Porta & Mattoni call a “deliberative democracy,” which

Refers to the decisional processes that occur under conditions of equality, inclusiveness and transparency, and where communicative process based on reason (the strength of a good argument) [that are] are able to transform individual preferences, leading to decisions oriented to the public good (Porta & Mattoni, 2013, p. 173).

In its ideal form participatory and deliberative citizenship is said to enable individuals and groups to contribute to the “creation of an open, transparent and collaborative environment for government-citizens-stakeholders interaction” (Ferro & Molinari, 2010, p. 2), in which, as Sherry Arnstein suggests, citizens are informed of their “rights, responsibilities, and options,” and who are able to distinguish the “important first step towards legitimate citizen participation.” Arnstein cautions, however, that

Too frequently the emphasis is placed on a one-way flow of information – from officials to citizens – with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation. Under these conditions, particularly when information is provided at a late stage in planning, people have little opportunity to influence the program designed ‘for their benefit’. The most frequent tools used for such one-way communication are the news media, pamphlets, posters, and responses to inquires (Arnstein, 1969, p. 220).

A number of challenges, therefore, are manifest on the way to an “open, transparent and collaborative government” (Ferro & Molinari, 2010, p. 3). This includes examining how, as a “society, we cannot simply design more civic tools, without offering participants more meaningful choices” (Stokes,

2013, p. 144), while at the same time bringing more “marginal actors” into the scope of “representative democracy.” In this way, as Porta and Mattoni attest, “social movements acquire instead more and more relevance in (participatory) conceptions of counter-democracy, as they contribute to the creation of critical public spheres” (Porta & Mattoni, 2013, p. 178).

This *critical public sphere* stresses how the preferences that individuals hold are expressed, and how the idea of the public good is oriented through argument and debate, and by the achievement of consensus (Stahl, 2008). This means adopting “deliberative norms” that allow communities to work out “complex social problems” without resorting to conflict or deriving solutions from ideological, rather than pragmatic positions. As Porta and Mattoni suggests,

Many conflicts must be approached by reliance on the potential for mutual understanding that might develop in an open, high-quality debate. The notion of a common good is often recalled (e.g. water as a common good) as is democracy as a common good, which is constructed through communication, exchange of ideas, knowledge sharing (Porta & Mattoni, 2013, p. 173).

This means recognising the capability that people have for participation in “decision-making processes,” which as Kevin Howley suggests, is at risk from taking place in an “informed and deliberative fashion” only through “corporate-controlled and commercially sponsored media” (Howley, 2005, p. 18), in which only dominant forms of communication are privileged. According to Porta & Mattoni,

The value of discussion among ‘free and equal’ citizens is mirrored in the positive emphasis on diversity and inclusion, but also in the attention paid to the development of structured arenas for the exchange of ideas, with the experimentation of some rules that should allow for horizontal flows of communication and reciprocal listening (Porta & Mattoni, 2013, p. 173).

3.7.1 Civic Regimes

The idea of “good communication” is seen, then, as a way of maintaining and sustaining effective participatory models of civic engagement that are based on the “transformation of preferences” and the “achievement of satisfactory instances of participatory and deliberative democracy within social movement networks” (Porta & Mattoni, 2013, p. 175). Philip Selznick suggests that “particularism is diluted as the community expands,” and so as “more and more people are recognised” as members of the same community or “in-group,” then there is greater willingness to attenuate the experience of citizens from a “larger perspectives,” a perspective that “undercuts primordial ties of family, tribe,

religion, and locality,” and which rejects “patriotism and nationalism” as the sole “expressions of the particularist impulse” (Selznick, 1995, p. 112). This suggests the route available is to move away from instrumental conceptions of identity and community, and instead investing in “plausible” accounts of “how to sustain the character and customs necessary for a civic regime” (Georgiou, 2001; Sullivan, 1995, p. 174). Therefore, and as Kevin Howley explains,

By treating community members as citizens, not as consumers, community media foster a greater awareness of the interdependent nature of social relations and shared environments both locally and globally (Howley, 2005, p. 268).

Emphasis is placed, furthermore, on media that is “citizen-controlled as opposed to state- or corporate-controlled” (Atton, 2002, p. 17), and which advocates “collaborative forms of political involvement” that are able to “engage broader public interests,” and to go beyond the “more individualistic” and more “narrowly defined interests” of consumerist thinking. As Robert Putnam argues, “any political system needs to counterpoise moments for articulating grievances and moments for resolving differences” (Robert D. Putnam, 2000, p. 45). If this process is left solely in the hands of the commercial or state communications institutions, then there will be a diminution of the networks and practices of communication that exist *in-situ* between people and communities, and instead there will be an “erecting [of] institutional and policy barriers to citizens access to, and control over, what were once viewed as local media institutions” (Wurtzler, 2003, p. 52). Hence, as a way of counteracting this retrenchment, *media advocacy* and media participation are posited as operational modes that “encompasses a range of strategies aimed at reframing public debate of issues” (Holder & Treno, 1997, p. 190).

3.8 Techno-Centric Participation

According to Jenkins, Ford & Green, the media industries have shown a notable shift in the relationship between audiences and producers, as the process of media consumption and circulation has become “more participatory” (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 35). The rules and the role designations that once existed are no longer fixed, but are in flux, thus meaning that the assurance of the older regimes of media power are no longer as certain as they once were. As Jenkins, Ford and Green note, while participatory culture is a relative but welcome turn, there is still some way to go before a complete sense of participation is achieved. The shift signals, however, a move towards a media culture that requires new debates and terms to explain the process of participation, and new policies and practices that will enable new participants, especially those that have previously been marginalised and

excluded. The participatory model of media circulation, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, signifies a fundamental shift in the way that we consider media circulation. Rather than considering media as an “empty exchange of information stripped of context and meaning,” Jenkins, Ford and Green “see these acts of circulation as constituting bids for meaning and value” (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 44). Shifting away from the purely transactional and information model of mass communications (Stuart Hall, 1993), participatory media therefore becomes a process that itself shapes the cultural and the political landscape, as acts of circulation offer diversified opportunities for meaningful participation and decision-making processes, and thereby shaping our culture and society (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013; Fox, 2005).

Hence, it is in looking at the multiple ways that media content circulates today, given the technical models of network distribution, rather than the transmission and broadcast model of media distribution that defined previous models of media consumption (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002), that we come to a different view of the nature of media participation. Jenkins, Ford and Green argue that if we look to the mechanisms of media circulation as they are practically used today, then we will see that these routines and relationships have shifted from the top-down and hierarchical forms of media management, to a bottom-up and grassroots model of media engagement. This implies that media, and the way that people who are embedded in the social networks of media circulation, value the meanings of media content in multiple and diverse ways (Belshaw, 2011; George & Scerri, 2007; van Dijck, 2009; Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007).

Using the term ‘spreadable media’, Jenkins, Ford and Green argue that we are now faced with hybrid models of media circulation in which there is a mix of bottom-up and top-down forces that determine how media content is circulated. This process is ‘messier’ but more participatory, and signals a shift in the centralised distribution model of media, towards a process of circulation that is embedded in the shared cultural practices of the public, who are accounted for as more than simple consumers of a pre-constructed message, but who are co-creators and generators of these messages in ways not considered previously (or at least for the period of mass-media industrialisation). As Jenkins, Ford and Green note, these micro-producers of media are engaged in a process of

Shaping, sharing, reframing, and remixing media content in ways which might not have been previously imagined. And they are doing so not as isolated individuals but within larger communities and networks, which allow them to spread content well beyond their immediate geographic proximity (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 2).

Media circulation in this 'spreadable' model is therefore defined by a social logic and a set of social and cultural practices that are enabled and embedded in the new media platforms of online and network technologies. The technology of circulation and exchange that is inherent with the operations of the internet can help to explain, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, why sharing has become such a common practice. 'Spreadability' as a participatory model is therefore imbued within the social logic and the cultural practice of emergent technical affordances and capabilities (McLuhan, 1964). The new platforms, as Jenkins, Ford and Green state, define the structural logics of mass participation in new, evolving and widespread forms of media exchange. These exchanges, a combination of the technical and the cultural, allow users to share their own self-produced media and the modified media of others, across a globalised, fluid and de-professionalised cultural landscape (Gauntlett, 2015). The challenge, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, is to understand how content circulates across this techno-cultural landscape, and in what way content can be designed so that it is made available in easily measured locations that allow people to assess "how many people view it, how many times it is viewed, and how long visitors view it" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 4).

3.8.1 Sticky Media

The spreadable model contrasts significantly, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, with the 'stickiness' model, which is best described as forms of media that occupy fixed positions that audiences gather around. The stickiness model thus represents the privileging of content that makes audience measurement easier to calculate. This 'destination viewing' approach conflicts with the dynamic viewing and fluid circulation approaches that are associated with individual internet usage, in which media circulates based on the social connections that are structured into the networks and communities of audiences, rather than the fixed pathways of easily measurable and delineated audiences of mass-communications models (Dijk, 1999; Gillespie, 2005; Grey, 2003). Media circulates in these networks because it is meaningful, rather than because it is simply a product of the industrialised mass media economy that is defined by clearly delineated commercial roles of the 'consumer', the 'producer', the 'marketeer' and the 'audience,' each of whom play a separate and distinct role. In the spreadability model, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, there is not only "increased collaboration across these roles but, in some cases, a blurring of the distinctions between these roles" (Jenkins et al., 2013).

In the spreadable media model, there is a recognition of the social connections between people operating in networks. These connections are amplified by the social media platforms that underpin

the new and emergent forms of media distribution. Whereas the stickiness model, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, counts on the isolation of audience members, the spreadable model recognises the importance of social connections. Therefore, there is a clear contrast in the conceptual basis on which the former models of media participation are defined.

Table 2 Spreadable Media Model

Stickiness	Spreadable
Migration of Individuals	Flow of Ideas
Centralised	Dispersed
Unified Experiences	Diversified Experiences
Prestructured Interactivity	Open-Ended Participation
Attracting and Holding	Motivating and Facilitated Sharing
Scarce and Finite Channels	Myriad Temporary (and Localised) Networks
Sales Force Marketing	Grassroots Intermediaries – Advocating and Evangelising
Separate and Distinct Roles	Collaboration Across Roles

(Jenkins et al., 2013)

Hence, participation is technically enhanced in the spreadable media model. The flow of ideas is facilitated by the social connections that individuals can make, which emphasises the production of content in formats that are easy to share, such as online videos, memes and chats. As well as being relatively easy to produce, this content is found at access points that are socially defined, rather than being structured into the industrial production and distribution systems. The flow of ideas is therefore dispersed and distributed in the social networks, as opposed to being centralised at pre-determined distribution points at which audience members are expected to congregate. The traditional mass distribution models, such as broadcasting, seek to draw people to the channels or points of distribution, and to keep people loyally at these points indefinitely, so that they can be measured as a totalised audience. The spreadable model, however, recognises that audiences are now defined by diversified experiences that seek to serve a multiplicity of needs, rather than a homogenous and cohesive audience model with a common sense of identity (Anderson, 2006; Dayson, 1998).

This decentralisation offers individuals an opportunity to personalise their media consumption patterns and to control, to some extent, the flow that media takes, its format, and any follow-up with subsidiary or translocated forms of media (Jenkins, 1992). This has a knock-on effect as it changes

the focus of the texts that are produced, in which people are invited to “shape the context of the material as they share it within their social circles” (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 6). Participative media therefore offers a more open-ended view of Interactivity, and consequently moves away from some of the more pre-structured and determinative textual forms. Audiences are no longer expected to only use content in predetermined ways, but are increasingly encouraged to use content in unanticipated ways, and to adapt and modify this content in many distinctive forms, using many different production techniques (Lindgren, 2017). The spreadable media model is thus more difficult to measure and account for, as it does not follow the established contours of media consumption, but instead evolves and emerges through group interaction and social recognition.

3.8.2 Beyond Resource Rationing

The challenge for media producers, if they are inclined to continue to regard themselves as this, is to facilitate and share content that supports the interest and the concerns of the social network. This is a process of active participation and reciprocal engagement that helps audiences move past one-dimensional marketing exercises, and views media as a collaborative experience, and not just a process of attracting and holding an audience at fixed intersection points. What has made this change possible, though, is the shift from scarcity and resource rationing, to the excess of network alternatives that can be found on a global basis online. Thus, people are now able to connect with issues of interest across globalised networks, which do not have to include local authorisation and validation of the experience or sense being expressed (Fenton, Metykova, Schlosberg, & Freedman, 2010). There is a lot more competition for people’s attention, however, and there is a myriad of channels and platforms emerging and dying-off in cycles of engagement or neglect, and according to the capacity for network sharing and interaction.

The structure of participatory network culture, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, cannot be determined, by any one single cause, but is instead shaped by many contributing affordances of the technology of network distribution, affordances that enable socially embedded decisions, and thereby the spreading of media texts. People are faced with the prospect of asking *how* the content that they are producing or sharing has value and might be picked up by others? Will this content engage people? Will this content be of specific interest to people? What is the best platform that will facilitate this shared engagement? Are there any particular validating messages that should be circulated with a particular form of media in order to imbue this media with more recognisable and con-

gruent meanings? This distributive process is often described in relation to the metaphor of the virus, though even this relatively new term is itself undercut, according to Jenkins, Ford and Green, as the diminution of the top-down hierarchies that support the linear transmission models of communication are dissipated. Co-existent media, co-existing meanings, co-existent relationships, are now more common, largely as a result of the changing tools and technical network infrastructure that are altering the dynamic of mass communication.

3.9 Rhizomatic Media

To recap thus far, community media participation can be viewed from a number of different perspectives, either as forms of oppositional media; as forms of social development practice; as forms of civic media; as forms of technically enabled spreadable media, and subsequently as forms of “rhizomatic media” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. xii). The concept of the rhizome is closely associated with the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who suggest that rhizomes are a useful metaphor for the “juxtaposition of rhizomatic and arborescent thinking.” An arborescent structure is linear, and relies on “hierarchical and sedentary” thinking, that is said to resemble the “tree-like structure of a genealogy,” with “branches that continue to subdivide into smaller and lesser categories” (Bailey et al., 2008; Vuuren, 2003; Wray, 1998). The arborescent is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the attitude of the mainstream, whereas the rhizome is “non-linear, anarchic and nomadic” (Bailey et al., 2008; Deleuze & Guattari, 2013, p. 19). So, while the rhizome connects different points at any other point, the arborescent structure, in contrast, must follow its established linear pathways.

Underpinning changing discussions about participation in community media, then, are links with society that form *intersection points* with other structures. So, rather than viewing community media as fixed, using the rhizomatic model it becomes possible to see these as organisational structures in which unorthodox media organisations can remain grounded in local communities, and simultaneously become engaged in translocal networks. These translocal networks are fluid and diverse, and have been established so that they avoid the “dichotomised positioning of alternative media in relationship to the local and the global,” or the market and the progressive, or the consumer and the producer. The model of the rhizome highlights a different way to speculate about how the “local and global touch and strengthen each other” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 27), which points to a non-deterministic outlook with regard to media, technology and society, as well as a breaking-down of the dichotomies between different kinds of media. And while rhizomatic enterprises are fragile and “liable to collapse, disruption and incoherence” (Atton, 2002, p. 149), they give way to open, discursive spaces

for more fluid features of media identities. This is a process of *detritorialisation* in which the mainstream media acts in a linked and relative relationship with alternative media, because the process is more fluid, more problematic and vulnerable, with increasingly sequestered base positions. As Bailey *et al* suggest,

The rhizomatic approach can help to support a more agonistic relationships with mainstream media and with the market and the state, reducing the antagonism that has for years hounded these media organisations (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 33).

Community and alternative media organisations, moreover, tend to promote a working orientation that is non-hierarchical rather than vertical, and as a result those organisations that are horizontally structured have to incorporate more widespread and continuous deliberation (Lévy, 1997; Mittell, 2013; Wenger, 1998). This would appear inefficient to a traditional, corporate and vertically managed organisation, but as Bailey *et al* point out, communities that are committed to participation “have to deal with a certain degree of inefficiency sometimes,” as long as this inefficiency is not seen to be undermining their functioning and the realisation of their objectives, or perverting their objectives” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 25). Rhizomatic clusters, moreover, are focused on diversity, heterogeneity, ad-hoc organisational arrangements and network interconnections. They use a wide variety of different forms of technology, and are agnostic about standards, so they are able to recognise a wide range of positions, while also utilising the multiplicity of identities and sense-making routines that people use to steer through community life (Raymond, 2001). Those organisations that are rigid and homogenous are not likely to be able to adapt and respond to changes in the social world, such as the relationships between the local and the global, meaning that they unable to respond to, or “overcome the confinement of locality,” and as such have very little to say about the “elusive and diversified” forms of engagement that are typical of alternative forms of media (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 124).

The point is, according to Bailey *et al*, that “creating an arbolic structure would simply imply the creation of a copy of mainstream and large-scale media, and would not generate a map, with its multiple entryways and adaptability” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 124). The rhizome emphasises “connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and a signifying rupture,” that allows for complexity, and which makes no attempt to smooth community and network relationships into simplistic structures or bonds. This means that community-based media can “remain grounded in local communities and become simul-

taneously engaged in translocal networks characterised by the fluid articulation of media organisation.” This approach, therefore, becomes key to avoiding the “dichotomised positioning of alternative media in relationship to the local and the global” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 124), as each are recognised for the role that they play in opening up ways to think about how each can strengthen the other within alternative, collaborative and community media fields.

Old forms of media give way, therefore, to network based forms of media: the meme, the virus, spreadable media, and such (Clay, 2011; Lessig, 2008; Shifman, 2014). Media is shared between participants in the network and the community, so the Internet plays a pivotal role in adding to the sense of fragmentation and discontinuity. Meanings resonate as parody while “reversing, transgressing or subverting” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 139) the established approaches to meaningful accomplishments, such as “using/accepting and partially abusing/rejecting the tools of communication from the state and the market” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 141). In these circumstances emphasis has to be given to improving the fluidity of communication and to cultivating flow through the networks so that it will enhance the independent, unplanned and diverse accomplishments of different alternative media producers and activists, acting as ironists, who have the fluency to shift between frameworks and systems (Hutcheon, 1994). As long as these producers are making content that is attractive and comprehensible, as it is understood within the framework of spreadable and DIY media, then there is every chance that it will spread a sense of dissent formed through “just plain old independent thinking” (Atton, 2002, p. 127).

3.10 Summary - Participatory Ethic

So, while traditional critical media studies approaches have accounted for community, alternative and collaborative media as the *product* of a social order imbued with distinct, though hidden power relations; the green and ecological framework reminds us of the needs of the biosphere; and the potential for community and collaborative media to fulfil a role in supporting the civic realm; that technology has a significant underpinning to the forms of communication that we use in social interaction; which leads to potential forms and social structures that move on from the centralised and linear forms of the past, we are reminded that the ethical and political (i.e. tactical) lifeworlds that people operate in are framed in notably different ways (Henderson, 2013). The challenge of making the shift from one lexicon to another, is therefore found in the way that we accommodate the practical functions of organisation and supervision that support and enable public and ethical regimes of prac-

tice-based participation, particularly as they emerge and play-out of their environmental or civil dispositions. **Table 3 Participative Framework** maps out these alternative dispositions and modes of engagement.

Table 3 Participative Framework

Social Arrangement	Form of Participation	Main Media Forms	Aims	Ideal Community Type	Mode of Engagement
Hegemonic	Counter-Force	Oppositional	Emancipation	Discursive	Activist
Ecological	Pluralist	Diverse	Sustainability	Holistic	Steward
Civic	Representation	Public Sphere	Association	Deliberative	Representative
Techno-centric	Generative	Spreadable	Globalisation	Networked	Collaborator
Rhizomatic	Ironic	De-Territorialised	Fluidity	Nomadic	Cipher
Commercial	Customer	Sticky	Profit	Market	Consumer
Administrative	Instrumental	System	Efficiency	Information	Inspector
Managerial	Subordinate	Organisation	Perpetuation	Hierarchical	Devotees

There is no ultimate goal to be aimed for in promoting and articulating community and collaborative media participation that is determined by any of the accounts listed so far, other than the immediate practical concerns of engagement and accomplishment, and coupled with the management of personal, civic and environmental balance and sustainability. This does not mean that a sense of social justice is excluded from the nexus of possibilities that one might want to see enacted through community and collaborative media. Rather, this shift to the ethical and the tactical simply puts participation in its proper position, recognising that it is only through *continuous conversation* and the *redescription* of the *vocabularies* and *symbolic frames*, i.e. the interplay of congruent and incongruent vocabularies (Rorty, 1982, 1989), that it will be possible to support change.

As Richard Rorty reminds us, “the terms used by the founders of a new form of cultured life will consist largely in borrowings from the vocabularies of the culture which they are hoping to replace” (Rorty, 1989 p.56). It is commonplace, according to Rorty, that we will begin to have doubts about what we are doing and the way that we explain to ourselves what it is that we are doing. So at some point the stories that we tell ourselves about what we do and why we do it will become “incommensurable” with those we have used previously (Rorty, 2009, p. 386). We are bound together by the “common vocabularies and common hopes” that our vocabularies and stories tell about the future, as well as the “outcomes which compensate for present sacrifices” (Rorty, 1989 p.86). So, if we can understand the differences that these vocabularies and stories make, then we may be able to understand how the aims and hopes for the future that we hold are going to be brought about. So, in undertaking these practical observations, it would not be necessary to introduce further concepts of orientation that help to frame the practice of agents acting in their lifeworlds, beyond the participative experiences found and defined by the *agents themselves* acting in those lifeworlds. Therefore, the relevant question remains, is participation an agent of social change? And the only way to answer this question is to observe people taking up and making roles, and thus participating in social life.

4 Addressing the Research Question

Attention has been given in this study, then, to the significance of participation as a social process in community media, and the way that participation is relevant to social change. Applying Blumer's principle of neutral social processes, as discussed in the previous section (Blumer, 1990), this study therefore considers the following issues:

1. Participatory processes are neutral and are observable at the lines of entry to group life.
2. A range of diverse alternative social developments are possible in regard to these processes at the points of entry into group life.
3. The participative process does not determine, nor coerce, the alternative routines and dispositions that come into play in the social setting.

The research question asks, therefore:

Is participation in community media an agent of sustainable social change, and is it possible to identify a dynamic *framework of evaluation* that encompasses the practical operation of the process of participation as it embodies the relative relationships of form, structure and routine in group life?

In answering this question, it has been necessary to investigate a specific social setting in which issues of community media participation, and the way that participative practices are demonstrated in group life, are apparent. This means finding out how the individual *stances* and *perspectives* relating to community media participation are established in this situation, and how they are experienced along the lines of entry into group life. So, in ascertaining a methodological guide for this examination, attention needs to be paid to the following general issues:

- What is understood and accomplished by volunteers and participants, particularly as they seek to use and incorporate forms of participative community media practice in the routines of their group lives?
- How well-suited are the forms of community media practice and organisation to the many and varied tasks associate with participation?
- To what extent are the established models of participation, that are characteristic of community media practice, viable?
- To what extent is community media participation disruptive of mainstream forms of media organisation?

- To what extent can community media situations be conceived as a symbolic site of interpersonal negotiation that allows for, and facilitates, expressions of identity, community and social accomplishment?

Additionally, the general methodological questions that arise are:

- In what way is it possible to observe the collaborative participatory practices that take place in community media groups?
- In what way is it possible to account for how participants in community media define and understand their role, their identity and their accomplishments?
- In what way is it possible to explain how these participants reflexively understand themselves?

The objective, therefore, was to develop a pragmatic account of the casual correspondence and contingent relationships that *fall together* within fieldsites of community and collaborative media, with the assumption that this account might open up space for further discussion about the basis on which *collaborative purpose*, in the form of community media participation, is arrived at.

4.1 Practical Focus

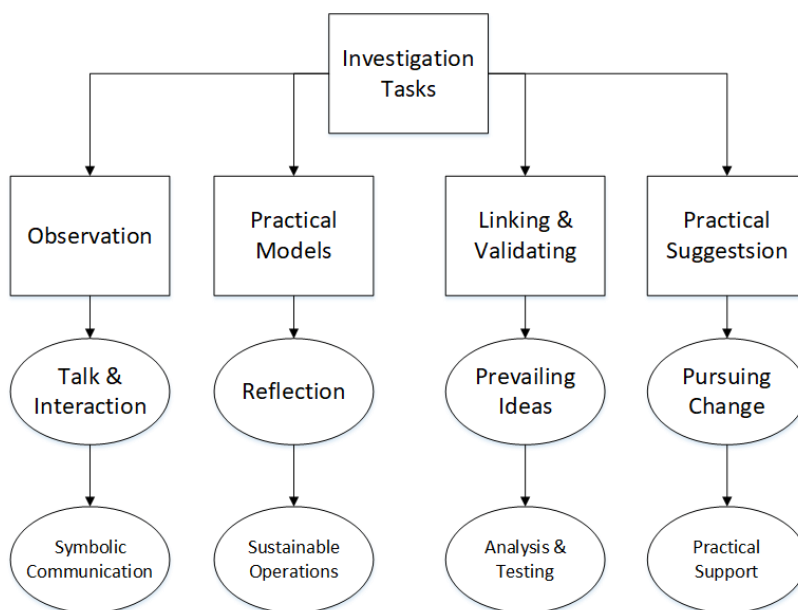


Figure 1 Investigation Tasks

In attempting to locate this sense of common purpose, it was necessary for this investigation to focus on some practical tasks. These tasks include:

1. Observing the behaviour of participants in community media groups and learning to talk and interact with the different agents who operate within these groups, with special attention to the commensurability of their symbolic communication.
2. Developing practical models that participants, volunteers and supporters of community media can reflect on to improve the effectiveness, competence and sustainability of their ethical and practical operations.
3. Linking and validating the commonsensical practical imperatives of people who work in community media groups and networks, with the prevailing ideas and concepts that are associated with the analysis of community media.
4. Establishing practical suggestions that might help in pursuing change on the ground – both in the community media groups in practice, and in the formulation of the prevailing ideas and concepts associated with the study of community media.

4.2 Research Summary Statement

This study was based, therefore, on an ethnographically informed process of data collection that used reflections, observations and interviews that had been gathered and assembled following an extended period of field study of Leicester-based community media groups during the period October 2012 to September 2014. This was a lengthy period of participant observation that allowed the study to be undertaken in close proximity to community media activists and informants acting in a number of different community media groups and settings.

4.3 Analytical Framework

This study developed the use of an ethnographically informed mixed data collection method that is aligned with the analysis technique of symbolic interaction. As indicated in the previous chapter, the conceptual underpinning for this study is an adaptation of Herbert Blumer's assertion that social processes are neutral, and thereby necessitate empirical observation in specific social settings (Baugh, 1990; Blumer, 1990; Lauer & Handel, 1983; Prus, 1996, 1997). Blumer's development of symbolic interaction therefore provides a framework for analysis that offers a recognisable and examinable set of empirical research parameters, including:

1. How people establish goals in the situation they are located in.
2. How people apply their acquired or emergent perspectives gained from their interaction with significant others or reference groups associated with the situation.
3. How people identify or label themselves (their self), any relevant objects in a situation (for example the identities and roles of other people, any natural or human-made objects, any shared concepts and ideas, their use of language and descriptive terms, for example).

4. How people take a role and thus become a recognisable other, either as individuals or as a group as a whole.
5. How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to:
 - a. How we assess what we do in relation to each situation.
 - b. How we assess what is happening in different situations in relation to our sense of self.
 - c. How we ascribe a sense of value or worth to our sense of self in different situations.
 - d. How we articulate or negotiate a sense of identity in different situations.
 - e. How we interpret what we are experiencing emotionally as self in different situations.
6. How people define the future streams of action that are potential in their acts in different situations. These potential streams of action might be perceived to be distant or immediate, tangible or intangible.
7. How people apply their prior acquired knowledge in a situation in the form of memories from the past and apply them to the present situations.

Furthermore, in using symbolic interactionist principles to explain the social situations being studied, evidence was sought of:

- Agents acting reflexively and defining the situations they encounter.
- How actors relate towards one another, and how these actions are developed or unfold in the situation that these actors define.
- How actors as social objects are defined in relation to one another.
- How accomplished acts are originated, not from discrete motivations, but are influenced by actions that are encountered as other actors interact.
- How acknowledged social interaction takes place at the intersection points where different actors merge their streams of action, each changing his or her own stream of action according to what others do.
- How interactions lead over time to a shared view of reality (a worldview or perspective) that becomes part of the definition and labelling of social interaction, shaping the potential for decision-making and the direction of future actions.

The systematic framework that Blumer identifies at the entry points of group life, was made possible by viewing industrialisation as a neutral process. The insight gained from Blumer's approach has therefore been adapted and abridged in relation to the process of participation, as it can be demonstrated to be a neutral phenomenon of community media group life. Thereby, this study asks how we can make sense of media participation in group life in relation to each of these adapted lines of entry:

1. The structure of occupations and positions.
2. The filling of occupations, jobs and positions.
3. The new ecological arrangements.
4. The regime of work.
5. The new structures of social relations.
6. The new interests and new interest groups.
7. The monetary and contractual relations.
8. The goods produced by the manufacturing process.
9. The patterns of income of industrial personnel (Blumer, 1990, pp. 42-46).

In the process of examining the specific settings and examples of group life, it was necessary to look afresh and adapt these parameters, particularly as the social conditions under which they operate relate to different forms of social, technical, economic and ecological arrangements, arrangements that in practice, and upon examination, were found to be distinct and different to those developed by Blumer. Thus, the overall aim of this enquiry was to **identify an emergent framework of evaluation that encompasses the practical operation of the process of participation as it embodies the relative relationships of form, structure and routine in group life.**

4.4 Symbolic Interaction

In applying the insight that is gained from the symbolic interactionist perspective, then, this study emphasises that human interaction takes the form of accomplishments within a world of symbolic social objects, and that when we act in this world we do so, not in relation to any world that can be said to be 'out there,' but instead to a world that is defined in relation to others through symbolic communication and mediation (Becker & McCall, 1990; Blumer, 1953, 1966, 1969, 1990; Blumer & Shibutani, 1973; Charon, 1995; Denzin, 1992; Hewitt, 1979; Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975; Prus, 1996, 1997, 1999; Shalin, 1986; Stryker, 2002). As Joel Charon notes, "as we interact we develop a perspective as to what is real and how we are to act toward that reality" (Charon, 1995, p. 55). Therefore, given the contingent, multifaceted, uncertain and emergent nature of human relations, there is no way that an absolute or linear methodological set of instructions can be provided which will result in an enduring and undeniable analysis of the social field. Symbolic interactionism, therefore, is open to, and defined by, the interpretative process of negotiation and accomplishment that shapes social relationships as they change and adapt. Symbolic interaction, furthermore, is effective as an empirical form of inquiry that is suited to discovering in what way these processes and relationships are manifest in lived social experience.⁸

⁸ "The perspectives taken here envision human behaviour as a community-informed, reflective, constructed phenomenon" (Prus, 1997, p. 7).

4.5 Ethnographically Informed Data collection

Following general principles of ethnographic enquiry (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012; Creswell, 1994, 1998; Flick, 2009; Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004; Prus, 1996, 1997, 1999), this study has been conducted in a manner that is *responsive* and *open* to the shifting interests of the participants that have been encountered. This entailed exploring a set of uncertain topics and field sites with little prior experience or definitive statements available from which it was possible to draw established contextual data. This meant, as Creswell notes, that many of the “variables” were “largely unknown” (Creswell, 1994, p. 77). And so, the project was started with a loosely defined set of general questions that evolved during the process of the investigation. As a result of the ongoing process of exploration, the original set of research questions, while still related, changed quite a lot, with “new ones emerging in the process of investigation and analysis” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 80).

Furthermore, as an example of field-based research practice in the form of participant observation, particular attention was given to the “flow of everyday life,” with the subsequent research data almost continuously emerging from the “engagement with those lifeworlds” (Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 32). Thus, formulating the parameters of the study, as noted above, was driven by a process of identification of the issues defined and expressed by the participants themselves, and thus the seeking of instances in which those definitions were felt to be most applicable (Bernard, 2006). Therefore, in attempting to make sense of the social phenomenon of participation within community media, it was necessary to ascertain how the different forms of community media that might be encountered were *defined*, how they were *structured*, what *regularities* were involved in their *operation*, what *processes* they were subject to, and what the *originating imperatives* were perceived for those processes. This meant seeking out what the accomplishments and actions of the actors were as they took place in their lived experience, and hence giving a sense of what “strategies” participants employed to manage and make sense of their experience (Flick, 2009 p.101; Goffman, 1990; Mills, 1959). In order to ascertain this evidence, the standard units of study were:

- *Field-notes*, drawn from, and based on, sessions of *participant observation* taking place in locations around Leicester.
- *Interviews* conducted with a number of selected participants who acted as *leading advocates* within their communities for the promotion and development of community media activity.
- *Mixed-media recordings*, accumulated in the process of engagement and used to capture events and occurrences as part of the flow of activity.

4.6 Multimedia Modes

The relationships established with the *leading advocates* for the different community media groups, ensured that it was possible to gain access to a wide range of activities and people who participated in community media in Leicester. In an age of multimedia communication, it is not possible to exclusively focus on one single representational mode of enquiry, so a mixed and blended approach was adopted. This approach looked at the reported and observed experiences of the participants involved; the cultural practices of the different participants; the social media usage of the participants; and some limited online ethnography (L. Freeman, 2010; Guimaraes, 2005; Masten & Plowman, 2003; Murthy, 2008; Orgad, 2005; Rutter & H.Smith, 2005; Scott, 2009). The collection of data, and the reporting of provisional analysis, therefore took a non-linear approach, with a series of interconnected and parallel techniques that were empirically “grounded” and “process-oriented” (Cragg & Cook, 2007 p.3). The data was recorded using field journals, an audio recorder, a still camera and a smart phone with multimedia recording capability. Electronic notes were made using Microsoft One-Note, blogs were written and shared using a self-hosted Wordpress blogsite: <http://robwatsonmedia.net/category/communitymedia/>

4.7 Themes and Ongoing Issues

To summarise, this study is based on:

- The concept of process neutrality in relation to participation.
- Symbolic interactionist concepts of social behaviour and negotiation.
- Ethnographically informed data collection techniques.
- Informal and mixed-mode interviews.
- Mixed modes of participant observation.
- Reflexive methods of contextualised data review.

Furthermore, the following set of sub-questions formed a cluster of ongoing issues and topics that were assumed to be relevant and useful to this study:

1. What are the concepts of community media held by agents in different situations?
2. What characteristics of community media are relevant to concepts of participation in different types of settings?
3. What are the experiences of community media in different types of setting?
4. How are the concepts of community media understood by agents in different types of setting?
5. How do concepts of participation relate to different volunteers active in community media?
6. What relevance do agents acting in community media ascribe to their own concepts of participation?

7. What can be derived from the conceptual debates between concepts of community media and concepts of participation?
8. Can inferences and models be derived from an evaluation of participation in community media?
9. Can the language of participation be tested and validated, both in principle and in experience, in specific community media settings?
10. What do people do with local definitions of participation?
11. What do people say that they get from discussing participation, and how does the use of community media change the things that they discussed and practiced?

5 Data Collection Methods Overview

5.1 Ethnographic Principles

An ethnographic investigator attempts to make sense of the way that people accomplish intersubjective communicative fluency based on their experiences in their day-to-day life-worlds. So, and by taking this approach, it was determined that standard quantitative research techniques, such as surveys, questionnaires, demographic comparisons, or content analysis (Miller & Dingwall, 1997; Ochoa & Duval, 2008) were not suited to the aim of gaining familiarity with lived experience.⁹ Ethnographic research evades notions of experimentation, or the setting-out of controlled variables that are used in forms of comparative analysis. The techniques of ethnographically informed enquiry instead focus on the *relationships* and the *processes* that shape those relationships, and which form the “complex currents of everyday life” (Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 3). There is no ideal type of variable that forms the basis of ethnographically informed enquiry, so no attempt was made to randomise the selection of informants, or to categorise an ideal situation in which these informants might be said to act. The conceptual model that grounds ethnographically informed study is therefore best summed up by noting that: *the situation is what the situation is, and the people acting in the situation are what they are*. Any attempt to determine and test how people might respond to stimuli, or predict how they might respond to changing circumstances through instrumental forms of experimentation, for example, are counter to the ethos of pragmatic ethnography and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Prus, 1996).¹⁰ After all,

The man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied (Dewey quoted by Melvin L Rogers in Dewey, 2016, p. 29).

The empiricism that grounds the ethnographically informed study, thereby takes situations and the people acting in them at face value. They are neither instruments, vessels, dupes or victims of false

⁹ “Thus, instead of viewing human behaviour as the product of factors (internal and external) acting on people (i.e., viewing people as the mere mediums through which these factors find expression), as do quantitatively oriented social scientists, ethnographers generally attend to the ways in which people (as linguistic, thinking, interacting, adjusting, community-based beings) construct or accomplish their activities over time or in process terms” (Prus, 1997, p. 195).

¹⁰ “Those adopting a positivist (or (positivist/structuralist) orientation generally take the viewpoint that human behaviour is a product of the forces, factors, or structures (internal and external) that act on people to generate particular outcomes” (Prus, 1996, p. 4).

consciousness, so the starting point of any model of human social interaction in the pragmatic tradition is the recognition of creative agency inherent with each actor (Dewey, 1910; James, 1950; Lyman & Vidich, 2000; Parsons, 1968a, 1968b; Peirce, 2013; Thayer, 1970; West, 1989).^{11 12}

5.2 Empirical Parameters

This means, as John Creswell notes, that four empirical parameters are used to build-up a picture of the processes involved in group life:

The setting (where the research takes place), the actors (who will be observed or interviewed), the events (what the actors will be observed doing or interviewed about), and the process (the evolving nature of events undertaken by the actors within the setting) (Creswell, 1994, p. 149).

While other methodological approaches might be considered, such as Action Theory, Typological Analysis, Ethnomethodology, and so on (Alasuutari, 1995, 1996; Garfinkel, 1984; Madison, 2005) the focus for an ethnographically informed approach, as Blumer reminds us, is that we have to be careful not to skip the experiences that are to found in practice, and in the middle of the research process as it were, between theory and results (Blumer, 1990). Instead, focus is placed on reflexive investigation grounded in empirical observation.¹³ This starting point is based, therefore, on the fundamental principle that,

It is not what takes place in a situation that matters, but how people form definitions of the situation which they can use as the basis for negotiated actions with others.

This creates a distinct methodological hurdle to be overcome if we are to undertake research that does indeed take at face-value what people say what they do, and perhaps most important, observing what they actually do in practice (Slater, Tacchi, & Lewis, 2002).

¹¹ "The interactionist tradition may be seen to build more broadly on four sub-traditions...: (1) the hermeneutics (interpretive understanding) of Wilhelm Dilthey, (2) American pragmatism (which emphasised the practical accomplishment of human activity), (3) Cooley's (1909) method of 'sympathetic introspection' or what more commonly has become known as ethnographic research or field research, and (4) the body of ethnographic research or field research, which was developed primarily at the University of Chicago" (Prus, 1996, p. 10).

¹² "A community thus presents an order of energies transmuted into one of meanings which are appreciated and mutually referred by each to every other on the part of those engaged in combined action" (Dewey, 2016, p. 179).

¹³ "The recognition that intersubjectivity is at the core of the human essence implies that any viable theory of human behaviour would necessarily be interpretive, hermeneutic, or reflexive in its thrust. It would be based explicitly on on-going reflective interchange" (Prus, 1996, p. 21).

As Blumer makes clear, if we change one parameter in this conceptual relationship, then the corresponding and related parameters also change. Not on the basis of a transaction, or the influence of a transcendent force, but because human understanding and accomplishment is a negotiated process of symbolic interaction. We act, according to Blumer, on the basis of the meanings we affect. We then alter those meanings on the basis of the viability of the accomplishments we are able to achieve. Each facet is relational. If we change one, we thereby change the other. This approach does not view social interaction a transactional exchange of needs and desires in a zero-sum game, or as variables in a system (Lunt & Livingstone, 2001). It views social interaction, instead, as the engagement between creative and practical agents. The fundamental recognition of agency, therefore, is at the heart of the symbolic interactionist method, and shapes the entire approach to observation assumed in any empirical study (West, 1989). *The world is what it is. People are what people are.*¹⁴ Understanding and describing the processes that shape this social configuration in different situations is therefore sufficient for our immediate needs, so there is no need for conjecture, supposition, experimentation, the lifting of veils, or a promised sense of enlightenment, to explain what is before us.

Therefore, it was essential to focus throughout this study on developing data gathering techniques that would be *attuned* to the ways in which practical behaviour was negotiated and carried out by the people it was possible to observe, as they worked on a day-to-day, sustained, and here-and-now basis, i.e. as a process of symbolic interaction. The evidence that was gathered for this study, therefore, needed to be able to give due insight to the manner in which intersubjective communication was accomplished by practitioners acting in their respective life-worlds, seeking to understand how different viewpoints had been achieved in these life-worlds, and what interpretations of meanings could be attached to these viewpoints by the people involved, especially as they experienced mutual events, interacted in formal and informal settings, and exchanged symbolic accounts of their experience, either directly or circuitously. The ways that these interactions were accounted by these agents was of particular interest, as either individual experiences, or as shared, collaborative and social experiences. As a result, it was important to comprehend in what way these agents exerted influence over others, and how they subsequently accommodated or resisted the influences of other

¹⁴ "Thus we are told that the public is the community as a whole, and a-community-as-a-whole is supposed to be self-evident and self-explanatory phenomenon. But a community as a whole involves not merely a variety of associative ties which hold persons together in diverse ways, but an organisation of all elements by an integrated principle. And this is precisely what we are in search of" (Dewey, 2016, p. 87).

people. Much of this can be seen or accounted for in the bonds and allegiances that the agents developed with others, and the way in which they were able to manage the relationships that they established and attempted to maintain.

5.3 Field Study Selection & Planning

The preliminary specification for this investigation was a site-specific case study based at DemonFM, De Montfort Universities' Leicester-based and student-led community radio station. The original intention of the study was to investigate how social media was used by volunteers in DemonFM, using digital ethnographic principles. It was hoped that the research would result in the production of an empirical model that mapped themes and patterns of social media use, as experienced by participants in DemonFM. The idea was to explore how the participatory nature of social media was defined as an enabling experience, and form of media literacy, for the productive agents and the communities that operated via the station. However, in undertaking this initial period of engagement, it became apparent that there was a significant conflict of interest that meant that it was not possible to maintain an appropriate impartial bearing with the station volunteers. So, in December 2012 alternative sites of community media practice were sought that would meet similar or related objectives. This meant starting the process of gaining entry to the field sites again, and searching for suitable community media activities that would be sustainable. Fortunately, a number of good personal and professional contacts had been established with people who were active in Leicester's community media groups, including: Citizens Eye, Leicester People's Photographic Gallery, and EavaFM.

5.4 Participant Observation Fieldwork

In ethnographic study the aim of being in the field is for the researcher to "be immersed in the setting," and to "generate an understanding of the context in which interaction is rooted" (MacKay in Hine, 2005, p. 134; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The following principles of fieldwork were therefore incorporated into the study:

- Building intimate familiarity with the lived experiences of those they study in order to "convey as fully as possible the viewpoints and practices of these people to others" (Prus, 1996, p. 103).
- Using "observation, participant-observation, and interviews" (Prus, 1997, p. 199).
- The development of categories as they emerge from the informants, "rather than specifying them in advance of the research" (Creswell, 1998, p. 77).

- Observational notes and records made from what is witnessed at hand by the researcher, and then recorded in maps, diaries and journals (Heron & Reason, 1997).

Participant observation, according to Robert Prus, “adds an entirely different and vital dimension to the notion of observation.” Prus suggests that while the “practice of describing and analysing one’s own experiences has often been dismissed as ‘biased’ or ‘subjective’ by those who think that researchers should distance themselves from their subject matters,” there is, moreover, a primary advantage of the participant-observation process, in that being a participant observer “allows the researcher to get infinitely closer to the lived experiences of the participants than does straight observation” (Prus, 1996, p. 19).

5.5 Data Collection Evaluation

In summary, data for this investigation was collected in a number of ways:

Table 4 Data Collection Evaluation

Data Collection Practice	Effectiveness
Notes were taken during and after field and site visits, and recorded in a personal journal.	While written from a personal perspective these notes are rich in contextual information. Journaling goes beyond utility and allows for impressions and emotions to be accounted for.
Photographs were taken during field and site visits, and edited and stored on an appropriate secure drive.	These provide rich, context sensitive information that is enduring and supports the descriptive framing of the social settings and the people encountered.
Audio recordings were taken during field and site visits, and edited and stored on an appropriate secure drive.	These provided sustained records of interaction, discussion and conversation that flows in time and provides evidence of respondents’ self-reflection and thinking-through.
Audio interviews were recorded in specific field sessions, and edited and stored on an appropriate secure drive.	These provided an opportunity to enter into deeper and more probing conversation that was specifically located in contemporaneous settings.
Screen-grabs were captured of online media sites relevant to the field sites and the participants interests and activities.	Recording and noting online material meant it was possible to filter and shift between instances and examples that were referred to by the participants.
Bookmarking of articles, sites, blogs and news feeds were taken from online sources relevant to the issues encompassed by the participants interests.	This ensured that ongoing reference to wider contextual material was captured in the flow of engagements, and which could be reviewed and summarised later.

Feeds and threads were captured from social media accounts relevant to the activists, groups and participants in the different activities.	Capture and use of social media extended the circle of engagement by amplifying the interactions of participants, which could be captured and reviewed later.
Specific focus was given to spending time with, and interviewing, a key group of participants who represented the core set of activists for the community media groups involved.	Direct face-to-face contact was the most significant and valuable form of interaction as it gave essential insight into the dynamics of group life and the definitions and negotiations undertaken.
A consistent effort to keep in regular contact with this core set of participants was maintained, using email, telephone and informal meetings.	Being in contact with participants and volunteers was important to maintaining open and collaborative relationships, gaining trust and insight into the concerns, priorities and perspectives of participants.
Regular attendance at organised sessions and meetings was crucially important in maintaining regular contact, likewise helping at events and offering services such as instruction to volunteers, web development, and sharing images for use by the contributors.	Open and free-flowing contact with volunteers and participants in ad-hoc sessions gave insight into the group dynamic and the forms of negotiation and engagement that were offered in practices, as circumstances changed and moved forward.
After each visit a journal entry was written with reflections and observations recorded that describe the setting and any salient information from the occurrence.	Noting the broad impressions of the setting and the way that people used, defined and interacted in that setting gives a range of insights that are fluid and negotiated, and which vary from setting to setting.
Local knowledge of the community media field in Leicester was useful in maintaining links and relationships.	Being aware of the issues and the politics that are encountered in the situations meant that it was possible to figure out where the potential lines of action might be moving, and what is being left behind.
The investigator's status as a representative of De Montfort University was a positive entry-point to accessing groups.	Social status is used as a definitional indicator of intent, as a role is a sign of a wider set of social practices. This was negotiated in different ways in different settings and with different participants and groups.
Maintaining the balance between participation and observation was consistently reviewed, managing expectations that the researcher was able to provide 'solutions' or make 'judgements' about the activity in the different groups had to be monitored.	Striking the balance between neutrality and motivated engagement is fluid and differs in each situation, based on the negotiated expectations. Presenting the role of the researcher in too objective a manner could be alienating, while being too engaged as a participant is not reflective.
An archive of original audio recordings was collated and is available for review.	Being able to reuse this archive for further analysis, and to revisit the reports for further contextual information about mood, emotionality and the negotiation of fluid positions proves useful.

An archive of transcriptions of interviews and field recordings was collated and is available for review.	Verifying fieldwork activity in a structured and thematically collated archive ensures that coding and analysis is simplified and trackable.
An archive of photographs, screengrabs and links was collated and is available for review.	Illustrations of activities undertaken in different settings and the use of mixed-media forms to illustrate the forms of engagement with media in the different settings locates these observations in a specific time and place.
Confidentiality and ethical interaction was maintained in an ongoing review of the data, but there were few specific or distinct circumstances that went beyond standard professional practice in respecting information imparted by individuals or people working in group situations.	An ongoing process of ethical review that ensures the minimisation of harm is both a practical consideration that enhances engagement with participants, and ensures that data is managed in appropriate ways according to recognised standards.
There are no discrepancies in the accounts that people provided and the actions that were observed of participants.	Central to participant observation is noting what people say, and then what they do, as both may vary in the way that definitions are negotiated and accomplished.
There are no special characteristics in the scope of the design for this research that go beyond the standard access to publicly available.	As the research did not deal with contentious issues of criminality or social marginalisation there was little need to edit or sequester published data to avoid identification.
There are no specific issues raised by the use of digital ethnography.	The contacts in the field were primarily driven from face-to-face engagement, with no contact originated directly through online or social media platforms and sites.

5.6 Pilot Study

Because of the late change in the field site, consideration was given to a revised pilot study, in order to demonstrate that the research methods being advocated would be suitable and sustainable.

While not ideal, this resulted in a parallel process, in which primary research was being conducted at the same time as engaging in a distinct and self-contained pilot project. In spring 2013 a proposal was received from Dr Thilo Boeck (T. G. Boeck, 2011), who was concluding research work with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, as an adjunct to the Amplified Leicester project, that had taken place in 2010 (T. Boeck & Thomas, 2010). Dr Boeck wanted to assess how the Amplified Leicester project had brought benefits to the participants and the groups that they represented. One of the participants who took part in this study was Ian Davies, who was involved in this study as the manager of the Leicester People's Photographic Gallery. Ian was keen to find out how other photographic galleries in the UK maintained and supported an active relationship with their communities. With the financial support of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a tour of photographic galleries in the summer

of 2013 was organised, traveling to different UK cities to discuss how they maintained their community profile and met their communities' needs. This resulted in a report that described the process of organising the visits and the discussions that were held. This was submitted to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in October 2013 (Watson, 2013). As a preliminary task, this enabled the generation of interviews, fieldnotes, blogs, informal discussions, and photographs of the visits. All of these activities proved essential in developing, testing and validating the proposed data collection techniques that could be used in the main study.

The priorities of the pilot study, therefore, were conceived around two outlooks:

- Those that account for the participant's experience of community media.
- Those that test the process of collecting data using ethnographically informed research techniques.

Corresponding with these aims were the parallel objectives of ensuring validity and coherence, while also ensuring that more contentious issues were ethically managed and dealt with. This included project activities that scoped and explained the data collection process, as it is developed in the context of the specific field-based research. Furthermore, this included project activities associated with data reporting and analysis, as these ultimately helped to shape the main study following the pilot. However, it was noted that the development of these activities could not be implemented in a strictly linear process, but would instead be completed in parallel, and through interlinked progressive steps.

The pilot study resulted in a number of strategic recommendations for the Leicester People's Photographic Gallery, such as improvements to their role as a sustainable enterprise, their role as a learning community, and their status within the community of photographic galleries and projects around the United Kingdom. Strictly speaking, this is not an outcome that is suited to an ethnographic approach, or an analysis of intersubjective accomplishment, but it did help to test the suitability of the data recording techniques, the extended rapport that was established with Ian Davies, and the reflections that were proffered in writing the report. As such, it was possible to establish a level of competence and capability in developing a more extended report, and defining assessment and reflection criteria that would allow for advances in the planning of the wider ethnographically informed research approach in a more sustained manner.

5.7 Being in the Field

Field observations for the main study began in autumn 2012, and ended in September 2014. Consisting of almost eighteen months of irregular and ad-hoc contact with different community media activists and groups based in Leicester. To start with the informal acquaintances made when working as the DemonFM Station Director were used to establish new contacts, and to access the informal community media networks that were active in Leicester at the time. Productive relationships were developed with key advocates, especially John Coster of Citizens Eye, Ian Davies of Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery, and Dee Bahra of EavaFM, among others. The challenge of working in this somewhat unplanned and spontaneous manner, meant that it was not possible to precisely forecast and predict what would be undertaken from one engagement or observation session to the next. Going with the flow, and following the directions and opportunities presented by the people with whom working relationships had been formed, meant there was a need to stay alert and attuned to opportunities as they came along, particularly if they enabled participation in the different community media projects happening at the time. Interacting with, and getting to know different groups of participants, so that observations could be made based on the mutual experience, thus explaining what they were seeking to accomplish, and sharing how they made sense of their lived experience.

Activity in the fieldsites was therefore kept under continuous review, with ongoing and fluid adjustments to the data collection techniques to ensure that they suited the conditions encountered during the information gathering sessions and interviews (Denscombe, 1998; Sanders, 2005). Significantly, it was deemed essential that a continuous ethical review process was established as an integral part of this study, and given the way that it was planned to draw on participant observation techniques, it was essential that it was possible to gauge and measure the impact that the data collection and observation activity might have on the agents and actors who were participating in the various projects.

5.8 Entering the Field

Entry into the field came about as a result of the established rapport with the participants previously mentioned. John Coster managed Citizens Eye, so he was known from many of the community media sessions that had been run across the city. John was well connected with other community media activists in Leicester, and was very supportive and encouraging in the early discussions about the role of community media, and the motives expressed for undertaking this research. So, by attending the Community Media Café sessions that John ran on a Tuesday morning, it was possible to establish

other contacts with people that might also engage with this study, such as Simon Parker who ran Down Not Out, a community news agency focussed on homelessness issues; Ian Davies, who ran Leicester People's Photographic Gallery, and Dee Bahra who was the station manager for EavaFM, a community radio station aimed at the Leicester-based East African communities. As a result of establishing relationships with each of these high-profile community media advocates, it was possible to meet other volunteers and participants who were working in these groups. It is important to express thanks to each of the community media champions mentioned above, because they were supportive and encouraging of this project, and recognised the extent to which it might have mutual benefit.

5.9 Navigating Networks

Learning to navigate some of Leicester's community media networks was a significant challenge, as they were somewhat opaque and ill-defined, and on the whole, were characterised, as one might expect, by a range of personal relationships, cultural affinities and political rivalries. Therefore, time was spent adjusting to the social landscape that each community media group represented. Community groups in Leicester, at the time, were often run separately and independently, despite some of the headline reports, which suggest that Leicester is a successful example of multicultural integration. At the time, and as a result of national government austerity policies that impacted on local government from 2010 onwards, there was a nervousness about the direction of public services, and the knock-on effect on charities and other third-sector services in the United Kingdom. The then Prime Minister, David Cameron, was promoting the idea of the Big Society as an alternative agenda for state and local government run services. However, it was clear that this resulted in a noticeable lack of direction, and a marked sense of anxiety for many people working in, and associated with, the voluntary sector in Leicester. This was manifest in the absence of clarity and understanding of the possible role that community media might play in the civic life of the city of Leicester, and the part that community media could play in the wider third-sector movement of community and volunteer groups. As a result, there was an absence of political and cultural leadership that could drive co-operation, coordination and collaboration among community media and community volunteer services in Leicester, thus making access to the field a consistent challenge.

5.10 Collecting Material

The practicalities of collecting material while in the field are not inconsiderable, for what is an ongoing process, as the material that is gathered has to be used to inform decisions as the research progresses, thereby shaping the ongoing activities, while also serving, in the end, to inform and structure the stories that are used in the final narrative account. One solution to this problem came from one of the advocates themselves. John Coster suggested that it might be useful to produce a series of podcasts around the theme of community media. These *Community Media World* podcasts were published online at <http://robwatsonmedia.net/category/communitymedia/> and shared using social media. This meant recording interviews and fieldnotes on a regular basis, and storing them either privately or on an open platform, thereby enabling discussion or comment as part of a collaborative process of engagement with the different participants. This meant that it was possible to shape the field notes continuously, which provided a theme to the organisation of the texts that were collated along the way, i.e. the encounters in the rich and varied world of Leicester's community media groups.

Each of the respondents and participants in these interviews had to be informed that they might be published online, and gave verbal permission for this material to be used, making ongoing data available for inspection by any research associates, and more generally available to the participants themselves. As a result, it was possible to connect different elements of the gathered data with other emerging themes. By writing regular blogs, moreover, it was possible to produce an ongoing reflective commentary, or memos, on the stories being gathered, which would prove useful in later analysis. As this process was based on experiential accounts of the participants in the community media groups encountered, there was no need to perform a content analysis of any broadcast or published material produced by the participants, though some notes, clippings and bookmarks were noted of media products that might be associated with, and that potentially allows a wide range of secondary texts to be incorporated and considered in further studies.

5.11 Reflexivity

As a recognised academic member of staff at De Montfort University, any participation in the field was often pre-figured with expectations about the supposed or imagined role of the researcher. With a reputation as a supporter of community media proving to be useful in gaining the confidence and trust of the advocates and groups that were interacted with, it was also necessary on occasions, to play-down the perceptions of the role of the professional academic researcher, particularly when

introduced to regular volunteers and participants. There was sometimes an assumption made by participants at the first meetings that this project was part of a well-established and integrated research community, and that there was extensive technical back-up and support within a network of similarly minded professional researchers linked to research networks in the social sciences. And while there was sufficient support and supervision in the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility at De Montfort University, the work that was undertaken in the field was largely independent.

5.12 Interviews

In addition to the field recordings, it was useful to plan a series of more focussed interviews with different contributors. Social research, according to Bauman & May, is an “extended commentary on the experiences that arise in social relations and is an interpretation of those experiences in relation to others and the social conditions in which people find themselves” (Bauman & May, 2001, p. 180). Therefore, the appropriate use of structured and semi-structured interviews was a vital tool for the development of accounts of intersubjective experience (Hannabuss, 1996; McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003). The interviews undertaken here were designed to ask open-ended questions, followed by time spent with the participants to listen to what they said, and exploring further issues that were relevant to the discussion (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). Displaying empathy for the participants’ situation was important, and a lot of effort was put into exploring developmental issues in these conversations. Therefore, there was no best question scenario set in advance, rather the process of question and review encouraged reflection and the working-out of issues that affected the participant most, rather than the concerns of the interviewer (Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). This meant that questions would “change during the process of research to reflect an increased understanding of the problem” (Creswell, 1998, p. 19). The interview process, furthermore, was built on a sense of “developing trust and rapport with our informants,” such that it was possible to offer a “non-judgemental attitude” that reassured the participants that the aim was to gain a fuller understanding of their lifeworlds and experiences (Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 95).

5.13 Media Capture

As suggested earlier, a number of data gathering techniques were employed that allowed for interaction both on a formal basis, and also on a casual basis (Mackay, 2005; McCarthy & Wright, 2004). As formal notes could seldom be recorded at the time of a participation session, they had to be written from memory later. It became important, therefore, to capture media content in different forms, such as taking pictures on a phone or camera, taking audio recordings of sessions, either as a general

form of ambient audio capture, or by recording individual interviews using a reporter's microphone. The use of both direct, interactive recordings and background recordings would later aid the recall of events, and provide a rich source of information as a source of later transcriptions. This augmented the written journal that was kept, in which personal notes, observations and recollections were made, along with issues and ideas to be followed-up in later investigation.

These notes had to be updated continually, and as new encounters in the different sessions arose with different participants. Because it was generally difficult to return to an event afterwards, to review it and capture further data, the journal therefore reflected the ad-hoc and unfolding nature of the encounters, and was used to note issues as they emerged, and rather than trying to fit observations into a pre-determined framework of analysis, or an 'off-the-shelf' matrix of theoretical social characteristics. In keeping with the ethos of participant observation, then, these journal entries were written in the first person and recounted events from the unfolding subjective experience gained at the time. These notes have subsequently been transcribed so that they are available for inspection, and form the basis of the evidence provided here.

5.14 Advocates

While the overall data gathering approach was designed to be open to the possibility of many diverse and different individual encounters, each constitutive of many different types of experiences, on reflection what emerged was a pattern of interaction with key 'advocates' within the community media groups being observed. This was because these advocates had a deeper investment and involvement in the running of the community media groups being worked with. They also afforded regular opportunities for conversation that focussed on the process of supporting and establishing these community media groups. These rich discussions were highly reflexive, as each of the key advocates was keen to work-out and understand their own role as a leader in their organisation and community, and therefore ascertain what resources they might deploy, and what cognitive and practical capability they might invest in to further develop their organisations, however informally. In this sense, it was necessary to play the role of a *sounding board* for different ideas that were often of concern to the advocates. There is considerable gratitude to be expressed, therefore, that the three main respondents (John Coster, Ian Davies and Dee Bahra), were supportive of this research project, and were willing to extend invitations to different events, allowing for useful contact with other significant participants, while also being open to wider discussion about the role and function of community media. It is one of the enduring recollections of these observations, then, that the work,

commitment and vision of a small number of motivated leaders can be fundamental to the building and establishing of sustainable community media organisations and groups. As a result, it is possible to recognise here, that by focussing on the activities and the experiences of these advocates, it is also possible to elucidate a greater sense of what their involvement meant in terms of their routines, behaviours and actions, as they occurred at the heart of these groups.

5.15 Ethics Considerations

Engaging with people in ways that are faithful, accurate and sensitive to their lived experience requires a fundamental appreciation of the ethical boundaries and repertoires that are essential to good research practice. De Montfort University ensures that researchers work within recognised international standards and codes of ethical practice that are suited to the form and type of research that is being undertaken. De Montfort University's ethics research guidelines state that "all research projects conducted by either staff or students involving humans, human data or animals, must undergo an ethics review." The guidelines for approval for this review can be found online:

<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/research-requiring-ethical-approval.aspx>

In addition, reference was made to other bodies:

- Social Research Association (SRA) Ethical Guidelines <http://the-sra.org.uk/research-ethics/ethics-guidelines/>
- Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2010) <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/framework-for-research-ethics/>
- British Computer Society (BCS) Code of Conduct <http://www.bcs.org/category/6030>

By reviewing and incorporating the ethics practices and expectations of these professional bodies, therefore, it was possible to:

- Identify who the researcher was, and what institution they were working on behalf of.
- Identify clearly, and in accessible language, what the research entailed and what its intended use would be.
- Give respondents and participants clear access to further information and links to any supporting documents.
- Give respondents clear contact details for the researcher, and appropriate colleagues who would be an independent contact who they could act if matters of concern were raised by participants.
- Give respondents clear information about their ability to withdraw from the research if they requested it.
- Link to any associated research ethics protocols generally applicable as standard practice in the research community.
- Gain permission from the De Montfort University Research Ethics Committee.
- Confirm appropriate confidentiality agreements with relevant participants.

A pilot study was used to trial and assess the methods for recording, collating and archiving data that might subsequently be used during the more extended study period. Emphasis was given to the contextual environment in which the participants operated, the relationships that they might be identified through, and the access that participants had to information about the project and its aims. A risk-assessment pro-forma was used to identify potential harm for different categories of participants, with a consent form given to each participant with the appropriate information that they might need, and which could be accessed later. A list of participants' contact details was retained, so that volunteers and participants could be informed of any changes to the project and the use of the associated data-archive. The initial approach to asking questions consisted of both verbal agreements between the interviewee and the researcher, and a written agreement for more extended discussions. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and accompanied by a photographic image if possible. On the occasion that an ad-hoc Interview was undertaken, in which only verbal consent was given, the participant was given a 'business card' with the contact details of the researcher, and a short statement with a link to the research website providing more information about the project.

5.16 Consent and Withdrawal Procedure

At the start of each interview a check list was read through, identifying the duration of the entire interview process, the form of questions to be asked, what the primary and overall purpose of the research was, and how the researcher could be contacted for further information. The audio recordings and notes that were taken during interviews were copied from the portable digital device and stored securely on a computer in suitable office with secure password protection. Location information of the secure archive was registered with the De Montfort University Research Ethics Committee, outlining the data protection and encryption methods that were used to store sensitive material.

5.17 Anonymity

Where applicable, file names and participant names were anonymised using a secure coding system that did not explicitly name or identify the participants who had not given clear permission to be named. The coding system has been kept separately from the working data-archive. Where it was necessary to identify the name of an individual a consent agreement was sought and recorded. In keeping an on-going research blog that included reference to comments and observations made by some of the interviewees, and about the organisations and situations that they worked or practiced

in, specific consent was sought from the interviewees immediately prior to recording of this information, and any references to roles and positions was anonymised as necessary. Participants were provided with full details of the objectives of the research, and information appropriate for those whose first language was not English, and to ensure that all forms of participation was voluntary and based on informed consent.

5.18 Analysis and Reporting

The concluding task of an ethnographic study is to account for the involvement and time spent by the researcher in the field (Davidson, 2009). It is important that the narrative account that is produced clearly enunciates a picture of the experiences that were formed when interacting with the different participants. The narrative therefore takes the form of a first-person account that describes the way that the researcher entered the field of study, how they established the ongoing relationships with the key participants, and what they gained from their time spent participating in the community activities, and from talking in extended interviews. The narrative thus describes the inferences that get fed back to the collaborators and research associates, and gives an account of the type of media collection techniques that had been used, with some assessment of their impact on the experience of working with people. These narratives are both *chronological* and *thematic*, and illustrate the experiences using supporting multimedia files, quotations from the interview transcriptions, and if possible, a selection of illustrative images taken when attending different events (Sierhuis, 1996). The narrative explains why the site was chosen for study, what was done during the researcher's visits, with an emphasis on the ways that it was possible to observe, interact, and collect stories from participants. The narrative describes, therefore, how the observations were made, what impact they had on the witnessed sessions, and how this was approached ethically and responsibly. [Most of these points have been identified in Section Six, the Data Collection Methods Overview].

5.19 Coding & Analysis

Coding is an essential part of the ethnographic process, in that it provides a means by which the researcher can locate and organise the evidence that they have collected, and use it to query the data by testing the themes that have emerged through the process of investigation (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). In order to assist with this process Nvivo has been used to help identify themes and noticeable occurrences (Bazeley, 2013; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Edlund & McDougall, 2012). Nvivo is an internationally recognised data management programme that has been designed for use in qualitative research. It is possible to use Nvivo to label passages of data with a code that summarises

what the researcher believes the passage is about. This has been achieved by working through a two-stage process:

- Firstly, identifying and labelling the data in a broad sense, relying on initial responses to the data. This is known as “initial or open coding,” and uses “a priori or emergent codes” that are generally applicable and are commonly associated with the known phenomenon being studied.
- The second stage of coding uses a set of “more analytical categories or clusters,” and which is “often referred to as focussed coding,” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 126). This can be cross-referenced with the intersubjective concepts discussed earlier.

In this sense, codes are applied as *organising principles*, rather than as representations of provable deductions. The categories are therefore a form of self-selected “tools to think with,” that allow the data to be “expanded, changed, or scrapped altogether as our ideas develop through repeated interactions with the data” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 126).

There are two distinct groups of concern that are linked in this process. The first set of concerns are those that have been outlined earlier, and relate to Blumer’s thoughts on industrialisation, which will be adapted here as they are applicable to participation in community media. Once the pattern and arrangement of these categories is established in the first iteration of the analytical overview, the second stage of the process identifies evidence of how the interactions, negotiations and definitions and accomplishments are played out in the observed settings. As Robert Prus notes,

By attending to the analytical grids represented by these transcontextual, action-oriented processes, one may acquire the major conceptual tools for embarking on research in any setting involving human behaviour (Prus, 1996, p. 25).

This results in a model of community media participation, and a framework that can be used to record the manner that these processes are enacted in the group life of community media in Leicester, and enables an evaluation of participation as an agent of social change as outlined in the research question. The categories have been specified in the following tables:

Table 5 Participation Analytical Categories and **Table 6 Blumer’s Lines of Entry**, and will be elucidated and tested in the following narrative account. **Table 7 General Symbolic Interaction Evaluation**, identifies issues of interactive process, and will be used to interrogate the fieldwork notes for indications of the process by which the wider social processes were negotiated. Finally, framing the method of information management and data-extraction using the primary modes of operation associated with ethnographic forms of observation, and the way that different techniques highlight and elucidate different aspects of the narrative development process. **Table 8 General Symbolic Interaction Evaluation**: Framing the method of information management and data-extraction using

the primary modes of operation associated with ethnographic forms of observation, and the way that different techniques highlight and elucidate different aspects of this narrative development process. **Table 9 Participative Framework**, indicates the potential roles that are played by activists, participants and advocates of participative media processes, which will likewise for the bases of the framework of analysis of the recorded observations that follow.

Table 5 Participation Analytical Categories

	Neutral Processes	Indicator	Evaluation Form
01	Structure of occupations and positions.	Role negotiations and expectations management	Reflection and discussion of role parameters.
02	Filling of occupations, jobs and positions.	Recruitment process for volunteers.	Reflection and discussion of volunteer engagement.
03	New ecological arrangements.	Location and spatial resources utilised.	Observation of events, production sessions and meetings.
04	Regime of work.	Training and discussion of role parameters.	Formal and informal specification of tasks and roles.
05	New structures of social relations.	Interaction with volunteers, supporters and resource holders.	Form of contact and engagement with participants.
06	New interests and new interest groups.	Parameters of established topics and emerging topics.	Negotiation and validation process with internal community or external community.
07	Monetary and contractual relations.	Funding arrangements and resource planning.	Reflection and discussion of resource expectations.
08	Goods produced by the manufacturing process.	Facilitation and sharing of media products.	Reflection, discussion and observation of media products.
09	Patterns of income of industrial personnel	External participant media activity.	Observation and discussion of wider participant conduct.

(Adapted from Blumer, 1990)

Table 6 Participation Analytical Categories: Taking each line of entry in turn, this framework was used as an analytical guide to give an initial response to the data. As a set of preliminary and open codes, these categories were used to identify relevant actions and discussions, and how they related to the potential accomplishments and lines of action that became possible as agents acted in the social situations that were observed.

Table 6 Blumer's Lines of Entry

Lines of Entry	Arrangement	Operation	Social Practice
Structure of occupations & positions	Social arrangement – hierarchical or horizontal?	Social structure – differentiation or similarity	Codes of living, expectations & dispositions
Filling of Occupations, jobs & positions	Allocated roles	Recruitment process	Co-option, reinforcement or displacement
New ecological arrangements	Situational arrangements	Consultation	Accountability and sustainability
Regimes of work	Social governance	Dispute resolution	Enfranchisement
New structures of social relations	Interpersonal or group relationships	Cultural interactions	Permissible codes of action
New interests & new interest groups	Communities of interest	Sharing and recognition of interests	Negotiations between interest groups.
Monetary & contractual relations	Contractual liabilities	Negotiations and contractual agreements	Records and accounts of agreements
Goods produced by the manufacturing process	Symbolic and physical production	Distributional arrangements	Consumption and use
Patterns of income of industrial personnel	Social exchange	Innovation and realignment	Displacement of established practices

Table 6 Blumer's Lines of Entry: Used in the second stage of coding, these categories were used to identify clusters of accomplishment and definitions of activity that indicate what the social practices are that frame the practice of participation in community media groups. The aim of this framework was to develop the emergent themes and instances that demonstrated how alternative configurations were possible, what those alternative configurations might be, and how they extend into group life.

Table 7 General Symbolic Interaction Evaluation

	General Symbolic Interaction Issues	Evidence Forms
01	How people establish goals in the situation they are located in.	Interviews and discussions focussed on reflexive comprehension.
02	How people apply their acquired or emergent perspectives gained from their interaction with significant others or reference groups associated with the situation.	Interviews, discussions and observations of interaction, with reflexive accounts of social identification.
03	How people identify or label to themselves (their self), any relevant objects in a situation (for example the identities and roles of other people, any natural or human-made objects, any shared concepts and ideas, their use of language and descriptive terms, for example).	Interviews, discussions, observations and group interaction, co-located with media, associated organisations and similar groups.
04	How people take a role and thus become a recognisable other, either as individuals or as a group as a whole.	Observations, interviews and discussions reflecting on identity and role taking.
05	How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to: How we assess what we do in relation to each situation.	Observations, reflections and discussions in group situations and what can be achieved.
06	How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to: How we assess what is happening in different situations in relation to our sense of self.	Interviews and discussions with reflection and accounts of accomplishments, displacements, frustrations or indifference.
07	How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to: How we ascribe a sense of value or worth to our sense of self in different situations.	Interviews and discussions with reflection and accounts of accomplishments and self-identification as a role performer.
08	How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to: How we articulate or negotiate a sense of identity in different situations.	Interviews and discussions with reflection and accounts of identification as a role performer.
09	How people define their sense of self in different situations in regard to: How we interpret what we are experiencing emotionally as self in different situations.	Interviews and discussions with reflection and accounts of accomplishments, sense of belonging or reward, alienation or distance.
10	How people define the future streams of action that are potential in their acts in different situations. These potential streams of action might be perceived to be distant or immediate, tangible or intangible.	Interviews and discussions with reflection and accounts of accomplishments working with others to achieve goals.
11	How people apply their prior acquired knowledge in a situation in the form of memories from the past and apply them to the present situations.	Interviews and discussions with reflection and accounts of memory patterns.

Table 7 General Symbolic Interaction Evaluation: Framing the method of information management and data-extraction using the primary modes of operation associated with ethnographic forms of observation, and the way that different techniques highlight and elucidate different aspects of the narrative development process.

Table 8 Participative Framework

Social Arrangement	Form of Participation	Main Media Forms	Aims	Ideal Community Type	Mode of Engagement
Hegemonic	Counter-Force	Oppositional	Emancipation	Discursive	Activist
Ecological	Pluralist	Diverse	Sustainability	Holistic	Steward
Civic	Representation	Public Sphere	Association	Deliberative	Representative
Techno-centric	Generative	Spreadable	Globalisation	Networked	Collaborator
Rhizomatic	Ironic	De-Territorialised	Fluidity	Nomadic	Cipher
Commercial	Customer	Sticky	Profit	Market	Consumer
Administrative	Instrumental	System	Efficiency	Information	Inspector
Managerial	Subordinate	Organisation	Continuance	Hierarchical	Devotees

Table 8 Participative Framework: Using the categories developed here, it is possible to look at how different roles are negotiated by actors who are role-playing or role-taking in different circumstances. Focus was given on the role definitions and the narratives and explanations that are used by agents to enact their roles, either partially, in combination, or as an engaged player in the field.

5.20 Methodology Issues Summary

To recap, the methods used in undertaking this study were assembled from multiple sources and using multiple techniques, including:

- Mixed-media recordings of discussions, workshops, meetings, public events, training sessions, and private meetings.
- Structured and unstructured interviews that were recorded, transcribed and annotated.
- Limited reference was made to online media, email communications, Twitter Feeds, Facebook groups, planning material, participant journals, and other forms of collaborative documentation.
- A collection of audio recordings has been archived.
- Simultaneous data collection was possible with the use of multimedia and web technologies, and the use of synchronised online storage resources.
- Nvivo was used to process the data as a set of memos, rather than as a wide-ranging qualitative data processing tool.
- The objective was not to reduce data forms from large-scale sweeps of variables, but instead to highlight representative allusion to related themes.
- The inferences and conclusions have been presented in a commentary as the last remaining section of this thesis.

Additionally, it is possible to state that each of Blumer's steps for analysis of neutral social processes have been observed, something that Blumer calls a "research procedure under the new perspective" (Blumer, 1990, p. 150). This operates by identifying:

1. What is meant by participation [*see literature review*].
2. The participatory process [*see literature discussion*].
3. The major points of context of the participative process in group life [*see narrative contextual statement*].
4. A general awareness of the larger social process [*see narrative account*].
5. An identification of what takes place at the points of contact [*see narrative discussion*].

Finally, it is useful to remind ourselves, and in adapting Blumer, that

The only way one can be sure that [participation] has, in fact, initiated social changes is to study what takes place at the points at which such changes arise, namely, at the points of entry of the [participative] process into group life (Blumer, 1990, p. 155).

6 Leicester Community Media Activists and Advocates

6.1 John Coster

This section is a summary of the following interviews [see Appendix 11.1]:¹⁵

- 2013-05-29 Interview Summary [A] - John Coster, Citizens Eye.
- 2013-11-01 Interview Summary - John Coster, Citizens Eye

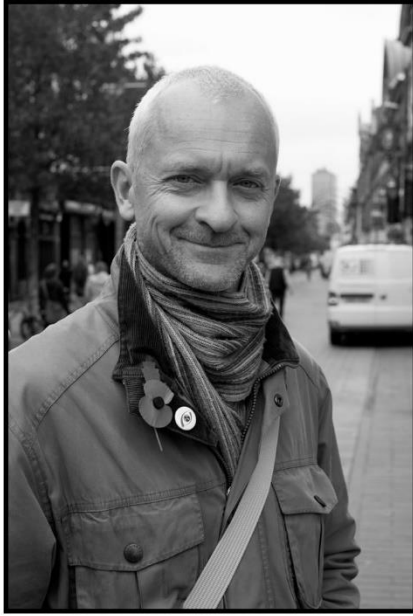


Figure 2 John Coster Citizens Eye

Founded by John Coster in 2005, Citizens Eye was a way for John to put something back into society and to do something that would rehabilitate John's reputation after he had served a prison sentence [1.81.2]. Citizens Eye was an attempt to establish an organisation in Leicester that offered ordinary people a chance to participate in civic life by promoting the work of community groups and holding politicians and local organisations to account. [1.3.xvi]. John pioneered techniques of community engagement after reading how journalists in America and the Czech Republic would directly engage with their readers and members of the public in community cafes [1.3.vii] [1.3.xvii]. John took this idea and used it to develop a form of engagement that fed into the blog site that he set up using Wordpress. The development of the website meant that John could create an online presence and

¹⁵ Citations of statements and quotations made here indicate the section number and paragraph as listed in the fieldwork report, which is available as a separate document for review. These transcriptions note the date, the component and the media source file that the summary is based on [see Appendix **Field Work Notes Summary Table**].

identity using *ad hoc* techniques of informal social engagement and collaboration with established organisations, such as the Leicester Mercury and the Leicester Library Service [1.109.xiv].

6.1.1 John Coster – Biography and Values

John started Citizens Eye following a discussion with a friend in 2005, who was part of a group of people involved in a “BME Citizens Jury,” which suggested that they needed to have “a voice and some teeth.” They came up with the name Citizens Eye, but for various reasons it was not used. When John was discussing this with his friend he was keen to take up the idea of developing a citizen organisation that had the role of being something of a “citizens watch,” something that could hold social and civic organisations to account. As John recalls, he “always had a bit of a thing for doing something around... online journalism.” [1.3.1]. John was keen to develop Citizens Eye into something socially beneficial, because as John described, he was motivated to do something after he spent time in prison, and was uneasy having to deal with the questions that would be raised in the job recruitment process. This meant that John wanted to work independently. John had been bankrupt on a number of previous occasions, and with the prospect of explaining that he had also been in prison, he realised that he would have to help himself if he wanted to engage socially again. The prospect of working without assets or financial security, however, meant that John could innovate in the way that he eventually developed Citizens Eye, which would be established through social and online media, thereby reducing the risk of running an enterprise in a traditional way, because there would be little or no physical assets.



Figure 3 John Coster Citizens Eye

John’s background in the armed forces, and as a community organiser, meant that he had the confidence to engage with people directly, and encourage other volunteers to get involved in what was,

at the time, a loosely defined project. Resources for running and developing Citizens Eye were secured *as-and-when*, on an *ad-hoc* and on-going basis. Generally, though, collaboration with sympathetic partners such as Simon Parker at Leicester Libraries [1.9.2], Keith Perch, the editor of the Leicester Mercury, and Jane Hill, the editor of BBC Leicester, were helpful in getting Citizens Eye running [1.109.xiv]. Consequently, Citizens Eye gained a reputation for innovation and good practice that travelled beyond Leicester, with the Media Trust awarding 'Beacon Status' to Citizens Eye for the way that it was able to work across the boundaries of professional media practice and volunteer-based media [1.114.i]. The practices developed through Citizens Eye have been discussed in relation to citizen journalism, hyperlocal media, DIY media, open-learning and third-sector media [1.3.xxii].¹⁶

John's role in leading and developing Citizens Eye was mainly to give advice and support to volunteers and participants, and to help to facilitate networks of contacts with news producers, funding agencies and volunteer groups. This meant that volunteers could work independently and on their own terms, rather than being tied down to Citizens Eye as an umbrella organisation which would vouch for the content produced. In his efforts to develop Citizens Eye, John considered a number of options for establishing different platforms that would support the longer-term viability of the project. John discussed the idea of offering training and consultancy services [1.109.1], and has attempted to integrate Citizens Eye into a cooperative of community media volunteers who would form its operating base [1.3.6]. Ultimately, however, John recognised that Citizens Eye, in the funding climate of the time, lacked the ability to establish longer-term backing, and was therefore unable to secure the necessary professional relationships that would transform Citizens Eye into a long-term sustainable organisation. When the funding for local government and third-sector projects was cut by the coalition government from 2010, and core services of local councils were at risk because of these austerity policies, then the flexibility to form small-scale collaborative partnerships and projects, on which Citizens Eye had been dependent, dried up [1.3.5].

While accounts of the role and the function of Citizens Eye, and groups like it, are being discussed by academics elsewhere (Ali, 2014; Harte & Turner, 2015), especially for their potential to challenge the standard models of community media engagement that are usually deployed as a response to social and policy issues, John regards these as secondary matters. John explained that he felt there is space for academics to discuss these issues in more detail, such as the relationships between global and

¹⁶ <http://www.answersfrombigissue.com/2013/11/citizens-eye/>

local media, the value of community media based on its ability to affect social change, and the impact that forms of community media can have on policy change, both in local and national government. However, as John explained, he sees this as a lot simpler. John is a

“Great believer that the grass is never greener on the other side, but if you water the grass you stand on and chuck a few seeds over at someone else who's standing on a bit of shit ground, and then encourage them to water the ground they stand on and grow some grass, then suddenly we'll have all these little patches and we'll all joined together and we'll live in utopia. It's great isn't it. It's like a Hollywood movie, but I think it's about that man in the mirror. Until you change yourself you can't even begin to change other people. So when other people start changing and changing other people's opinions of themselves, and the way that we live, well you start making society better.” [1.3.18.xi]

John explained that he is an advocate of the idea that to help one person to improve their lot is a valuable contribution that anyone can make. Helping people to feel valued, and reflecting the positive way that this impacts on that person, and the people around them, as John explains, is something that cuts through to peoples' sense of self-worth, whether it is gaining confidence to write poetry and read those poems on a radio programme, or to attend events at a café session where they make a friend. These small gestures can often result in valuable interactions that have more of an impact on someone's life than traditional forms of social services can. For John, this is not about a search for “macro solutions to macro problems,” but is instead a ground-up approach that allows people to grow in the way that they want to grow. This is not an approach that seeks to fix top-down solutions, but instead draws out what people are interested in, and finds ways to make improvements to their ability to sustain their own sense of wellbeing. As John explains

“I just think we talk big issues and big scary headlines to try and keep people where they are. We don't want people to aspire, because ultimately the people that have all this done to them, or are affected by all the stuff that's in the paper, are never the people that vote.” [1.3.20.xi].

John copes with the inevitable knocks that come with this approach by taking the negative experiences and turning them into positives. As John described, he's “like a tree that takes in Co2 and gives out oxygen.” Ever since he was a child, and since he joined the army and went travelling, John prioritises experiences above reading books. As John explains,

“I love people who read all this shit in books and then when you talk to them about what it's really like to go through it, and go to prison and those kind of things. And feel your life's in

danger, and all these kind of things in different kinds of places around the world. And I think it's only when you suddenly realise that, well, that's it" [1.3.21.xiv].

John's appreciation of the demands of life, and its character-building potential, were formed from these experiences, so he believes he is now more able to keep a balance between the positive and negative experiences, and to look for the potential in people, rather than seeing only the surface characteristics of people. John suggests that he has an improved ability to recognise "false friends," which means that if he can help someone else "come out of the dark just to participate, well that's a life worth living isn't it." [1.3.21.xvi]. Whether parts of the mainstream media could learn from the work that John has done, and the approach that he has taken with Citizens Eye, is a useful question.

John pointed that there are a large number of qualified and trained journalists who are misinformed about the purposes and the role of community media. When John interacts with professional journalists he tends to steer clear of the citizen journalism debate, and instead calls community media volunteers 'community reporters,' thus avoiding confusion. As John points out,

"The more informed ones have an opinion about someone who they know who is a citizen journalist, and then when you really dig down into it they have a bit of a, sometime begrudging, they are aware of it and the value that it is. And then when someone meets me, and then find out about Citizens Eye and what it's about and the way we do what we do, then they are always surprised" [1.3.26.xxiii].

This is a constant process of reflecting on the bias of professional positions, yet still working across boundaries. John encourages professionals to work with amateurs, and amateurs with professionals, and recognises that what he does is not guided by university or professional qualifications. This means that the rationale for Citizens Eye is driven as much by need, as it is by the desire to work within a professional media system. Particularly as it gives John the opportunity to write his own content and to promote his own events. John's experience following prison meant

"Never trusting anybody, never owning anything, anything you could lose, so I suppose nearly six years ago the internet was still quite new to most people, and the idea of having a Wordpress blog you could put the site up and then you learnt how by putting films on YouTube or on iPadio, as it was then. Photos on Flickr, and this new thing Twitter that could all be put on to your Wordpress blog, and then you could use a smart phone" [1.109.iii].

John recalls that he always had an interest in using technology, and that he would include the latest forms of technology into the things that he did. John recalled how his phone at the time was a Nokia N95, one of the first internet enabled phones, which meant that:

“Suddenly you had this amplification out to the world, and to those that wanted to listen. But I still had the confidence to be able to go out and speak to people about how they should be having coffee mornings and these sorts of things, or organising events, and to be able to interact with either service users or members of the public. And so, really when I look back, it was the perfect marrying of my own personal situation, with an opportunity, with a skill-set that I probably had. I was more confident in my own ability than I actually had the skills to deliver if I'm honest. Now nearly six years later it's got to the point where we are in Community Media Week Six. We've had an iPhone app built for us for free, which was fantastic, and we still advocate community media cafes for talking to people and stuff” [1.109.4.iv].

John's personal experience of getting access to books from his local library, and how this enabled him to talk with his grandmother about issues happening in the world, was formative. John's world outlook is driven by these conversations, and the need to engage other people in conversations in which shared experiences are expressed and common ground is found. As John explains,

“There was a need for me to do something, and I had nothing but time having come out of prison, and then there were lots of people out there who were willing to have a conversation about it. I think the great thing about Citizens Eye is that there never was a plan. Still isn't now, probably. It kind of came out of needs and wants of everybody involved, rather than 'I'm going to take this to the masses, or the masses is going there's a big gap who's going to fill it for us” [1.109.8.viii].

Clearly there is a strong streak of aspiration in John's views, and he might be said to have a utopian view of community media and what it might be able to contribute. John recognises this and ascribes it to the social values of his upbringing. As John explains,

“Everybody has a value. No one is value-less. I hate bullies. I think that I totally believe in social engineering, and that it is used to keep people where they are. I think we have allowed, in this country, we've given this country away, you know what I mean... [There] was a great thing on Facebook the other day, and it said something about you're born white, you go out in the sun and get brown. You eat Chinese food, this is from India, your TV is from China, this is from there, you listen to music from here, the language you use is this. You use Arabic and all that, and then you worry about an immigrant living next door to you? And I think what's happened is we've allowed government to put all of these dividers to make us divisive” [1.3.15.vii].

6.1.2 Citizens Eye - Concept Development

What, then, was the Citizens Eye like in the early stages? John explained that it is not so different now. The activities that he runs now reflect the type of activities that he has always been doing. For

example, John has run community media cafes for Leicestershire Aids Support Service, a cafe for Action Deafness, one for people affected by mental health issues, one for Action Homeless and Down Not Out, as well as sessions with people who are refugee and asylum seekers, or ex-offenders or young people in prisons. John's sessions with these groups reflects the same basic principles, that people can get involved in making media and representing themselves, on a day-to-day, basis by following their own interests and concerns, or by attending one of the community media café sessions that John runs on a weekly basis. John is now more confident about saying "why don't you run your own and then we can support you?" [1.109.9.ix].

Citizens Eye has therefore evolved from simply delivering a range of community media activities, to developing the concept of the Community Media Training School, and trying to make it something that people recognise. John hoped that his work with BBC Radio Leicester can aid this process, and might enable the community media activities that he promotes to be recognisable. John draws a distinction between the mass media and the way that community media operate. People know what stations like BBC Radio Leicester are about, and they draw some comfort from the stability that broadcast stations represent. However, it is now possible to use social media to disperse information about an event or a protest in a way that is driven from the grassroots. As John describes:

"In a room with one hundred people at a big event, or something that is important, a protest, if everyone has got a smart phone, and if everyone is taking a photograph, and if everyone's making a video, who do you know is doing that? Unless you see the lanyard on their badge telling you who is from BBC Radio Leicester, with their ISDN connection back to the studio? Whereas the radio car gives it a certain anchor" [1.109.10.x].

John regards the Community Media Cafe as an anchor, something that he is hoping that the Community Media Training School might become. John views Community Media Week as a visible manifestation of the work he is undertaking. As John explains, "it's almost like a version of the radio car," a high-profile event that people can see, interact with and discuss. As John recalls,

"It always surprises me the amount of people that when I talk to them, they know about Citizens Eye. They have a perception of me, they have heard of community media week, they know that we have a cafe, they know that we have the training school, and that sort of stuff. But they don't get involved, and they have never been involved, because it's 'not for them', 'it's not on at the right time', but they would quite happily tell someone in a conversation, down the pub, at the working men's club, at the football, walking through the market, that if someone said to them 'oh I'd like to do this, or I've got an interest in that', they would automatically refer them through to me" [1.109.11.xi].

John was drawn to the idea of developing an online news agency after reading an article in which Paul Wolfowitz suggested that the way to impact on social policy is to start a magazine.¹⁷ According to John, “Wolfowitz started a magazine around Neo-Conservatism, and they said that was really the start of it. It brought all these people together” [1.3.3]. After John’s release from prison he was surprised by how quickly he was able to get Citizens Eye up and running. Particularly after being introduced to someone who “built, basically the first version of Citizens Eye” using Wordpress. According to John, “it pretty much hasn't changed since then” [1.3.4]. At this initial stage, the main concern was to build bridges with his family members and to occupy himself during the daytime. John was therefore able to let Citizens Eye unfold, rather than working to a defined plan, something that John has maintained since. As such there is no business plan for Citizens Eye, and it has survived in this ad-hoc way for some time, operating as a quasi- or virtual-news agency. Primarily it is based around the skills and expertise that John has been able to bring together with a small group of core contributors.

The kinds of public policy that John has in mind, are concerned with the levels of discrimination against certain social groups, such as older people, younger people, people with disabilities and carers, ex-offenders and refuge and asylum seekers. John explained that:

“Anybody that is considered a 'box' by society who also needed help, were the same people that were written about by the mainstream media, and rarely would anyone rise up from that group to be able to represent that group with any level of accuracy I'd say. Let alone sharing your story, about what a real experience is. So, I think talking to lots of refugee and asylum seekers, and being able to support them and give them something to do, and suddenly realising that when we came up with the name for the refugee and asylum seekers news agency – HAT - which was Here and There, and everyone thinks it's 'wherever you lay your hat is your home'. And it's nothing to do with that at all, you know what I mean.” [1.3.9.ii].

However, John is resistant to some of the terms that are used in these situations, as he feels that they confine people’s expectations of what Citizens Eye might attempt to achieve, perhaps because it was more comfortable, according to John, for others to place limits around the activities that Citizens Eye undertook, and therefore what it could become. A prime example was John’s insistence that Citizens Eye was not a form of hyperlocal news, because John was never interested in breaking

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Wolfowitz

stories that related to any one locality. Though John was happy to work with groups and organisations that did seek to do this, such as the Bedford Clanger. In this respect Citizens Eye sought to act as a pathway to other issue-based community media groups, the most prominent of which were Down Not Out [1.63.1], a news agency run by people affected by homelessness, and HAT News [1.115.2], a news agency for people who are affected by immigration status issues. The model of developing news agencies based around different issues was important for John, as it meant that he was able offer support for an idea and a concept that other people would then own, pursue and develop. The news agency concept meant that content for stories or news could be focussed on specific issues that were of interest to the people who were involved in promoting and developing the agency [1.109.xii].

John recalls his experience working with a man who had moved from Zimbabwe to the UK, who had been a journalist, and who wanted to pick-up his career as a journalist again. When he had applied for a course at a local college he was asked to provide education certificates. However, as John explained,

“When he leapt out of a window with the secret police knocking on the door, and leaving behind his family, his worldly goods and probably lucky to get out with a pair of trouser and a hat. Well the last thing that he thought of was a way of putting something online and to be able to build-up a portfolio, and stuff” [1.3.10.ii].

John realised that when he sat with people who have had similar experiences then a significant set of stereotypes come into play. As John described,

“It dawned on me that the things that kind of unite all of those people is not necessarily open persecution in the media, but misrepresentation. So if you could work with those people to be able to help them find their voice?” [1.3.11.iv].

It is more important, according to John, to find the things that we have in common, which bind us together, and to put aside the divisions that are created so often in the mainstream media. Whether it is a question of your sexuality, where you were born, the colour of your skin, what you believe in, who you pray to, and so on, they are issues that can be used to divide people, when in fact they should be a point of celebration about the things that make us different, which in themselves are worth celebrating.

John is critical of many of the ways that media operates, with its bias that “you're either with us or against us,” and that “you are either one of us or you are not one of us.” John believes these categories are designed to create opposites, whereas in life things are generally grey and in the middle. There are multiple angles to every story, and that it is only when we sit down together and start to talk that we get to know what these stories might be, and how our lives are affected by the rules and policies. Often the implementation of these rules strips people of their dignity, but John is surprised how many people who are affected by the enforcement of these rules, such as people seeking asylum, that they retain their focus and desire on the potential opportunities that living in the United Kingdom brings them.

It is often a struggle to make sense of the mainstream media and the way that it represents issues and stories, but it is not until we speak directly with people, and we hear their stories, that we get a better sense of what motivates them and how they have achieved the things they have. Occasionally an event or story will come along that allows for a temporary break from the leading set of stories.

As John describes this:

“We have these little bubbles that come along, like the Olympics and the Paralympics, and everybody would love to adopt someone with a disability, and everyone would love to have a Paralympian living next door to them. And here we are back to still hating people and killing people, murdering people. Having ATOS come round and assess them for work, and then people you know committing suicide” [1.3.13.vi].

John explained that even though community media is recognised by the World Bank, the EU and the UN “all these great organisations. These organisations that are attuned to democracy and the use of community media to promote civic engagement,” however, these discussions always seem to be about events that are taking place elsewhere. As John explains:

“We talk about community radio and we aspire to community radio like they do in Africa, to share stories of who can sell seeds, and how they are using mobile phones. And that's all great, but I'm not being funny, we can have people living a mile away from where we are sitting in the centre of Leicester, who don't even have that level of access because of things like technology. And sometimes I think that poor people here, in a developed country, are more excluded than in a developing country where it's about aspirations to rise from one dollar a day to two dollars a day. Here you can't aspire to go from one dollar, you know, one pound to two pound because you couldn't survive on a quid” [1.3.14.vii].

John is inspired by the values expressed in the Olympics, and he wanted Citizens Eye to represent the values of respect, excellence, friendship, determination, and courage, which he believes undercuts all the other values. Citizens Eye can be a “beacon for people to do things they want to do,” John explains. With the priority being courage, because “as Churchill said, that's the quality that undercuts all others, underpins all others” [1.3.17]. In the end, there is a strong element of equality in John’s values. As John explained:

“I've always been good and evil, you know, ever since I was a kid, you know goodies and baddies. I've always wanted to be a soldier. I like protecting people. Injustice makes me really angry. I get really angry at people dropping litter. So I suppose all of that's through life's opportunities and life's knocks and wound itself up” [1.3.17.x].

6.1.3 Community Conversations

The competing rationalisations used here are designed to deal with both adversity and potential. The challenge for community media is in helping people to understand both the positive and the negative side of this potential. John’s response is that none of this is about technology, and that he believes that the debate about the value of community media would be lost if it is reduced to who has an iPad and who does not. The technology can be impressive, John explains, but in the end, it comes down to the sense of conversation that is enabled. John thinks that the community news café is a fantastic invention, inspired by the idea he had seen in two other places:

“I've told that story before, you know, the Washington Post sending eight journalists out every week to sit in cafes. And in the Czech Republic citizen journalism didn't exist, so they went into cafes and it just went through the roof. So it was a reaction to 'I was buying lots of people teas and coffees and they weren't coming back, to well lets pick a cafe once a week when it was their quietist, and we are still doing it three years on. So I think it's that good-old value community conversation. And I always remember two specific conversations. One with a former journalist with the Mercury from thirty years ago, and then... one of the BBC Leicester presenters. Both of them in their own way said to me, John this is what we used to do in the past. About talking to people where they live, about what was important to them where they lived. That kind of hyperlocal stuff” [1.3.22.xvii].

The question, therefore, is why mainstream media had stopped doing that? John suggests that it is because mainstream media organisations have chosen to believe that people do not care, and that the media industries are now run by a self-selected group of people who are concerned with their own sense of professionalism, or their qualifications. The sense of providing a service is in decline, and the range of topics that people working in the media will invest in has declined. There is little

attention to the “humdrum mainstream lives” of ordinary people. Mainstream media is instead obsessed with celebrities with “pumped-up lips and fake boobs and people being filmed walking around leading pointless lives doing nothing” [1.3.23.xviii]. Social issues are covered in dramas like *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*, in a form that expresses conflict and antagonism. Moreover, the underpinning civic structure is often left to “busybodies,” while the practice of writing and valuing independent newsletters has fallen by the wayside. John is concerned that schools and colleges do not anymore promote and instil a culture of discussion through things like newsletters, so there are few ways of getting organised communicating going.

Citizens Eye, then, is about getting back to the front-line, John explains, which is more than simply adopting a fashion for so-called hyperlocal media. The hyperlocal model has become a way of making money, or is a search for finding new ways to make money, and while in the process people like John have become interested in making localised media, the danger is that they get “sucked into this 'how are we going to make money doing hyperlocal journalism'?” John is unequivocal about hyperlocal journalism, it is not something that he entertains or attempts to do.

“I don't do hyperlocal at all. To me it's about Leicester and Leicestershire and the world. Because all of these issues are everywhere. It's about the issues and it's about the people. And so therefore I'm not doing it for LE1, or I'm not doing it for a particular street. I'm doing it for people, and where they choose to live is down to them” [1.3.25.xii].

6.1.4 Citizens Eye – Partnerships and Collaborations

John has been keen to nurture a working relationship with BBC Leicester, and regards working locally with other media organisations as “just too good an opportunity to miss.” John’s expectation, however, is that any relationships that he establishes would have to value the arrangements for the right reasons, such as bridge-building, reputation enhancement, and so on. John regards reputation as the “only currency you have,” so thinks it is best to establish something positive with it. So what has it been like working with other media organisations? John has worked with the Leicester Mercury, the Library Service, De Montfort University, Leicester College, and many more. John explains that being involved with different organisations means that it is possible to “have their badge, and they can use you as much as you use them.” And while John does not use *Citizens Eye* as a way of collecting these badges, it was more important that he meets people who are interested in similar things. As John explains:

“It's about people. It's about the people that you find in the Library Service, like Simon Parker, you know, people that you meet at something like the Leicester Mercury, like the editor Keith Perch, and Mark Charlton. Being here at BBC Radio Leicester, you know it's great to be here with a training school. We have a good relationship with the editor Jane Hill. But that goes right back to the very early days of Citizens Eye, probably in the first year, where I still don't know how, but I met Rupal Rejani, and then I used to come on once a month, and from the very first time I came on, you know, all those years ago, she introduced me as John Coster from Citizens Eye. He's the editor and he runs this online community news agency. I remember her saying to me 'I really like what you do', she said, 'because you get to go out and meet people, and I don't really get to do that very much, because I'm here behind the desk, steering and flying the lunch-time show, as it was then. Whereas you are out there meeting people’” [1.109.14.xiv].

John recalls how another BBC Radio Leicester presenter had described him as a ‘powerful man.’ As John recalls,

“I remember him bursting out laughing, and he said 'but you are out there meeting people, but we used to do this thirty or forty years ago'. And I remember an old journalist from the Mercury saying that to me as well. I said 'that's why it works'. You know I haven't reinvented the wheel. I've just kind of made the wheel turn, and I think if you spoke to communities forty years ago and got all your news for the paper or from the radio? Well it's still there, all that news, all that's happened is because of shrinkages in the press and the media in jobs and stuff like that. Suddenly there's this gap that can be filled by enthusiastic amateurs, that are citizen journalists, or community reporters. And I suppose with the training school it's about saying 'well in that gap, if they've got all these enthusiastic people, why can't we help them to improve their skills, or try different ways. If you are doing it online why not have a newspaper and stuff, and then the opportunity with this qualification with the NTCJ gives that another, another layer to it if you like’” [1.109.15.xv].

6.1.5 Exploring Ideas - Community Media Training School

John's experience supporting community volunteers suggests to him that there is a lot more to the processes of community media than qualifications and status. It is more about confidence and about being seen. John suggests that the more we can invest-in, and provide alternative routes into different forms of accessible media, then the more diverse the conversations that take place will be. However, rather than this simply being people “ranting and raving about blogs,” there is a need to enhance people's skills and to develop their confidence by giving pathways of engagement. As John explains:

“It allows them to develop a few skills, but then you talk to them about things like mainstream media ethics and mainstream media law, but not in fancy long words; you break it down into common sense” [1.3.27.xxiv].

John believes that by having a training school, it would allow people who are interested in developing community conversations with and through media to acquire new skills, improve their confidence, improve their level of literacy, perhaps even gaining some qualifications that may lead to improved job prospects, and perhaps moving into a career that they once thought was off-limits to them. John suggest that this is about helping people to start their own newspapers or magazines, to form their own newspaper club, perhaps contributing to other forms of local media, and sharing their expertise in the lives that people live ordinarily, “because at the end of the day you are an expert in your own life” [1.3.28.xxv].

The biggest issue is establishing something credible that gives experience to a wide range of people. Some of the choices that people are faced with in gaining experience and developing their media skills can be limited. Necessity means that they might have to work in non-media related posts while they gain experience volunteering or studying. The challenge, according to John, is to create opportunities that mean that people can find a role in community media as a volunteer while balancing their working life requirements. How do people, regardless of their age or social position gain credible experience that will allow them to put together a portfolio? This is often about identifying experiences that go beyond the requirements of a job, and demonstrating capability and an interest in volunteer roles that show the multidimensional character of people, and not just their capability in a limited business sense, and thus challenging some of the stereotypes and narrower expectations of how people can succeed by combining things that they are interested in with their work or study.



Figure 4 John Coster Community Media Hub Session

John explains that rather than reaching for special or extraordinary forms of engagement with community groups, he prefers to look at his activities as being at the “cutting edge of mundane,” which means going back to having

“Face-to-face conversations with people in cafes, and putting on events in Community Media Week, which are about as much as having conversations with people, and informal networking, life skills, talking to people, and communication” [1.109.5.v].

John made the point that while we are taught to read and write this does not necessarily mean that we have learnt to communicate effectively. John’s belief is that if he can help people communicate more effectively, especially those that are marginalised or excluded from society, then “we stand a much better chance of - not changing them, or changing their opinion, or even making them included, but understanding where they are coming from.” As John explains,

“I think a lot of people I meet that are marginalised or are on the edges, they don't want to come back and be like everybody else, they just want everybody else to understand, you know, why they are marginalised or excluded, and then find a happy medium. And so if we can do that, and I think that's really where we are at now with community media week and this conversation. It's very much about using technology, but not to become more dependent on it. It's how do we use that to bring that right back to the conversation. So how do you use an iPad or a smartphone with an iPhone app on it to bring it right back to talking to people. And that's why I love plugging my iPad or iPhone, and through that little dongle thing into the TV downstairs, because it's when you're showing what's online to people that probably don't even have a smartphone, and in using that as the basis for a conversation, so you're showing them that there is a way of getting more from being involved in that technology and using that technology, as opposed to their not anybody unless they have got the technology” [1.109.6.vi].

6.1.6 Working with Communities

One of the main challenges about community media, according to John, is the idea of what community is? John regards this a potentially fraught area of discussion, because the tensions that are embodied in the idea of community cohesion are difficult to reconcile. On the one hand the message of community cohesion has been about tackling some of the more intransigent social problems found in a city like Leicester, while on the other hand, a lot of what passes as public policy is simply “‘Ar-texing' over the damp and the cracks.” John believes that there is insufficient attention given to the underlying causes of many of Leicester’s social problems, and that too much is done on the basis of “making it look beautiful for a government minister's visit, or for the purposes of winning an award, or maybe a 'city-of-something” [1.109.19.xix]. What John suggests was more important is the em-

phasis on the sense of continuity that neighbours develop when they live together for longer periods. However, the problem, according to John, is the lack of discussion about some of the root causes to the problems within our communities. So rather than selling an image or an aspiration, there is a need to deal with some of the more deeply engrained issues. Attempts at supporting communities are often mishandled, John explained, because they simply try to upgrade an outdated facility by attaching it to a new technology. As John describes,

“I think it's very much like a trying to have a horse and cart, putting an engine in it, putting all this other stuff, like a sat-nav and a TomTom, and all these things, but then expecting people to come around and go well the reason it will never go faster than three miles an hour is because it's a horse and cart” [1.109.20.xx].

John believes that this approach is wrong, and that what he has learnt from developing Citizens Eye, has been the concern that too many people are prejudged. As John explains,

“I've learnt really from doing Citizens Eye is that you, you go in with a, you pre-judge someone with a prejudice, and you normally find that when you talk to someone of faith, no-faith, a demographic group or geographic area, that ultimately we all bleed and we are all human, and we are all affected by the same things, we are all anxious about the same things. How we choose to live your life behind closed doors, who you pray to, or when your version of Christmas is, are things that we should be celebrating, you know. In effect, I could have Christmas every day if I hung out with all the people that are in Leicester” [1.109.21.xxi].

To what extent then does John feel that issues of marginalisation should be at the top of the agenda in community media? John recalls a discussion in which he had identified that

“Community cohesion is the elephant in the room, and that we almost need like a Truth and Reconciliation council, because no one is ever prepared to ask the difficult questions, because they are quite painful. Because sometimes you might not necessarily get the answer you think you are going to get. We never actually deal with the problem” [1.109.22.xxii].

While this is clearly a cultural education process, John is more concerned, however, that the process of education might simply be a token gesture, and that other forms of action might need to be taken, without vilifying or disproportionately marginalising people. Can community media be an active agent in raising awareness about these issues? John is quite sceptical, because he feels that:

“The whole community media space is still dominated by the mainstream media, and not through the fact that they are doing anything that's community media'ish, if you like. It's the fact that they have a great way of people from the mainstream media of turning around and saying to people, well you are not qualified. Which is the first paralysing. The second one I think is very much about they say 'how are you making any money?' 'Oh you're volunteers.' There's no credibility there. And so what you find is a lot of people that will run community

media organisations, whether they are blogs or radio stations, are constantly fighting for funding, which automatically takes your eye off the ball. Why, because as soon as you are hungry and you concentrate on eating a meal, then write what you are going to write, don't try and write on an empty stomach, because you aren't going to be able to concentrate" [1.103.23.xxiii].

6.1.7 Citizens Eye – Taking Stock

More recently John has been questioning the sustainability of the model that he had created, noting that many of the news stories that he used to receive from many of the Third Sector organisations and charities have dried up. This is made more acute with the withdrawal of funding from local authorities as the national austerity agenda was imposed. This meant there is a need to rethink how Citizens Eye can be put on a more stable footing, with a clearer rationale. One of John's proposals is to try to establish a Community Media Training School that can operate as a community cooperative, providing training to meet the needs of people, and help them to improve their communication and community-building skills. John suggests that he would "gift" Citizens Eye to the new training school, and would work to establish links with partner organisations, such as BBC Leicester and the Media Trust. John's response, therefore, was to reposition Citizens Eye from a direct participant-involved group, to one that supported other agencies and community groups in the work that they sought to achieve in the community. John began to offer support to charities and voluntary groups working in Leicester and Leicestershire as a way of demonstrating how communities and community groups might develop media content for themselves. John made significant changes to the aims of Citizens Eye when he realised that many of the charities and third-sector social organisations that he was working with had themselves had significant cuts to their funding and were operating a reduced service [1.96.8] [1.109.xxiii]. The next six months would be dedicated to establishing a community co-operative that would structure the community media training school, and then

"Putting a management team in place and sort of, you know, sessional staff, and getting it funded properly, so that from January next year, if you like, I can hand it over when Citizens Eye is six years old, we can sort of hand over the reins of this co-operative to people to run and manage it and move it forward" [1.103.7.i].

While funding remains an ongoing challenge, John believes that the more events he puts on, the easier they seem to be to organise. As John explains,

"It becomes simpler because rather than trying to create something new and run around like a headless chicken and try and impress everybody, you suddenly realise that you've got to

do things at a certain time, in a certain place, in a certain way, for certain people, and use certain venues. And it works. Community Media Week six is about engaging more people in the process through community news cafes, and exponentially using opportunities and partners like BBC Radio Leicester, like that, to spread the word. So that's where the community media training school we are opening next week really comes into its own. I think also we are looking to have a more international element to it, with International Community Media Day, and we've got representatives of all of the continents involved now. Probably up to about twelve different countries involved so far. They are adding every week" [1.3.30.xvii].

Ultimately, though, John is most proud when he is reminded that he has been able to help people, and that the 'have-a-go' ethos that he has developed makes a difference to someone's confidence.

As John explains,

"That kind of makes sense, doesn't it, you know', and 'I'll have a go at that', and I still get a great, I still get a tear in my eye, and certainly when I have quiet times and moments on my own when I think about some of the things that Citizens Eye's been involved and helping people to do, and shape and stuff like that" [1.3.31.xxviii].

6.1.8 John Coster - Personal Reflection



Figure 5 John Coster at BBC Leicester

John is not without a sense of self-criticism, noting that he has learnt the hard way that he is great at starting things, and that he is great at good ideas, but that he is "absolutely crap at managing them. So, the best thing to do is to hand it over as quickly as possible to someone else. And it won't go wrong." John makes the point that it is difficult to run an organisation effectively when you are constantly worried about your bills. As John explains,

"I think what's happened is they have come in and instantly gain the high-ground by turning around 'well how do you make any money?' Whereas if you run something like I've done

with Citizens Eye, it's based on the fact that you do whatever you need to do to earn some money, and then help that organisation to put that money back into that project to keep it running. You know it's not grant dependent, so you end up reporting on a lot of people that shut or go bust, or are struggling with funding, or are coming to you to raise their profile to get funding. Whereas you've never really had those issues, because you've always made sure that you eat, and this is the thing I always struggle with when people come to me about setting up groups" [1.109.24.xxiv]

The focus for John, then, is to "get real voices back into the mainstream representation of people," and to "increase tolerance and understanding" by raising awareness of the issues that are around them [1.103.29]. John points out that people who predominantly read mainstream media are probably the most difficult to change opinions, because they are submerged in a society that is intolerant, and this has repercussions for anyone who has questions about social identity, social status and social sustainability.

6.2 Ian Davies

This account is a summary of interviews:

- 2012-10-24 Interview Summary - Ian Davies
- 2013-04-23 Interview Summary - Ian Davies
- 2013-05-30 Interview Summary – Ian Davies, Interview
- 2013-07-07 Interview Summary - Ian Davies
- 2013-07-07 Ian Davies, Interview 001
- 2013-07-07 Ian Davies, Interview 002
- 2013-07-07 Ian Davies, Interview 003



Figure 6 Ian Davies Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery

Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery was founded by Ian Davies. Setting up the gallery provided Ian with an opportunity to put something back into the community [1.1.2], following a period of mental illness, and at the same time giving him a goal that would aid his recovery. Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery [LPPG] is based on Ian's understanding of emergent techniques of informal social engagement and collaboration, and involved a somewhat uneasy working relationship with Leicester Adult Education Service. These informal engagement techniques were developed by Ian after he participated in the Amplified Leicester project, with Professor Sue Thomas and Dr Thilo Boek of De Montfort University [1.32.18], which was designed to promote social capital using networking skills [1.7.1]. Ian embraced this approach, building on his entrepreneurial and business skills, and his personal interest in photography. Ian established the gallery by securing ad-hoc sponsorship and volunteer support [1.75.xiii], and while there was an initial wish that the gallery might be able to offer professional services, there was never a clear business plan that was able to secure a regular income from established commercial or social sources. As a result, it was never possible for Ian to pay himself a regular wage as the manager. Ian sought, therefore, to develop income from a range of independent activities, as and when he could, such as from the events that he held at the gallery [1.87.1] [1.75.2.i].

Ian was keen to tap into a growing sense of engagement and interest in photography [1.75.3.12]. Changes in the technological systems of digital cameras and the use of Internet based social media sites, meant that many people are now able to produce and share high-quality images online in a way that had never been achieved before. Photography, in Ian's view, is itself an accessible form of creative production that almost anyone can engage with, at levels that are appropriate to their interests [1.75.2.ix]. But when combined with online accessibility, it is become possible to establish valuable networks and communities based on the shared interests of photography. There is a blurring of the boundaries between the role of the professional photographer and the amateur photographer that has been exacerbated as new modes of production and sharing are introduced [1.75.2.iv], giving Ian the opportunity to form a group that would avoid the elements of control that he had seen in the established models of public arts activities, which are often seen in forms of judgmentalism, or hierarchies often associated with camera clubs [1.75.2.17]. Ian instead championed participation and integrated services as the preferred model of engagement. Ian recognised that it was a growing interest in photography that united different learners, who would communicate and share information openly, with the expectation that there would be learning opportunities passed between community members [1.75.1.14 p].

6.2.1 Ian's Biography

The Gallery was established in 2011, and as Ian recalled, he thinks that he “must have been mad really” to jump in to such a substantial project with no funding and only a vague idea of what he wanted to achieve. As Ian describes, he “just came in and the space was there, and I don't know, I just had a vision, and then just wanted to share that vision with other people. And that's really how I put the place together.” The gallery is based in the former Leicester central lending library, which has

“A mezzanine sort of area, which has got old library cabinets in, which are listed, so they can't be removed or anything else. So you have to make the best possible use you can of those. And we've got an open area which is a plain wall gallery, which we can put work up in any: framed, with mirror mounts, or hung from the ceiling, or any way you want to put it on the walls really. And that's the gallery” [1.32.2.i].

Ian found out about the space after he was invited to an open day for the Adult Education College. They were asking for ideas about what could be done with the space, and while there were many ideas for the main part of the building, as Ian recalls, “they were struggling for ideas of what to do with it, and I'd been touting it around for a long, long time, about putting galleries in public buildings.” Ian was originally offered a couple of cabinet spaces, but by the end of the day he had convinced the college managers to let him have the whole floor. As Ian describes, “that was a bit of a shock. And then they said, 'how long to get it up and running?' And I said, 'how long had I got?' And they said six weeks. And at that time, I hadn't even networked a single photographer. So, it was a bit frightening” [1.32.3].

Photography had been a lifelong obsession for Ian, ever since taking photographs of swans on the River Severn when he was six years old. He recalls his “father smacking me around the earhole saying, 'you'll use too much film up, I've got to go and buy you another one now'. That's really where it all comes from. It's just a love of the image”. Since then Ian has worked as a photographer and other associated jobs, though he was keen to question the term ‘professional photographer’ because it places too many restrictions on the wide and varied forms that photography takes. Ian described how he loves “natural light portrait photography in black and white,” which is what he tends to specialise in. Though he is also self-deprecating about his own ability. “I'm not very good at it,” Ian explains, “but I specialise in it. Other photographers do landscapes, other photographers love Photoshop and playing about with images. Other photographers always like HDR, and that's the way it works” [1.32.4].

Ian had never run a business as a photographer, but he had always had a strong interest in photography. Ian was cautious about working professionally because he felt that it can ruin the passion, even though he had used his skills as a photographer within the jobs that he had undertaken. Ian suggested that just because there is often no payment for photo sessions, does that mean that he is not a professional? It was while Ian was volunteering and attending Remit, a support group for people affected by mental health issues, that he had, what he calls

“This really crazy idea to create a database of lots of public buildings and bars and clubs, and to create a city-wide art gallery for the whole of Leicester. So the whole city becomes like a photographic gallery, or whatever. So I started working on that while I was at Remit, which I supposed was a bit of the wrong thing to do when you’re in that frame of mind, but, you know, it seemed things were going fine” [1.75.2.ii].

Ian discussed the idea of the city-wide gallery with a couple of people who were connected in community groups active in Leicester, but not much happened, so Ian concentrated on his recovery and volunteering. He managed to produce some photography work and was told that he could apply for an art grant to equip himself with a computer. Ian was always borrowing other people’s equipment, so to have some equipment of his own would make a considerable difference to the work he could undertake. As Ian explains:

“I didn’t have a computer or anything else. So I was taking all these photographs and finding the best way of getting them out there was always on somebody else’s kit. So I got two grand as an arts grant, and I kit myself out with computer stuff and programmes I needed. And it just went a bit bananas after that. I was doing an awful lot of photography work for people, still volunteering, still doing the Remit. I was at Remit four, five days a week by that stage. I was doing philosophy, I was doing literature, I was doing Photoshop. I did eighteen months of Photoshop. And all that sort of stuff, and just improving everything I was doing. And then it suddenly wasn't enough. And all of a sudden in really wasn't enough” [1.75.3.iii].

Ian felt that this work was not significant, so when he had the opportunity to produce an exhibition of his own work at the charity that had provided his counselling, he thought “there's got to be some way of giving something back.” This exhibition was held in the Leicester City Gallery, and also at a gallery in Rugby. As Ian recalls:

“It went really well, and people started to say 'well can you do a commission for this, that and the other.' I really didn't like that because at that time I wasn't well enough to take that stuff on board” [1.75.4.iv].

With no formal background in photography, Ian needed to put the gallery together in the six weeks that he was given, based on the network of support and resources that he could find. As Ian describes, there was not a single reason that he thought would stop him from doing it. According to Ian, “if you have a defeatist attitude from the start then nothing will ever work, will it?” Ian set out to make a link with a willing printing company, as well as bringing together lots of collaboration from “different organisations to get full the exhibition up.” Ian had calculated that he would need a minimum of one hundred and fifty images for the gallery to form the first exhibition. Ian then worked persuasively to encourage people to contribute to the set-up of the gallery. Winning people over to the idea, as Ian describes, was as much about making people feel guilty, as it was about selling the idea of the gallery. As Ian explains,

“It might sound crazy to say it like that but this place is in the middle of the city centre, and what I actually did was I went to people involved in the city centre and said, you know what you earn your living from the city centre and the people of Leicester, what about giving something back? And most of it was making them feel guilty for making all their money over the years out of the city centre and the people of Leicester without giving anything back. And it tended to work a treat. And it's still working now, so it's not a bad formula really” [1.32.6.ii].

In some instances, this approach led to a negative reaction, but Ian was determined to push through the resistance and get the gallery up and running, even though he was working without a budget. As Ian explained,

“It actually cost me to get this place open for its first full exhibition, it cost me personally sixty-six pounds and some odd pence. And if I can create a full gallery exhibition from that, with the collaboration of others, why the hell do we need five point four million, or whatever it was to create a new contemporary art gallery?” [1.32.7.iii].

Ian’s relationship with other volunteering groups in Leicester could be quite fraught. Ian was suspicious of groups that are comprised of, what Ian called, “the usual suspects,” who he felt could be likely to push him aside the moment that he was seen to show initiative and generate ideas. While Ian is aware that many people in these groups have health and well-being issues similar to his own, he did not want to be identified and labelled as a person with mental health issues, and therefore incapable of independent thinking. As Ian put it, he “wasn't for moulding.” This meant that his sense of independence would challenge some of the volunteer groups that he initially spoke with. Ian’s concern was that the volunteer support groups in Leicester have a culture that expects people to volunteer for the project group, whereas Ian was concerned that he gained recognition for volunteering for himself. As Ian explains,

“I suddenly realised, you know what, this volunteering thing, what they are doing is they are getting expertise from people for free and they are then ridding on the kudos that that creates. And that is really wrong. It's not right” [1.75.5.v].

Ian knew Simon Parker, who at the time was the senior community librarian at Leicester Libraries, and his boss, Michael Lewis. This was at a point when Leicester Library Service had closed the old library, and there was a search for alternative uses of the unused space. Ian approach Michael and asked him about using the space in the library. Ian had attended the Amplified Leicester project, in which he had learnt some networking skills and social media skills. Ian was putting these new practices into action, and could build a network around the idea of developing the gallery space in the library. Ian was then asked what he might do with the building by the then head of the Adult Education service, Chris Minter. As Ian explains,

“I went for a walk around with Chris Minter, and one of the city councillors who was in control of the planning and everything else, and we had a quick wander around the building and he said 'well the cabinets are listed, what would you do?' I said 'take all the shelves out'. And I showed him what I'd do. He said 'save all the bits and everything else, because it's listed.' Okay. 'Well' I said, 'we'd find a way of putting fixings in. We'd have to put it up on Velcro or something like that, it would have to be on board, or foam board, or something, you know. We'd have to stick to, but we'd have to get the right sort of Velcro that didn't have industrial glue on, etc. etc.'" [1.75.7.vii].

Some of the spaces that where available were in a low state of repair, Ian explained. What is now the main gallery had hessian walls, was full of old pipework, had metal racking on top of the hessian. As Ian put it:

“It was a mess, absolutely a mess. I hadn't started doing anything to the building at that stage, and it was just an absolute mess. And Chris Minter said 'I really don't know what to do with this room'. And I said 'well turn it into a main gallery. We'll just change the walls and we can put a framework up, we can do anything we want because we can't put it in there.' And what Chris Minter and this councillor then turned around and said to me was, 'right, okay we will be opening up at the beginning of term'. I said 'but it's June now? And what do you want?' 'Can you put it up by August the fifth?' 'Put what up?' 'A full exhibition.' 'A full exhibition of what? You mean in the cabinets? I could manage that?' But Chris said, 'what if I give you that room as well and we get it done?' And I said 'I'll have it up in four?'. That's honestly what I said” [1.75.8.viii].

Ian started to work on the gallery starting every day at seven AM. In total Ian spent sixty-six pounds:

“Sorry sixty-eight pounds sixty-four pence on stuff, such as masses of cleaning cloths, tins of Mr Sheen, polish from the pound shop, and everything else. Everything was sourced from the pound shop. I spent an awful lot of days in there cleaning and everything else. I'd started the cleaning and organising the shelves, when suddenly the refurbishment builder came in.

But it wasn't so much as a refurbishment as just rewiring. They re-plastered the main area for me. I actually sat in on the planning meetings as well with them, and we got a few things sorted. And they couldn't believe I wasn't costing them a lot of money to. I think it was a bit tongue-in-cheek with them, because they said 'he's not going to do this, not in four weeks'" [1.75.9.ix].

At that stage Ian did not have a network of photographers in place, so this meant that he had to be creative about where he could source material to be exhibited and displayed. Ian was confident, however, that he could network sufficient interest to start the process off, and that he could pull-in a number of professional photographers that would fill the place up. As Ian explains:

"So I've got to clean this building up, I've got to get it all organised and network a whole exhibition to fill the hole, and I'm thinking, who's got a large collection of photographs? Leicester Mercury? Who do I know at Leicester Mercury? No one! How am I going to get to know someone at Leicester Mercury? I'll go and knock a photographer out. I actually stopped a guy named Chris Gordon, who was a Mercury photographer and a 'street' name. 'I don't know your name, but you're quite short, so I don't mind having a go at you. I need a collection of your photographs from the Leicester Mercury.' 'What for?' 'Well it's no good me trying to explain it to you, have you got five minutes?' And what I did was take him into the building and shared my passion. And he went 'bloody hell'. 'Alright, where can we get all these photographs done? 'I'll go and talk to the editor,' who was Keith Perch, who I'd met previously anyway" [1.75.10.x].

Ian then met with Keith Perch, who was then the editor of the Leicester Mercury, who agreed to supply images for the first event at the gallery. Ian was pleased because this meant that the gallery would be full.

6.2.2 LPPG – Concept Development

With the widespread interest in photography in Leicester and Leicestershire, driven partly by the change in affordability of digital photographic equipment, Ian could quickly establish a significant social media presence for the gallery [1.5.4], both on Facebook and using a free Wordpress blog. This meant that Ian could establish awareness of the gallery based on his commitment to community networking [1.75.1.7]. And while Ian's focus was on participant driven media, he encountered significant perception issues from two key groups. The Leicester Adult Education service did not find it easy to engage with the informal nature of the peer-to-peer learning that was being promoted [1.32.16], while the professional photographic community had a problem adjusting to the community and participatory emphasis that was working well with other groups who used the gallery for

their personal development, or for social and recreational reasons. Ian was also dependent on backing from politicians in Leicester, who admired and supported in-principle the model that Ian was pursuing, but who were not able to support the gallery with any up-front financial commitment [1.22.4].

Ian describes himself as an ex-lorry driver who loves photography, the arts, and the people of Leicester. Ian explains that in developing the gallery he was trying to put each of these elements together. Ian had a strong sense that art and photography should be available to ordinary people, like himself, and that both amateurs and professionals could mix together, exhibit together, and “talk to each other and compare themselves.” Ian wanted to “take away the elitism of galleries,” because he does not “believe that we should go into cold, clinical places to look at art, and stand there pontificating, and rubbing our chins, and seeing if there is a hidden message.” Ian believes that “people just like to produce images, and they like to show them off” [1.1.1]. For Ian, the ethos of the gallery is about walking in and seeing a mix of both professional and amateur work on the walls. It could be the work of a “housewife on her iPhone,” or the work of a professional who has years of experience in the photographic industry. But they are both displayed with the same kind of care, attention and regard, because each finds the images meaningful and relevant. Ian described how photography is about “feelings,” and that people relate to those feelings, for example, “summer days on the beach,” with the smells and images it evokes [1.1.2]. For Ian, it is important to feel that he is giving something back to the people of Leicester, and that photography is more than something to stare blankly at, but instead, can evoke shared feelings and meanings that tell us about ourselves and our communities.

6.2.3 LPPG – Partnerships

Ian established the gallery in part of the former Leicester Lending Library. According to Ian the “space is the old gallery floor,” so the building is listed, and the book cabinets have to remain in place. This means that the use of this section of the building is limited. During the consultation held by Leicester City Council to find a new purpose for the building, Ian suggested turning it into a community photographic gallery. As Ian explained,

“We've had to leave the cabinets in place because they are all listed, but we've tried to adapt it and we've got lighting down one side in some, one set of the cabinets. But we've taken the shelves out, but they are still here, but we have left the cabinets and used them as frames, and using a set format to put the work within each cabinet. And so far, everybody seems to love it, except for the odd few who want us to take the shelves out, but that would be getting rid of the character of the space”[1.1.3.i].

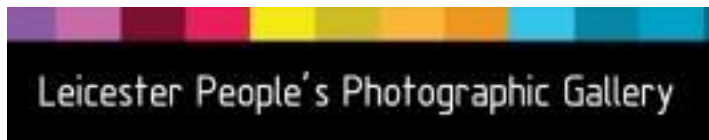


Figure 7 LPPG Logo

The bulk of the support in setting up the gallery came from Leicester Adult Education Service, who are the managers of the building, and who also use the space to run events and courses. Ian received help from some local businesses, the Leicester Mercury's photography team, and a local printing company, John E. Wright, had provided the signs and branding for the gallery, as well as providing prints for exhibition. Ian also had help from a local lighting company that fitted the LED lighting system into the bays, which meant that the bays would not get damaged. Ian was emphatic that he had been able to secure these contributions without having to pay for them. As Ian describes,

“We haven't paid for any of it. It's all been people that are involved with it, that have fallen in love with the idea, that wanna get even more involved, that have actually provided everything. So it is the people of Leicester coming together to give the other people of Leicester what they want” [1.1.4.ii].

Ian was clear that while the gallery is a social enterprise, and must make money to survive, it can not be funded by itself, and so either everything has to be affordable, with a small charge for the services that the gallery offers. Ian has a commitment, however, to making the gallery accessible to as many people as he can, regardless of income. There is a small charge to hire the display spaces, as Ian describes it, “one space is ten pounds a week, unless it's the smaller space which is ten pounds a fortnight. So it's affordable.” In this way the gallery can appeal to a range of people. “Students can come in and put their work up,” because the “gallery doesn't pay to get the work produced.” The exhibitors cover the costs of printing and displaying their work to the standard and cost that they feel comfortable with. For some exhibitions, there are some larger costs, such as mirror mounting, but Ian will provide a service for hanging exhibitions for a fee if needed.

The gallery space is shared in a multi-use building with other services associated with the Adult Education Service, so Ian had a strong idea of how the building could be used informally, with people spending time there to do other things. Ian described how he wants everybody to just come in and visit the gallery, because it is a

“Fish and chip gallery if you like. Come in here and have your lunch. Come in here and sit down and chill out, or bring your friends in, just sit down in a corner. But it is what it says on the tin. It's the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery, and hopefully we can inspire budding photographers to come in and go 'well you know what, I can do better than that, or I could take a picture like that, could I get it up here?' Yeah, you can, you can all have your week of fame, you know, for whatever it costs to produce that picture plus your tenner to put in here, you can have a week a fame along with some of the best professionals in the city. It's all yours” [1.1.6.iii].

Ian emphasises that photography represents a widespread set of activities that many people can get involved with, without the need for specialist equipment. As Ian puts it, “photography is a massive thing nowadays. Everybody takes photographs, whether it's on their phone or anything else, and we're just giving them an opportunity to put those photographs into a physical entity, instead of leaving them on a hard-drive. It's an opportunity to put them on the walls, to let other people see the work” [1.5.1].

Ian believes that the virtues of the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery are what sets it apart from more traditional, and well-funded galleries, with participation and collaboration encouraged as a deliberate approach. Ian uses an example to illustrate this idea: when families visit a formal art gallery or museum, places like the Tate in London, or many of the contemporary galleries around the country, they are according to Ian, “very cold, clinical places. You are always forever telling your children 'shh can't do that in here', 'shh quiet', 'shh'.” Ian wanted to question and challenge this culture, and asked “what's wrong with letting children enjoy art so that they go on to grow up to enjoy art even further?” So what Ian tried to achieve with the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery was an environment and culture where people can bring their children. As Ian point out, he would “just love them running around the gallery.” Ian’s aim, then, was to “make it a live gallery instead of a gallery that's dead just showing pictures. And that's what we try to do. We also include everybody; it's a totally non-exclusive gallery” [1.32.8].

Ian explains how the gallery displays the work of fifteen-year olds, next to the work of people who have been working professionally for many years. Ian describes how he was swapping one exhibition and putting up work from an organisation that looks after adults with learning difficulties and autism; people who, according to Ian, “will never really be able to be a real big part of mainstream community life. But what's wrong with them showing their work in a really large public gallery?” Ian’s commitment in displaying work in this way is to challenge the prejudice that comes with activities that are labelled, because as Ian explains, when the work is on the wall in the Leicester Peoples

Photographic Gallery “then unless somebody asks they won't know it's from people that have got learning difficulties. So in this way the gallery is non-exclusive. Their work is also up with consummate professionals” [1.32.9].



Figure 8 LPPG Twitter

Ian is very insistent that the gallery should not try to identify people as if they are in boxes. Ian explains that if you put people in boxes, then:

“What happens is nobody is able to move on. If you get a group of people that have all got the same problem or ethic, or whatever, and that's all the people that you work with, how does anybody ever move on?” [1.32.10.iv].

Ian's focus is on finding a way of:

“Funding and creating something that you get unemployed people, people with learning difficulties, consummate professionals, very rich people, and that, all working in the same group so that each can move each other on” [1.32.11.v].

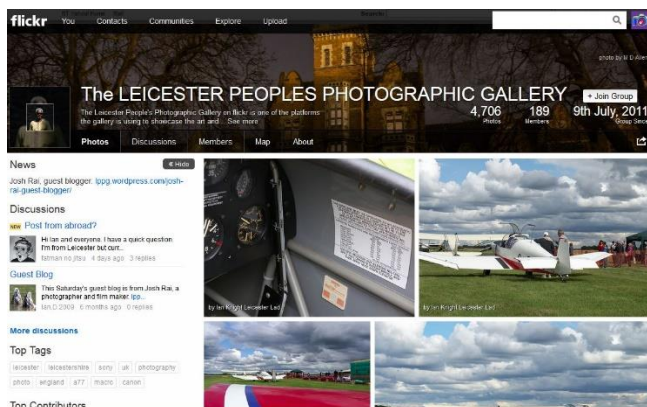


Figure 9 LPPG Flickr Group

Ian recalls how he had organised a workshop in which a “very wealthy businessman came along,” and at the end of the session he observed to Ian that it was “great that he had spent the day speaking with people that he would never normally speak to in his everyday life, and wanted to know when the next workshop was?” As Ian put it, “that to me sort of sealed-the-deal, you know, that literally seals-the-deal” [1.32.12]. The suggestion is that the work of the gallery is therefore about providing a community social service? “Well that's what art is, isn't it?” Ian explains that “art is part of our everyday community.” Ian believes that most people think of art as “very white, upper-middle class sort of, I don't know, whatever it is.” But when you come from a low-income area, according to Ian, your preconception about different forms of art are generally very different. As Ian explains, people will often say “‘Oh I'm not going to a bloody art gallery! What do I want to be this that and the other?’” [1.32.13]. However, when people take part in different art activities, and they are allowed to take ownership of the work that is produced and displayed, then they form a very different view. Ian believes that his primary role is to encourage people to take ownership of the gallery and the work that they produce in the gallery.

Ensuring, therefore, that as many people as possible can participate, means accounting for different levels of ability at the same time. As Ian describes:

“We have free workshops here, we have other people coming in off the workshops that they have to pay for, so we go through the whole gamut of everything. And people's abilities, we don't class anybody's abilities. So we have a workshop which might be quite difficult for some, but easy for others, but the workshop means that those who find it difficult can learn from those who find it easy. And that's what we tend to find. We had a light painting night in here, and there were people here who had never done it before, and there was another guy in here, well a couple of guys in here that didn't even know what a long exposure shot was, but because there were people in here that had done it before, and you let these people interact on their own, they tend to show each other what to do. And it's probably the easier and calmer learning experience. You're not actually sitting there and teaching from a board” [1.32.14.vi].

With the rapid changes in photography, and as the barriers to entry shift with the introduction of very cheap digital cameras, almost anyone can now pick up a phone or something and just start taking pictures. Which means that photography is more democratic than it used to be, according to Ian, as you do not need expensive darkrooms and equipment to come up with an interesting image anymore. Ian explains that this approach is not only leading to easier forms of access, but that it is also producing more interesting images as well. As Ian describes,

“Lots of stuff is available on a computer, but again that costs money. So another thing I would dearly like to do in the gallery is to have a gallery computer that's got all those sorts

of programmes on that people can come and make a use of that resource. If they haven't got these programmes at home, then come in and use what we've got in the gallery and bring in your memory stick and everything else. That's why I would ideally like to happen, but we haven't got that resource here. And I think until we can get those sort of resources set up then it's not compete as a peoples gallery" [1.32.15.vii].

Ian believes that the gallery is doing well, with a full set of exhibition bookings, with regular footfall in a space that has not been publicly promoted. The extent to which the gallery is doing well can be explained, Ian suggests, because he promotes a sense of participation and collaboration in the training sessions, and that people enjoy learning from each other. Ian's first opportunity to witness the impact of collaboration and co-learning was

"The first sort of experience I had about anything like that was a guy in his mid-fifties, for our initial opening exhibition. And, he sort of answered the internet call on the Facebook group that I created and everything else. 'I've never exhibited before' and this kind of thing. He put some stuff in and we put it up and the Mercury came along and took photographs of these, this guy and a few others with their work up and everything else. At the end of the photo shoot from the Mercury this guy was at the end of the balcony and he looked at me a bit, so I went up to see if he was alright, and he was actually crying. And he said 'I never, ever imagined that I'd have my photograph in a newspaper or even on exhibition in a gallery'. For me the guy at fifty-five who has taken photographs all his life, that made everything I was doing worth it. At that stage it made it all worth it. And since then there are several people I've mentored since then, and one guy just, he's just took off with it, he's gone absolutely bananas with it" [1.32.16.viii].

Ian's informal and personal approach is one of the things that drives access through the gallery. Ian was clear that this cannot be any other way because "art is a personal thing, and photography is art, regardless of what people might think." As Ian describes:

"For too many years photography has been regarded as a second-class art form, well now that everybody has access to that media, through digital photography, through camera-phones, through lots of different methods of digital photography. Because it's so available we have to stop looking at it as a second-class art form. It's the only real art form that's available to everybody. I can't paint like Renoir, but I can take a bloody good black and white natural light portrait. Other people are probably in the same boat. And you have a different eye. You have a different eye for painting with pictures than you do for photography. And some people like to tell a story with photography, and you can do that in a micro-second instead of taking fifteen months to paint an oil painting. So just think about the art form" [1.32.18.x].

Overall, however, Ian recognises that the forms of participation that he is championing have a positive effect, because he has been able to interact with "all sorts of people that come in, people with

mental health difficulties, people with learning difficulties, people that have come out the other side of depression.” As Ian describes:

“We've got a couple of photographers that are terminally ill, and they love the place, because all of a sudden it's real, and they don't get judged. We don't do the judging. There's no exclusivity here. You can guarantee that if you like a photograph, ten other people are going to like it, and that's what we do. And that's what it's all about” [1.5.9.iii].

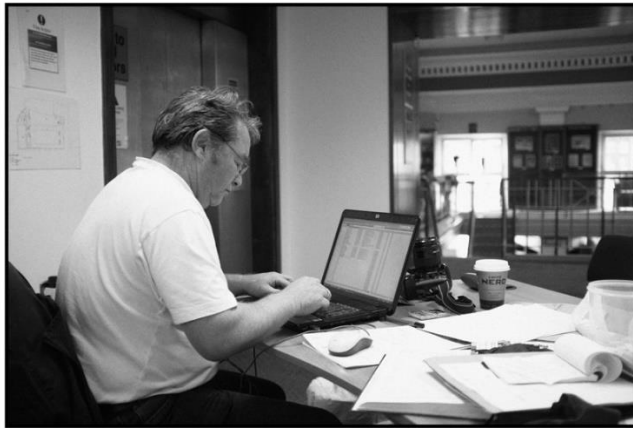


Figure 10 Ian Davies Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery

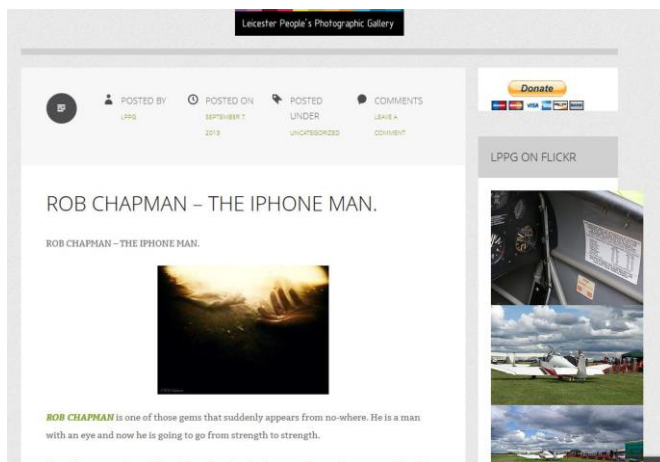


Figure 11 LPPG Wordpress Blog

6.2.4 Sense of Community Life

Ian believes that participation, sharing and taking photographs is now at the heart of many people's idea of community life. For Ian, the sense of community that emerged in developing the gallery was the “cherry on the cake,” though there are clearly things about this form of community engagement

that makes it distinct from other community engagement practices. Ian described how the LPPG Facebook group and Flickr Group, which he had set up to give supporters of the gallery a space to discuss and share photography, now have over seven hundred members. These groups are another place, Ian describes, where “people put their work on there, their photographs and their images,” and as a result they emphasise a sense of personal ownership that goes with producing images for themselves. Ian was circumspect, however, about the extent to which participation in these online groups could be considered as ‘real’? For Ian, “It’s not real,” because people are only engaging in partial interaction, rather than in the full range of actions that engaged social groups can bring. Ian also maintains a blog “where people see what other people will do, and they look at it and everything else, and yet again that’s still not real” [1.5.2].

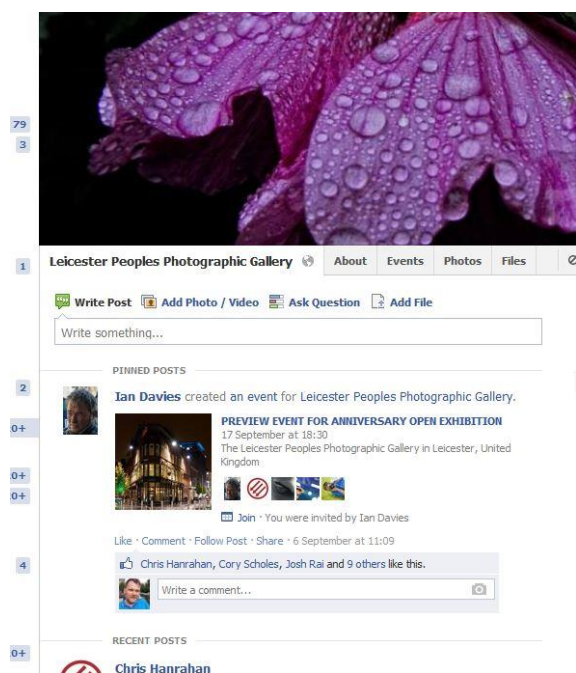


Figure 12 LPPG Facebook Group

6.2.5 Ian Davies – Personal Reflections

Ian believes that these social media groups are popular because what is being tapped into in the LPPG social networks is the “need to put that transfer of trust somewhere.” When people talk on the internet, Ian suggests, “you are giving them a certain amount of trust, but it’s trust in a different way.” However, when people physically meet up in the “real world that trust changes and it’s either there or it isn’t.” In this sense, the gallery is giving people the opportunity to move beyond the online world and to “come and talk to one-another, they can meet-up.” Participants, according to Ian, might have been “talking to each other on the net for twelve, eighteen months,” and they still might not know each other. However, because they now have the opportunity to attend workshops

or exhibition openings, then “suddenly they bump into each other at an event the gallery holds.” So, the gallery, as Ian describes it, is a catalyst for further social interaction, that develops “something physical from something that isn't physical” [1.5.4].

The challenge, according to Ian, is in maintaining these social media networks, and using them for their potential. Ian describes how the gallery is at the “top of the tree,” thus building on the links and networks that are established online. If people are interested in the idea of seeing photography for real then they can “come and see something that's real, that's done by the people that they see on Facebook, that are faceless. Or the people that are on Twitter that are faceless.” So what Ian has been able to do is to “take what is a faceless entity,” i.e. social media and social interaction on the internet, and “create something physical from it.” Ian’s focus of these forms of media practice and online communication, then, is largely based around the idea of sharing and collaboration, a form of interaction in which people come together to engage in an activity that is mutually supportive. Ian believes that as online communities engage in many forms of collaboration, with a “lot of sharing and caring” taking place, and the mutual “transfer of trust that can't be done when it's a faceless entity.” As Ian describes,

“I think what they are doing is placing what is generally a non-caring society that we live in with something where they can go and feel comfortable, where they can go and, if you like, talk to the guy at the bus stop they never met before, but instead of it being somebody in the physical world at a bus stop, it's somebody that's on the internet. And they can talk to them and not feel, well, embarrassed or frightened, in that sense. So to have the physical thing is just a reinforcement of that. If you like we are the bus shelter where people are queuing up for a bus and they are talking to one-another for a change” [1.5.5.i].

Photography has a unique potential in the way that it enables people to come together. Ian’s view is that photography allows individuals to “take-in” what other people cannot see. As Ian explains, if he takes a photograph of a chair, and then another person takes a photograph of a chair, then each person has been enabled, not only to see the chair differently, but to recognise “how we see it differently.” For Ian, this is what makes photography interesting, in that we “can create the physical, and then we've got something to share. It's the same item, but we are both looking at it in a different way, so there's our connection. And that's what photography does for most people.” Photography forms the basis, therefore, for an ongoing discussion and rapport between different actors viewing their social worlds around them in different ways. As Ian describes this process,

“Oh, discussion, and saying, 'I didn't realise you could do it from that angle, or I didn't think you could do this and that'. It's also about removing some of the, if you like it's like creating a society that you move the boundaries along, they become rubber, they become malleable, and you can move those boundaries about. Yes it's still the same thing brought out in a photograph, but it's done in different ways. So those boundaries become less strong, less set” [1.5.6.ii].

Ian believes that for most people the social experiences that they engage in are “strictly controlled by the regimes of society” [1.5.7], which includes the expectations of photography, both professional and amateur. Ian encourages people to forget about the technical conventions of photography, and to trust their eyes when they look at the world around them. As Ian suggests, the people that he has worked with have “gone off and its sort of blown-their-brains a little bit. You know, and all of a sudden we've just moved the outsides of those boxes and made them very soft, and they can step through it at any time” [1.5.7].



Figure 13 Ian Davies LPPG

6.2.6 LPPG – Exploring Ideas

When the gallery space was still being cleared and cleaned, Ian needed some help to get things moving along a little more quickly. He came up with the idea of organising a flash-mob after he had been speaking with a friend who had suggested that what he needed to do was to “create a community out of all of this, and it has to be an online community that can turn into a physical community.” And while Ian’s friend was sceptical that this could be done, Ian created a group on Facebook for Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery. Within a week it had two hundred and seventy members. As Ian explains:

“I just put a call on there and said 'right, I'm in the building, 'x' time, if you'd like to meet me at the front I'll show you around.' So I'd created an event for it. I went outside that day and there were five people outside and I thought 'well that's shit'. That's not going to happen then” [1.75.12.xi].

While Ian was inside with the initial group, he was approached by

“This young lady who appeared at the doorway while we were talking and said, 'excuse me, are you Ian?' And I went 'yes.' 'Well I think all these people would like to see you?' And she brought forty people up the staircase. And I'd created a flash mob of nearly fifty people. I went 'oh Christ!', 'OK this is a bit frightening now, this has got quite frightening.' And they listened to what I had to say, I was showing them the area and I was trying to tell them, you know, well close your eyes, look at it, and just imagine what it could be like? I then ended up with a team of seven or eight volunteers that were coming now and again to help me tidy up, and then I had, I was then thinking what do I do? I've got to give these guys something? Any photographer that gets involved I need to” [1.75.13.xii].

Ian then spoke with as many printing companies in the city that he could, to find out if he could get sponsorship for the photographic prints needed for the exhibition. Ian managed to persuade one company to look around the gallery, and after viewing the space Ian was offered support, they provided point-of-sale material, printing and signage for the gallery. Ian is pleased that he did this without a formal agreement being in place. He regards this as a collaboration, and explains that “there's no partnership agreement, no contract or anything else. So what they've actually done, they helped me get everything up.” Working with the Adult Education College Ian was able to build some publicity for the opening of the gallery. As Ian describes it, he was “networking like mad, getting mentions in the local press. We actually made the front page of the Leicester Mercury because it was their photographers” [1.75.15]. So rather than being labelled as an extension to the college, the space had very quickly, according to Ian, turned into Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery. Ian did not know how the college felt about this, but he made sure that he included the “college logo, the council logo, every single logo that I could work with that I was allowed to use, because it gives the Peoples Gallery kudos. And I understand that from a marketing point” [1.75.15]. On the launch night the Mayor of Leicester, Sir Peter Soulsby gave a speech and opened the gallery.

Ian recalled that it was hard work launching the gallery in this way, but that it needed to be done like this to raise the profile of the gallery and establish the principle that it was a community space that was owned by the volunteers who used it. Ian recalls how he again rejected support from one of the Leicester-based volunteering organisations, who he felt would have taken the project over, running it on other people's behalf. As Ian explains,

“I said, 'this is about the people of Leicester owning it themselves. This is about people being able to collaborate with agencies and organisations in Leicester that just don't want to audit a trail and perpetuate funding and somebody who doesn't know what they are doing.' So I showed them the door” [1.75.16.xiv].

So not only was the gallery a struggle to clean-up and then mount an exhibition, it was also, according to Ian, a struggle to keep ownership of the idea, the concept and the intellectual property rights to the gallery. As Ian describes,

“It was just a fight all the way along. The moment anyone saw that it was, 'oh, hello this is a bit frightening because somebody's doing something. They are not using any money; we would have to draw-down an awful amount of funding to get something like this done” [1.75.17.xv].

After the initial period of activity things died down, and during the first “January and February it was open, but it was dead.” “Nothing was really on. Inside people started to want to book it, colleges, universities, local stuff. Then other people started to want to come and book the space. And we had an anniversary opening in September and we had over two hundred images. Where did that come from?” A lot of Ian's time in the first year was spent building links and relationships, and many of the events didn't get charged a fee, so that Ian could work out if it would be possible to make the gallery pay. As Ian explains,

“The main gallery exhibitions have a higher-range price and a lower-range price, depending if they want a week, a month, whatever. But I always open with above what the highest expectations are, so they can come down. I like to negotiate. It used to be boring when you'd say to somebody, right this gallery is 'x' amount of pound per month, and they go 'yeah, alright then.' 'You not going to argue about it?' That's a bit boring, but that's it, that's how it went. Some people said it's too expensive. I said fine, if it's too expensive. But they'd come back and actually they've had exhibitions since then, and they've actually paid” [1.75.1.i].

Subsequently there are a wide range of people getting involved and exhibiting at the gallery. As Ian describes,

“It isn't just renowned photographers that are exhibiting all the time, some of them are people that say 'you know what, I've got to do this!' 'I've been taking photographs thirty years and I want to put an exhibition up.' And that's what we're about. So that's great, but there's a lot of work that has to go into that when it's that sort of person that comes in that's never done it before. So the gallery has to give them a lot of advice and a lot of help putting it together. Actually, putting it on the walls as well. Which is really hard work some-times” [1.75.2.ii].

For Ian, the lack of a sense of judgement about the work that people want to submit and include is important to the success of the gallery. Ian explains that whereas other galleries are tied into professional circuits of validated work, both artistic and commercial, he prefers to lower people's expectations about what can be included in this gallery. As Ian suggests, "you can't judge people can you? A lot of established galleries would say 'no, sorry, but you don't meet our criteria.' And a lot of gallery's criteria is usually well paid, white, middleclass. You know. But everybody takes photographs" [1.75.3.iii]. The approach that Ian prefers is one of support and encouragement. Asking people what they value about their images is a transformative process, because once someone is given validation for displaying their work they can move onwards and reach for more ambitious topics. Ian believes that something had changed now that more people have cameras, and more people have the internet, Facebook, Flickr. Ian explains that,

"It's the digital era and we've got social media and you know what, you can put stuff on Flickr, for instance, and the whole world gets to see it. But that's great, but that's in a little light box, and then you live in this virtual world, so let's make it physical and we'll put some stuff up and then see how they cope with it, with the physical world" [1.75.5.v].

The advantage of moving from the digital world to the physical world, according to Ian, is that

"There's personal interaction. And it stops people being anonymous, in a way. Instead of it being a click of a button on the end of a big lights-screen, they can actually come in and put something on the wall and people will go 'bloody hell, wow, you know. Who took that? Actually can I buy it?' You know, and that's what it's about. People having their work valued, not necessarily monetary, but valued" [1.75.6.vi].

As the person who is driving this idea, there is a cost, and Ian finds the constant process of engagement tiring, because he has to constantly fight against 'the establishment'. As Ian describes,

"I feel a little bit like the Russian Revolution. And then you get amazing photographer who come in who've won the world press prize at the Haig and they say to me 'can I show you some of my work and see what you think of it?' Before you know who they are. Then I just stop them dead in their tracks and say 'I'm not judging your photographs, if you think they're good enough you put them up'. And then then they turn around to you and say 'well this is who I am.' And that's a frightening experience to see people of that calibre coming in to find out if what we do is what we're doing" [1.75.7.vii].

For Ian this means being humble, and he regards the moments when he interacts with people on this open basis as being an honour. As Ian put it,

“If I was to run this gallery on an egotistical basis there would only ever be street photography in, or black and white images that blew people's brains as they look at the stark realities of life. Because that's the sort of photography I like. But it's not about my ego, it's not about anybody's ego, it's about... I don't know, because if you like, people take photographs and join photographic clubs and they join photography societies because they need a sense of belonging. Everybody needs a sense of belonging. I think in a lot of ways because we're all quite, over the past two hundred years we've become quite well educated, we are almost a secular society, so we are not controlled by churches and that sort of organisations anymore. So I think people lack a sense of belonging. You can belong to your family; you can belong to other things, and that. And actually religion is judgemental. So when you create something that isn't judgemental, people want to belong to it” [1.75.8.viii].

6.2.7 Training and Learning

One of the techniques that Ian has developed in order to build and facilitate a sense of community around the gallery is to hold regular training events, and to bring together different types of people who are good at different aspects of photography. He regularly asks people to come in and run workshops. As Ian explains:

“Some of these people are totally untrained in teaching and everything else. And all of a sudden they are given an opportunity and say, 'well actually, you know what let's see what happens? I'll come in and deliver a workshop and see how many people turn up?' And we always have a good turnout. There's never less than twenty-five people turn up to the free workshops. So for me that's quite a success, and it's people who've probably never stood-up in front of anyone, or twenty-five people” [1.75.10.x].

Ian also tries to make the learning style as informal and hands-on as possible. There is little use of projectors and slides, or textbooks. Instead the participants are encouraged to bring in their cameras and to learn as they use them. This creates a sense of participation and, according to Ian, a greater sense of belonging. This sense of community, according to Ian, cuts across social status, with many of the participants having access to a wide variety of equipment and resources, while others have little.

The principle of engagement and access goes beyond the use of technology, however, and is something that Ian feels is inherent in the forms of photography, as it allows us to see the world through somebody else's eyes. Ian explains that he likes black and white photography, and the way that it is possible to capture a moment that will never be like that again. As Ian put it:

“It's that one moment in time when the light's like that, and it might never, ever be like that again, and that person won't ever look like that again. They might not have their hair combed the same way again, they might not sit in the same place again, or stand in the

same place again. And it's capturing that moment, and everybody can do that, whether you get it right or not at the time doesn't really matter" [1.75.12.xii].

Ian regards the more recent blurring of the boundaries between documentary photography and 'snaps' as significant. He is happy to see the distinctions between so-called professional and amateur practice being lessened because

"It's less judgemental. While it was all like that, and it wasn't blurred and we'd got set degrees and set groups, societies, a lot of them still do it, you go along and they say 'oh alright, well your only a beginner at this so you stick with that group of beginners. How the hell do you learn if you are not working with people? So you take your camera and say 'I can't quite get the image you're getting, how do you do it?' Then you learn. It's like riding a bike, you know once you've learnt you've learnt to do it, but we can't learn to ride a bike unless we've got somebody holding the saddle, you know. And sometimes we can go off and we scoot around on your bike like it's a scooter, but you're not using it like a bike. We can all do that all day long. It's when there's someone who just holds the saddle occasionally, and gives you that bit of, bit of guidance and your body to learn how to balance a little bit, and that's how I see photography" [1.75.13.xiii].

The approach that Ian has developed goes beyond the administrative and practical day-to-day running of the gallery. Ian suggests that it is difficult to maintain the idea of democratic participation, and that being sensitive to people's life-histories is important. Ian describes what it was like when he had won an award for a street photography exhibition he had produced. He describes how all the other submissions to the exhibition had been nicely mounted, but Ian's image had been stuck onto a piece of purple card with a message written across it that it had won an award. As Ian explained:

"Everybody else's was framed, mounted, really nicely done, on display boards. Mine was stuck on a wall of the building on a bit of purple card. So it wasn't even the right colour background for a black and white image. And I thought, 'why didn't you just get in touch with me and say can you print it up bigger?' Well why didn't you? And this is the judgement thing, this is people saying 'they are not a part of our society, although we've offered this prize, this is about putting you in your place.' So I wasn't happy about that, and that's one of the things that, sort of, I suppose, led me to say, well you know this isn't right" [1.75.15.xv].

Ian explained that his motivation comes from a mix of place, but he is against the sense of judgementalism that is associated with galleries and exhibitions. As Ian suggests, "to actually walk round and be judgemental about other people's work because you're a member of a society, or because you're a member of a club or an organisation, is so wrong." According to Ian this sense of judgement comes, not from the images, but too often from the sense of status that the judge has. Once people who view images in an exhibition, and they have been informed about the intent or the status of the

photographer, then they are then persuadable to read the images in a different way, and to open-up to different expectations that photographs can be produced for a range of reasons and in response to a range of needs. Not all images should be judged technically or professionally, but should instead be considered because of the photographer's intention to produce something meaningful. As Ian explained, "it doesn't matter how good you are, or how bad you are, it's how you interact with your subjects" [1.75.17].

6.2.8 LPPG – Taking Stock

Ian wants to devise a model based on what he does in the gallery, particularly as Ian feels that it is mainly him who drives the ethos and the approach to volunteering and participation. Creating a model, according to Ian, does not necessarily mean sitting down and writing a technical response, but can instead be based on what emerges from "thinking on your feet." Ian explains that he was helping to mount a display by some eleven-year olds in the cabinet area, the topic was about them "moving on from primary and junior education into secondary education." The following day Ian then hosted a preview night for some professional photographers. As Ian put it, "how do you think on your feet or create a model for that, when there is so much in between? It's a really difficult thing to create a model for it?" [1.75.1]. How do you go from working with a group of enthusiastic young people, to meeting the expectations of a professional society that is steeped in years of photographic practice and tradition?

Ian was keen to emphasise that he wants to make a mark with both sets of people for equally positive reasons. The professional groups need to understand, as Ian put it, that "we're here and we aren't going anywhere." Ian also felt it was important that people who had turned him down and not got involved with the gallery, also saw that the gallery as meeting its promised potential. The challenge is to be diplomatic about it and not offend people. Ian explains his sense of where things are going with the gallery in this way,

"Because they've got a sense of belonging, for all of a sudden, once in their lives they've not been judged, for Christ sake. With No judgements. That's what these people are looking for" [1.75.2.i].

By promoting this environment, with its de-professionalised attitude, and its commitment to inclusive participation, Ian is challenging some of the norms that people hold about learning and social engagement. Many people, Ian suggests, find learning in formal situations problematic because the learning process is too steep. What Ian wants to do is to use different techniques of participation

and involvement to keep people on board, and to help them to recognise that they have the ability to learn from themselves, and on their own terms.

This is a very different approach to the general expectations of a business, which means that it is difficult to quantify this approach in a business plan or a funding application. Ian was keen to point out that rather than measuring the galleries output in terms of its balance sheet, it is better to value the passions that people discover and how they develop a sense of esteem about what they have been able to do. As Ian explained,

“I've had people come in and say I haven't taken a photograph for years, what's the point, blah, blah, blah. And then all of a sudden they are sending me a message or putting it on Facebook saying 'really glad I went in the gallery, I've discovered my passion. I know where it's been and I've got it back.' Why is it the galleries job to do that?” [1.75.4.iv].

Ian is doing this because he is personally driven to help people to overcome the social prejudice that exists, and how people get knocked about because other people do not understand what their lives are like. As Ian describes this, he is doing it because he wants people to

“Understand that on a personal basis it doesn't matter how much people knock us, or anything else, just don't give up. You know what you're doing, if you enjoy what you are doing and what you're doing good, just because someone... You know what, people can say some really nasty things out of jealousy, or out of contempt or anything else, and that's what tends to knock a lot of people down. And that's one thing I don't want to happen in the gallery” [1.75.5.v].



Figure 14 Ian Davies LPPG Display Set Up

6.3 Dee Bahra

This account is a summary of interviews:

- 2013-02-08 Interview Summary – Dee Bahra



Figure 15 Dee Bahra EavaFM

EavaFM is a community radio station supported by the East African Voices Association, based in Leicester, and was managed by Dee Bahra. Dee drew on her experience in commercial radio production and community work to support the volunteers of the station, and to ensure that it kept broadcasting [1.2.2] [1.2.1]. Dee's approach employed *ad-hoc* techniques of informal social engagement and collaboration, with an initial working relationship with South Leicestershire College who ran the site as a media centre. The station was based at the Ross Walk campus of South Leicestershire College, before and after the building was transferred to Leicester College, who developed the site as a language school. The base for EavaFM is situated in an area of Leicester that has a high South Asian population. Dee would look for resources to support the station by networking with local businesses and community groups as they were required, and would undertake the reporting and licence compliance with Ofcom, the broadcast regulator.

Dee had a strong reputation for community networking within Leicester's Asian and East African communities, and was sensitive to the differences that these communities exhibited in relation to language and cultural expectations [1.2.i]. Asians of East African origin are a significant population of Leicester, after many settled in the city in the 1970s, following the wave of expulsions from Uganda. More recently, settlers from Somali have also established a significant presence in Leicester, with

their distinct styles of cultural expression and identity, something that EavaFM attempts to represent. Dee was instrumental in encouraging participants and contributors from all parts of the community to volunteer and support the station [1.2.3], with Dee being regarded as a key person to deal with if volunteers had any issues or problems. EavaFM followed the model of community radio that has been established in the United Kingdom in the open access projects and ethos, with programming that is community focussed, produced by volunteers, and driven by the *in-situ* learning and participation of contributors. While some security of basic funding was established, Dee was never clear about how the service could be more sustainably developed, and on what basis the station was ultimately governed and held accountable [1.31.5]. Dee was able, however, to call on secure relationships of support when she was faced with management issues, but the level of support and oversight was limited and lacked clear lines of accountability [1.11.1]. For this reason, Dee would often find her involvement in the operation of the station to be stressful and problematic, as she would be calling on the goodwill of the volunteers and their associated communities, without having a direct and clear route to those responsible to developing the organisation.

6.3.1 Dee Bahra's Personal Reflections

EavaFM has a remit to support the people and communities of East Africa who have settled in Leicester, something that Dee indicates she has a strong affinity with. Dee managed the station as a volunteer because she felt that “community media is the only way of getting your message across to people.” Dee describes how she was concerned that people are living increasingly isolated lives, and that many people in local communities have come to rely on different types of media for their social networks. As Dee explains, she thinks its “vital that there is some sort of media,” local newspapers, community media, and so on, to help to keep people connected. Dee had previously worked as a journalist for a local paper, and had been involved with other types of media, such as commercial radio, but she was now focussed on community media because she felt it was vital “for people to have access to community radio” [1.2.2]. As Dee puts it,

“Community radio allows people to get involved at the level they want to. Say for instance, if I was at home and there was a local community radio, and then you've got the national radio. In the local community radio I would have a much closer relationship because they are not many boundaries where I can't speak to directly to the presenters. I'm able to pick-up the phone, dial the number and get straight-away in touch with the presenter on-air, and then also share my experiences” [1.2.2.i].

Dee's aim was to foster a closer relationship between EavaFM and the communities that it serves, focussing on relationships based on shared expertise and experiences that reach a much wider field. She trusts that as people can get closer they can share their experiences, and then they can develop messages that are more relevant to the local communities that the station serves. Dee does not believe that this is something that national media can easily do, but because community radio serves a much smaller radius, it instead allows a station like EavaFM to "build links up very locally with people within the community." Dee is aware of the compromise this means, in that audience might be small in comparison, but the chance of networking through local organisations offered the possibility of doing community media differently. Dee suggests that more mainstream media organisations can learn from community media because "working collaboratively is the biggest strength in strengthening good community relations," and that collaborative work can often be much more successful at a local level because "you can pass your messages on, they can pass messages on, and you learn from each other by working collaboratively." For Dee, this means accepting that when we are working collaboratively we are "learning all the time," about "how things are changing," and how things are happening in our local neighbourhoods. As Dee describes, "you wouldn't know if you didn't work collaboratively, you know, what's out there" [1.2.4]. And, so this process, according to Dee, helps to strengthen our relationships.

Dee draws on her own experience as a volunteer, and recognises that in becoming a volunteer people give a significant commitment to the organisation that they are helping out. Dee describes how EavaFM has sixty-four volunteers, and the main challenge for her as the manager is to keep them motivated. Dee explains,

"I think it's respecting them. I feel that respect is the biggest thing at the top of the agenda, so you feel respect for your volunteers, and then work with them and what their needs are, and look at them, that's where the collaboration then comes in. So with different organisations working collaboratively you can look at their training needs" [1.2.5.ii].

Dee describes how peer-group motivation was an important factor that helped to keep EavaFM on-air. Dee points out that volunteers helped by motivating each other while planning and presenting their programmes, all of which helps to build and maintain a stronger link with the community of listeners who tune-in to the station. According to Dee the community builds a relationship with presenters which in turn also motivates "other volunteers to come forward" [1.2.6]. In Dee's experience, as volunteers become more practiced they became more confident, and that they gained a sense of assertiveness that they did not have before. Dee describes how, for example, by working

alongside and over time with volunteers with learning difficulties, she had been able to see the difference in what they could accomplish. According to Dee “when they first came in a couple of those volunteers there was a lot of work that one needed to do.” But by “working along with those young people, building their confidence up via training, on one-to-one support that they need, and it's good to then see them as DJs out in the community. And both are very successful in DJ'ing out in the community and also now they are presenting a programme, which is the great inspiration for others” [1.2.7].

Dee is a keen advocate for community media opportunities, and wants to see greater levels of support that can assist people become something that they did not, perhaps, comprehend prior to their involvement. As Dee explains, “when you actually evaluate, and you see the amount of work that is done by volunteers, and also by the community media that's the most successful area, and it's vital that we have a community media around us.” Dee's commitment, then, is for community media to be an integral part of the civic communication infrastructure so that news and information can be shared in communities, and that people can learn about the “wide range of things that are happening around you.” Dee reflects that if community media was not there then large numbers of people in our communities would struggle to get information about what is going on in their neighbourhoods. As Dee told suggested, the whole area of community communication is “all vital to us” [1.2.8].

7 Community Media Group Activities

This section outlines the activities and practices that some of the community media groups undertook as part of their regular sessions. They demonstrate how volunteers and activists took part in them, what their apparent focus of engagement was, and subsequent discussions and reviews of their effectiveness. The main objective here will be to focus on the forms of participation that were exhibited and discussed in the different setting, and how their purpose was defined and negotiated, and in what terms their effectiveness was assessed.

7.1 Citizens Eye

7.1.1 Discussions & Planning



Figure 16 John Coster Citizens Eye Apex House

Many of the interactions and activities that took place when working with the community media advocates and groups related to the development of a sustainable community media model. These discussions were exploratory and driven by the values of the advocates who had recognised a specific social need, and who saw community media as a tool that can help to alleviate the negative effects of mainstream media, and specific forms of social exclusion common at the time. Conversations that addressed and explored these issues would happen during irregular and *ad hoc* meetings with John Coster and others. These discussions would happen in informal settings, often over a coffee in a café, as opposed to in formal business meetings and academic seminars. John's network of supporters and collaborators included Simon Parker, who was the editor of the Down Not Out news agency; Tina Barton, who was the coordinator of the Leicester branch of Somewhere_To, an organisation

supporting young people by opening-up spaces for them to use for their creative or business practise; and James Black, a community film maker. The sites that John used as a base for Citizens Eye were often temporary and co-located with other projects, such as in Apex House, which was run by Leicester City Council's employment skills support teams. Administrative work, teaching sessions, meetings, interview recordings, and so on, would take place in these various sites. Other meetings and sessions might also be carried out using a mobile presentation unit – basically a flight trolley with all the display objects and media equipment that John needed to run a session, with a pull-up banner that had the logo and contact details for Citizens Eye.

Occasions when informal meetings took place would often include a discussion about the general state of mainstream media, and the way that community media is supported in Leicester [see Friday 22nd March 2013]. The shared view at the time was that many established media companies were going through a rapid period of transition in their approach and outlook. On the one hand, the traditional media businesses were being squeezed by the economic pressures emerging with the shift to online media, which meant that they had to figure out how to cultivate different relationships with their audiences or readerships. The example raised by John was the Leicester Mercury newspaper, based on his experience working in the newsroom. At the time John noted that “apparently, the Leicester Mercury will be promoting User Generated Content on its website more widely, with a target of 60% of the sites content supposedly generated by users.” This seemingly simple statement implies a significant shift in orientation and expectation that challenged the whole approach of these established media companies. As a result, John was keen to develop a longer-term response, but he questioned the way that they were going about it. What would be the point in trying to cultivate a readership which would co-produce a newspaper, when the business model for the newspaper had not changed in any significant way, and the contributors remain disempowered to direct editorial policy?

John's response was to test the idea of establishing the Community Media Training School, which would use the pop-up café approach that John had been using to promote flexible and embedded learning sessions in non-traditional venues [Tuesday 11th June 2013]. The training school would offer a “range of different training services for different people and groups in Leicester's diverse communities, and then to replicate the concept in other cities and towns, and to take the services out on the road.” John had good working relations with the Media Trust, who had recognised Citizens Eye as a Beacon Hub for John's ability to displace boundaries and traditional linear models of learning

and participation. John, Simon and Tina each recognised that the orientation of media producers would have to be different in the future, as they would have to work in an increasingly indeterminate, mobile, personalised and networked environment. This is the kind of environment in which information and data is significantly foregrounded, but ethical conversations exploring media engagement of this kind are few and far between in practice.



Figure 17 Simon Parker Citizens Eye

Similarly, discussions focussed on the use of community media engagement techniques for raising awareness of pressing social issues. Simon Parker and James Black [Friday 12th April 2013] explained how they would be working with Action Homeless on a young-persons sleep-out event that was taking place in the LCB Depot courtyard. The idea was that “a team of young people who would be reporting on homelessness and its potential impact.” What motivated Simon, as he explained at the time, was his frustration that public services were becoming increasingly business-like and that the commercial focus was driving out the sense of public engagement. Simon’s experience was working with Leicester Library Services, so he is aware of the good that well-modelled public services can achieve, but which commercial cultures destroy with its focus on the balance sheet, and no expectation of the civic responsibilities that are needed for communities to prosper. Thinking through these issues meant that conversations drew on a variety of tacit approaches, and rather than looking at the issues in purely political, economic or administrative terms, advocates like John, Tina, Simon and James were drawn to promote and develop community media activities because of their “strong sense of personal responsibility,” which they felt “goes beyond and narrow responsibility that has strictly financial expectation” [1.9.3].

The network of community media activists in Leicester is close, with many of the same people involved in similar projects, and working reciprocally to support them. Simon Parker played a role in both Citizens Eye and Down Not Out, and was also a collator with Panj Pani Radio, an online community radio service that dealt with mental health issues in the Asian community. Simon also presented a programme on the station, and supported and trained others in presenting and producing programmes [Thursday 10th April 2013] [Monday 22nd April]. This mixed used of skills and forms of participation by motivated advocates like Simon is not uncommon in more general community media practices.



Figure 18 John Coster & Tina Barton

7.1.2 Partnership Building

By working in partnership with organisations like the Leicester Mercury and BBC Leicester, John was hoping to identify and explore a range of collaborative opportunities. For these organisations John's activities and approach represented a low-risk route, indeed it was John who had to do the work of getting people involved, while the partners would provide the meeting space, often in spaces that were surplus to requirements. John was keen to explore these reciprocal relationships, even though they came with no, or very little funding. Consequently, John did not want to be tied or any one specific working space, but was happy with the virtual approach he had developed, in which he ran pop-up sessions. This meant that John had few overheads, and that he could be agile and respond to the demands of different groups and people. The negative consequence of this approach, was that it made it harder for John to pick up funding, such as Lottery or grant funding, as there was little or no formal business structure underpinning Citizens Eye. John recognised, therefore, that partnerships would be crucial, so much of John's time was spent cultivating networks of contacts in businesses, charities, schools, colleges, universities, and so on. John's search for a framework to help structure these concepts, which gives a good indication of the ambition and potential scale of the challenge,

included the concept of a community media ‘think-tank’ that could “bid for research and development funding from international organisations who want to see the roll-out of more citizen media services” [Tuesday 22nd May 2013].



Figure 19 Co-Operative News Panel Discussion

Occasionally these discussions, and ways of thinking about the future framework that John might develop, would be examined in formal training sessions, such as the CASE event that was organised by the Co-Operative and Social Enterprise project and the Carnegie Trust, which took place at the Leicester King Power Stadium [Monday 10th June 2013 (Evening)]. This was a session dedicated to promoting the use of co-operatives and a local ownership model for news and community media. This was described as a response to the decline in localised news media and was linked to a campaign being supported by the National Union of Journalists. John, Simon and Tina attended the session, as well as a small group of engaged media activists from the East Midlands, such as Keith Perch, the ex-editor of the Leicester Mercury, and subsequently the director of communications at De Montfort University. The general critique of the presentations was that local news was in significant decline, but that not all this decline could be accounted for in the shift to online news. A significant proportion of the decline, it was suggested, was the lack of investment in journalism, and a focus on maximising shareholder value in the financial markets. This meant that the traditional model of locally accountable newspapers was being hollowed out, with news services increasingly centralised, with a smaller network of proprietors who were separate from the local communities that the newspapers represent, and the slippage between journalism and ‘churnalism,’ in which press releases get retold as new stories.

The argument was, as David Boyle one of the contributors explained, that it is possible to think through an alternative model that can be founded on small-scale cooperative approaches, which could still return a profit, and would be able to provide investment for services that reflect the locality of the place in which the service is developed [2013-06-10 Interview Summary - Dave Boyle]. The ironic factor, according to Dave Boyle, was that it was the so-called marketplace that was holding back innovation, and that competing models of ownership and control could not flourish under the present system.

John Coster was enthusiastic, then, about the potential that a cooperative approach might have for the Community Media Training School model, because it chimed with his exploratory thinking. The focus on collaborative organisations with direct local accountability, means that there is not an extended chain of command that needs to be worked through to get things done. Media co-operatives are also supported directly by the people who engage with them. The public service dimension of news, for example, gets embedded in the principles of the co-operative, with a focus on local news services that make neighbourhoods, towns and cities better places to be. The alternative economy of 'sweat labour,' 'gifting,' 'timebanking,' as James Flyn from Leicestershire County Council explained, is something that is in its early stages as a broader concept, and needs more support to ensure that it can be easily understood and taken-up by people who are volunteering [Wednesday 3rd July 2013].

The wider considerations for a co-operative community media model are therefore quite complex, and depend on clear strategic insight that would fit. Issues such as the empowerment of participants, the use of discussion from grassroots volunteers, the challenge to the mainstream in promoting an alternative agenda through bottom-up activism, in which editors and co-originators are elected, are all widely discussed issues, but gaining traction in practice, and especially in Leicester seems to be hard to achieve. The alternative media agenda is an approach that resists centralisation and managerialism, and is potentially suited to a range of different types of production, collaboration and participation, but is clearly resisted by existing organisations working from legacy business models. Given that community media is primarily a participation driven activity, John recognised that attention has to be given, instead, to the structures and the processes that result in a sense of empowerment based on local and non-commercial criteria that are decided by the people involved.

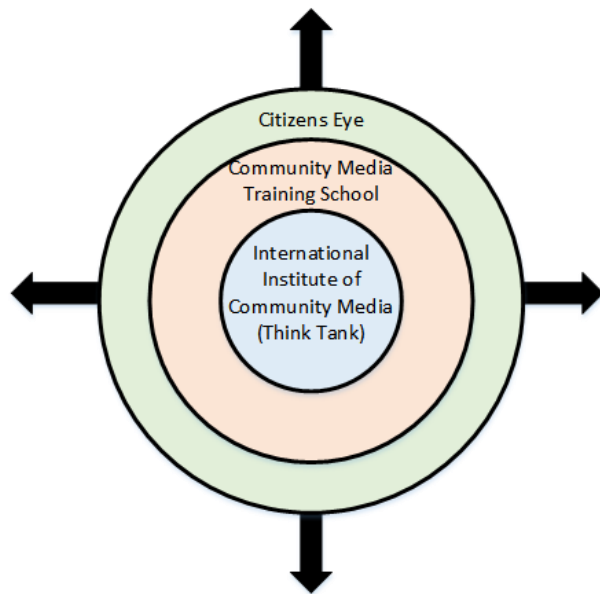


Figure 20 Community Media Think Tank Model

John’s outlook on the development of the additional services associated with Citizens Eye, such as the Community Media Training School, and the international ‘think-tank,’ are informed by John’s training in the army, and as an Outward-Bound instructor [Friday 14th June 2013]. John’s experiences have been wide and varied, so his expectations about what the Community Media Training school might achieve also seems to be wide ranging. In this sense John is focussed on the future possibilities and the new and emerging forms of media and social engagement that come out of them. John admits that he is not suited to the role of inspector or supervisor of services for their own sake. Instead, he regards public service as an ethical cornerstone of good communities, and that there is a need to invest in wider opportunities that help to support people’s awareness of their existing social framework of expectation. The initial thought process that John worked through had to start by defining what it is not: such as not being a talent pool for industry, or a fast track to fame, or a formalised learning academy. What it would rely on, instead, would be the development of relationships that are established and that grow between the participants. The focus of community media is not based primarily on the product that is delivered, but is instead about what we become through the relationships that we establish. As Corrie Climington from SparkFM explained, this “is about engaging people and allowing people to change their life, their skills, their ability, their confidence through engagement, and participation in something, some media output. [2013-06-01 Corrie Cilmington, SparkFM, Interview].

Significantly, then, if there was to be a partnership agreement established with the BBC to host the Community Media training school sessions, then a number of factors needed to be anticipated, such as the BBC's Producer Guidelines [Thursday 20th June 2013].

- What would be the risks involved if volunteers did not want to give a 'balanced' view about a subject or an issue?
- What if participants wanted to treat controversial matters in a partial way, because they would not be broadcasting them?
- How would a controversial subject be covered and produced on the BBC premises and using BBC equipment that did not conform to the BBC's guidelines?
- Would the BBC have a problem if a complaint was made?

John's expectation then, would be to separate-out content and training, so that it would be clear that the training school would only be responsible for showing people how to use the tools and to talk them through the ethical and responsible use of those tools. Should a volunteer then wish to log-off and produce content with a particular idea and angle of their own, and then share that elsewhere, then that would be the individual's responsibility.



Figure 21 John Coster & Tim Blewett

A couple of regular activities that John runs with and alongside Citizens Eye are the Doc Film Festival and Community Media week. These are designed to focus on a set of activities that enable the showing of documentaries and film screenings in different venues around Leicester, as well as enabling discussion and talk between activists, participants and supporters [Tuesday 2nd July 2013]. One of the reasons for undertaking these activities is to maintain an active presence in the social and com-

munity focussed networks in Leicester. Maintaining a visible profile is part of the process of engagement with partner organisations. A good example is the discussion with Rev Tim Blewett, who is an ex-director of Action Homeless, but who was then working and supporting the 'No Second Night Out' project, which aims to support Leicester City Council's homelessness initiatives [Thursday 4th July 2013]. John and Tim discussed how the resources and networks of Citizens Eye could be used to promote and supplement the initiative, exploring the idea that community media might be able to help 'bridge the gap' that had opened in Leicester at a time when austerity cuts had been imposed on local authorities. This recognises that community media can potentially play a part in 'opinion forming', assisting 'recognition' of social issues and for 'healing'. This is something that mainstream media is unable to do, according to Tim, as commercial media will not provide space for open-ended discussion, and the BBC have to package a debate or discussion, and cannot let people 'ramble on'. Community media, therefore, might be a more suitable vehicle for sharing these ideas and for allowing people to say things in their own words, and in their own way.

7.1.3 Community Media Training School

One occasion when a formal discussion session was held, was when a development session was held with CASE, who support co-operative business development, to evaluate the potential of developing the Community Media Training School model [Friday 21st June 2013]. The meeting was an opportunity to explore ideas and models of engagement that might be associated with the Community Media Training School, and the potential partnerships that might be needed to help it get established. These were tentative discussions, but included how it would be possible to determine:

- Legal structure & governance Issues.
- Skills analysis & expertise.
- Collaborative ways of thinking.
- Media productive skills.
- Media analysis & evaluation.
- Media project running.
- How do we define a 'community'?
- What are open learning models?
- Development of people as empowered citizens?
- Giving people tools of expression and understanding the mechanism of how they can articulate this?
- Is there a demand for community media?
- Whether terminology can be off-putting and might exclude more people than they engage?
- Whether marginalisation comes in many forms?
- Can the CMTS exist independently and sustainably?

- How can the CMTS incorporate the use of time-banking?
- What is the nature of participation ('Participation Ladder' – see Sherry Arnstein).
- What is a co-operative? It is a legal entity and a limited company by guarantee.
- Organic structure that is agreed by its members that can evolve.
- Set-up initially with a legal document which can evolve as the organisation changes.
- Community of Interest Company (CIC) – enables organisations to take advantage of resources for the benefit of the community – with an 'asset lock' and can't be disposed for the benefit of individual directors.
- A CIC can be more attractive to donors. Registration asks who will benefit and how? Gives a clear legal structure? Why incorporate as a CMC? Any models that we can look at?
- Maintain an ad-hoc nature to the media that is usual, but keep that 'emotional;' commitment to the people who are using it?
- Co-op run by employees; co-op run by its members; co-op run by members and employees.
- What working examples of co-operative can we look at?
- Retain openness and attractiveness of Citizens Eye, as that its strength. Tap into people enthusiasm. Simple language. What is the demand?
- Voice? How do people have a voice? How do we encourage people to get involved? The hook is 'I have something to say, regardless of who I am'. Once we have done that, what would be the next steps that you would want to take?
- What would be the social purpose of the CMTS?
- What is the relationship with the BBC? How do we stop the agendas of other partners from diluting the purpose of the CMTS? More formalisation might reduce the ability to react to need? Strengthen to react and adapt to change? Social and Network driven model as opposed to a linear model?

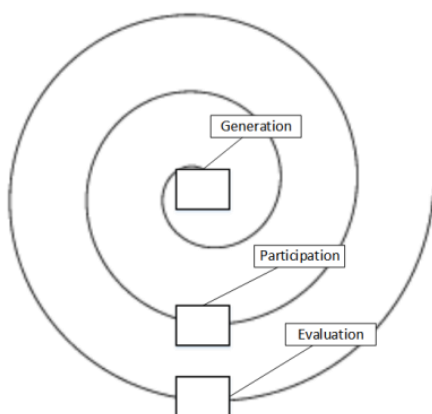


Figure 22 Community Media Training School Model

John's concept of the training school would integrate with the established sessions that were presently running, and formed the basis of links that had been established with the partners. The Community Media Training School concept consisted of different components of the process of develop-

ment that offered informal pathways into the school [Tuesday 28th May 2013]. The Community Media Café would be the entry point from which people could be signposted to the Community Media Hub sessions that would be held at BBC Leicester, with other specific training being undertaken using specific BBC facilities and spaces that were presently underused. John was keen to start the sessions at the BBC, and had planned a programme of topics and subjects, and had started the process of inviting people who he had previously worked with via social media.



Figure 23 Community Media Training School Planning

Overall, however, and despite the thoroughness of the deliberations about the Community Media Training School, it proved difficult to find a suitable match with the expectations of the business teams and the partners who had expressed support for the concept. The feedback that was given was that this project is not based on sufficiently robust or traditional concepts of social engagement. It was regarded as a good idea at an informal level, but it wasn't something that presently fitted with many of the development models that are commonly used in similar areas [Thursday 18th July 2013]. As this avenue proved to be less appealing, John was actively considering other approaches, such as a partnership with the NTCJ to establish a Level Three citizen journalist training package based on a link with De Montfort University's journalism team. The basic structure of the NTCJ qualification is designed to be comparable across different forms of training for journalism, with the exception of social media, and the additional embedding of the CMA Statement of Values. As these ideas failed to get traction, John was engaged in a constant process of casting around for ideas and potential partnerships. This was an ever-going cycle of engagement and discussion. So, if it was difficult to form and develop partnerships with traditional media organisations and courses, then perhaps links with organisations that serve a different social purpose might be better, such as the social and community development courses? It might be more productive to develop projects with Health

and Life-Service providers, with their emphasis on the idea of community development, sustainability and participation, rather than a commercial-driven skills and employability, or dream-factory approaches [Thursday 11th July 2013]. With their clear identification of need and requirements for social engagement, the Community Media Training School might have more success as a concept if it was identified with a more clearly articulated sense of social need.

7.1.4 Community Media Café Sessions



Figure 24 Citizens Eye Community Media Cafe

One of the main activities that is associated with John Coster and Citizens Eye is the Community Media Café sessions. These informal sessions provided a focal point for activities and discussions, and enabled people to get involved and be part of the network of community media activists, as they focused on distinct but related activities. They are structured and designed as a regular series of weekly events that provided a forum for the informal discussion and the dissemination of news and information, a chance to meet other volunteers, and to get to know people from outside Leicester who were interested in similar concerns. These were the main way that John promoted a sense of participation and engagement in community media practises under the Citizens Eye banner.

Community Media Café Key Points:

- Chance to meet up informally in a café setting.
- Open discussion based on particular social interests of the participants.
- Wide range of people attended on different occasions.
- Use of at-hand media to share stories and discuss issues.

- Base-point for other activities, such as training sessions, meetings, trips, visiting academic, etc.
- Sometimes themed, sometimes open topics.
- Visitors from other organisations and beyond Leicester would attend.

The Citizens Eye community media café ran every Tuesday morning at the Coffee Republic café on Granby Street in Leicester city centre [Tuesday 16th April 2013]. John arranged with the manager of the café to hold weekly meetings because it was not a busy trading time. John would identify the sessions by placing Citizens Eye leaflets and fliers on some of the tables, and would erect a pop-up banner in a prominent place against one of the walls. The café offered some discount vouchers that John could distribute if he felt that some people might struggle with the cost of drinks, and John was always willing to buy tea or coffee for those who could not. The café therefore provided an informal setting in which different people could meet and take part in informal conversations related to people's community media interests. The interests of volunteers who attended included bloggers, film makers, radio producers, journalists, academics, volunteers from charities, students, teachers, local authority administrators, as well as people who were retired, registered as disabled, unemployed, or out of work due to incapacity, and so on.



Figure 25 Community News Café

Discussion and engagement was always flexible and informal, as there was no set pattern to the people who would attend, other than John himself, Simon Parker and Tina Barton. Attendees would usually arrive intermittently, and would circulate as they recognised other people, or were introduced by others. As is usual in a café setting, the seating arrangement was clustered around small

tables, which meant that people would sit in small groups they were familiar with, or had been introduced to by John or Simon. There was no agenda or formal introduction to start the sessions, with John playing the role of host and welcoming people as they arrived, and generally ensuring that no one was left on their own. This sociable approach meant that it was possible to meet and talk with a wide range of different people who had come to the sessions, either to share stories and discuss issues related to their own activities and interests, or to share tips and advice about how to make media content, apply for funding or get work done with other institutions. Depending on the turn-out that week, it was possible to have brief or long conversations, and to discuss issues of mutual concern or regard without having to subject them to a monitoring process or put through an agenda process.



Figure 26 Simon & Andy Citizens Eye Cafe

The attendees at the community media café would vary each week, though a core group who were keen to attend the sessions for their own value, made up the majority of the regular faces. This was because the café itself became a regular point of contact and a social occasion each week. Andy, who was a regular at the sessions, reported that he could discuss his interest in street photography with people who had similar interests, and that it helped him to go beyond his personal concerns and focus instead on issues of social concern that affected other people. The fact that the café sessions were in the city centre meant that they were generally accessible to most. Being accessible by public transport was a concern for some, as was the reasonable level of wheelchair access that the café offered, being on one level meant that it was possible to reconfigure the seating arrangements as more people attended. The sessions drew vocal campaigners for disability rights, who would relate their experiences of the difficulties of being mobile and active in Leicester, and the challenges of navigating the government's social support systems.

John would promote the café sessions using the Citizens Eye Twitter, Audioboom, YouTube feeds, and would re-post articles and discussions from collaborating and visiting guests [Tuesday 30th April 2013]. John was active in using his phone to record and post interviews and discussions. On quieter sessions, it was possible to record and post a short video or sound interview there-and-then in the café, without having to use any special media equipment or editing software. Interviews were recorded in one take, and edited 'in the head', which removed the need to review content, as it could be posted immediately and spontaneously. As well as having accessible Wi-Fi in the café, John also used his independent Wi-Fi hub linked to his phone contract to provide internet access. This meant that John did not have to rely on the availability of Wi-Fi access in the different locations, and he could interact and demonstrate media using a tablet or a laptop.¹⁸ This gave John a way of promoting the cafes without having to rely on traditional forms of media, though John spoke regularly with BBC Leicester and used those opportunities to promote the café. The social media posts helped to widen the range of people who attended the sessions, from across different groups in Leicestershire, and were also picked-up by other groups from across the country who were interested in community media challenges [Tuesday 23rd April 2013].



Figure 27 Simon & John Citizens Eye Café

With the focus on what people brought by the way of interests and concerns, the form of interaction that John encouraged was open and non-judgemental. By encouraging participants that what they were engaged in was valuable, because it was of interest to those people, then a relatively socially diverse group of people would attend. The focus on social issues, with the use of independent news

¹⁸ There is an extensive archive of the Citizens Eye social media posts <https://docmediacentre.wordpress.com/category/museum-of-community-media/>

agencies, brought people together who had similar social concerns, either homelessness, immigration status, disability rights, mental health concerns, poverty campaigners, Green campaigners, and so on. The broad range of people who attended meant that they could share experiences and expertise, [Tuesday 14th May 2013] [Tuesday 13th August 2013], or suggest potential contacts in different organisations that might facilitate the social action aspirations of the different attendees [21st May 2013].



Figure 28 John Coster Community News Café

The structure of the café sessions was recognised by many who took part as being non-hierarchical [Tuesday 11th June 2013], and founded on the view that the learning potential of the sessions was based on recognising and rewarding what people brought to the sessions, and the positive contribution that people could make, rather than excluding people for what was absent. This meant that the café sessions had to eschew any sense of ‘insider-gain’ that is often promoted in similar professional and semi-professional networking events. The ethos of the community media café was to ‘push-down’ the learning levels required for access, ensuring that the traditional barriers to access to formal learning were minimised. Language capability, literacy and media skill levels, economic or physical capability, were secondary in practice, as the informality of the sessions fostered a peer-to-peer collaborative approach that reflected the different stages of capability that people felt they had or could offer. This meant people of widely variable skills and formal educational or professional achievement levels could sit together and learn from each other. John ensured that there was no

‘teacher’ in the room, so learning had to be facilitated in the relationships that were established between different participants.

Learning in this regard unfolded, and opened-up additional spaces for discussion, rather than passing through levels or gateways. One volunteer, a retired drama teacher Mike, used the phrase ‘unfolding,’ and suggested that learning cannot progress unless a process of unfolding has been established. This gives the learning activities in the café a *tacit* and *voluntary* nature, as any of the learning opportunities involved a distinctive dynamic that other formal learning processes usually did not recognise. The advantage was that it offered an alternative pattern of learning that was not dependent on placing barriers to those who would otherwise not be able to access formal linear training [Tuesday 9th July 2013].



Figure 29 Adam Perry, Media Trust

Adam Perry from the Media Trust recalls that the work that he had undertaken with John and Citizens Eye was a good example of the kind of engaging practice that the Media Trust wanted to promote, and that could be used in other communities and media engagement projects [2014-04-11 Interview Summary - Adam Perry, The Media Trust]. As Adam explains,

“When I first met John and started talking to him about the work he'd been doing at Citizens Eye over the last five, six years, you know, it was really inspirational, and I thought it was such a good basis for other people to learn from. It was such a good model for other people to use in their communities. So I really wanted to get to know John better, find out more about how he did it and it's been a fantastic journey over the last few years with John.”

Indeed, the café sessions have drawn wide discussion as a model of community engagement, with Jenifer Jones explaining that this is a model that can be used to

“Meet with people who are either interested in engaging with project, wishing to know a little bit more about the concept of community media or digital storytelling or simply wish to learn more about making media using the tools and platforms available to them. It is important for us to meet and give space to those who chose to contribute and take part in future activity”¹⁹

While Hannah Scarbrough suggests that it is

“Inspirational to see how Citizens’ Eye empowered community members to create their own media and report their own events, and gave them the tools and confidence to do this.”²⁰

However, this all comes down to a simple factor, as John explains, the “good-old value community conversation” [2013-05-29 Interview Summary [A]].

7.1.5 Community Media Hub Sessions



Figure 30 Community Media Hub at BBC Leicester

The community media hub sessions ran on Tuesday afternoons using the College of Journalism room at BBC Leicester. These were more formal information and learning sessions than the café sessions, with a specified agenda, informative talks and training sessions, and a mix of guests who were active in producing community media content. The sessions had a similar ethos to the café sessions, in that they started from the view that shared expertise and peer-learning was the most appropriate form of inclusion so that a wide range of people, with different interests and capabilities could take part.

¹⁹ <http://digitalcommonwealth.co.uk/2013/11/13/what-is-a-community-media-cafe-how-to-get-involved/>

²⁰ <https://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/2014/03/05/citizens-eye-community-media-cafe/>

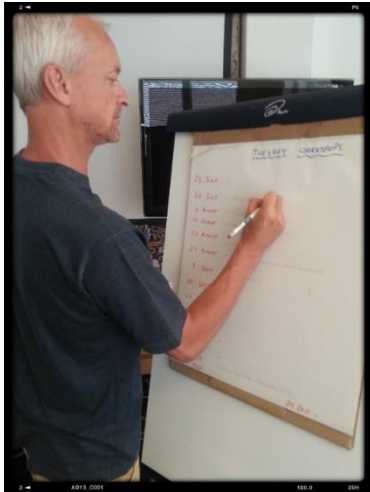


Figure 31 John Coster Lists Future Community Media Sessions

The agreement that John made with Jane Hill, the Editor of BBC Leicester, meant that it was possible to use the College of Journalism training room each week. Also known as the Co-Jo room, this gave some limited access to PCs, Wi-Fi access and display equipment. There was also limited access to the former Asian Network studios on the first floor of the building, which meant that it was possible to run break-out sessions and record interviews, though there was no direct access to the studio production interfaces [Thursday 16th May 2013]. John explains that the space had not been used for over a year, as the BBC Academy had been centralised in London and Manchester. The studio space is comprised of three broadcast radio studios with an adjoining control suit, a breakout area, a meeting room and kitchen. The initial consideration was to figure out how the relationship with the BBC would be fostered, such as recognising that the BBC would have clear boundaries about what can be delivered and discussed using these resources.

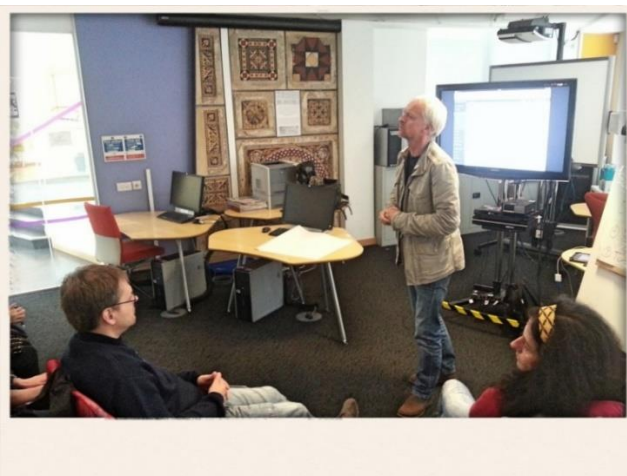


Figure 32 John Introducing a Session in the BBC Co-Jo Room

The first session that John ran at BBC Leicester was attended by over fifty people throughout the afternoon [Friday 7th June 2013]. John was interviewed that day on BBC Radio Leicester's Jim Davis programme, in which he explained that the Community Media Training School would be a virtual resource operating across different locations, with one of these locations being at BBC Leicester. John explained how the CMTS would potentially be run as a co-operative with advisors and trustees representing different parts of the community. John suggested that the CMTS must fit within the governance model of the BBC, and would be not-for-profit. John thought that this model might fit with the need for the BBC to generate and capture more local news. The sessions that were being undertaken during the summer of 2013 would therefore be a pilot to establish if there is sufficient interest from volunteers, and sufficient support from partners. John suggested that he was aiming for a formal launch in January 2014. If a template could be worked out here, then other stand-alone co-ops might be possible in other locations.



Figure 33 Community Media Hub Participants

The change in emphasis for Citizens Eye, John says, is to value the involvement and ownership of participants more. The Media Trust, for example, has the 360 News community channel that might be a useful vehicle for the production of content for Leicester. John's expectation is that the users who generate the content are the ones who own it, which means developing time and space to mentor new reporters and content producers, while developing open and informal training in making content and telling stories responsibly. Hence the need for regular training sessions that brings people with an interest in these subjects from different fields together to share their knowledge and to help others to become proficient at producing content.



Figure 34 Mark Clark Community Media Hub Presentation



Figure 35 Simon Parker Community Media Hub Presentation

The open learning approach, therefore, does not rely on technical or professional expertise, but is amenable to the expertise that people bring from their found and tacit experiences, and which is indigenous to those communities, instead of something that is factored in from external practice. This was demonstrated in the Community Hub sessions as the delivery of those sessions was mainly done by people who are active in the existing community media networks in Leicester, and who were willing to share and facilitate a short learning session. It was agreed that it was important to keep the tone of these sessions light and conversational, and to base it on each person's experience. John ran a session one week on how to run a community media café [Tuesday 30th July 2013], Simon Parker ran a session on putting together a social action campaign [Tuesday 20th August 2013], Mark Clark ran a session on developing a community magazine [Tuesday 9th July 2013], and I ran a session on podcasting and telling stories using audio, in which we explored simple recording techniques, simple

editing structures, and then ways to share content using social media, such as SoundCloud or Audio-boom [Tuesday 25th June 2013] [Tuesday 6th August 2013]. Additionally, there was a session about blogging in which a number of people shared their experience of using different blogging sites and approaches to writing on a regular basis for different audiences [Tuesday 16th July 2013].

There was a clear interest from the regular attendees that they were engaged and willing to understand the process of planning, developing and producing media content based on the issues and the experiences that they were already concerned and passionate about. So, the discussions had a practical and down-to-earth focus that asked questions that might otherwise get overlooked by a more technically proficient or professionally focussed audience. For example, these discussions would compare styles of production, asking how a community focussed radio programme, such as those made by Simon Parker for Panji Pani FM, would differ from a professionally produced programme at the BBC [Tuesday 27th August 2013].



Figure 36 John Coster Community Media Hub

As with the community media café sessions, these sessions brought together people from many different backgrounds, and who shared an interest in community media and community development. At one sessions academics from Birmingham City University, Dave Harte and Jerome Turner, visited to discuss the issues associated with hyperlocal news media with the editor of the Evington Echo, who had been making a local newspaper in Leicester for over thirty years. Chris Webb, who was a retired former BBC radio producer shared his experience planning programmes and getting interviews [Tuesday 30th July 2013].



Figure 37 Community Media Hub Session BBC Leicester

The culmination of these community media hub sessions was a schedule of events that would be run as ‘Community Media Week,’ with John hosting a series of pop-up events at different locations and in collaboration with different organisations. The focus was to be ‘International Community Media Day,’ which would be hosted at BBC Leicester, and involved invited speakers from different local community media groups who would come and talk and share their experience. Some of these speakers made a virtual contribution, linking via online media with community media practitioners and organisers from around the world. The discussion and planning for these events was held with the volunteers [Tuesday 2nd July 2013]. John wanted to have as many contributors from community media groups as possible from across the world. He drew a map showing where we could expect contributions from, and with the exception of Australia, each continent was covered.



Figure 38 John Coster International Community Media Day

The discussion focussed on how an event for community media week might take place that brings together the community media sector in Leicester and Leicestershire with the service providers in the area, such as the health services, the faith groups, and the police. The aim would be to demonstrate how community media can assist and work as a partner with different service organisations to run sessions, develop collaborative opportunities, and develop training and to help spread the different messages about public services within different communities. The potential of hosting a 'market' in the BBC Leicester lobby was discussed, in which different media groups and different service providers could network and hear first-hand accounts from community media volunteers. This then led to a discussion about an event for further development of the Leicester Media Network, in order to launch the network and build participation, asking people from as wide a range of media groups in Leicester to attend, either as individuals or as organisations, to help establish a database of contacts, a website with feeds, and potential news of interest. Community Media Week was therefore viewed as a useful vehicle to get this off the ground.

The ethos of Citizens Eye, and the community media café, and the community media hub, are perhaps best summed-up in the words of some of the visiting guests, and the words of some of the participants who have gone on to produce their own media content. Jonathan Calder writes a blog called Liberal England [2013-11-05 Interview Summary - Jonathan Calder]. His approach to blogging is to "avoid saying something pretentious, like blogging's a way of life." Jonathan suggest that his approach is to use his "blog as a diary to record things I've done, places I've been, books I've read, and so on." He also uses it to note his thoughts on things that have amused him, while including a "bit of political campaigning now and then." As a form of community media Jonathan suggests that the

"Great thing about blogging is anyone can do it. It's a sort of punk ethic. You know, anyone can be in a band. You don't need an editor or someone to commission you, or give you permission to do it. You just start for yourself. And what kind of blogs do you, are you drawn to yourself? Have you got people out there that you like and admire that inspire you and you bounce off?"

This is reflected in what Ineca Poultney says [2014-04-11 Interview Summary - Ineca Poultney, Blogger]. Ineca is an active blogger whose connection with community media started when she attended a book swap at Radio Leicester. At this event, she got talking to someone about her blog. As Ineca explains, she is extremely passionate about writing, to the point that she says that she lives for her writing. Her blog is called Inkey World, and as Ineca describes the only time when she does not write is when she feels seriously poorly. It was during a conversation at a book swap that Ineca explained

that she had been unemployed for a number of years, and that she is partially sighted, but that she uses this experience to inform her work. The conversation then led to Ineca meeting with John Coster and finding out more about Citizens Eye. So she went to a couple of the open-café meetings that John runs, and she got talking to a couple of people who also like writing. Ineca writes about all sorts of topic, but she is most inspired by the news and issues relating to vision equality, she writes about



Figure 39 Ineca Poultney, Blogger

“What it's like being unemployed, what it's like being disabled, what it's like sort of, not being recognised. Trying to get rid of some of the stereotypes to actually being short-sighted and like what I can do and what I can't do and what I like to do, and everything like that. So that's inspired by the news, 'vision on inequality', 'inspirational people'” [1.118.2.i].



Figure 40 Erica Rolfe Bedford Clanger

As confidence in the DIY ethic of self-production of media grows, some have taken the challenge of producing more widely distributed forms of media. Erica Rolfe, one of the co-founders of the Bedford Clanger, explains that the work that has been put into producing a newspaper that reflects the cultural life of Bedford is rewarding, despite the hard work and the learning curve. In the two and a half years that the Bedford Clanger has been running, it started with “A sixteen-page newspaper with a thousand print run, and we are now a forty page publication with a twenty-five thousand print run.” Their ethos is to

“Try and portray the positive sides of the town. I'm not reporting news, It's not political, we're independent. It's not a political publication. All it is about is about making people proud and happy to live where they live and showing them the good stuff that goes on in our town, and why they should be happy to live there” [1.116.3].



Figure 41 Matthew & Sally, Barwell Link

This is also something that Matthew Hulbert and Sally Crossfield try to do for their town, Barwell, in Leicestershire [2014-04-02 Interview Summary - Matthew Hulbert, Barwell Link]. The Barwell Link is a community group that was set up as a local community media portal, comprised of a blog and a YouTube channel, which aimed to “best promote the good, positive news that's happening in Barwell.” Sally Crossfield is the Barwell Community Arts project worker, part of the Barwell Events Link group, which has the aim of promoting community activity in Barwell. Sally explains that they wanted to link people in their village with information about what is going on in the village.

“It's just to link everybody up, to put that information out there. A lot of younger people are using social media and and we've not really used it to its best effect. So once you are doing that it's like word of mouth. I think word of mouth is the strongest way of promoting things. And it's like a good thing for community cohesion as well. So it's getting people from different backgrounds to get together and that's something that we really do work on in Barwell. And then you find that people are helping each other in different ways after events and stuff” [1.113.1.i].



Figure 42 Elisha Shamba HAT News

Elisha Shamba’s experience is very different to many of the other guests and participants in Citizens Eye. Elisha works for a charity based in Loughborough that looks after young people who are from different countries, who are unaccompanied asylum seekers [2014-04-11 Interview Summary - Elisha Shamba]. In 2008 Elisha met with John Coster, who helped him to set up a news agency, Hat News, which is dedicated to highlighting “immigration issues, asylum seeker issues, refugee issues, and reporting in a balanced and fair manner.” Elisha described how this involves

“Helping those who find themselves in the bracket of asylum seeking, they are in a limbo, not knowing what to do, and they are, because of the system they are so restrained, they can’t express themselves. So Hat News was set up to help them to provide a platform for them to gain skills, like get trained to write articles, or poems, or anything. And then publish them on to Hat News website” [1.115.1.i].



Figure 43 Jennifer Collier Community Media Volunteer

Another person who has benefited from the approach promoted by Citizens Eye, is Jennifer Collier [2014-04-11 Interview Summary - Jennifer Collier]. By volunteering with John and Tina, Jennifer was able to get much needed experience as a writer and community media producer. As Jennifer explains, it has given her an opportunity to “write about what's going on in the local area and also get experience of journalism for the first time.” Jennifer wanted to do this straight after leaving school and before going to university, so that she could gain some experience. Jennifer described what it was that she enjoyed about producing community media. She said that she enjoys

“Writing of what's happening around me from my own perspective, and I enjoy learning about different people really. I've met so many different types already working for Action Homeless and things like that, with their Down Not Out news agency. And it just gave me a chance to have my eyes opened to the actual business itself, really, of journalism” [1.119.1.i].

Taken individually, these are just a small number of people who are able to testify about the impact and the positive effect that Citizens Eye has had as a community media platform in Leicester and beyond, with its distinctive approach and commitment to personalised support. As Lauren Pennycook, a policy officer at the Carnegie UK Trust says,

“There is a real need for a greater equality and diversity of news sources about neighbourhood news. There's a lot of research out there that shows that while there's a great demand for local news the supply of good quality and comprehensive news out there really had decreased in the last few years. So we need Neighbourhood News to address the democratic deficit that is out there in communities, where people just simply are not aware of what's going on” [2013-11-05 Interview Summary - Lauren Pennycook, Carnegie UK].

7.2 Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery

There are three forms of interaction that demonstrate the activities discussed with Ian Davies in his advocacy of the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery. These can be identified as: the sense of practical engagement that Ian attempts to engender; the sense that these engagements are based on the shared interest and experience of photography; and the informal nature of the interaction that Ian Davies fosters. These take the form of the exploratory discussions that Ian encouraged, the engagement that people has with others, and the practical undertakings found in the exhibitions that are mounted.



Figure 44 Ian Davies Chatting Over Coffee

7.2.1 Exploratory Discussions

Ian is motivated to personally invest in the concept of Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery because he recognises there is a social need that was not being met or accommodated in existing social engagement practices. Put simply, Ian believes that photography can act as a focal point for social interaction and personal development that crosses boundaries and the stratification patterns of social differences. The challenge for Ian is to manage this as a fluid and open process, while maintaining positive relationships with established organisations and partners, and thereby maintaining a sense of personal wellbeing, and hopefully not getting lost in the *mission* to provide these alternative services. Ian's commitment to developing an alternative approach to the gallery's activities, especially the way that he would recruit people to help and support the gallery, and the way that people could get involved, is resolute to say the least. The challenge, consequently, was to identify and articulate these expectations in a way that lessened the pressure Ian feels in his role as the primary advocate of the gallery, and to find more effective ways to convince other support organisations and administrators that the gallery represents something positive and worth investing in, that a collaborative and participative approach to community building using photography is a good idea in both principle and practice.

Ian often expresses frustration about his relationship with the administrators of the Leicester Adult Education College, who manage the building in which the gallery is based [Friday 22nd March 2013] [Saturday 11th May 2013]. There were many discussions exploring how Ian felt in this regard, and Ian's belief that the managers of the college did not fully comprehend Ian's approach. Ian explains that he felt that the administrators of the Adult Education service did not understand that the gallery existed because Ian and others worked on a voluntary basis, and that there are few offers of help that would establish a business model. This was because volunteer-based organisations do not often get purchase with administrative and process driven organisations. So, for example, at one point, Ian had been told that he is not allowed to use the telephone in the reception area of the building, which had left him feeling dejected. The same happened when storage space that Ian depended on was withdrawn and he was left to find alternative storage provision for the materials and boarding that was essential to maintaining the gallery spaces [Friday 21st June 2013].

Ian is a volunteer for the gallery like everyone, and is not an employee. He is not drawing a wage and he does not want to apply for formal funding because this would divert the gallery from the purpose that Ian had proposed, which gave him a high level of autonomy and freedom. Ian could contrast this sense of frustration, however, with the occasional moment of pride, such as when he saw the gallery listed in the Leicester What's-On Guide, which featured the gallery as a permanent tourist activity in the city. Ian used his connections within the Labour Party in Leicester to promote the interests of the gallery, and would regularly invite councillors and the city mayor to events. Ian suggested that Sir Peter Soulsby, the Leicester Mayor, had been informally lobbying for a more secure status for the gallery [Thursday 10th April 2013] [Monday 29th April 2013], and that because of this support it was sometimes necessary to 'call-in' some of his political capital in order to prevent changes that were less favourable to Ian and the gallery from being pushed through. The obvious conflict of priorities, then, between the strategic aims of the college, and the motivations of the political supporters, sometimes widened the diplomatic gap between the partners, in what could become a game of cat and mouse, as each side sought to gain advantage over the other. This is a common problem when relatively low-powered community organisations have to use tactics in order to survive, rather than being able to form a longer-term strategic vision.

Given the somewhat precarious nature of the under-footing to the gallery, which was dependent on political support, considerable time was spent by Ian discussing in what way it might be possible that the gallery could be placed on a more stable footing. Any conversation was never far from asking if it

was possible to develop an alternative funding model, either a bequest from a social philanthropist, a business angel, or an industrial endowment? Likewise, considering the range of practices and services that the gallery could potentially develop, which might generate some income, attract sponsorship, micropayments, increased membership fees, and so on [Tuesday 28th May 2013]. Each was fraught with risk, and would take more effort to locate and administer than was possible to devote to the task if the gallery was to remain open and ticking along. The sweat-equity approach seemed to offer the most promising way forward, but with changes to the benefits and social support payments systems, it was less likely that people had time to invest in side-projects if it would otherwise mean that they would be considered fit to work.

One suggestion was to look for funding opportunities that could act as a 'hook' for a collaborative project [Thursday 25th July 2013]. If Ian could organise sessions that would be based around a theme, such as 'history', 'wildlife', 'memories', 'stories', 'protests', 'our way of life,' then these sessions could be offered on the basis that they are inclusive of all groups and participants. If funding can be gained, then it would be used to subsidise places for people, or to be offered to certain groups on a limited cost basis [Friday 26th July 2013]. This would allow Ian to build-up a set of rolling activities that could be pre-packaged around a set pattern of delivery, with key collaborators and fixed costs. Photography will be the vehicle, but the subject would be common connections raised by these issues. Ian's main concern, however, remained the idea that he wanted to offer integrated learning sessions and services, that allowed people from different backgrounds to learn from each other, and that support services generally tend to group people together in special cases of social need, for example, mental health or unemployment. Additionally, it was also suggested that the business market for the gallery would not be found in the city area of Leicester itself, but instead, might be established in the towns and villages around Leicestershire, as this is where the greater local wealth is. Many ideas were considered and discussed, such as offering people a tea and coffee facility, so that people can relax more and feel a greater sense of ownership over the space. Allowing people to use the space to play chess or other board games, or to listen to a lunch-time recital. Or, the possibility of running a series of public lectures in the early evening. All exciting ideas in themselves, but they would have to be negotiated with the college, and as they would extend the remit of the gallery, they would go beyond the basic exhibition of images.

The idea of setting-up a crowd-funding and pledging arrangement for the gallery was discussed on several occasions, so that at least Ian could cover his basic costs and draw a wage. The question remained, however, in what way could these activities be built into the existing routines of the gallery, in such a way that they would be easy to operate and retain the flavour of what the gallery offered? Ian's principle concern was that any funding arrangement maintained his present freedom to operate entrepreneurially and as he saw fit, because Ian did not want to answer to a supervisory board. This was a dilemma, and meant that Ian was sandwiched between a social enterprise model, which the council was unable to allow, because it would be a commercial service using council resources at a non-market rate; or a fully registered charitable trust-type body that could negotiate with the council to offer long-term services over time, with no cost to the council. Ian's mode of operation, however, was firmly stuck in the middle between recognising social gain, and challenging the existing institutional arrangements [Friday 14th June 2013].

A further problem of maintaining support for the gallery came in perceptions of measurement and engagement. How could a gallery that was run by volunteers account for, and explain, the social impact that it was having, such that the administrators of the college would be able to extrapolate from this information that the gallery was performing a suitable function? Ian had a rule-of-thumb mechanism for measuring footfall in the building, though regular and accurate records of this footfall was never recorded. Keeping a journal was one option that was considered, but it was never possible to gather enough volunteers together in a coherent and consistent pattern of activity that gave Ian sufficient time to write and note these occurrences. The ebb-and-flow of the gallery's week was changeable, and was dependent on the nature of the exhibition being mounted. Some exhibitors were semi-professional or commercial in their intent, and could be charged accordingly for the period of display. While others were voluntary groups, or people with special needs that might only cover basic costs. Ian was the sole person who could determine the relationships and the contracts that each had been given, thus meaning that it was not easy to then plan and motivate teams of volunteers who could regularly attend exhibition set-up sessions. When this happened, this was very engaging, but it had to happen at the least accessible hours so that the exhibition is ready at the most accessible hours, which prevents people who work at regular times, or who have education or family commitments, and the time to get involved. Thus, Ian did a lot of this work himself.

The kind of feedback that Ian did receive, however, was often heart-warming. After one exhibition opening event, Ian received a message that thanked him for the work he had put in to making the

gallery a success, and the fish & chip supper that had been provided [Thursday 20th June 2013]. Ian received these kind of letters and messages on a regular basis. It was possible to see from the expressions and the body language of the people involved in the exhibitions that they had a clear sense of pride and achievement, and to overhear their conversations they often expressed their feeling that an exhibition of this kind, in a space of this kind, was never something that they thought they could achieve. But this kind of feedback was very difficult to codify and to record.

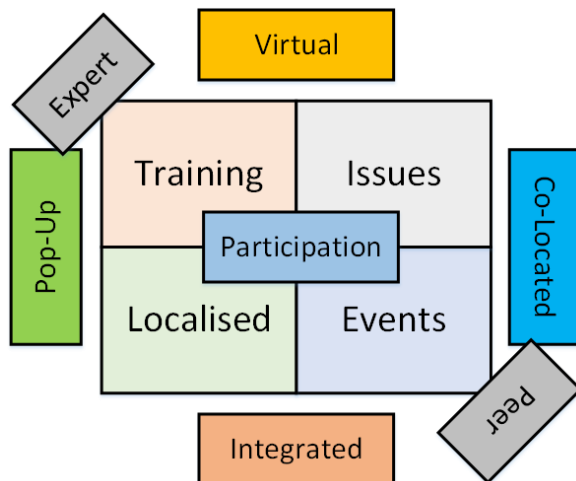


Figure 45 LPPG Learning Model

As a model of engagement, then, Ian pursued a number of interacting and dynamic objectives. On the one hand, he recognised the need to provide learning opportunities that had a regularity and a pattern to them, but this was counterbalanced by the need to offer these events in a fluid, responsive and personalised manner. Too often training sessions would be run for the benefit of the training provider, according to Ian, and not as something that is embraced and maintained individually by the participant. Ian was keen to ensure that these sessions would be integrated as peer-learning with a group of diverse and mixed participants would be a social good in its own right, and would be something that went against the grain of most training provision. The challenge would be to make these sessions feel local and responsive to issues that people cared about. Street photography was a good example of how this might work, as it has a strong tradition of being accessible, needing only limited camera equipment and an observant eye. The often-transformative practice of walking around Leicester city centre, observing situations and people, means that participants are encouraged to look again at the social and civic environment that is around them, and to understand that life on the streets of Leicester comes in many shapes and forms, not all of which fit the marketing image of a city trying to improve its public profile. Activities of this kind were successful because

they were direct, used the tacit knowledge of the activity leader, and could be undertaken across a range of skill levels [Saturday 18th May 2013].



Figure 46 Ian Davis on the Fire Escape

A different route that Ian pursued later was seeking to attract an external exhibition that could offer some kudos and prestige for the gallery by being held in Leicester. The most important of this kind of exhibition was Ian's negotiation to host the Royal Photographic Society exhibition (RPS) [Thursday 27th June 2013]. Ian had negotiated for the RPS Open Exhibition to be shown in Leicester. The first time this has happened since the society was founded. Ian's argument in bidding to host this exhibition, was that it gave the gallery recognition within the photographic community and within the peer network of public galleries that Ian was aiming to stand with. This would add and represent an additional level of appreciation for the gallery, and it might potentially change the perceptions that a 'community' gallery could go beyond the internally validated work of its local support network. Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery would therefore be able to attract external exhibitors from outside of Leicester, which might then lead to other connections and opportunities to co-host events, such as the Royal Photographic Society annual general meeting [Wednesday 10th July 2013].

When a community media organisation is so heavily centred on one person, who is the catalyst, the entrepreneur, and the administrator, it is difficult to maintain a healthy perspective on the running of the organisation. Stepping back, reviewing and evaluating what is happening, and how things are

working, requires time and a nurturing environment in which the central objectives that are being championed are understood and supported. Ian had a strong and supportive personal network of friends and collaborators, based on his experience running the gallery. Ian could talk to anyone and have a beer or a pot of tea and pick-over his ideas. The challenge came, however, when these ideas had to be implemented, and Ian was by-and-large the only person who could action them immediately [Sunday 7th July 2013]. This lack of structure and support was something that was recognised by active gallery members, who eventually persuaded Ian that it would be useful to move to an elected system of membership self-management, and that Ian could then step back from operational and day-to-day issues and focus on his health and his income status [Monday 22nd July 2013].

7.2.2 Social Media Use

Ian's use of social media tools and networking approaches was one of the main factors that drove interest in, and awareness of the gallery. Ian would maintain a consistent presence within the Facebook group that Ian had established to promote the gallery. Ian had cultivated many contacts from around the world using social media, and was happy to support and train people in the effective use of the different platforms. Ian would engage in discussions about how to share documents with supporters locally, while also inviting international photographers from around the world to write guest blogs for the gallery website. Ian was pleased with the international reach of the gallery, and would use the site statistics to gauge how much interest there might be in any of the forthcoming or proposed activities [Thursday 10th April 2013]. Prior to the launch of one exhibition, Ian was excited that there were over four hundred and fifty hits on the group. This gave Ian a sense of validation for his work, because it meant that he could quantify something that was otherwise elusive and intangible. Receiving offers from photographers in Mongolia was a source of pride for Ian, because it meant that his interests could be shared with other people around the world, even if they met resistance more locally in Leicester.

Ian explained that the gallery website is popular because it is promoted across a number of networks and social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Ian uses multiple groups and lists to promote and identify content on the site and the Facebook page. Something he learnt from the Amplified Leicester²¹ project with Prof Sue Thomas and Dr Thilo Boeck from De Montfort Univer-

²¹ <http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/amplified-leicester-impact-social-capital-and-cohesion>

sity [Thursday 4th April 2013]. This meant that Ian could appeal to supporters and volunteers simultaneously at the same time, such as those who had an interest in particular forms of photography, and those who wanted to use the gallery as a chance to meet-up in person, rather than simply online. Ian described how members of the Facebook group often do not realise that the gallery physically exists, and could be surprised that it had a presence in the centre of Leicester. Through the use of the blog and the Facebook group Ian expected that even if the physical location of the gallery changed, or it closed, then the community of contributors and supporters would continue on the basis that they had found a supportive network of people who share a similar interest in a topic that crosses social boundaries.

7.2.3 Networking



Figure 47 Scott Choucino LPPG

An important aspect of the gallery, then, was the way that it became a focus for a network of amateur, professional and student photographers. Because the gallery had a wide remit, it was possible to offer services and events that drew in photographers from different backgrounds. Ian's intention was that it would be better for people to learn from each other, and to provide support for one another through these social networks, than it was for silos to be maintained that separated people based on their recognised social status as a commercial photographer, an artist, a designer, a learner or a hobbyist, and so on. This approach, however, was not without its problems, as managing the expectations and sense of entitlement of some contributors would be contrasted with the lack of confidence and social validation for other photographers. As Ian asked on many occasions, what is it that makes someone a photographer? Is it the fact that they get paid for it? Is it the care they put into capturing an image and sharing it with others? Or, is it someone who spends lots of money on

the latest equipment? Each of which does not make anyone, according to Ian, a respected producer of photographic images.

The mix of established and emerging photographers was always a constant process of interaction and discussion [Saturday 11th May 2013]. Those with an eye on developing a professional career or widening their client base, could on occasions be condescending of the 'community' element of the gallery, as if it was not sufficient to run an accessible gallery that could aim for so-called professional standards of selection and display, but which was also inclusive of all interests and skill levels. This self-selected reinforcement of the role of a 'proper' photographer, was regularly challenged by Ian, though Ian recognised that this process worked both ways. As one of the gallery supporters, Scott Choucino explained that, as an emerging professional photographer, he had also been messed about by some of the established and well-funded Leicester-based arts organisations, who could be accused of wasting money because they do not have the proper discipline to embed and develop projects either commercially, or from a social-gain perspective [Tuesday 16th April 2013].

7.2.4 Hands-On Support



Figure 48 LPPG Open Exhibition Set Up

A lot of the activity that was undertaken in the gallery was hands-on, and included: mounting, painting, repairing, sorting, collecting, packing, and so on. Ian was fluent at the practical tasks and could spend hours preparing the walls for a coming exhibition. He clearly enjoyed the conceptual and practical experience of fixing and mounting images to the walls, in the different configurations, and with different materials. On occasions that people came to mount their work on the display boards, Ian would spend time demonstrating how the mounting process worked, and encouraging the exhibitors to mount their own work. Ian felt that this was an integral part of the experience. They could pay for

them to be mounted, or they could have a go at doing it themselves, and thereby learning something about the process of hanging images [Tuesday 16th April 2013].

The occasions when the main gallery was being switched from one exhibition to another, was a good opportunity to get involved, meet other volunteers and get to do some practical work. Clearing the walls of the previous exhibition material, removing the Velcro pads, filling-in the holes with plaster, then painting the walls white was not as easy as it looked. Being able to hang images on an uneven wall, while keeping them consistent and proportional was an absorbing process. Ian was always patient with newcomers to the process, and was happy to guide people through the stages that had to be worked through.



Figure 49 Hitz Rao LPPG

For example, setting-up for Hitz Rao and Scott Choucino's exhibition was an intensive process [13th May 2013]. Hitz was excited at the prospect of unwrapping his images and sorting them into the sequence that he wanted them to appear. Hitz even described his excitement, saying "It's like Christmas. It's like boxing day. Oh wow." Hitz described how the images he was showing at this event had originally formed part of a "pop-in exhibition" that he had contributed to in Leicester's cultural quarter around a theme of the Paralympics. Hitz described that the theme was based on "mainstream Asian musicians and even up-and-coming young musicians." According to Hitz his images reflected a sense of community, and that he wanted the visitors to see this in a flow as people move through the gallery. Hitz was emphatic about the preparations for the exhibition, he suggested the work was "proper getting your hands dirty."



Figure 50 LPPG Volunteers Exhibition Set-Up

Scott Chouciño's response to the hands-on experience of mounting his images was similar, that he was absorbed in the process of getting the images to look good on the wall, whereas most people, himself included, are used to seeing images on a screen. Scott had photographed musicians from around Leicester, but he was keen to go beyond the standard view of Leicester's music scene, often associated with the Leicester cultural quarter area. As Scott described it, "it's all things that are cultural, but not necessarily funded by any sort of Arts Council cultural funding or government funding. It's all done off people's own backs."



Figure 51 Scott Choucino LPPG



Figure 52 LPPG Exhibition Set-Up

Scott explained what he was hoping to get done as he was putting the exhibition together. As well as checking the prints that he had had produced, he wanted to make sure that none of them had been damaged. As Scott described, “there's a few which need redoing again, but we've been putting them up in the gallery, choosing the order to put them in, making sure everything looks okay. Trying to work out where to put the food, where to put the people, and just the general logistics.” Scott hoped that the visitors to the exhibition would gain an insight into parts of Leicester’s cultural scene that may often get lost because it is not officially funded [2013-05-13-001-LPPG-Exhibition-Set-Up]



Figure 53 Royal Photographic Society Exhibition Set-Up

Typically, at an exhibition change over, Ian’s focus for the day would be to clear the previous exhibition, refresh the walls and mount the images on the walls in an order that works in a pleasing way [Monday 1st July 2013]. Ian is in his element during this phase, because it is very hands-on. Scott’s brother, James, was helping, along with Alex from the framing business that is situated in the basement of the Adult Education centre. The badinage was naturally occurring, with lots of jokes being cracked, tea being drunk, and people coming and going. The process of hanging one hundred images in a small gallery space requires a strong spatial awareness. Ian was able to do this instinctively, and

had a very good sense of positioning and relative spaces between each of the different frames. The job of putting mirror-brackets onto the back of the frames slowed down the process, because Ian's resources were limited and he had to purchase, or persuade people to share, equipment as he went along. This meant that there could be delays in getting equipment. The whole process could be speeded-up if there was a petty cash pool so that Ian could get things in advance. But Ian was pretty much working hand-to-mouth, and used a lot of his energy persuading people to 'gift' or sponsor resources for the gallery [Monday 5th August 2013].



Figure 54 Alex Finishing RPS Exhibition Set-Up

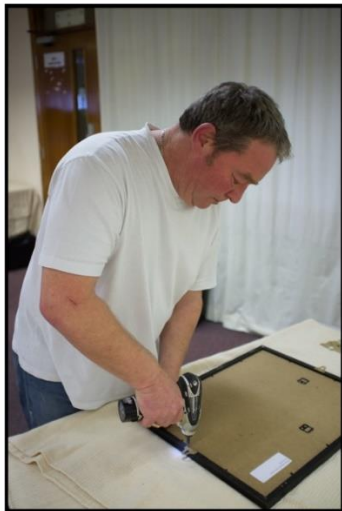


Figure 55 Frame Making RPS Exhibition



Figure 56 Frame Hanging RPS Exhibition Set-Up

7.2.5 People



Figure 57 Ian Davies RPS Exhibition

The expectation was that once people had become familiar with the work of the gallery through the social media groups, perhaps attending an activity session or an exhibition, that they would sign-up for membership, so that they could be represented more formally in the development of the gallery. Ian was the main point of contact for anyone who wanted or needed help, and one only had to sit at the gallery desk to get a sense of the comings and goings of the different volunteers and supporters of the gallery. Ian's presence acted as a focal point for many people to come in and share their interests in photography, in a more socially accessible way than a more formally organised gallery might

[Thursday 9th May 2013]. One group of visitors was a small group of students who had special needs, and who were guided by their support workers as they prepared for an exhibition of their work. While another regular visitor to the gallery was Andy, an ex-soldier, like Ian himself, who was developing his own IT business, but had a keen interest in photography. Ian often sat with a radio on in the background, on one occasion it was tuned to CapitalFM. When asked why he did not listen to BBC Radio Four or Radio Three, Ian replied “the clue is in the title of the gallery, and that he’s not playing something that will put people off.” This was a light-hearted exchange, but it gave a good sense of Ian’s approach and desire to keep the gallery accessible [Monday 10th June 2013]. Not everything was serious of course, at one-point Ian was out on the fire escape photographing a spider’s web that was coated in moisture from the rain. There was a sudden crash and a shout of ‘bollocks!’ Ian had dropped his mobile phone three floors, and it smashed on the concrete floor. Scott retrieved it and despite a smashed screen it was still working [Saturday 15th June 2013].



Figure 58 Adult Education College Course

To gauge how the gallery was understood, it was worth speaking in more detail with supporters and members [2nd July 2013 Arthur Foster]. Arthur Foster was a professional photographer for over forty years. His background was in newspapers and magazines, but he also managed to produce work that was “destined for the gallery wall, although it would look okay on a page.” Arthur described his feeling about Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery, and the way that it tries to make photography more accessible. Arthur had been keen to find out more about the gallery, and he had discovered that “it’s exactly what it says on the tin.” Meaning that there are “no judges here, and nobody to tell you whether your work is good, bad or indifferent.”



Figure 59 Arthur Foster LPPG

Arthur felt it was important that if people are going to be encouraged to display their work, then the atmosphere of a gallery has to be accommodating and supportive. It might cost a small amount of money to take part, but for that price you get to see how other photographers are working. Arthur felt that the Leicester Peoples Photographic gallery was a good meeting place for photographers who “have a like mind.” According to Arthur, this is a “sorely needed facility in this area at the present time. When people have got no work and no money why would you just give them something to look at.”



Figure 60 Liz Kendall MP Visits RPS

Another prominent visitor to the gallery was the local MP Liz Kendall. Liz wanted to have a look to get a sense of what the gallery is like, and how it might be better supported [Friday 12th July 2013]. She suggested writing to schools within her constituency and recommending the gallery as a learning resource. Ian and Liz discussed briefly how the gallery was supported by volunteers, and how this could be a model for potential future service developments, and how they can cut across the divide

between different social groups and different service agencies. Another regular supporter was Nick Rawle, who is a professional photographer and volunteer [Monday 15th July 2013]. Nick had offered to spend time at the gallery while Ian was away. Nick reflected that the gallery had come-on considerably since it started, but he felt that Ian was often reluctant to let go of the control of the gallery, but that it was good to see him taking some time out and recovering. Nick liked the way that the gallery provided a non-judgemental space, while at the same time having a clear idea of its sense of purpose. Nick felt that it was important that Ian had people around him that he could trust, and that it was this basis of trust that was at the heart of the way the gallery worked.

7.2.6 Exhibitions



Figure 61 Exhibition Participants

The primary focus of Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery was to mount exhibitions of work undertaken by different contributors and supporters, as well as occasional outside guest exhibitions. Glen Tilyard ran a digital photography course in Leicester, and had chosen to exhibit students work at the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery [5th June 2013 Exhibition Opening]. As part of the launch of the exhibition Glen held a reception in the gallery so that students could see their work printed and mounted on the walls, and bring family and friends to view the work. Glen described that he was very pleased with the turn-out for the exhibition and the standard of the student work that he was able to show. As Glen said:

“I've got to say the turnout is better than I expected, it's absolutely brilliant. The exhibition is fifty percent up on last year. Last year we had twenty-two exhibitors, and this year we've got thirty-one, so we've got about, a lot more pictures. And I'm very, very proud, very pleased and proud of everything that everybody's done.”

Glen explained that he was a former Leicester Mercury Photographer, and that he also used to tutor at a local college. When he was offered voluntary redundancy, he decided to put the two things together, and set up his own business running photography courses. What Glen aimed to do was to get “beginners of the full-auto setting and taking fabulous pictures.” He did this initially on a one-day course, and then followed that up with a “level two courses where they can follow-on and they can do, maybe, portrait photography, macro photography.” Glen described this as an “intermediate photography course, a night-time photography course, all sorts of lots of other extra courses.”

The reaction to the course was that it was enjoyable, and that people come back again to do other courses. It has got to the point where Glen has to run up to ten courses each year. As Glen explained, he has “to put on a new course because some people have done all the courses and they'll, they say 'what can we do next?'" And because Glen is self-employed he has the flexibility to respond to the interests of his clients. So, if someone is interested in photographing animals, Glen can tailor his teaching towards that interest. Glen was enthusiastic about the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery space, and he thought that the gallery space was “marvellous,” and something that Leicester needed because as it is “big and prestigious is absolutely brilliant.” Glen thought that “Ian was doing a marvellous job getting it kind of built up. And it's growing, you know. And I think with exhibitions like this, and with this sort of turn-out and future courses and future exhibitions it can only grow and grow.”

It was worth finding out what people viewing the exhibition thought of the work and the gallery. One guest said that she was a friend of one of the exhibitors, Jackie, and that she had seen the exhibition last year and really liked it. As she said, “I like to see what people have been up to. I want to see, there's a few that I kind of spotted last year so I want to see what they are doing this year, the same people.” She said she thought the space and the work were

“Great, there's, I find it very - now what's the word I'm looking for? Because there's so many it kind of like... Yeah what's the word, it's a bit of, yeah, there's a bit of an overload because there's so many all at once though. I want to stand back and take things in in chunks...”

One of the student exhibitors explained that they thought it was a very good idea to see the work up on the walls, and that getting people in to see the images as they were displayed was good, because “typically you'll take pictures, particularly with digital, and it goes onto a computer, and it sits there and nobody ever sees it. So, this is an opportunity to actually get them out there where other people can, hopefully, appreciate what you are doing.”

There was strong appreciation for the gallery itself. "This is a really good space," one student said. "I mean there's lots of space here. It's good to have somewhere, you know, where you can have these kinds of exhibitions. And it doesn't cost a lot to actually do it. Anyone can actually exhibit, so it's a really useful space." They explained that this was the "second year that we've actually had and run this exhibition, and it's yeah, it's very good. I just hope that we get lots of people coming through the months that it's here, they're on display."

One of the other exhibitors suggested that the exhibition was "fantastic" and that they were "really enjoying it" because putting the exhibition together was "a bit of a challenge, putting your work up for public approval." As they went on to describe,

"It's quite nerve-racking actually. But I'm not as nervous as last year, because you've been through it once, but it's actually a really, really good feeling when the work goes up and it looks fantastic. And it's really nice to see a lot of the people I know here exhibiting. Their work is amazing and it's a good excuse to get it printed-up, because so often now we don't print anything, you just leave it on your computer and no one ever gets to see it. So it's a good opportunity to show off a bit and get together."

This is because,

"Normally as a photographer you would not get this opportunity to exhibit in the way we're doing. So it's affordable for people who, right from amateurs up to professionals, to hire out the space and use it in this way. Normally an exhibit might cost you thousands and thousands of pounds, whereas this is a bit more, you know, it's a budget and yet we still get as you can see the room is very, very full. You get a lot of exposure, so I think it's fantastic, I do."

Another person suggested that they enjoyed using the gallery space, and that they were pleased to see so many people attending the exhibition and looking at the photographs. Another exhibitor described their experience taking part in the course, and what it felt like to show their work as part of the exhibition. They said,

"I'm here tonight's because I'm one of the exhibitors, and it's my first time. I only started doing photography about nine months ago with Glen, and on lots of his courses, which are fantastic. And it's just great to be part of this tonight actually. I'm really, really pleased that I've put some in. Very nerve-racking though when it's your first time, but really good fun."

And that having their work on the walls?

"It feels really quite special actually. Yeah, it does actually. And they are such a great group, and so encouraging and everybody's always so nice about your stuff. Even when you get

ones that aren't quite so good. Everybody's very good at pointing out what next time, but in a really positive way. It's just a brilliant group."



Figure 62 Ian Davies & Chris Hanrahan

Chris Hanrahan was a prominent supporter of the gallery and a keen photographer who had never exhibited his own work, but with Ian's encouragement he arranged to host an exhibition demonstrating examples of his street photography [Monday 5th August 2013]. On the evening of the exhibition opening, and after tidying the gallery, Suzanne (Chris' wife) prepared a buffet and a good quantity of wine. Unfortunately, there was a very heavy rainstorm around 6pm that kept a few people away. In total about seventy people attended. Chris gave a short speech and was clearly emotional as this was his first public exhibition. The comments about the exhibition were very positive, as one would expect from friends and family. This was a very good example of the gallery in action, with a wide range of people coming together to celebrate the work of a local photographer in a relaxed and open and pleasant environment.



Figure 63 Gallery Visitors



Figure 64 Ian Davies RPS Exhibition

Perhaps the exhibition with the greatest sense of expectation was the Royal Photographic Society Exhibition. This was something of a coup for Ian Davies and the Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery, and so it was interesting to gauge the reaction and views of the visitors to the gallery [July 2013 RPS Exhibition Opening]. One respondent explained that they had come because they were “trying to support what Leicester has to offer in the arts really.” And they thought they would “pop along for the opening night and just drink in the atmosphere here. It's brilliant.” They had a look around the exhibition and said that they thought “it's kind of amazing to get the quality of work kind of coming here you know, into Leicester, which is, you know, can't compare up against places like London, so it's pretty kind of good isn't it.”



Figure 65 RPS Exhibition Visitors

Ian was very nervous about giving a welcoming speech at the formal presentation, but he managed to thank the people who had helped and supported the gallery, and who had been involved in the process of putting the exhibition together. Ian thanked the Adult Education college for their support,

and for being patient with him. Rather than declaring the exhibition 'open', Ian instead asked everyone present to shout 'open!,' thereby reversing the traditional way of launching an exhibition.



Figure 66 RPS Exhibition Visitors

Speaking with other respondents they said that they were “impressed with the photographs,” and that some of them were quite affecting. As one respondent described:

“I do like animals, so those images. The one with the elephant in it. The deer, the little baby thing. I think it was called 'Hope' or something. I felt 'aahh'. But some of the effects I'm amazed at them, you'd think, some of them you look at them and you think it's going to be, you know, a painting. Just amazing. And someone was telling me, you know, in this digital age you can get better photographs. You wouldn't have been able to do it years ago. I am impressed. Yes, it's been very nice.”

Another visitor to the gallery explained that they thought the exhibition was “fab actually,” and that they had “looked at it originally when it came in and thought it was amazing, but that was all kind of stacked-up, so half the pictures were upside down. But they are fantastic on the wall, and Ian's done a grand job laying them out.” They went on to explain what they thought an exhibition like this might do for Leicester.

“Ohh, for Leicester it's completely invaluable. As the city of culture bid city it's of the utmost importance that we have stuff that's of a national, kind of, importance. Rather than just regional or local. And I think this is one of the key steps in becoming a national city of culture. Obviously the Richard the Third thing is hugely important, but so is something that is modern and contemporary, like the Royal Photographic Society. It can't do any harm at all to Leicester's profile.”

Another person described that they are a member of a local camera club, and that their husband is a member of the RPS, so they had received an invitation. She had experience of using the building in

relation to the college and her work as a tutor. She was impressed with the exhibition, and particularly liked natural history images. “There's some beautiful horse ones, and I'm very interested in horses,” she said, “and there are also some fascinating portraits.” She even thought it would be nice if her camera club could use the gallery space as they had never exhibited in Leicester.



Figure 67 Scott Shooting Portraits for RPS Exhibition

One of the regular gallery volunteers explained that they thought that the exhibition was impressive, but that they felt some doubt about their ability to put on an exhibition next.

“It's very impressive, and the worst thing is for me is because I'm having an exhibition here. After this I feel already a bit diminished. But there it is. I choose, I will be on that wall putting some work up of my own. There are some fantastic photographs here, images. Particularly images. I would love to see more of that rather than a mixed exhibition. But it's a general show so it's inevitable. It has to be democratic and people have to share the wall. Whereas in my case it will be one and somebody else will be having an exhibition.”

Another person suggested that they not only liked the exhibition, but they also liked the “general vibe,” because “everyone's really chilled and stuff.” He was not confident at expressing a view about any of the images, because he felt “sometimes I think how many times can you look at a photo? It can be like once, but I don't know, everyone gets to see it in a different way, don't they. So, and you can come up with little back-stories in your head, I guess.”

The Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery host an open exhibition each year in which members can submit prints to be shown [September 2013 LPPG Open Exhibition Launch]. At the beginning of the evening a lady brought in some camera equipment that she wanted to donate. Ian Davies spent some time talking with her, discussing what the different cameras were. The lady explained that the cameras had been her mothers, and that she had had them before she herself was born. Ian carefully unpackaged each of the cameras and tested them to see if they worked.



Figure 68 LPPG Open Exhibition Launch Event

When the exhibition was formally opened, the winner of the previous year's open competition gave a few words about the exhibition and what it meant to her. Tracy thanked everyone for coming and for presenting some "spectacular work on display." She also thanked Ian Davies as the curator of the exhibition. One visitor had come to see their friend's prints that had been included in the exhibition. They thought that the images are "really stunning ones," and that they were "really surprised at how many other pictures here are really interesting to look at." Noting how there are so many

"Different things you can take pictures of, and how you can present them in colour, in black and white, different backgrounds and frames, and all sorts. So, I'm really pleased and surprised, and I didn't know this event was on, but I'll come again another year."

Another person was an exhibitor, who had two images in the exhibition. They said,

"I just think this is such a fantastic thing for anyone trying to get into photography. I've not done it for about ten years and this just gave me the confidence to have a go. It's brilliant, it's really good. Really good gallery."

Another exhibitor had three images in the exhibition. He described himself as one of the older people in the exhibition, at sixty-four. He described the image he had on display.

"Black and white portrait of a beautiful young woman which I took on the one-day portraiture course that was run at the Phoenix, which I really enjoyed. It was a very instructive day and I took pictures I never thought I was capable of."

Another guest that said that he was not signed-up with the gallery at that point, because he felt that his work was not yet up to standard. He explained that he felt that

"Some of the work is absolutely fantastic. It just makes me kind of realise, right, just a bit more effort needed. But I can see from other bits and pieces, like my friend has told me

many times, I'm good enough to compete with them all. So, I just need to pull my finger out."

Speaking with a tutor from the Adult Education College, and who teaches photography at the college, she described that she wanted to come and see her work, and the work of her colleagues and her daughters work. She explained that it is good to see work on the gallery wall, and that it makes a huge difference seeing the work on the walls rather than just looking at it on a screen. She felt there was a growing demand for more opportunities for people to get involved in photography, and explained that she had

"Been here for three years and it's grown and grown every year. And since we've had the gallery here are well it has. It's actually grown the amount of learners that I've got and how many courses we run has actually expanded. So, yeah."

She also hoped that the gallery would make a difference:

"Because there's not many places that have dedicated photographic galleries. We're a big city so we should have one, and so I think it would be good. I think it will make a difference, yeah. We've got lots of talented people in Leicester, so it's good that they've got somewhere to put their work."

One husband and wife couple explained that her husband had some images in the exhibition and that she was very impressed with his work. She said,

"I like a lot of the work that's done in black and white media. I think you get a different sort of contrast with it. It's not something that you see very often. A lot of people like to work in colour these days, and colour is fantastic, but I think black and white gives you sort of like a more natural image."

She was impressed with the diverse range of the images, and that the gallery worked very well with the diversity of Leicester. Another guest suggested that they thought the exhibition was "really amazing, especially because somebody who's not a professional can come and exhibit where people can come and have a look. So, it's really good." The emphasis on the social side of the gallery was very important, as they explained:

"A lot of people know who I am now and it's quite good for me to kind of, it's a good social thing. It's good to meet other people here, likeminded people, and you see the other people's work. So yeah."

7.3 EavaFM



Figure 69 EavaFM Website March 2013

As a radio station that aims to serve the needs of Leicester’s East African communities, EavaFM provided a range of opportunities for participants to get involved. It is managed by Dee Bahra, whose experience as a radio journalist and as a community organiser, helps to keep the station running by organising the schedule, training and technical support that the station needs. Based at the Ross Walk learning centre, part of Leicester College, EavaFM is located in a part of the city with the highest concentration of people from an Asian or East African background [Wednesday 27th March 2013]. Typically, the activities that Dee is able to organise are of the kind that kept people having access to the building, being able to use the studio equipment and to understand how the playout software operates. Dee’s concern is that the station should be able to operate in an autonomous and sustainable manner, though on many occasions this can seem distant, because many volunteers did not understand the structure and regulations that go behind keeping a service on-air. For Dee, the most important need is training that can be easily assimilated by the volunteers, none of whom had professional media experience. The general reason for being involved with the station is a sense of civic-mindedness, which Dee appeals to continually in order to access funding and support. EavaFM has a very low funding base, and a limited technical capability, so volunteers who help at the station are doing so on an ad-hoc basis. Somehow, though, the station maintains a diverse range of broadcast output and it addresses different language-based communities with some equanimity.

Dee’s support for the volunteers at the station usually goes beyond the limits of what is needed to keep programmes running, and spread into issues of welfare support and advice. Dee describes the

case of a volunteer who had been arrested because he was in the UK after his visa had expired. Dee suspects that this was the result of a rival station who were concerned about the popularity of the volunteer when he was a presenter on EavaFM. Dee expresses some frustrations that there is not a greater sense of community between media groups in Leicester, where they are working closer together, and that there is some conflict between some of the different groups. Dee's main preoccupation is therefore funding and the renewal of the stations licence with Ofcom. Both of which were somewhat opaque, because of the relationship with the founding organisation that supports the station. Dee explains that EavaFM is run as a subset of the 'Solutions Centre' in St Matthews Community Centre (<http://stmcs.com/>), and that when money has been needed to pay for licences, or rent, or equipment costs, the 'elders' who support the station would find the money.

Dee tried to enlist the support of volunteers with a fundraising background. On one occasion at a meeting with Dee and Brian, the issue of applying for funding from the Community Radio Fund was discussed, as well as other potential funding sources. Dee explained that the licence extension for EavaFM would have to be submitted by the end of April. This was somewhat alarming, as Dee was unable to talk definitively about how the application was being approached, by whom, and following what process? Brian was concerned that when he had interacted with the board running the station, he had been unable to establish a clear sense of the arrangements for governance and financial reporting [Thursday 18th April 2013]. As Brian explained, this relationship seems somewhat opaque, and could not be sustained if there is ever to be an application for extended external funding. What was needed, Brian suggested, was a set of governance documents, minutes and audited accounts, none of which had been made available to him at EavaFM. There was some concern, then, that EavaFM was facing an imminent application for its licence extension, and yet so little was being done to prepare for it [Wednesday 15th May 2013]. Eventually the licence renewal application was submitted to Ofcom, but Dee reported that she had little input to the process and the renewed objectives of the station [Thursday 27th June 2013].

Dee explained that she was happy helping and supporting volunteers, but that she did not want to get involved with the financial administration or the politics of the station and its management. She wanted to be able to reconcile some of the outstanding issues that have been expressed in previous Annual Reports made to Ofcom, but this had to be done in a way that was not going to cause any conflict within EavaFM, or its support network. Some work would need to be done, however, to translate some of these issues, as Dee put it, from a Western cultural view to an Asian/East African

view. It was suggested that the board that runs EavaFM look again at the Ofcom Social Gain objectives, and consider how these can be rationalised with a small number of people who understand them and who can focus on them.



Figure 70 Leicester Vaisakha Procession

Dee's involvement with EavaFM is more than simply administrative, as the station encourages a strong sense of cultural and faith identity. EavaFM is able to arrange outside-broadcasts from events such as the Vaisakhi procession. This is a Sikh celebration that involved families walking from the temple at the 'Lonely Bones,' to Rowley Fields via Victoria Park in Leicester. There was an opportunity for guest and supporters to share some tea and samosas. Dee had promised there would be 20,000 people on the walk, with lots of families walking together and chatting [Monday 22nd April 2013].

Training is a key priority for Dee, who wants to ensure that station volunteers stays on the right side of the Broadcast Code. A training session was organised using one of the training rooms at Ross Walk [Monday 29th April 2013]. About twenty people attended the session. At the start there was a Health and Safety briefing from Leicestershire College, about fire evacuation procedures and working alone in the building. The first part of the presentation was an outline of the key principles on which the Ofcom Broadcast Code is founded, and an explanation that freedom of speech under the Broadcasting Code is balanced with broadcasting responsibility. The session was as open and interactive as possible, but it also included some strong language and discussions about adult content. The discussion was vibrant and passionate with a very good, shared response. There was a tendency for the discussion to be driven by the men in the group, though it was 50/50 male-female audience. The

discussions focussed on examples of good and bad practice, and identified several ethical issues associated with broadcasting that make a unique experience in Leicester. A good example that was discussed was the recent English Defence League march in Leicester, and the challenges that this presented for a balanced and objective coverage on the station. Could and should the station take a neutral stance when discussing controversial issues associated with these events, without compromising the values of the station?

Part of the management routine of running a community radio station is responding to complaints that have been made to Ofcom. One such issue that arose was a complaint that EavaFM was playing music that focussed too much on one language group [Thursday 30th May 2013]. The response that Dee worked out was to assure Ofcom that the station would review its programming practices, its training practices, and the playlisting system that was used to put programmes together. The challenge that Dee identified, however, was the difficulty in encouraging people from different language communities to take part in the station, as the communities that are usually absent prove the hardest to recruit. The process of developing the station, Dee suggested, needed to be underpinned by a much more robust framework of volunteer support and management, so that regular patterns of participation and involvement could be built-up that targeted those people who find it most difficult to self-identify with community radio programming.

The tendency was to find small groups of people with a strong interest in a subject or cause, and to give them time on the station to widen the reach of the communities that the station served. One example was allowing Ramadan Radio to access the station for the whole period of Ramadan that year, and to effectively take over the station output [Monday 10th June 2013]. This meant that Dee and the regular station volunteers could take a break, but it also meant that control of the output of the station was delegated to this group, hence the need for training in the Broadcasting Code and the obligations of broadcasters. One of Dee's concerns was that the training was requested to be undertaken in two sessions, one for men and one for women, but Dee insisted that the training sessions would be mixed because the audience itself would be mixed, and the responsibility of anyone broadcasting on the station was to recognise this in their programme content.

In 2012 the arrangement was that EavaFM ran streamed content for the month of Ramadan because they did not have an RSL (Restricted Service Licence), which meant that the presenters at EavaFM could take some time off. This year Ramadan Radio had an RSL, which meant they would also be

broadcasting in Leicester. It was suggested to Dee that from a listener's point of view, having two radio stations running the same content at the same time might lead to a complaint. Dee agreed that the content needed to be different and that the programming should come from EavaFM, rather than talking a direct stream from another station.

7.4 Down Not Out



Figure 71 Simon Parker Radio DNO on Panj Pani

A regular event that was organised as a Down Not Out session, was the programme that Simon Parker organised for Panj Pani Radio [Thursday 25th April 2013]. Simon Parker hosts the programme, with a contribution from some of the participants in the homelessness project. The programme could be based, for example, around a discussion of the governments use of language in the welfare debate. The studio in which the programme is recorded is simple, but well thought through, with a standard layout. It is based in the Towers Hospital, part of the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. Simon explained that a lot of the equipment in the studio was not working, and that the PC would run very slowly, but that Panj Pani would be moving because the Towers Hospital will be closing for redevelopment. Panj Pani streams online and runs occasional RSLs.

The on-air discussion ranged from talking about the concept of the 'benefit scrounger,' to the perception of users of the unemployment services. The discussion was led by Simon who quoted from some published articles from the Guardian newspaper. This took about fifty minutes before finishing on a lighter note with a story about Japanese residents of the Okinowi Island living to a late age. One of the volunteers reported that she had visited the island, and had first-hand experience of life there. The discussion then moved on to how eating fish helps a healthy diet.



Figure 72 Radio DNO Show Panj Pani



Figure 73 Simon Parker Radio DNO Panj Pani



Figure 74 Panj Pani Radio Flier

Simon describes how he feels very tired after producing the Radio DNO shows on Panj Pani Radio, and how he will be looking to structure time-out after the Wednesday and Thursday shows [Friday

14th June 2013]. Simon explains that Homeless Action Leicester was particularly pleased with the radio sessions, as they gave an opportunity for direct engagement by the volunteers. Simon reports, however, that the director of Action Homeless is moving on, and that he was concerned that the project might not receive as much backing as it had so far. Simon's concern was that Citizens Eye had perhaps lost some of its original drive, and that it would be good to re-examine the original sessions of Citizens Eye that he was involved with, and how he got to know James Black and Sam Newton. Simon explains that he is motivated largely by his ability to engage with people who are otherwise written-off by society. Simon is keen to develop further work with prisoners and offenders, as radio is regarded as an increasingly important vehicle for rehabilitations and skill development.

8 Reflections on the Lines of Entry into Group Life

Returning to Blumer's view that social processes, such as participation, are neutral in relation to social change, attention can now be given to how different participative practices might be observed and understood as a related set of social practices which take shape along lines of entry into group life [See Table 6 Participation Analytical Categories]. This framework can be used as an analytical guide that elucidates a response to the situated activity that is comprised of the interactions between agents that are expressed in the preceding narrative. As a set of preliminary and open codes, these lines of entry make it possible to identify relevant and significant issues, such as the *definitions* that are produced, the *stances* that are negotiated, and the *actions* that are accomplished (or that become possible), as agents act in the social situations that they are part of. As was stated earlier,

The greater the opportunities for participation in practice that are offered up, the greater the potential variety for social change that accompanies them. However, the participative practices "do not determine what the specific social changes will be" (Blumer, 1990, p. 74).

8.1 Structure of Occupations and Positions

Recap: *There is nothing inherent in the particular process that explains the social character of these occupations and positions, because, as Blumer points out, "one cannot find the explanation of these matters by going back to the bare [socialising] process" (Blumer, 1990, p. 62).*

8.1.1 What are the structures of occupations and positions?

Within the observable patterns of community media that formed the basis for this account, it is difficult to define what is meant by an 'occupation,' especially as community media tends towards arrangements of indeterminacy and fluidity. There are few established rules that have been embedded and codified, as they might be in routine or ritualistic patterns of professional or industrialised practice. 'Station managers,' 'editors,' 'co-ordinators,' and so on, are terms that have been appropriated from other situations and cultures of media and social practice. However, within community media settings, they have no determined structure or fixed pattern of representation. A useful question that elucidates the extent of this problem, is to ask how someone might go about becoming the 'editor' of a community media organisation or group? What careers advice would they seek to guide them through the pathways and social networks of different types of community media organisation? What types of employment experience, or the qualifications gained through educational and

professional accreditation, would mean they were well placed to pursue community media in a leadership capacity? Is there a pathway that can be followed from one community media group to the next, i.e. as a set of transferable and recognised skills and dispositions, that would suite the passage towards leadership roles? Occupational pathways are common in other forms of social activity, for example the highly demarcated career progression routes and expectations developed in the teaching profession. But in this instance, there is no replicable processes or sets of routines that a motivated community media activist can follow into specific roles, instead, they must on the whole guide themselves and each other.

Are the occupations that we can trace, then, the result of an impulse of self-identification and self-labelling, as a form of ego-driven posturing? Or conversely, are they the result of the process of continual negotiation and labelling that aids the understanding of others? Are they a posture, as it were, or do they have a defined purposeful effect that aids a set of desired lines of action in local circumstances? While people might adopt the titles assimilated from routines of mainstream and professional practice, on further inspection, however, it seems clear that community media leadership or advocacy roles do not stand comparably to those found in professional media and other corporate organisations, because they do not match the terms that would be codified as a set of professional expectations. The incongruity between the different roles of community media often lend themselves, therefore, to misunderstanding about what it means to be an 'editor,' a 'station manager,' or a 'gallery manager.' Indeed, they may well be closer in practice to other types of roles, such as social advocate, community development worker, training co-ordinator, mentor, councillor, volunteer administrator, civic and political activist, and so on.

When Ian, John and Dee are identified as leading actors in the social groups that they operate in, they are doing so in relation to a framework of concepts and ideas that, on the surface, might relate easily to other forms of media practice, in that their assumed title and the status that comes with adopting that title, is unclear and adaptable. Though they use these titles – 'editor,' 'station manager,' and 'gallery manager,' it is for convenience rather than from conviction. Neither Dee, John or Ian demonstrated a particularly strong regard for the status that might otherwise be assumed with a leadership role in a more traditional business structure. Instead, their adoption of these titles was more about speeding along the process of explanation, i.e. *signalling*, when they came to interact with other people from outside their network group. The role title was a functional sign of what might be expected of them, rather than an aspirational status marker. Consequently, we can assess

the extent to which this role-labelling operated nominally when we consider what happened when they were put aside. Working without a formally mandated role title is generally considered to be socially anomalous, perhaps because most common and day-to-day assumptions about people who participate in an organisation are built on the structural arrangements of these roles, which in turn helps us to recognise an organisation based on a process of self-reinforcement. The whole debate about hyperlocal media and civic journalism is a strand of this dynamic, as one group of professional insiders refuse to let go of their power to include or exclude people who seek to do similar things, but who are not motivated by the 'insider' status that a role title brings. As John argues, are you a 'journalist' or a 'community reporter,' and what difference does this make?

Role titles suggest, therefore, that an organisation will have a clear and well defined hierarchical structure, with clearly delineated job roles, such as those found in a typical commercial or public service radio station, or a mass circulation newspaper. Whereas in the circumstances observed here, at this point of time, the job roles were fluid, incongruent, or aspirational. Each social setting demonstrated a lack of formal governance systems that could enforce the role structures that were being enacted. The result is that each participant, Dee, Ian and John, were identified mainly by those role labels that they created and used for themselves. This self-identification is helpful in shaping the expectations and the limits of what they can achieve, but it cannot be assumed from the structure of the occupational role titles, at face-value, that they would make life easier in the circumstances. Nor can it be suggested that these role titles would make life more difficult, because the only thing that we can say in the circumstances, is that the use of role labels and the structures of occupation observed here are relative, as with all role observations, and depend on who was being dealt with, on what basis, and in what circumstances?

Further Investigation: *Is it possible to trace the adopted roles in different community media organisations, and account for how they are defined by those undertaking them, and those that interrelate to them?*

8.1.2 How where Social arrangements put in place and how do they compare?

The social arrangements of these occupations, therefore, are loose and indeterminate. They depend on what can be done, or *got-away-with*, in the circumstances. In the sense that they are defined by what people will accept as useful, i.e. what they can define and negotiate, as their sense of social position is ultimately based on what they are attempting to accomplish. Professional bodies that fund or want to establish partnerships with community media groups, overall, prefer to deal with people

with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. However, the participants in community media groups often have a general sense of scepticism towards these kind of role labels, particularly if they are informed by practices that replicate or assimilate those of mainstream and corporate media organisations. The aspiration for a title for one's job role in community media is often kept on a short leash, and therefore has limited currency. Volunteers respond, instead, to a personable figurehead, who acts as the main point of contact within a community media group, who can explain what the organisation represents, and who embodies the values and the dispositions that are being cultivated. There is little appetite, therefore, for those roles that are enacted in the form of executive or administrative routines. Indeed, the lead advocate or figurehead of the community media group will have very little or no administrative support, no executive authority, and no perks and differentiating remuneration packages that mark them out as different from members and volunteers of the rest of a community media organisation. They are expected, instead, to embody the values of an emerging or fluid organisation, rather than playing roles that are proscribed and delineated.

Instead, the co-ordinator or figurehead's role in community media groups is more akin to a "*shepherd*" who offers guidance and a sense of direction, though most often they do this by leading from behind, by intimating a sense of what the next moves might be, and sending signals out about how volunteers might get there. This alternative style of leadership requires patience, tolerance and a sense that the tasks that need to get completed may get done at the end of the day, though the route to having a settled view about this, and getting them done correctly, might not be straightforward. Indeed, the jobs that need to get done will be undertaken in different ways, at different times, to different standards and for different reasons. The co-ordinator, therefore, must act as a facilitator who seeks to support what other people want to accomplish, rather than directing people to achieve specific tasks, outcomes, targets, objectives and plans. Crucially, the sense that there are outcomes to be met might themselves be anathema to an active community media experience, as the process of engaging in the experience, and what we become by that experience, is what informs peoples motivations, and not what the supposed product, service or unified experience might be. This is a markedly different principle that informs community media that often gets lost in translation. It is one of the core concepts of community media practice, and differentiates it from linear forms of commercial or professional media practice.

Roles in community media groups tend, then, to be horizontally spread rather than vertically and hierarchically arranged. Roles are decentred, they are dispersed, and they are voluntary. Transgression

from the standard enactment of these roles cannot be enforced through sanctions, and anyway, few sanctions can be imposed on volunteers who transgress norms of behaviour and conduct because they are gifting their time and energy to the community media group, so they are not fixed within an accountable corporate structure. Indeed, attempts to codify and specify the form of conduct that community media groups can expect from their volunteers are often onerous and time consuming to put in place, so issues tend to get dealt with without reference to a formal code of conduct, but instead on a personal, one-to-one basis by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator, therefore, must resolve issues of conflict or disagreement through diplomatic practices, rather than enforcement of a code of conduct. Formal volunteer and supporter agreements tend to be negotiated piecemeal, with those who attend a session at the time, and based on what form of social interaction they are likely to enact at the time (i.e. supportive or disruptive), rather than as set out in policy principles formulated and written-up into a manual guide of appropriate conduct.

Further Investigation: *In what way are community media membership conduct contracts and rules written, negotiated, enacted and enforced?*

The lines of communication, therefore, are predominantly interpersonal, rather than instructive. They are relationship-based, rather than autocratic, and they are persuasive rather than directional. This means that community media advocates must spend their time establishing trust with volunteers, supporters, suppliers, partners, and so on, so that they can feel comfortable with the range of actions in which they might take part and contribute, and thereby justify giving support and offering validation for what they might accomplish. This support, however, is based largely on the relationships that are established with individuals, rather than with an organisation as a social entity. The personal interchange, therefore, must be plausible within the different situations that they are engaging in, having to present an appropriate face to the different people in each of the different circumstances, in the different ways that they are enacted, and for different reasons that motivate people. As a result, they must 'fit' with everyone else, not the other way around. Dee, Ian and John were engaged in a constant process of negotiation and discussion with volunteers, and had to draw on their personal values and intuition to 'nudge' volunteers into more appropriate patterns of behaviour and action. On occasions this was fraught, and on other occasions this was reciprocal, and thereby rewarding. The sense that it was possible to integrate volunteers into the culture of the community media group meant, consequently, that it could be sustained. However, the challenge was that this enculturing process was dependent on the perceived status of the figurehead advocate, and this status and enactment was as variable and indeterminate as any other factor.

Further Investigation: *What are the typical roles of community media activists and supporters and how they are negotiated in different situations?*

8.1.3 What are the differentiating factors?

The differentiating factors, therefore, are things like: official titles, name calling, roles in formal meetings, who can commission and instigate meetings? Who is answerable to funders, regulators and partners? Who represents the organisation externally? How is that external representation organised and signified? Who is identified in the internal procedures as a mediator or adjudicator of disputes? Who do people turn to for advice or reflection on their performance? Some of these practices are framed around official designations, such as company directorships, or habitual and assumed practices that are associated with other similar organisations (i.e. station manager). The classic modes of distinction that are witnessed in social life, such as dress codes, gender identification codes, displays of wealth, ethnic identity, and so on, all still play out as signifying factors, marking community media advocates as either 'insiders' or 'outsiders' to a community. On occasions, an advocate may gain plausibility with a community by acting out a class-identified, culturally-informed, locally situated, personal disposition that can be recognised by an 'insider' community. This would be regarded in a different way to when they adopt the typically 'neutral' or 'business oriented' disposition of a professional community services manager for an 'outsider' audience. These kinds of differences are crucial and clearly discernible when we witness leading advocates operating in different circumstances and with different audiences. This is not a prompt to affix ethical or social judgements to the people who are acting out these roles, instead, it is a way of assessing if some community media advocates are more proficient at acting out these different roles as a task-based performative engagement. When volunteers and supporters do not understand that this part of the advocate or facilitator's role might be motivated by the need to communicate with different social audiences, they might, on occasions, become uncomfortable about the different 'faces' that the lead advocate presents. Likewise, professionalised audiences may not see past the initial 'rough-edges' of personal presentation, things like the lack of formal attire and other more relaxed codes of personal dress that management cultures seem to commonly eschew in favour of business clothing, i.e. suits, high levels of personal grooming, the latest personal computing technology, and so on.

This is most evident, for example, if we look at who carries out the function of welcoming, introducing and directing people at an event? How does the figurehead role take shape in informal meetings, i.e. listening, engaging, circulating? What are the types of business introductions? John and Dee

were very good at interfacing with formal partner organisations, sustaining relationships on a official level, and introducing new partners to the situation. Ian, however, found this more difficult to manage. This is not a personal judgement, rather it is a recognition that the disposition that a community media advocate has to learn to manage and present are variable, and depend on the audience and the motivating factors that drive the individual. Ian was more experienced and practiced at networking techniques with local artisan businesses, than he was with educational administrators. John's disposition was suited to working with 'foresight' organisations, such as the Media Trust, the Carnegie Trust, and so on. Dee's disposition was culturally oriented towards members of the local East African and South Asian communities, and forming bridging links with the colleges that wanted to work in these communities. The community media facilitator acts, therefore, as a bridge-builder, who links different people within a social network with others in the wider social networks. The question that is raised, however, is how do they manage groups that have no seeming alignment or recognisable utility that matches the aims and needs of each of the organisations? A proficient community media advocate, therefore, must be able assess and negotiate these relationships tacitly and intuitively, and thereby make imaginative leaps that brings people together who would never previously have considered working in alignment.

Further Investigation: *How do leaders and advocates in community media explain the different roles that they might play and the relationships that they help to manage?*

8.1.4 What are the factors that are similar?

Like any occupation, there are similar responsibilities and expectations about what role performers can handle, achieve and accomplish. It is when people get together in informal situations, however, when they share their experiences of working to support community media organisations and groups, that these similarities become most recognisable and come to the fore. That is why an event like the Community Media Association conferences are important [1.35 Interview Summaries – CMA Conference], because they give community media advocates from different organisations the opportunity to intermix and discuss their experiences, without having to explain and justify their approach, their formal role, or the way that they go about working with volunteers and producing media. They are among *friends* who have similar experiences and take on similar challenges, and thereby establish clear recognition and validation for what they do. Sometimes this can be in response to, and even as a reaction to, the routines of mainstream and corporate media organisations. The language on these occasions is therefore shared and congruent with experience. The experiences that are articulated are informed by similar motivations and similar expectations. The network of contacts and

interacting activists is allied and analogous. Address books might contain similar or related contacts, and name recognition plays an important part in establishing alliances, mutual interests and potential lines of action, as they explain and point towards a set of expectations of what that person represents, both positively or negatively. Station managers, for example, know who the key people might be at official organisations, such as the teams at Ofcom, or PRS and PPL, who look after community radio stations' administration and licencing. Experienced activists will be aware of many of the same characters and people within the more dispersed network or movement of community media activists themselves, based on their interaction and communications using forums and chat groups for example.

Moreover, acceptance and recognition of a social role comes from learnt codes and traits of behaviour. When someone is new to a role they must spend an initial period assessing, learning and appropriating these codes of behaviour. Learning to speak in the expected way that signifies what the role involves, and what they want to achieve from it. This is demonstrated when we look at how meetings are organised and how the different contributions to these meetings are played out. Ian was not proficient at formal meetings, but he was effective when having interpersonal conversations with volunteers and visitors to the gallery, especially over a cup of tea. John was able to present himself proficiently, and was good at working with a mixed group of people from different backgrounds and with different expectations. Dee was good at empathising and sympathising with people, and she knew instinctively what cultural sensitivities to look out for, and how to respond to expressions of angst or frustration. All social experience is learnt from other social actors. This learning may be direct and tacit, first-hand learning, or it might be from secondary sources and role models based on mediated representations. The way that these exchanges and adaptations of experience, self-presentation, and the shifting role models that are available, are constantly being used, is a reflexive process of negotiation that is founded on persuasion, on-the-fly assessment, and reflexive evaluation.

Some volunteers and supporters of community media groups will draw a sense of security from those who play the CEO role-type, while others will draw a sense of engagement from an activist and champion role-type, and others will be attracted to a paternal or maternal figurehead. The fluidity of community media groups, and the circumstances in which they operate, is sufficiently loose and fluid that these roles functions do not tend to get built-up into solid and defined patterns. However, it is clear that in the situations observed here, that the success and prosperity of each of the groups

was largely dependent on the identifiable figurehead role that was played by each of the advocates, based on the extent to which they embodied the mission and aims of the organisation. Stray too far from the values of the group, and present a managerialist face to an inside group of volunteers and activists, and the risk was disengagement and turn-off. Stray too far into being perceived as simply another activist or volunteer, and the boundaries that a champion or figurehead needed to maintain their life balance got lost. Both Dee and Ian found it difficult walk away from their groups activities at the end of each day, as the expectations of the volunteers had arisen in such a way that they were expected to be available to continue to answer personal issues and problems, either via phone calls or via social media, on an almost continual basis. John was better able at handling this, but then the form of organisation that John led was typically more associative than the task-driven organisations based in a fixed location, such as the gallery and EavaFM.

Further Investigation: *If no formal occupational structure exists to clarify and codify the roles within community media, how do people define and negotiate them in practice?*

8.1.5 What are the observable codes, expectations and dispositions, and how where these defined, managed and negotiated?

Community media roles, then, are like any roles that are enacted *in situ*. They are a performative practice, a performative practice that is shaped by the contours of the individual circumstances, however, and not by the desire to impose a standard model of role-regularity on each situation. Each of the advocates observed here had used their prior experiences, and had thereby taught themselves how to engage in this process. They brought with them their past expectations, behaviours and routines of practice. This meant that they carried with them an expectation of certain recognisable dispositions that had been learnt over time, and following interaction with different types of people in different social situations. Both Ian and John had been in the army, but their dispositions were markedly different, and were informed by a different sense of belonging. Even though community media advocates might share common past experiences, they respond, react and seek to accomplish their goals in markedly different ways. In part, this is because the social circles that define their present forms of engagement are dissimilar, but also because they share diverse outlooks and priorities. Ian was more engaged in the craft of maintaining the physical space of the gallery. John was more engaged in building a network of collaborators. Dee was more engaged in promoting wider issues of social responsibility. To some degree, each of these advocates shared the same values and beliefs, but what differed, however, was the disposition they had towards the way they would enact them, and how they would co-opt others into the process of accomplishment.

There may be an element of conscious incorporation of those past experiences, or there may be an element of conscious rejection of those experiences. The personal biographies of each, therefore, while illuminating and essential to understand, does not determine how they approach their present role, or the way they think about future enactments. Though their past may influence and give shape to how the tasks they are seeking to realise and undertaken are accomplished, and past behaviour is often a good guide to future behaviour, they clearly each have a disposition towards experimentation and trying out different formulations. In this sense each is pragmatic, working to identify what differences their actions bring about, embedding those practices that do make a difference, and jettisoning, or attempting to jettison, those practices that do not make a difference. The observable differences become more pronounced, therefore, at times of stress and overload. Did the training and experiences of the past kick-in and guide them as they explored these indeterminate and nebulous situations? Alternatively, did they flounder and dissipate their energy and time by trying to incorporate too many scatter-gun practices when a more methodical approach would be appropriate?

Both Ian and John clearly exhibited a tendency towards structure and methodical operation, for example when Ian organised the exhibition hanging sessions, and when John ran an event. Both displayed intuitive organisational ability and communication skills in getting people busy and doing things. Dee could offer interpersonal advice and reassurance in the form of guidance and mentoring, as volunteers in the station got on with their tasks. Dee was skilled at persuading and co-opting others to complete the process of engagement that she was unable to achieve directly herself. One observable difference in advocacy style, then, is between the strategic and the tactical. At what point does a facilitator demonstrate their capability in getting a job done, or is their skill based in how they bring people together who can complete the tasks? Both approaches are legitimate and valid, and as ever, they are related to the situation, the definition of what is being negotiated, and the mutual sense of accomplishment that is shared.

Community media leaders, therefore, might be better defined by what they are not, rather than what they are, i.e. as executive managers, sales people, mystics, administrators, to name only some. They may embody some of the characteristic or stereotypical roles of leadership and management, but then they may find this style to be too restrictive in the circumstances and given the kinds of people they are interacting with, and opt instead for an alternative approach to leadership. A simple

test that might be applied to see how this works would be to walk into a room full of community media activists and participants and observe how easy it is to identify who is in charge of the session? Community media's focus on accessibility means that formal dress, expensive equipment, supervisory clipboards, and so on, are eschewed and downplayed. The sense of inclusivity and active participation, based on individual esteem and social engagement is more important. Indeed, personal expression through dress and identity-play, that goes against the grain of managerialist codes of behaviour and dress, may be more important. Looking like and acting like a 'manager' never goes down well in a community media meeting, but it is also difficult to articulate what a community media activist might typically look like because they are diverse, different and incongruous, which is kind of the point.

Further Investigation: *What are the observable codes and identity mannerisms that signal an advocacy or leadership role in community media groups?*

8.2 Filling of Occupations and Positions

Recap: *Recognising the range of alternative possibilities that are faced by the members of the social group who are defining and making sense of these possibilities for role recruitment and allocation.*

8.2.1 What are the occupations and positions?

The examples of community media described here are not determined by a fixed set of structures, they depend, instead, on people working-out their potential lines of action for themselves, given the local circumstances. These might often be mimicked or taken from other forms of media, i.e. as is done with the roles of editor, director, presenter, producer, reporter, and so on. However, as was indicated previously, there can be resistance to the use of external titles that are then projected upon community media advocates, activists and participants. Titles such as 'citizen's journalist' or 'hyperlocal reporter,' can be a cause of concern because they are used to differentiate the supposedly 'amateur' roles that are found in most community media groups, from the 'professional' roles found in commercial and mainstream media organisations. This form of labelling, on the one hand, can have the effect of signalling acceptance of the new and emerging roles that are coming forward, outside of the traditional media industries. While on the other hand, they can also have the effect of further exacerbating social differences by drawing attention to the supposed non-professional status of these activities, and thereby further excluding and separating the contribution of members of the public in media publishing. This process simultaneously shores up and protects the professionalised

roles of journalists and mainstream media producers, though for how long this process can be maintained in the light of significant technological changes is unclear. Self-identification, then, is a vital element in this process, but the framework of reference from which these roles are labelled is not free from political demarcations of *insider* and *outsider* communities.

As witnessed on numerous occasions during this study, many community media participants were keen to resist and challenge the often restricted and narrow definitions of media practice that have been drawn from legacy media profession, such as print and broadcast journalism. They expressed this either by appropriating and adapting role-labels and titles, or going the other way and eschewing them entirely. The term that was used consistently by both the advocates and the participants in the community media groups and sessions, that best fitted their activities, was *volunteer*. So, rather than using terms like media producer, or media activist, the generally accepted term emphasised the informal nature of the engagement. The identification of volunteering suggested that the time, expertise and contribution of each person was being gifted, and could be taken away at any time should the volunteer see fit. Ian Davies was active in challenging the labels given to participants as 'photographers,' since Ian's mission was to reduce the perceived barriers of what a professional photographer might be. Ian did not regard access to equipment, training or a professional work environment as the determining factor in identifying if someone was a photographer. He was more concerned that they should enjoy taking and sharing photographs, and then discussing the status of these images, in whatever capacity was appropriate for them at the time, and as part of a mutually supportive community. Whether this meant that someone was a volunteer in these circumstances was irrelevant. Of course, Ian asked for volunteers to undertake specific tasks, but his primary objective was to inclusively label all gallery members, supporters and participants as photographers.

This process of widening the scope of who was included as a photographer was reinforced with Ian's active inclusion of images that were, for a traditional photographic gallery, produced in non-traditional ways. This meant that images were displayed that had been produced on smartphones, by children, by photographers with learning impairments, and by photographers with distinct social disadvantages. Ian deliberately kept the standard of presentation of images down, i.e. framing and printing was basic and minimalistic, so that they were affordable, and so that they could easily be produced by people with low-levels of craft and photographic printmaking skill. Ian wanted to encourage the more capable and experienced image-makers to assist, support and inspire people who

were taking their first steps into the visually expressive form of photographic personal communication. This caused some concerns with some of the established professional photographic community, members of whom were resistant to the 'community' stance of the gallery, and therefore the extent to which they would be associated with the community aims of the gallery was limited. While Ian wanted the gallery to be inclusive of all skill levels, income groups, and abilities, he was relaxed about a group of people who he regarded as able to look after themselves. If they did not want to be central players in the life of the gallery, then they could look elsewhere.

Winning both tacit and explicit support for the gallery, however, was crucial, as this gave Ian's model of engagement validation. Ian was enthused by the comments of Arthur Foster, who as an experienced professional photographer was supportive of the gallery's aims and Ian's inclusive way of working. Likewise, John found that the sense of endorsement that came with the link that he established with Jane Hill of BBC Leicester, with Keith Perch of the Leicester Mercury, and with the Adam Perry of the Media Trust, were useful sources of validation for his ideas and concerns, because it meant that his ideas were not just singular whims, but were credible and plausible. This made attracting other supporting organisations more straightforward and less onerous, because they could be recruited based on John's association with these validating partners and organisations, which went beyond his own personal interests as an advocate and a champion of community media principles.

What was interesting, however, is that new terms drawn from other industries and communities did not enter the framework of reference for community media advocates and participants in these situations. New terms from software development, for example, did not get used, terms such as 'hacker,' 'developer,' 'geek.' In role-labelling terms, when the choice is open and unencumbered by expert or professional outlooks, it is possible that volunteers and participants might choose a wide range of role labels for themselves. However, these tended to remain relatively stable and gravitated towards those terms that are established in legacy forms of media. The discussion at the Citizens Eye community media café, for example, was often related to 'community reporting,' 'citizen's journalism,' 'radio presentation,' and so on. Some volunteers did refer to themselves as 'bloggers' and 'podcasters,' and at the time the phrase 'vlogger' was only just emerging into mainstream usage. The emergent nature of the terms of role identification, then, have a time-lag in their take-up, with known terms being appropriated first, even though the people who are acting as community reporters, presenters and writers, are taking advantage of the emerging technologies of digital media,

web-creative practice and social media. Ironically, this happened at a time when traditional and legacy forms of media are falling back in importance.

Hence, if the descriptive terminology of roles is difficult to establish, and they are variable and dependent on the circumstances of the setting, then this suggests that it is likely that recruitment practices will be difficult to establish consistently and sustainably. As the wider shift to more dispersed forms of media production and social media gathers pace, then there will be a change in the currency of these terms, based on what they represent and how they are associated as relatable co-practices. It is likely, however that these terms will come from outside similar community media settings as described here, and will be related to a generational shift in expectations about personalised media and broadcast media practices. The shift in alignment of broadcast television and online video is a recent case in point, with many emerging services that are attractive to younger people, leaving them seemingly unaware of the implications of broadcasting as a concept, and the implications that it has previously encapsulated for a sense of communal experience. Indeed, the terms of description used in this account are themselves difficult to establish and fix. It has been difficult to clearly identify what is meant by a 'participant,' a 'volunteer,' an 'activist,' an 'advocate,' and so on. Each has a connotative fluidity that is relative to the circumstances in which it is enunciated, defined and negotiated. The essential point, moreover, is to listen to the people who are making sense of the situations that they are defining and plotting lines of action.

Further Investigation: *Is it possible to map the congruity and incongruity of the self-defined role labels used in community media organisations and situations?*

8.2.2 How participants were recruited and encouraged to take part.

The process of recruiting people to these roles, then, is indeterminate and challenging, because it is emergent, unpredictable and happens without certainty or precision. How do you become a citizen journalist, or a blogger, or a photographer, or a radio presenter in these circumstances? Occasionally volunteers and participants are allocated a place on a funded training and skills development programme. This was the case with Down Not Out, in which Simon Parker was funded by the Big Lottery to work with people who were vulnerably housed or affected by homelessness. Simon dealt with people who were at the margins of mainstream society, and who were at risk of falling through the limited social safety net that is available in an age of declining welfarism. Radio serves a significant function in social rehabilitation for many reasons. First, when it is produced or recorded live it is immediate. Secondly, it requires a comparatively low-level of skill to engage with a discussion, and the

participants in a programme recording can use their own experience to inform that discussion. Finally, radio requires only a low level of skill to listen to its output, as radio prefigures aural rather than visual acuity. The recruitment practices that define examples of community radio, therefore, are equally varied and wide-ranging. On EavaFM for example, a regular dance-music programme was produced every Friday evening, and was well established as a staple of the Leicester music and clubbing scene. These are examples, therefore, of two very different forms of participative practice that are motivated and executed in significantly different ways and for different reasons. This means that it is problematic to compare types of participative activity, because they are often motivated and organised in significantly different ways.

Further Investigation: *How are community media volunteers recruited or co-opted into different types of community media groups?*

8.2.3 How are roles allocated?

To some extent, then, role allocation in more informal community media groups is a mystery. There is no set process for filling roles or positions unless they are funded and have a reporting requirement attached with them. Some community media organisations are established with a formal structure, with a board of supervisors or trustees. The three organisations observed here had different structures in this respect. EavaFM was supervised by a board, but this was opaque and distant from the day-to-day operations of the station. Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery was evolving from being driven by a self-employed social entrepreneur, and Citizens Eye was collaborative and partnership based, relying on negotiated cooperative projects, rather than formal role allocations. John encouraged participants to get involved and establish their own news agency, for example, and not to wait for the right structure or role to be put in place, but to get on with creating an activity that would suit their needs and interests by using simple tools that had recently come available online. 'It's better to ask forgiveness than permission' was one of John's maxims. Ian on the other hand, was engaged in a constant process of negotiation and persuasion to get what he needed done, to the point at which the lack of structure was off-putting for some potential volunteers, and exhausting for Ian in the process. Dee was regarded somewhat maternally at EavaFM. She was clearly the person that volunteers could turn to for a helping hand or a word of encouragement. Each type of enactment of the role of figurehead has its value and benefits, but they are not easy to reproduce, and can sometimes put too much obligation on the person who was identified as the figurehead to carry the expectation of the volunteers and participants. This could then, in turn, run up against internal political problems, as people would naturally disagree and try to circumvent the

main advocate, or worse fight against them, forcing people to take sides and to commit themselves to one faction or another. To be leader, as the saying goes, one must have followers.

Therefore, the allocation of roles within each group was informal, based on the personal relationships that were centred on each of the key advocates, and driven by the interests and the willingness of the participants to take-up these roles for themselves. Simon Parker worked extensively with John, collaborating and developing Citizens Eye because he was attuned to its values and saw the opportunity to map something out that he had a direct interest in, based on his extensive experience working in public services in Leicester. Dee would personally invite people to contribute to the programming of EavFM based on her appeal to the civic virtues that she promoted, and Ian sought to recruit volunteers and participants on the basis that the gallery was a social utility, and that it served more than a narrow sense of self-interest. There was little in the way of appeals to remuneration, status, or perks. None appealed to potential volunteers with the promise of being involved in a nursery for their skills, or as a stepping-stone into employment, though this was loosely intimated in many of the conversations. Instead, recruitment to these groups was usually based on an appeal to civic activism, social concern or personal empowerment.

Further Investigation: *How are community media roles and jobs allocated in different situations, and how are the expectations about these roles managed?*

8.2.4 What the recruitment process is like?

The recruitment process, therefore, is generally one that appealed to the interests of the potential participants and volunteers. It could be based on self-interest, like the professional photographers at the gallery, or it could be articulated as a civic duty, as Dee emphasised at EavaFM. Or, it could be an issue of expediency and communicative need, as John was able to promote when recruiting charities and other social organisations who wanted to innovate and improve their media engagement. Ian used the social media feeds to draw on people's interest in photography, and to co-opt them into supporting the gallery. John was engaged in collaborative approaches that were separate and distinct, but involved working as partners. Dee would often flatter people and remind volunteers that they would get their 'reward in heaven.' This fitted with the ethic of civic duty and public service that Dee promoted. Usually, however, volunteers had to speak directly with someone in the group about volunteering. More could be learnt, perhaps, about applying a different approach to role recruitment, by looking at alternative models or other development processes, such as community work, community development organisation, sustainable development movements, open-source software

development communities, online communities of interests, or even returning to traditional practices that used to occur in civic associations and voluntary associations in the past.

In practice, then, the process of recruitment worked in a number of ways, sometimes the association with marginalised, poorly educated, ethnically diverse and poor people was regarded as a pre-filter. Putting some people off before their sense of civic virtue could be appealed to. The prejudice and disregard for certain types of people and social classes is as prevalent in community media as it is elsewhere in society. Negative connotations of the unemployed, the physically disabled, the mentally unwell, the poor, the socially deprived, and so on, are deeply inscribed into many peoples' social perceptions, and must be navigated in relation to community media as much as they are navigated elsewhere. People who are minded to challenge these forms of social prejudice, do so for a number of reasons: for ethical, political, personal, or even reasons of social efficiency. They might be drawn to the mission of community media to do something about social inequality and the negative frames of reference that have been established in mainstream media discourse. However, the challenge is how to enunciate a sense of political mission that recruits people to a community media group that is not seen to be outright political in its own right. A good example is Down Not Out. The volunteers for this news agency were highly motivated by a sense of social injustice and campaigned to draw attention to the issues affecting people who are in insecure housing. The participants in the Down Not Out sessions, the media that they produced, and the campaigns to raise awareness that they articulated, can be regarded as overtly political because they challenged the prevailing policy orthodoxy and expectations of general civic life in Leicester. However, they were not socially organised, so they instead used their media enactments to make public their personal testimony and experiences.

Further Investigation: *How does community media recruit people to different roles, and what differentiates these roles?*

8.2.5 How are volunteers and supporters co-opted? What roles are displaced and what roles are sustained?

While the indeterminacy of the roles and the positions in community media makes community media a difficult social practice to assess, it does, however, play a crucial role in displacing and disrupting the existing frameworks of reference and organisation found in traditional legacy media industries. The process of transformational change is not being well adapted to by many media organisa-

tions, who (ironically) could learn a lot from the more fluid, decentred, collaborative, open, democratic, de-professionalised forms of media that community media advocates champion. With the rise of social and online media, globalisation, digital creative tools, and so on, the opportunity for people to access and produce media is rapidly expanding and pulling in more active participants to the media production process. The vast majority of these practices and forms of creative media engagement will not result in paid employment or jobs in the media industries, as they are not all motivated by the same narrow set of interests and incentives. Instead, they may wish to learn to use these tools to enhance their sense of community, and their shared sense of interest. Community media could, therefore, be a catalyst for a transformation in expectations about media engagement and production, supporting the development of new types skills in open and collaborative forums that enhance a sense of civic participation, representation and empowerment. Perhaps, then, it is possible to also examine the language that is used to describe the community media 'sector' itself. This phrase often pops-up in conversations with community media supporters, because it is often used by Ofcom and government as a way of identifying community radio in the UK. The phrase 'sector' fits within a frame of reference that connotes that community media is part of the social and state infrastructure. What difference would it make to refer to community media as a movement instead? What would be the alternative motivating dispositions that would follow from this, and how would it appeal to potential recruits in different ways?

Further Investigation: *How will community media roles and practices displace traditional media roles? Will the community reporter become the norm?*

8.3 Ecological Arrangements

Recap: *The question, according to Blumer, is that we should seek to understand how the participative media process affects the "ecological arrangement of people" (Blumer, 1990, p. 65).*

8.3.1 What are the emerging ecological arrangements?

The ecological arrangements that typified the different examples of community media covered here are relatively simple to account for, as they tend towards adaptation of existing resources, rather than any deployment of new resources or locations of operation. Each of the settings that the community media groups worked had their differences, and they shaped the dynamic of the social inter-

actions in different ways, but none required a wholesale and original use of physical building resources. There was no unique or novel designation of locations in which activities were built up from scratch, as each of the community media situations were adaptations of already available spaces. Ian made the most significant intervention in terms of adapting a pre-modelled space and finding a new use for it. The achievement of adopting a legacy space in the form of the Leicester Lending Library, cleaning the book bays, organising remedial work, and then making the space fit for its purpose as a gallery, was considerable, and required a fortitude of vision that was novel and entrepreneurial. This was a spontaneous adaptation to the environment, with Ian taking advantage of a small window of opportunity to recast the perceived use of the space, and thereby to find innovative, low-cost and sustainable ways to make the space work. This was not entirely problem free, of course, as issues about storage and entitlement to use the space for other activities was reviewed and monitored by the college managers. This became, in itself, a sign that the appropriation of this space was not likely to fit with the structured ecological arrangements preferred by the college administrators. This is understandable given the different roles that a college plays within the civic and social infrastructure of a city like Leicester. The frustration for Ian, however, was that there was little space for adaptation and alternative uses built-in to these arrangements, because the expectations of the college were fixed, settled and dependable, and Ian's were transformative and disruptive.

John's use of the BBC Leicester College of Journalism room for the community media hub sessions involved no adaptation of the space provided, and while the opportunity to use the studio spaces was visually attractive as a way of promoting the sessions, based on a perception of enhanced credibility by association with a technically sophisticated resource, in practice they offered little in terms of hands-on utility for active media production projects, as there was no access to the equipment or systems. They tended, then, to be used for meetings and briefing sessions, rather than any active form of media production. Indeed, the perceptions that were associated with using the BBC as a meeting space also worked against the objective to provide inclusive learning and participatory discussions sessions, with as many people likely to be put off from attending these sessions precisely because they were held at BBC Leicester. They attracted people who were keen to move ahead with their personal investment in alternative media forms, but it cannot be established for certain if the association with the BBC *itself* became a barrier to entry for people who might regard such an organisation, and its building, as beyond their social reach. This potential misperception, therefore made the community media café sessions that much more vital, as the community media café sessions were a good example of how informal spaces can be co-opted and used to develop alternative practices, thus recruiting people who would otherwise be put off by the formalism of a session at BBC

Leicester. If we change the space, we change the range of options that we believe can be undertaken in that space, and we change the signal we give to the types of people who might engage and participate in the activities that take place there. The café space could be reconfigured easily, but it was not used to provide formal taught or meeting sessions. The café remained open, so other customers would be entering the space as well. So, in changing the space and the typical location of the community media activities, this also signalled that a wider-range of people could potentially participate. As ever, though, this was not open-ended, as many people might also find café venues as problematic as other formal operational spaces. One of the social dividing lines between insider and outsider communities, therefore, is the way that they appropriate spaces and locations, and the way that they signal that ‘people like us/them’ can enter them.

EavaFM’s studio was located in a shared space with first South Leicestershire College, before Leicester College took ownership and control of the building and changed its use from a media centre to a language school. Initially this space had been invested and kitted out as a media centre, with television, radio and sound studios, but with the transfer of ownership it was changed to a language centre designed to encourage people in the local neighbourhoods to improve their literacy skills. The radio studios were fitted into the available space within the building, with the addition of a couple of office and storage rooms. The building was formally managed by the college during office and term hours, with a reception that visitors reported to, with access codes on the doors. There was a small canteen with hot water and vending machines that could be used for refreshments and informal conversations. As a college resource, the Ross Walk centre was equipped with seminar rooms that were accessible for meetings and training sessions. This meant that all the activities that took place in the Ross Walk centre were monitored and adapted to suit the expectations of the college. It was not possible to personalise and decorate the studio spaces to suit the interests of the volunteers and to reflect their culture more overtly. The studios were well maintained with the functional decorative aesthetic of corporate working spaces. They had excellent IT infrastructure, safety features and accessibility features, but they were somewhat clinical spaces, the walls were painted white and lit with fluorescent strip lighting. They represented little of the culture of EavaFM, its people and its communities.

Further Investigation: *In what way does the spatial location of a community media group shape the activities that they undertake?*

8.3.2 What are the situational arrangements?

The Leicester Peoples Photographic Gallery is based in a prominent building in Leicester city centre, this is well situated with adjacent bars and cafes. This meant that Ian could interact with people who could drop-in as they were passing in the city centre. Ian was based in one place, and therefore had to negotiate the use of that space as an occupant or tenant. Visitors, supporters and suppliers had to come to Ian because he was unable to travel freely beyond the co-located spaces and businesses that were near to the gallery. Ian was at the centre of the activities in developing the gallery, both physically and figuratively, but he had no priority over additional space allocation within the building, so he had to negotiate along with other building users any additional spaces needed for meetings, training sessions, and so on. John, in contrast, was nomadic. John had designed his equipment so it could be mobile and self-contained, and he made effective use of attending different events and sessions around the city in a pop-up format. John was always willing to travel to meet people, run a stand at an event, or to give a mobile training session. John was never located for very long in one base of operations, and used the opportunities that were available to co-locate and partner in reciprocal agreements with other people and organisations. Dee, however, could move between the fixed points of the studios and office, and mobile spaces such as cafes and visits to the businesses of potential supporters and clients. Dee made use of a formal office space, but also met with people informally away from the studios in an adjacent café. Sitting and talking with Dee might involve a string of interruptions, which she generally welcomed, as volunteers would ask questions and check that what they were undertaking was satisfactory.

With the advent of portable computing equipment and low-cost smartphones, the situated arrangements of each of the group's organisers was consequently less determined by the location, but could be effected by the availability of data signals and Wi-Fi, for example. The informality of the meetings and sessions that were observed, signifies a shift away from formal and scheduled meeting arrangements that might have been used in the past, to something that is more fluid and dispersed in terms of the social arrangements and relationships that were being developed. With the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, particularly by John and Ian, it was possible for supporters and associates to be informed of what was being planned, what events were happening, and what meetings had occurred, just by following the appropriate on-line feed. This is a process of dispersed media participation that is occurring more generally, but it is useful to consider the way that community media groups and champions have learnt to use these forms of media, especially as they are interacting and co-developing content and conversations with partner organisations. It meant, for examples, that while Ian was bound to stay at the gallery space, it was still possible for him to find out

what was going on in his networks, for him to make a contribution to the conversations in those networks, and then to 'amplify' his contributions in the networks he organised for the gallery, and networks that were associated with similar organisations and practitioners. The question of the digital divide remains an important issue, however, as the assumption that smartphone and internet access is universal is folly.

Further Investigation: *Do the spatial working arrangements of community media advocates affect how they structure their work?*

8.3.3 What are the forms of consultation and expectations of access in these emerging spatial arrangements?

Gaining access to the spaces that each of the groups used was achieved in different ways, and following different patterns of behaviour. John's negotiation of access to these spaces could be described as diplomatic, especially with BBC Leicester. John was keen to ensure that Citizens Eye, and the community media hub sessions were not seen as a threat to these organisations, rather that they had complimentary interests of social gain. This was made easier with John's links and appeal to the charities, social service groups, and community development groups that John had links with. An informal community media workshop session that included the Media Trust or Carnegie UK, or appealed to visiting academics or prominent third-sector professionals, meant it was easier to gain trust and explicit support for structured access in a space that is normally well guarded and protected from public visitors and participants. Had the community media hub sessions had a more overt alternative media stance, or had they depicted a more radical political agenda, then the appeal to the partner organisations might have been lessened. In this regard, these sessions were promoted as information-transfer and learning exchange opportunities, rather than as a rallying point for a challenging debate about social issues of concern within Leicester, however valid those concerns might be. In this way John's expectation was that he was using these techniques to help people to learn to drive, it was then up to the volunteers and participants to decide what to do with that experience once they had moved on. So, in negotiating access to these spaces, John always emphasised the mutual benefit, thereby widening the reach of the partner's activities, while also offering volunteers access to something they were normally excluded from, thus giving them insight into how an organisation like BBC Leicester works.

Dee's negotiation of the studio spaces was based more on a sense of strategic partnership with the college. Dee's constant negotiation and interaction with the college, anticipating how the use of the

building would be evolving and what priorities the college had been adapting to, meant that she was able to secure access and resource provision at low cost, and with the guaranteed maintenance support that came with a college run building of this type. Dee would promote this as a demonstrable social-gain activity that the college could support, because it gave the college access to a recognised social platform that reached into the local communities that would otherwise be hard for them to reach, based on their experience of servicing a multi-ethnic, culturally diverse cliental. The interactions with the college managers therefore carried a sense of formality and respectfulness, as Dee was able to engage in an appropriately business-like manner, and thus form a bridge between the two distinct organisations with their significantly different social roles.

Ian's negotiation of these spaces for the gallery, in contrast, was markedly entrepreneurial and political, and required a significant degree of networking skill with local politicians to establish support for Ian's ongoing use of the space. Ian often made the point that he was bucking the trend in the way that he had acquired and continued to use this space, gaining a foothold into a public space that had hitherto been shut off. The benefit for the college was that they could claim that this formerly disused space had been given a new lease of life for minimal cost at a time of austerity and cuts of local authority funding. With a well-matched group of people on either side, this approach can work effectively, however, when this relationship is not managed or embedded as a reciprocal form of self-interest, then it is likely that the ongoing governance relationship would be tested. Ian's diplomacy skills were tested and often fraught, as he was not able to put in place the form of structured interaction that the college preferred to operate with, which often created friction and consternation within the communication process. Ian's social activist approach to appropriating a space that was underutilised would be a challenge for most business administrators in local authority services, though over time and with support no doubt these issues could be resolved.

Further Investigation: *What are the concepts and arguments that are deployed when community media groups seek to gain access to spaces and resources?*

8.3.4 What forms of accountability and sustainability are associated with these ecological arrangements?

The patterns of accountability in each of the community media groups also varied. The degree to which there was a formal process of assessment of the practices and routines of each was not fixed, and therefore was not easy to observe. Mostly, as each of the advocates and coordinators were self-directed, and operated mostly through personal relationships, it was not possible to account for

these activities in formal processes, either in relation to the participants and volunteers that they engaged with, or in relation to the partner organisations that they worked with. Ian had to negotiate with Leicester Adult Education college to provide information that would underpin his activities, but he found it difficult to provide statistical information that would satisfy the college's reporting requirements. Ian was changing the use of the space continually, which caused a problem for the more linear management style of the college, so practices could not be easily compared or related. Ian also had to manage the expectations of the gallery participants, which was done mainly in the Facebook group discussions, though this was predominantly interpersonal and lacked organisational structure. The benefit of this approach was that participants could get directly involved should they wish to do so, the disadvantage was that if anything went wrong it was much more difficult to assess and remedy. The equilibrium between a formal organisation and an informal dis-organisation is validated in practice, with a formal organisation perhaps lacking engagement with emerging communities of interest, and with an *ad hoc* organisation lacking the processes and support that would sustain them

As indicated earlier, Dee had to negotiate with Leicester College in a mutually beneficial arrangement that maintained EavaFM's ongoing viability. The radio station gave impetus to the college work with local communities in the area, so being able to demonstrate how many volunteers used these resources was an advantage. Likewise, including references to the college's support in any written documentation, or in the on-air programming, tended to satisfy their need for validation. As long as volunteers followed the rules and the management criteria laid-down by the college, and did not transgress those rules, such as no smoking or using fire escapes to enter or leave the building, then the relationship was regarded as mutually beneficial. What was not clear at the time was the role that the formal board of the East African Voices Association played in monitoring the station's activities and output, which was generally left for Dee to keep on top of. As a model of accountability this was not desirable for Dee, as it meant that responsibility for the governance and administration of the station, such as reporting to Ofcom, was an ongoing and stressful challenge.

John's approach to partnerships was relationship based, and did not rely on a formal process of governance. John recognised that he was a guest of the organisations he was working with, and that they could end their relationship at any point. For example, if the College of Journalism room at BBC Leicester was double-booked for a BBC training session, then the community media hub session would meet in the BBC Leicester atrium. This maintained a presence in the building, but it implies

that the relationship was less than equal. Perhaps the use and development of so-called service-level-agreements would facilitate a more structured and long-term relationship. The problem with these forms of agreement is that they take time to consider, write, negotiate and then review. It is also likely that a service-level-agreement would highlight the disparity in negotiating strength that an established and well administered organisation has over an emergent, socially entrepreneurial organisation.

Further Investigation: *How do different building access and management agreements support or inhibit community media activity?*

8.4 Regimes of Work

Recap: *Participation as a social process is itself neutral and therefore has no alignment with any form of social organisation or governance developed by producers and practitioners.*

8.4.1 What are these working practices?

It has now been clearly established that each of the community media situations described here were indeterminate and ambiguous in their social arrangements, which was reflected in the working practices that volunteers undertook. Rightly, when volunteer and participants are learning the skills of production, or they are orienting their previously held stocks of skill and knowledge to new situations, there is a period of adaptation and learning. The pattern of content production for broadcast radio at EavaFM gave the strongest indication of a settled pattern of production, because of the need to meet the licence requirement for original and locally produced content and broadcast output. Therefore, working practices at EavaFM had to be replicable and standardised. EavaFM's practical working focus was on ensuring that volunteers and participants had access to the radio studios, and that they understood the main issues associated with operating the equipment, developing programming content, and engaging with listeners through phone calls, social media and emails. The basic framework of radio production practices on the surface are standardised, and are located in the on-air studio, ensuring that volunteers follow a programming structure, using social media to engage with listeners, and managing the expectations of what kind of content was acceptable and achievable. While these processes are typical, it is the cultural mix of programme makers and contributors that is variable and different. One of the significant differences that community media enables between itself and commercial and mainstream media, is that product standardisation, and

therefore working practices, are very difficult to achieve. Indeed, the rich variety of voices and points of view that do not come from standardised cultural production processes is the lifeblood of community radio.

Moreover, John encouraged using smart-phone technology and available virtual resources based on a nomadic approach to digital media and personalised media technology that was emerging at the time. While mindful that the definition of media marginalisation includes access to media equipment, John was keen to encourage volunteers and participants to use the tools that they had to hand, and that are now built in to many forms of personalised technology, such as laptops, tablets or smartphones. These portable media capture devices enable the recording of audio, taking images and editing video which can be more easily shared and incorporated with other forms of media, such as blogs, group chats and discussion forums. John is self-taught in the use of these media forms, and might be described as an enthusiastic amateur, rather than a seasoned producer and expert in media production. This meant that when John was showing and demonstrating to volunteers how he produces his media, it was done from the point of view that he was a person like the volunteers, with no special experience or qualification for producing media, just a strong interest in a topic and a willingness to post content and share thoughts about topics and events that he attended.

The transition from a media industry almost exclusively defined by insiders is being challenged by the changes in personalised media technology, with the potential for a greater democratisation of the media production process. The main issue for many of the volunteers here, however, was what cultural model could they expect to use as a guide in producing content? What were their expectations and what were the differences that they could informally assimilate? The dissolving of the boundaries between amateur and professional practice was one clear feature of Ian's work at the gallery. What was apparent in the working practices that Ian encouraged was the need for participants to explore many of these issues for themselves, rather than being instructed in them. The gallery was driven by two sets of expectations about working practices: the shared contribution to the social media groups that people participated in; and the physical presence required in producing a print that could be mounted on the wall in the gallery. The differences that these working practices solicit might seem insignificant and minor when compared with the wider conceptual issues associated with media change, but they demonstrated, instead, a key element of community media that is often overlooked. That being an active participant in a community media group is also an expression of community engagement and belonging in itself. Opportunities to meet-up and discuss face-to-

face their own work, view the work of others, take part in demonstration sessions, and take-part in the upkeep of the gallery, go beyond the simple approach taken in some media access models, and are themselves a form of community engagement that offers an alternative set of working practices for the purpose of establishing a sense of community.

Further Investigation: *How are the working practices found in community media situations adopted and defined, and how do expectations about these practices relate to the adoption of alternative practices?*

8.4.2 What are the social governance arrangement associated with these working practices?

What is markedly different in these situations, however, is the lack of formal governance arrangements. None of these community media settings had editorial policy documents, or formal training and development sessions, that guide producers towards a standardised model of content form. In contrast to mainstream and regulated professional practices, there is noticeable sense of peer-engagement and shared working practices taking place in community media networks. Differences are explored and discussed during informal workshop sessions and through conversations, rather than as a set of working practices that must conform to a compliance-based model of media production. This is content that people want to produce for themselves, to circulate within their immediate networks, and which recognises their status as an independent practitioner of media content production. Indeed, many volunteers who participated in the social networks and events of the gallery, for example, did so because it was an alternative outlet for their interests and concerns, that was not regulated in the way that their working life, or their family life might have been. The media content that they produced was variable, driven by individual perspectives, based on shared and learnt experiences of producing media content, but which remained clearly an expression of individual interest that was empowering. The working practices in each of the community media settings was therefore guided reciprocally, mutually and collaboratively. Arguments and disagreements could erupt from time-to-time, but this is perhaps a demonstration of the variability of these practices, as people attempt to make sense of this variability, rather than the imposition of conformity and regulation of output. One of the markers of a vibrant, emergent and contested cultural scene, perhaps, is the number of arguments and disagreements that occur between people operating in these situations, as they explore, disrupt, contest and experiment with alternative working practices of media production.

Further Investigation: *How do communities of interest and practice regulate their working practices socially and collaboratively?*

8.4.3 How are disputes managed and resolved?

If the working practices of community media are unsettled and disruptive, then a mechanism for dispute resolution would be worth evaluating. Ian, Dee and John, as indicated earlier, dealt with nearly all of the issues of conflict and disagreement through discussion and personal engagement with volunteers. To this extent the informality of the role of lead advocate or figurehead was diplomatic and conciliatory. On occasions, there was pressure for Ian, John and Dee to take sides in a dispute between participants, though they tended to avoid getting drawn in to these disputes and relied on other volunteers to make the case for an alternative resolution to the issue in other ways. For example, Ian was able to rely on the support, wisdom and guidance of several gallery members who were more experienced and socially confident at conflict and dispute resolution. If a dispute erupted on the Facebook group, for example, the first reaction from Ian was often to regard this as a provocation and a challenge. However, as Ian became more confident in the overall aims of the gallery project, and as he was able to co-opt a number of trusted and experienced ‘allies,’ he was able to step back from these disputes and let the members resolve them for themselves.

The mindset that this required was very different from a managerialist mindset, in that it had to consider and imagine what the *intentions* might have been of the persons making the comments. If they had a pattern of this behaviour, Ian and others had a tried and tested set of phrases that would shut-down the thread and allow others to move on to different issues. It was ultimately Ian’s responsibility, however, to delete posts and comments that were deemed inappropriate or offensive, and which went against the shared values that Ian promoted. This was rare, however, and in the absence of a formal governance and monitoring procedure, was based almost entirely on Ian’s status as the figurehead and lead advocate for the type of community that was emerging – peer-based, collaborative, deliberative, and socially dispersed.

Further Investigation: *What are the dispute resolution processes employed by advocates and figureheads in different community media situations?*

8.4.4 Who is enfranchised by the new working practices and how?

Perhaps the central issue of all community media development topics, and the concept that most clearly defines community media practice, is that of enfranchisement. The literature discussed earlier prioritises the view that community media is about addressing issues of social marginalisation, voice poverty, civic participation and a sense of belonging to a recognisable community of locality,

identity or interest. How these issues are addressed, in one form or another, is the backbone of most community media projects. However, there is a danger in assuming that this process is inherently progressive in its intent or output. There are many viable and plausible reasons that people participate and engage with community media working practices, and not all of them fit the progressive model that is largely demonstrated in the scholarly approaches and literature. For example, communities of interest based on identity and belonging are contested in society, and so are therefore contested in community media networks and projects.

The prioritisation of a multicultural model of community media, that services under-represented social groups because of their ethnic and cultural identity, often expressed in language or faith-based programming, means that other under-represented groups do not get included in the discussion of empowerment and enfranchisement. John was mindful that young, white, working-class men are one of the least represented groups when it comes to formal participation in community media activities. It is easier, and correct, that community media is inclusive and socially diverse, but the culture of engagement with white working-class communities is often assumed to be problem free because there is a belief that these groups are already well served by mainstream media, or alternatively, that to discuss white working-class culture is a product of a racist bias that is colonised only by the extreme right. Ian was conscious of the need to talk in a language that addressed these social groups, and that he should also represent the communities of which he belonged. Ian was proud of his local neighbourhood in Leicester, which is a predominantly working-class area, and he was proud of the class networks within which he circulated, which he often expressed in his political views and in his support for the ideals of the Labour Party.

The challenge, moreover, is that issues and discussions of representation are themselves weighted towards specific outcomes and political imperatives. This is where contextual and quantitative studies can make a difference to the terms of debate. Consider, for example, the demographic changes in Leicester that have shaped the social make-up of the city and its communities [**see Appendix: Leicester – Local Circumstances**]. These indicate that Leicester has one of the highest proportions of mixed-ethnic communities in the United Kingdom, and that the city is defined by a significant proportion of the population who come from non-white ethnic backgrounds, which itself is a problematic measure given the more recent arrival of East European migrants. The continual focus and celebration of Leicester's multicultural identity, however, and like any social process, will have mixed re-

sults. On the one hand, it will empower some communities, while on the other hand it will disenfranchise other communities. We know from past experience that the communities most likely to be disenfranchised from the civic process are poor, under-educated and transient people, rather than those who have a financial and social grounding, established in home ownership or stable employment status. However, in prioritising social need as a measure for the validation of community media, there are some groups that are given only a cursory social acknowledgement. The scourge of loneliness in modern British communities is fast becoming one of the key contributors to social disenfranchisement. Loneliness and social isolation, however, can affect people of all social classes, age groups, ethnicities and employment status. There is considerable evidence that what we regard as sociability, has been significantly loosened in both urban and rural communities in the United Kingdom, though little is put in place to support and encourage new and emergent communities of interest and belonging. Ian, John and Dee each expressed these concerns, but were powerless to intervene in the social policy development process that could make a difference to the direction of discussion. As indicted in the review of Leicester's social cohesion policies, community media in Leicester has not figured in these discussions [see Appendix: Community Cohesion].

Further Investigation: *How do local policies of community cohesion relate to the perceived role of community media?*

8.5 New Structures of Social Arrangements

Recap: *In forming networks of social relations that are integral to the process of enhanced participation in media networks, nothing about these networks is uniform, and in any given instance there will be clear indications of heterogeneity, diversity and differentiation, or they may be marked by homogenous characteristics that support a sense of common community membership. Social differences can be an identifier of common virtues, or they can be a discriminator of cultural difference.*

8.5.1 What are the new structures of social arrangements?

The social relations that are demonstrated in this account are marked by their often tenuous and emergent characteristics. They are as likely to fall away as they are to gain a foothold and become established. These are social arrangements that are different from traditional forms of social organisation, in that they take place, and are shaped, by social forces that are themselves in flux and rapidly changing. There is a clear lack of continuity with the past, and the deference that was often previously given to established social institutions is waning. As emergent networks of media producers

and activists, these situations reflect wider social processes that are in play, which is not exclusive to community media models, but which are impacting on, and shifting the social dynamic of media production and distribution all the same. The shift towards social forms of media, in the form of networks of collaborators and co-producers, is dependent on a shift in emphasis about the role of what was previously called the audience. As mapped in the literature review, these changes are widespread and offer a fundamental challenge to the established models of information and communications practice and management, and therefore, forms of social organisation. Participants in media networks, based on the emergence of active media collaborators, present a different model of engagement than that which was founded in the mass media models and frameworks of industrial media production. Put simply, if you do not like mainstream media representations, it is now possible, and relatively simple to create, share and circulate your own media products and stories.

Rather than thinking of people as passive consumers of media, then, it is now more important to examine and develop models of collaborative media production that situate agents as generators of content, as they share, negotiate and create different expressions of media. This is why a return to the methodological framework of symbolic interactionism is relevant, as it offers a conceptual view of creative agency that is located, as a starting point, in the person (or 'self'), and as actors operate in a social situation (West, 1989, p. 230). These creative agents make purposeful interventions, they share creative products and expressions, and they symbolically interact in the process of making the world around them meaningful. This is the very definition of social interaction, and in many ways the shifts and changes in technology and distribution networks have given us the opportunity to return to models of social communication that are not dominated by industrial, mass media, instrumental or positivist frameworks. In practice this means that advocates, like John, Ian and Dee, who argue for more dispersed forms of media that can coalesce in communities of interests, practice, identity, and so on, are disruptive in their approaches, because they have recognised that the centre of gravity has shifted, and that large and monolithic media producers and publishers are no longer the dominant objects in a constellation that is made up of many numerous, dispersed and diverse forces.

What remains to be seen, however, is the extent to which these foresighted individuals, and people like them, who predominantly act on instinct, and use the values that they are informed by, rather than by an abstract policy processes and academic traditions, are able to make a difference. It is clear that the media economy has been disrupted by internet-based systems, consumer software

and app developers, who are focussed on mobile media technologies and personalised media networks. The extent to which any communities that are formed around these new practices is yet to become clear and consistent.

Further Investigation: *What are the literacies and skills that support communities of generative and collaborative media production?*

8.5.2 What are the new interpersonal and group relationships like?

We can hint at the new interpersonal and group relationships, but it is going to need a lot more study to understand this in practice. There is insufficient evidence in this study to make comments in detail, and offer a view that would explain the social interactions that were observed. Some initial comments, however, would indicate that models of communities of interests, communities of identity, and communities of practice, are becoming more central to social experiences, and are shaping people's views of their social experiences in relations to other social processes, such as globalisation, consumerism, collaborative production, and self-identified communities. Certainly, there is a considerable amount of discussion in academic networks at all levels about these issues. What is useful to note at this stage, however, is that the principles of the symbolic interactionist approach should afford considerable opportunity as a valid methodology for this investigation, because it is applicable in dispersed and decentred social environments, and focusses on the accomplishments and interactions of agents operating in these social situations. Wherever there are people, there is a topic for investigation. Moreover, the process of investigation also situates and legitimates the interactions of John, Ian and Dee, in such a way that they can be examined in close proximity and with a view to understanding how they have made sense of the routines and roles of community media practice in specific situations. This approach can be replicated and used as the basis of additional studies that attempt to answer these continuing questions in more detail. These further studies could usefully examine, what the forms of cultural interactions that emerge look like, and what the permissible codes of action are (i.e. what is it that people can do?).

Further Investigation: *How does the introduction of new social media technologies change the way that community media groups are organised?*

8.6 New Interests and New Interest Groups

Recap: *The approach taken here suggests that the interests of those who are interacting in social settings, do so through a process of evaluations of each other's positions as they are related to the social settings. The tendency is to form interest groups that give and show a focus of organisation related to the demands and expectations of those groups, amidst a wide range of alternative and competing interests that operate and interact simultaneously.*

The scope and scale of an ongoing study that considers the wider implications of the emergent social interest groups extends well beyond the scope of this study. There are significant questions that can be raised, and situations that can be observed, in which we can enquire in what way these new interest groups emerge, and what the interests are that they coalesce around. We know from past experience, and following Blumer's line of thought, that social change is articulated in the expressions of commonality or difference that people express in their lifeworlds. Further investigating of what these communities of interest might be, and to what extent they shape the social field, is an ongoing task that needs to be observed in practice and using empirical approaches. Finding out what constitutes these communities of interests, and how people raise, recognise and share their interests, can only be undertaken if the researcher is embedded in these communities, thereby making it essential that the methods and approaches of symbolic interactionism and ethnography are more widely studied, understood and practiced. There is no point in simply surmising how a community of interest might operate, as this study demonstrates, as a researcher one has to enter the lifeworld and find out what is going on, identifying how people recognise and share their interests, what it feels like to those involved, what form the negotiations between different agents and groups take, and what it means as a set of practical accomplishments.

Further Investigation: *How do emerging communities of media practice and networked distribution define and negotiate their practices?*

8.7 Monetary and Contractual Relations

Recap: *There is nothing built-in to the participative process that controls the character of these negotiations, or which will determine the outcomes of these negotiations. Instead, the resolution of these negotiations will be worked out in a series of judgements and acts of will, relative to which a wide variety of alternative solutions may be possible.*

Based on the evidence that is presented here, the contractual arrangements of each of these situations studies were limited and opaque. Mostly, relationships were managed on a personal basis, with due regard to each of the advocates reputations. What was absent from each of the situations was a formal record of the outcomes of these negotiations, which is characteristic of many community media groups. It is unlikely that an informal community media organisation will invest in contract administrators or lawyers to assist in the development or the running of a community media group's activities, unless it is identified that there is sufficient risk to warrant such an approach. Community media in the forms identified here were reliant on trust and the reciprocal exchange of knowledge that might alleviate risk. Dee, for example, organised an Ofcom briefing session as a response to an issue that was investigated by the regulator, though the result of this training was simply informative rather than binding on the volunteers. Contracts and formal agreements are difficult to enforce when the participants in a community media group is transient, de-professionalised and an expression of good intent. It would be appropriate to examine and trace the contractual liabilities of community media organisations, and the way that these liabilities are understood, as a mechanism for determining if they promote and support social change, or if they are designed to inhibit and repress social change. The manner of negotiation of these contracts is varied and inconsistent, indeed the promotion of the licence application process for community radio stations in the United Kingdom centralises the diversity of types of application that are solicited from different groups.

Neither John, Dee or Ian, at the time of this study, had access to any significant funding to support their activities, so there is a lack of information in this study to suggest that the financial interests of community media would make any significant difference to the outcomes of their activities. However, the fact that each group was run on a shoestring, and used bartering and reciprocal agreements to acquire resources, suggests that much more can be done to develop models of alternative economic and monetary exchange. Support for crowdfunding, timebanking, sweat-labour, cooperatives, and so on, were in their infancy at the time this study was undertaken, and may have become more established in subsequent activities. The challenge, then, for future studies of community media is to establish if these emergent models drawn from the gift economy, charities, social entrepreneurialism, and other alternative social business practices, have made much difference.

Further Investigation: *Do alternative economic funding models provide sustainable investment for community media groups?*

8.8 Goods Produced by the Media Process

Recap: New modes of living with different standards of income and exchange may be facilitated in interesting and significant ways, but they will not be finalised or set by them. The negotiations and differentiated positions that are taken up will remain fluid and open as new consumption patterns take different forms in different settings.

This is a line of entry into group life that clearly needs more focussed and specific work to be able to satisfactorily answer. As an initial comment, however, it is worth keeping in mind that community media is focussed on human development practices, rather than the media products themselves. This does not mean that the products that are produced by community media practitioners should not be examined in detail, rather, that in doing so the context in which these products are understood needs to be considered beforehand. The industrial media process is such that it puts considerable effort into masking and making opaque the process of production that facilitates most commercial media artefacts and services. They are generally presented to the market as goods that are fully formed and operational. The distinction with community media, however, is that it is founded on emergent practices of self-development and learning, so the basis on which the products are understood, both practically and symbolically will differ depending on the circumstances.

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine in detail the distributional arrangements of the products that were produced in each of the community media situations observed, though some informal deliberation was articulated by the advocates and the volunteers that intimated at these differences, such as the lack of accountability in many forms of media, the lack of embedded civic engagement in many mainstream media publishers, and the lack of positive identification with the representational issues that are covered in the mainstream media. Because community media is generally articulated as a reaction against mainstream media, this limits the scope of enquiry of the products and services that are produced by community media groups. We can easily identify the literacy and skills development practices as having social utility, but it was unknown from the situations observed in this study if the programmes, images, stories and other forms of media that the participants produced had an impact or played a wider role in broader social environments. This is a common issue for community radio stations, who cannot pay for ratings systems such as RAJAR, that would indicate the listenership and reach of a station in demographic terms. Likewise, the investment in alternative forms and processes of evaluation are disparate and dependent on the experience and interests of individual community media advocates and leaders.

Therefore, it is problematic to be able to state how the development and circulation of community media products and services can be accounted for, and what arrangements might be best deployed to evaluate them. Usually this is indicated in terms of social gain and social impact, however, even Ofcom has dropped this element of reporting from the responsibilities of community radio stations because of the difficulties in establishing a common and reliable methodology. A survey of similar studies might offer some insight into the nature of the consumption of community media products, though this would be a considerable body of work that is not accessible to many community media practitioners, and it certainly was not available at the time of this study. Each of the advocates had to surmise how the output and content that was being produced would be understood and incorporated into the routines of potential consumers of these products, but no consistent methodology is available that can outline this in more detail. Some avenues that offered useful insight to these processes might be drawn from the community development movement, that is more directly practiced at measuring social impact and social gain objectives.

Further Investigation: *Can social gain and social impact be assessed and accounted for in community media?*

8.9 Patterns of Income of Advocates and Activists

Recap: *Money has a significant role to play in the change that is facilitated by social groups, but there is no determinative feature of money in itself that precludes different financial approaches. As people's expectations of money change, so do the lines of actions and association that are formed.*

This is another grey area that does not easily reveal itself in the type of enquiry used in this study. The lack of a sustainable economic model that can underpin community media activity in the United Kingdom is a subject of much frustration. While other countries justify governmental support for the civic objectives of community media, the United Kingdom sought to develop, for community radio in particular, a hybrid-commercial model which allows stations to use advertising to raise revenue for the station's activities. The challenges in implementing this approach are significant, as the radio advertising industry in the UK is semi-regulated, and advertisers rightly expect to know what they are getting from the station, either in terms of rotation and play of spot adverts, or in terms of reach and impact of these adverts. The challenge is that the administration of advertising and sponsorship is usually beyond the means of most stations, regardless of whether it fits the ethos of the station. The groups observed here used bartering and reciprocal arrangements to define the exchange of goods

and services, but these followed no fixed pattern or structure. Blumer suggests that a process has likely been established in a social situation when monetary exchange is a structured marker for the exchange of those goods and services. Community media is far from having a consistent and settled view of the different forms of social exchange that it uses, so considerable work needs to be done to move past the informal barter and exchange stage that is lingering at present.

Blumer suggest that in following these lines of exchange we will be able to see how patterns of innovation and social realignments are being played out, what is being displaced, and what is being embedded as these new practices become normalised. There is considerable scope for testing new forms of income distribution using different social models of exchange, though none of the groups or advocates observed here was in a position to articulate a significant capacity to do this. Ian's frustration was that he was unable to establish a funding model for the gallery beyond the volunteer base that he had initially established. John was able to work with small collaborative funding bids, but he had to change the model of operation for Citizens Eye when austerity cuts hit the charities and social groups that he was accustomed to work with. Dee's appeal to sponsors and supporters was based on an appeal to civic duty and social mindedness of businesses within the related communities. None of these patterns of income were sustainable, and hence could not be said to displace any of the existing funding models in any significant way.

Further Investigation: *How can new patterns of income and income distribution be applied to community media groups and services?*

9 Discussion - Participative Roles Framework

Given the issues that have now been identified, and following the nine lines of entry into group life that are specified by Blumer, one final area of consideration can be focused on here. This will provide a framework or analytical model that might more easily guide future work in this field as *an off-the-shelf* and *ready-to-go* approach. A simple way to anticipate the ongoing process of community media practice is to identify the role-distinctions that participants and advocates in community media use to frame their experience, define the situations and lifeworlds that they are part of, and account for the lines of action that they wish to pursue, thus achieving their desired accomplishments. Specifically, we will better understand what participants in community media *do* in relation to the roles that they adopt and act out, because a role, and the labelling of a role, represents an actor who is seeking to negotiate potential lines of action that they intend to fulfil and accomplish their goals. It is useful, therefore, to look at other social and behavioural models, though it should be noted that this is a purely heuristic and speculative gesture at this point, which is open to extensive further investigation and study. It does, however, represent a useful route for any future study, because it is adaptable and recognises the process-based nature of social interaction. In this instance, then, and for convenience only, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator model of personality types and role dispositions, might prove useful as a framework for the contextualisation of the social roles that can be observed in community media situations. Though obviously, what is argued here is only a partial and initial proposition, rather than a full analysis of the suitability of this or other models like it. The use and application of these models are an extensive area of study in their own right, which goes well beyond the scope of this thesis. It is convenient, however, to consider these ideas on a preliminary basis, as a rule-of-thumb that might indicate how further studies of community media participation practices might be organised.

9.1 Role Types

The functional principle of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators [MBTI], which is informed by traditions of Jungian psychology, are based on observations and noticeable traits of comprehension, sensation processing and cognitive processing (Briggs-Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2003; Hogg & Vaughn, 2008; Keirse, 1998; Lauer & Handel, 1983; Shibutani, 2000). These personality traits are laid out as a set of potential opposites and combinations that work as a *process* to provide a distinct and observable set of dispositions towards *extroversion/introversion*, *sensing/intuition*, *thinking/feeling*, and *perception/ judgement*. There are sixteen personality types in total, which are represented in four main groups: *The Artisan*, *The Guardian*, *The Rationalist*, and *The Idealist*. The distri-

bution of people who share or relate to these characteristics in society is not uniform, with some areas more prevalent than others. For example, 40% of the population are said to exhibit behavioural characteristics that align with *The Artisan* type personality. This indicates, to put this distinction crudely, that a significant proportion of the population are focussed on undertaking tasks spatially and temporally through concrete experience, thinking about matters of concern in the present, and ensuring that social groupings work harmoniously in practice. Contrast this with *The Rationalist* type, who form less than 5% of the population, and we can observe that those who have a disposition towards abstract thought and planning are a minority in social groups. Though these rational-types often find themselves in leadership roles in organisations because of their disposition towards abstract models and schemes that encompass the numerous lines of action that an organisation might pursue. It is a truism to say that some people are better at planning and others are better at executing and doing.

Table 9 MBTI Role Types

ARTISAN	GUARDIAN	RATIONAL	IDEALIST
Promoter (ESTP)	Supervisor (ESTJ)	Fieldmarshal (ENTJ)	Teacher (ENFJ)
Crafter (ISTP)	Inspector (ISTJ)	Mastermind (INTJ)	Counsellor (INFJ)
Performer (ESFP)	Provider (ESFJ)	Inventor (ENTP)	Champion (ENFP)
Composer (ISFP)	Protector (ISFJ)	Architect (INTP)	Healer (INFP)

The attractiveness of the MBTI framework, therefore, is that it allows us to comprehend the significance of perceptive differences and cognitive diversity that might otherwise go unrecognised, and therefore, the range of expectations and forms of interaction that different social actors might bring to the role that they feel comfortable playing, and indeed to which they are disposed. This is not a deterministic view of social behaviour that suggests that our dispositions are iron-fast and pre-structured, rather, they indicate that our sense of agency and intelligence are interactive and socially related. We might be informed by these dispositions, but we are not bound by them. This fits with the pragmatist proposition that “ideas, words, and language are not mirrors which copy the ‘real’ or ‘objective’ world but rather tools with which we can cope with ‘our’ world” (West, 1989, p. 201). Many rational types, for example, might have excellent systems comprehension skills, but they might be poor empathisers with other people in their social networks, and thus unable to understand why others, who are drawn to different forms of social action, do not comprehend the plans and the

scheme that *Rationals* have in mind. Each type of person will excel in different ways, and as long as their preferred cognitive disposition is understood, acknowledged and recognised in the social processes that facilitate organisations and social practices, then they are comfortable and can undertake tasks proficiently. One common example that is often given which demonstrates these issues, relates to the teaching profession. Most teachers are said to be drawn from *The Guardian* type, and indeed, almost wholly from *The Inspector* and *The Supervisor* type roles. Consequently, there is a lack of role models and learning activities that *Artisan* types can access and assimilate in schools. Practical and spatial activities that can guide an *Artisan's* learning, in a way that they are disposed to comprehend, are often neglected. This is because there is a lack of suitable teachers with *Artisan* characteristics, whose dispositions are focused on action, operation and activity. With the supposed focus of schools increasingly on abstract concepts, it is no wonder that so many young people struggle to engage with a curriculum that is supposedly academic focussed, but which in practice is relevant only to a minority portion of the population.

9.2 Community Media Role Types

Earlier, a framework of roles in community media was identified from the general literature relating to community media, which suggested that there are different dispositions in community media practices [Table 3 Participative Framework]. This included the following roles, which have been further expanded to include a suggestion of what motivates the people undertaking these roles, and how this would be observable in community media situations:

Table 10 Community Media Roles

Role	Motivation	Action
The Activist	Promotes social change	Campaigning & political action
The Steward	Ensures continuity	Support for institutions & guiding social change by degree
The Representative	Encompasses all views	Speaking on behalf of others
The Collaborator	Ensures active participation	Getting people working together
The Cipher	Uses established & accumulated knowledge	Relating a pre-determined message
The Consumer	Uses & incorporates what is at hand	Combines and uses media products at hand
The Inspector	Ensures things are ready to work	Checks that work is undertaken at appropriate standards
Devotees	Plays a role in the existing social order	Follows figureheads and leaders

Obviously, many questions are raised by what is meant by each of these role characteristics, how they work in practice, and what the implications might be for an understanding of community media if the starting point of any future analysis is undertaken in relation to different role frameworks that are identified. Attention might be given, therefore, to the interaction of different social processes, as they are embodied in a set of roles that individuals assume and act out in their social and organisational situations, rather than simply as they might be said to operate discursively in the institutional arrangements, the textual products, the policy arrangements, and the inherited scholarly debates that preceded empirical examination. This is why Herbert Blumer insists that an empirical researcher should put preceding concepts and ideas out of their mind before they enter the field, and that they should not attempt to hypothesise or instrumentalise the situation before them.

Consequently, if we are able to adapt the MBTI framework, or others like it, we may conclude that a different set of social processes are at play in the situations that we examine, and that these processes are relative in their operation. We can potentially find out more about what is taking place in practice as they signify the contours of the social field, and as they represent changes in the established or emerging configurations of these fields. The symbolically interactionist engagements that people use and adapt to make sense of the world are never fixed, but are subject to an ongoing degree of change that is complex and widespread. As John Dewey suggests, intelligence is “both a form of experience, and a facilitator in experience” (West, 1989, p. 74). People must be able to negotiate their lines of action for future accomplishments, and one way that this is achieved is in the adoption of embodied social roles. If we follow the people who play out these roles, and listen to the definitions and the explanations of how they operate and situate themselves as role-makers, as role-takers, or as role-disrupters, and so on, then we will be able to better understand the processes that are driving social change in action.

Table 11 Community Media MBTI Roles

MBTI Role		Disposition	Action	Social Role
Artisan	Operator	Present – Hedonistic	Harmonic	Promoter
	Entertainer	Future – Optimistic	Tactical	Crafter
	Playmate	Past – Cynical	Artcraft	Composer
	Liberator	Place – Here	Artistic	Performer
	Negotiator	Time - Now		
Guardian	Administrator	Present – Stoical	Associative	Supervisor
	Conservator	Future – Pessimistic	Logistical	Inspector
	Helpmate	Past – Fatalistic	Commerce & Material	Provider
	Socialiser	Place – Gateways	Dependable	Protector
	Stabiliser	Time - Yesterday		
Rational	Coordinator	Present – Pragmatic	Deductive	Field-Marshal
	Engineer	Future – Sceptical	Strategic	Mastermind
	Mindmate	Past – Relativistic	Sciences & Systems	Inventor
	Individuator	Place – Intersections	Ingenious	Architect
	Visionary	Time - Intervals		
Idealist	Mentor	Present – Altruistic	Inductive	Teacher
	Advocate	Future – Credulous	Diplomatic	Councillor
	Soulmate	Past – Mystical	Humanities	Champion
	Harmoniser	Place – Pathways	Empathetic	Healer
	Catalyst	Time - Tomorrow		

Table Twelve maps out some of these dispositions in general terms (Adapted from Keirse, 1998, p. 62), though there is a considerable amount of study, investigation and explanation needed to orient and validate this framework in the context of community media. It does, however, indicate that this kind of framework might be a productive and informative route on which to guide future studies of community media, especially given the challenge that this study has had in illustrating and defining any kind of unified or objective social process that might be said to embody or underpin participation in community media. To repeat and adapt Blumer’s assertion, participation is a neutral social process, and so we are drawn, as a consequence, to the fact that the people who define, adopt and play out these roles, and thereby endorse different lines of action in pursuit of social accomplishment (the very indicator of social change), are not neutral, and that they are themselves the agents and drivers of social change. This, then, is the ongoing process that is in need of further study, and provides a retort to the research question asked earlier.

The social process of participation is neutral, but people’s objectives are goal driven and therefore divergent, and this is what qualifies as social change.

9.3 Reflections on Interviews - Process-Based Outcomes

Each of the individuals and the advocates that were interviewed here had a different set of expectations and way of explaining the values that underscored what they were attempting to accomplish. They were mindful of the potential for different alternative routes that might be available, and which they might negotiate with others. They were also mindful of what subsequent forms of organisation might be best suited to achieve their desired level of functional sustainability, especially within the resource boundaries they perceived as available to them. As a recognised form of organisational practice, then, what these advocates describe cannot be defined in terms of orthodox instrumental planning and modelling, such as a managerial accountability model, or a structured learning model, as defined by linear literacy models. Instead, each advocate represented a model of *temporary, informal and ad hoc* social organisation that was closer (i.e. more congruent) with the communities of interest they represented. These forms of community are primarily focussed on the practices of media production and their associated accomplishments (i.e. as a widening of technical capability); or as communities of identity based around shared cultural accomplishments (i.e. a feeling of them against us). In some instances, these groups acted as reciprocal and informal learning communities, combining a rich mixture of shared interest, co-developed practice, and identity accomplishments, signifying social belonging. The primary form of engagement exhibited by each advocate in their account of their community media participation practices, then, is driven with regard to a high level of personal commitment and investment to their chosen community media cause and values (i.e. as a democratic and ethical impulse).

The interviews and observations outlined here can be read in a number of ways, though the most relevant approach here is their alignment with the central feature is symbolic interaction, that the “human person has a self,” and thereby “has the capacity to thematise [themselves] reflexively and to act toward [themselves] as toward any other object.” (Baugh, 1990, p. 86). The demonstration, then, is of an intense and probing reflexivity on the part of each of these advocates that is not only a product of the interview and observation process, but is corroborated through the wider schemes of their activities. That each advocate is attempting to develop and accomplish something that is outside of the common frame of reference for most people who consume media, or most people who run traditional learning organisations, or most people who participate in the encircling practices of social organisation management. It is understandable, then, that they seem to do so without any prescribed or recognizable plan, any set of tested guidelines, outside formal political discourses and routines, or with reference to delineated social theories or models of human motivation. These are all intensely personal responses to the circumstances, they are not planned or calculated, and they

do not fit a standard set of categories of description or a standard form of operation. They are a demonstration of the creative process of thinking, the ambiguous process of definition, and the potentially fraught process of the pursuit of lines of action, as they seek to implement the common ground of values, emotions and beliefs.

This demonstration takes place in relation to themselves (as selves), in relation to the interest groups that they form (as communities), and in relation to those that they interact with and negotiate with (as social objects). These are people who are working solidly to grasp the variable and changing nature of the social environment that they are part of; the variable and emerging world of media practices and forms of media representation that they encounter; the shifting and changing sensitivities of the people that they seek to engage with, either from the communities themselves (i.e. the amateurs), or from the organisations that are established and set in their routines of expert practice and administration (i.e. the professionals). These are people who are struggling to intervene in meaningful ways as mediators in the conceptual frameworks of lived community experience, emerging technical proficiency, and intransigent institutional social organisations. What they embody, therefore, are the “interdependent relationships between forms of communication, and the incorporation of media, presentations, and people in a world of moving events that imparts an evolving character to each of them” (Blumer quoted in Baugh, 1990, pp. 83-84).

In establishing and maintaining relationships with the advocates presented here, the challenge of explaining and describing, in a clear, relatable and recognisable form, what community media means to them was significant. Community media is a process-based form of participation and engagement, rather than an outcome-based form of production, and so is markedly different from the mainstream commercial or professional media. Mainstream media organisations tend to be distinguished by well-defined intentions of programming utility or profit. It was therefore a continuing challenge for each of the advocates to remain motivated as proponents of a set of alternative views of how media might be otherwise organised. In some instances, this involved advocating for the wider attitude and ethos of community media, what John Coster describes as ‘having a go,’ and thereby buttressing the beliefs of the advocates, and assuring them that what they were attempting to accomplish was socially relevant and valuable, despite the challenge of *going-against-the-grain* in their effort to demonstrate that the community media approach was valid and had potentially convincing social outcomes. This shared experience and empathy for the intentions and accomplishments of the

participants can be read, therefore, as a powerful and elucidating tool for gaining insight into the achievements of community media activists operating in their different lifeworld.

9.4 Models of Engagement

Each of the advocates was well informed about the different potential models of community engagement that were available to them, however, this awareness was mainly gained from personal experience, or from attending short courses or development sessions offered within the associated community media sector. This commonly involved talking with other community media advocates, and maintaining a presence within community media networks. For example, John Coster worked regularly with the Media Trust and several academics that were drawn to his model of informal engagement in the Community Media Café. Dee Bahra attended the Community Media Association conferences and was familiar with the work of other community radio stations. Ian Davies had participated in the Amplified Leicester project and used his networking skills to maintain contact with other community groups in Leicester. These forms of engagement took the arrangement of a *location* in which people who were affected by specific issues could come together. For John Coster this meant uniting volunteers around a shared sense of misrepresentation and discrimination by the mainstream media, hence supporting the news agencies such as Down Not Out and HAT News, so that people could come together and find out what they have in common, rather than being focused on what they are told divides them. For Dee Bahra this meant working closely with the volunteer presenters of EavaFM, and building a close personal relationship with them in person, to the point of being able to pick up a phone and talk directly with each volunteer and asking them to contribute to the programmes of the station. For Ian Davies, this was a recognition that the social practice of photography is itself illuminating and instructive of negotiated subject positions and creative practices.

The challenge facing each advocate, moreover, was to articulate an appropriate model of communication and strategic development that could be enacted within the social situations that each was working within, while also fitting within the pattern and principles of community engagement and participation that each advocated. Each of these community media leaders recognised the need to motivate and manage the expectations of volunteers, partners and collaborators, thus facilitating their ability to participate in the different community media groups on their own terms, rather than by importing an external, artificial or prescriptive framework of involvement and imposing it on them. For example, and as Dee explained, much of her role was devoted to building the confidence

of the volunteers while recognising that their participation within the programming of EavaFM was a significant and important part of their lives. As Dee said, many people would struggle without the information and sense of purpose that community media offers. Principally, then, their intention was to generate a community of self-interest based on mutual understanding, interaction and collaboration that drew its principles from peer-to-peer learning, assisting those from marginalised communities to find their voice, and to recognise the potential social benefits of using media to represent aspects of community life, both to itself, and to other associated communities. Ultimately, the outcome of this, and the answer to the research questions, is that we should shift our attention from thinking what it is that participation does, to how different people define, respond, process and negotiate different stances, dispositions, feelings and attention schemes to their sense of engagement and participation (i.e. as they are played out in the form of roles). Future studies should ask, therefore, how do we understand or feel about our participation in specific settings, keeping in mind that these are relative (i.e. they are relationally defined) accomplishments?

9.5 Primary Frameworks

It is worth noting some final comments that reveal the ongoing challenge of this way of thinking from a conceptual point of view. This process of structuration of roles and role-taking, which is accordingly expressed through different ‘frameworks,’ give substance to the differing conceptual schemes that recur within a culture. Organising the rules and the definitions that accompany concepts into primary and subsidiary frameworks might, as Anthony Giddens suggests, indicate that “whatever its level of organisation, a primary framework allows individuals to categorise an indefinite plurality of circumstances or situations so as to be able to respond in an appropriate fashion to whatever is going on” (Giddens, 1984, p. 88). Individuals, therefore, who make sense of, sustain and promote a ‘primary framework’ of meaning are positioned as ‘actors’ who understand the “rules of language [and] of primary and secondary framing.” These agents are thus able, at the same time, to conduct themselves over “large areas of social life” (Giddens, 1984, p. 89) in both adaptive and imaginative ways. The point here, according to Giddens, is that while frameworks of reference exist for individuals within communities, they are neither *determined* nor *programmed* by those frameworks, but instead act with a *recursive degree of agency*, interdependence and independence, against a background of claim and counter-claim. Therefore, it is important to follow Richard Rorty’s instruction to seek to identify the *congruent* from the *incongruent* language that we use, because we will always grow out of and tire of the existing frames of reference that we presently take for granted. Moreover, and rather than having these definitions imposed and defined for us, we should consider

the extent to which it be possible for agents and actors in the social realm to shape and define, what Rorty calls, a *common vocabulary* for themselves. As Rorty points out,

What binds societies together are common vocabularies and common hopes. The vocabularies are typically parasitic on the hopes – in the sense that the principle function of the vocabularies is to tell stories about future outcomes which compensate for present sacrifices (Rorty, 1989 p.86).

We might subsequently ask ourselves the question, as Michael Oakeshott suggests, do we want to do this on the basis that we are a society predominantly organised as a *universitas* or as a *societas*? What is a more relevant question than how do we make sense of, and give due importance to, the every-day practices and experiences of the participants who volunteer in community media groups? We might be better explaining participation, on the one hand, as a form of social knowledge that is exchanged within a '*societas*,' that is a group of people who share their corresponding life experiences together; or alternatively, as a set of social arrangements that takes the form of a '*universitas*,' in which there is a mutual self-interest between a group of people who want to achieve a particular goal or outcome (Oakeshott, 1975). Either way, the challenge is to find out what people do from first-hand accounts, as Blumer suggests, as they take place as a form of meaningful accomplishment.

9.6 Conclusion

In this study I have been able to examine and question the basis on which it is possible to understand what motivates people to contribute to community media. I have been able to do this both as a general set of ideas and principles, and as a set of specific social practices and roles that are found in explicit situations and locations of social practice. I have established a flexible and empirically grounded model that takes into account this diversity, complexity and multi-layered nature of community media volunteers and activists goal-driven engagements, and I have established the need for empirical investigation techniques that are able to take account of the enactments that are situated in the informal and formal roles and practices of community media volunteers and activists. The model that I have developed demonstrates the complexity of the social processes that underpin the codification of these social roles, and I have concluded that people who volunteer as community media producers and activists are motivated by a range of complex, competing and multi-layered impulses and characterisations. I have established, therefore, that these motivations and impulses cannot be easily explained or understood by any one single theoretical model or framework, but must be grounded in empirical observations and interpretivist evaluations that are built-up from the shared experiences, the accounts and the testimony of those involved in shaping and generating these practices.

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11 Appendix

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11.2 Leicester - Local Circumstances

Leicester is a city in the middle of England that can trace its origins back to Roman times. After the Industrial Revolution Leicester was principally known for its economy based on light engineering, hosiery and shoe manufacturing. However, like much of the British economy from the 1980s onward, Leicester has seen significant changes in its economic and social makeup. This shift, from an industrial economy to a service economy, has been accompanied by a substantial change in the diversity of the population of the city, and the high proportion of multicultural communities that now represent the greater part of Leicester's neighbourhood makeup. In popular consciousness Leicester is now known more for sport, with the success of its Premiership football team, and as the last resting place of King Richard III. Yet, while Leicester is only one hour away from London by train, in many ways the city encapsulates the disparities of wealth and social division that bedevils much of the British economic and social model (Gunn & Hyde, 2013; Hutton, 2011).

11.2.1 Diversity in Leicester

Leicester is one of the most multicultural and multi-ethnic cities in the United Kingdom. In 2016 the London School of Economics published a report that identified Leicester's Narborough Road as the "most diverse high street in Britain"²² The Leicester Mercury reported in January 2016 that there are 222 shop units on Narborough Road, and that the owners of those units come from 22 countries around the world.²³ Data from the 2011 census shows that there were 329,000 people living in the city, which was 24,000 more than in Nottingham, and 79,000 more than nearby Derby, which means Leicester is the largest city in the East Midlands. More than half of Leicester's population describe themselves as white British, compared with 80% nationally, and 63.9% when the census was undertaken in 2001.²⁴ Leicester has a population that is significantly younger than the average national population, at 35.5 years old, compared to 38.7 years old for England and Wales. The average age of the ethnic minority population in Leicester is approximately eight years younger than that of the white population.²⁵ Twenty percent of the population of Leicester are under sixteen years of age, with 69% between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four, and the remaining eleven percent over sixty-four (Roberts-Thomson, Clarke, Coulter, & Robertson, 2008). According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey, the estimated aggregate population of Leicester in 2015 has

²² <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/britains-most-diverse-high-street-7302465>

²³ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/world-street/story-28655305-detail/story.html>.

²⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-20678326>

²⁵ <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/assets/LeicesterDiversityOfLeicester.pdf>

grown to 342,600, with the working age population making up 66.8% (228,900) of the total population.²⁶

In the 2011 census forty-five per cent of the city identified themselves as 'White-British', one of the lowest proportions in the region.²⁷ The Leicester Mercury reported in December 2012 that White British people now form less than half of the population of Leicester, with 45% of the city's residents regarding themselves as white British, compared with 61% in 2001. About 49% of the population is made up of people from Asian, African or Caribbean or mixed-race backgrounds, and about 5% are white but not British. Changes to the 2011 census suggest that people in the city of Leicester, and the surrounding Leicestershire County areas, increasingly ascribe their ethnic identity simply as British, rather than White British.²⁸ Approximately 50% of residents of Leicester are from ethnic minorities, with nearly a third of the population being of South Asian heritage. The city has the largest Indian population of any local authority area in England, with additional communities of people originating from Somali, Middle Eastern, African and Eastern European backgrounds. Leicester is therefore a complex amalgam of ethnic and immigrant communities that form the majority of the city population.

11.2.2 Model of Multicultural Diversity

Leicester is regularly put forward as a model of multicultural integration,^{29,30} sometimes controversially, as in Channel Four's 2014 programme Make Leicester British,³¹ which sought to portray the diversity of opinion and cultures prevalent in the city, but which was criticised for being "angry and manipulative."³² The programme was intended by its makers to spark debate and conversation

²⁶ <https://www.llep.org.uk/our-economy/districts/leicester/>

²⁷ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Census-2011-White-British-people-form-half/story-17558831-detail/story.html>

²⁸ <http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/medialibrary/briefings/localdynamicsofdiversity/geographies-of-diversity-in-leicestershire.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/were-all-in-this-together-how-leicester-became-a-model-of-multiculturalism-even-if-that-was-never-8732691.html>

³⁰ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/deep-focus/How-Leicester-became-UKs-multicultural-model/articleshow/52169078.cms>

³¹ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Make-Leicester-British-Channel-4-programme/story-23964451-detail/story.html>

³² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/tv-and-radio-reviews/11206163/Make-Leicester-British-review.html>

about the process of community integration in Leicester, at a time when immigration was a challenging national political issue, with the Mayor of Leicester, Sir Peter Soulsby commenting that “the programme makers were interested only in making something which would get ratings, rather than making a programme which told the reality of life in Leicester or made a positive difference to the city.”³³ The premise of the programme was to “put eight individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in a house and see what happens.”³⁴ As one reviewer pointed out, “Channel 4 had decided to centralize the programme around the sensitive issue of immigration, and what being ‘British’ means.”³⁵ Another review suggests that the programme “insinuated that Leicester had been conquered by settlers,” and that ‘British’ identities were being “vanquished in the city and that Britons, white, black and Asian alike were all amalgamated in their derision of the new economic and crime scapegoats; the Eastern Europeans.”³⁶ The politics of identity and migration have been highly charged in national political debates, with acquisitions, according to one correspondent to the Leicester Mercury, that “amid the constant brainwashing from press and politicians alike about cohesive diversity and the browbeating of the PC brigade telling us what we can say and think regarding the issue, the word integration is a complete misnomer.”³⁷

A more eclectic representation of the multicultural heritage of Leicester can be found in the independent documentary ‘Spectrum,’³⁸ which was produced by the 2Funky community arts group, and charts the “history of soul, disco, reggae, R&B, gospel, drum 'n' bass, hip hop and ‘urban’ music in the city”.³⁹ This film depicts the changes in cultural expression and identity associated with different musicians and performers associated with black music in Leicester (Mistry, 2013). This depiction of the changes that have taken place in Leicester comes from musicians, performers and community media activists themselves, rather than from a media company that was visiting the city and seeking to address a wider political agenda.

³³³³ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/reactions-channel-4-s-make-leicester-british/story-24113047-detail/story.html>

³⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/nov/08/make-leicester-british-broadmoor-afghanistran-tv-review>

³⁵ <http://www.kettlemag.co.uk/article/lessons-learnt-channel-4%E2%80%99s-making-leicester-british>

³⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/chris-whiting/make-britain-tolerant-lei_b_6097538.html

³⁷ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/cultures-integrate/story-13268783-detail/story.html>

³⁸ <https://youtu.be/Rei5sMW6wj0>

³⁹ <http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/emoha/leics.html>

The charged atmosphere around the politics of cultural identity and migration in Leicester can be seen in the reaction to disruptive protests groups. In 2012 the English Defence League (EDL), a far right and anti-immigration group, applied for permission to march through Leicester city centre. The resulting protests and controversy followed the experience of an earlier march that took place in 2010, which had degenerated into violence, and resulted in thirteen arrests following clashes with police and anti-fascist demonstrators.⁴⁰ The predominant view expressed at the time was that groups such as the EDL were not welcome in Leicester, as they are inflammatory and only wished to “confront the residents of Leicester with a view of reality that is not experienced or shared here.”⁴¹ A view that was expressed by the city mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, who made the point that he was able to “articulate on behalf of the city our opposition to everything the EDL stood for.”⁴²

More recently, it has been suggested that “Leicester City Football Club’s phenomenal success becoming English Premier League Champions in one of Britain’s most diverse cities has ‘touched the lives’ of people from all walks of life – and could have a positive impact on tackling racism.”⁴³ However, concern continues to be raised about the cultural preferences that are still prevalent and associated with British sports. As Simon Kuper writes in the Financial Times, “most east African Asians [in Leicester] had grown up with cricket, not football. Those who did go to watch Leicester City risked being rebuffed. City, for most of its history, has been a white working-class institution.” The concern is that while individuals and communities are able to live side by side, there is a danger that this sense of “getting along may be quite superficial.”⁴⁴

11.2.3 Leicester Austerity

Since 2010, cuts to local government funding across the United Kingdom have been substantial.⁴⁵ The ongoing impact of these cuts to local government services in Leicester have been significant, with the city council obliged to make reductions year-on-year. In 2013 a total of £61 million was cut

⁴⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-11505724>

⁴¹ <http://www.theraceequalitycentre.org.uk/latestnews/oct2010/why-the-edl-is-not-welcome.html>

⁴² <http://www.birminghampost.co.uk/news/local-news/elected-mayors-value-city---3913063>

⁴³ <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2016/may/could-leicester-citys-sporting-success-help-kick-racism-into-touch>

⁴⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/6ffadee2-fc45-11e5-b5f5-070dca6d0a0d>

⁴⁵ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Years-horrendous-cuts-services-ahead-warn-Labour/story-25467264-detail/story.html>

from the overall budget,⁴⁶ with similar substantial cuts made in each year before and after.⁴⁷ This ongoing process has meant the loss of a significant number of jobs,⁴⁸ and the threatened closure of many social services, such as libraries, youth and community centres.⁴⁹ The wider impact of cuts associated with the austerity agenda of the British government since 2010, has had specific impact on services in Leicester. The “litany of pressures” have prompted worries about “rising energy bills, upcoming changes to the housing benefits system and government welfare policies.”⁵⁰ According to Jonathan Davies and Adrian Bua, the austerity agenda has “hit the city very hard in the eight years since the [2008 financial] crash, leaving many unable to meet their basic needs, and eroding the social fabric that people depend upon to participate effectively in social, political and economic life.”⁵¹ According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation “cuts to local authority budgets are having a profound effect on the services people receive. The poorest communities and residents are being hardest hit and those least able to cope with service withdrawal are bearing the brunt” (Hastings, Bailey, Bramley, Gannon, & Watkins, 2015). It is estimated that by 2019, Leicester city council would have lost 50% of its budget over a decade. The goal of local politicians, according to Davies and Bua, however, is to “manage down demand for services and mitigate the impact of austerity for those worst affected, while trying to avoid dramatic headlines and conflicts with central government.”⁵²

11.2.4 Leicester Poverty

People in Leicester, it should be noted, are officially accounted for as one of the poorest populations in the United Kingdom. According to the Office for National Statistics, when an analysis of gross disposable household income (GDHI) is undertaken, which assesses the “amount of money individuals have available for spending or saving once bills, rent, mortgages and other out-goings are paid,” then people living in Leicester are near the bottom of the list, while people living in the City of Westminster are at the top.⁵³ According to child poverty campaigners, Leicester is among the “ten worst

⁴⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-23286409>

⁴⁷ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/city-council-still-needs-to-cut-23-5-million-from-spending/story-29745515-detail/story.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/700-jobs-axed-leicester-city-council-warns-unison/story-28752821-detail/story.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/question-mark-hangs-over-african-caribbean-centre-and-other-building-in-council-cost-cutting-plan/story-30049904-detail/story.html>

⁵⁰ <http://locality.org.uk/our-work/policy/impact-austerity/food-bank-queues-highlight-impact-rising-bills/>

⁵¹ <https://cura.our.dmu.ac.uk/2016/06/07/governing-austerity-in-leicester/>

⁵² <http://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk/blog/2016/governing-austerity-in-leicester/>

⁵³ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/people-leicester-poorest-country-national-report/story-26583767-detail/story.html>

areas for child poverty in the UK,” with nearly 27,000 children living below the poverty line in the city, which amounts to nearly forty per cent of the city’s children.⁵⁴ According to research undertaken by Save the Children, the issue of entrenched poverty in Leicester remains “unacceptably high.”⁵⁵ When broken down by local authority the figures reported by Save the Children show that Leicester is in the top ten of local authority areas that have the highest levels of severe child poverty:

Table 12 Leicester Child Poverty

1) Manchester 27%	2) Tower Hamlets 27%
3) Newham 25%	4) Leicester 24%
5) Westminster 24%	6) Nottingham 23%
7) Liverpool 23%	8) Birmingham 23%
9) Blackpool 22%	10) Hackney 22%

The use of foodbanks has been of increasing concern in recent years, with reports that there were thirty-one foodbanks operating in the city in 2015, an increase from twelve that were operating in 2012.⁵⁶ According to the Leicester Child Poverty Commission, the most common reasons for foodbank referrals in Leicester have been benefit changes, delays in paying benefit, low income and budgeting problems. The Trussell Trust reports that foodbanks are a last resort for people in crisis, but the patterns of poverty and hunger in the UK have increased markedly in recent years.⁵⁷

11.2.5 Leicester Healthcare

A city as diverse and multicultural as Leicester presents substantial tests for the management of public health. The Leicester City Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) reports that the diversity and disadvantage faced by many of Leicester’s population presents significant challenges for improvements in public health.⁵⁸ For example, people living in the city of Leicester live on average two years less than the rest of the country, and for those “living in some disadvantaged parts of the city life expectancy is as much as eight years lower than in others.” As indicated earlier, about six in ten people living in Leicester are under the age of forty, and there are less people aged sixty-five and above, compared to the national average. However, while inward migration plays a significant role in the

⁵⁴ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/leicester-slips-uk-s-10-areas-highest-child/story-23180183-detail/story.html>

⁵⁵ <http://www.charity-link.org/one-in-five-children-are-living-in-poverty-in-leicester>

⁵⁶ <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/179784/child-poverty-update-paper-march-2015.pdf>

⁵⁷ <https://leicestersouth.foodbank.org.uk/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.leicestercityccg.nhs.uk/about-us/strategies-and-reports/>

present rate of growth of the city, this is balanced by the low levels of recorded relative wealth and wellbeing. Leicester is the twenty-first most deprived city in England, and according to the CCG has some of the “worst health of anywhere in the country.” Almost one quarter of all adults in Leicester smoke, which is seen as a major contributor to the life expectancy gap between Leicester and England, as deaths from heart and lung disease are common, with cancer and infant mortality also a significant factor. The city has high levels of adult and childhood obesity. Over 20,000 people in the Leicester have diagnosed diabetes, with many more expected to be undiagnosed yet living with the condition. Nearly one third of the population of Leicester is estimated to have been affected by mental health problems at any one time. Healthcare and wellbeing inequality is therefore recognised by the CCG as one of the central challenges to improving life expectancy in the city (Marmot, 2010).

11.2.6 Leicester City Services

Leicester City Council and other local authorities in the region therefore face significant pressure to provide services that can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. Challenges in providing integrated and modern services and facilities against the backdrop of austerity are considerable, with the city under pressure to reduce the high levels of carbon emissions from traffic, which are the result of poor environmental controls, congestion, low levels of personal activity and mobility, and are resulting in a declining use of public transport.⁵⁹ In 2015 Leicester City Council came under criticism from Ofstead, the inspector of schools and children’s services, when they reported that

There are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. Leaders and managers have not been able to demonstrate sufficient understanding of failures and have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/slump-in-number-of-people-using-buses-in-leicester/story-30100305-detail/story.html>

⁶⁰ https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/leicester_city/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children's%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf

The growing list of services that are affected by cuts include the closure of community hospitals in Leicester and Leicestershire,⁶¹ substantial loss of jobs in children’s services,⁶² and proposals to sell off or close libraries and community centres.⁶³

11.2.7 Skills, Literacy Levels and Education Marketisation

Another significant change in government policy has been in the area of schools, skills, further and higher education. The move towards academies and free schools, has shifted the focus of education policy from strategic planning to parental choice. This has been coupled with a focus on core academic subjects, and a narrowing of the range of taught subjects on the school curriculum. The criticism of government policy is that the interests of social “elites” are being put ahead of the broader population needs.⁶⁴ The further education sector has been adversely affected by many of the changes pushed through with the austerity agenda. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) cuts in funding for education and training opportunities for sixteen to eighteen-year olds, have been a hallmark of education provision for more than twenty-five years. According to the IFS, primary and secondary schools “have done rather well in terms of funding per pupil,” with spending “set to be at least 70% higher in 2020 than it was in 1990.” However, according to the IFS the “bigger story” is that sixteen to eighteen funding in school sixth forms and colleges has been “continually squeezed,” with “spending per pupil set to be no higher at all than it was in 1990.”⁶⁵ The further education sector has not benefited from government protection of its budget, because “it does not benefit from the power of the parental lobby, like schools; neither does it have the powerful supporters and high-level lobbyists who speak up for higher education. It is the poor cousin of the education world, but does a complicated and remarkable job.”⁶⁶ A report from the Public Accounts Committee, which examines public spending, “warns that the financial state of the further education sector remains ‘deeply worrying,’ and may even be subject to the “risk of ‘financial meltdown.’”⁶⁷

⁶¹ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/nhs-cost-cutting-plan-hospitals-and-county-birthing-centre-set-to-close/story-29922332-detail/story.html>

⁶² <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/more-than-100-jobs-at-risk-as-leicester-city-council-revises-children-s-services-cuts/story-30161489-detail/story.html>

⁶³ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/leicester-libraries-and-communities-centres-may-be-sold-to-cut-costs/story-29720112-detail/story.html>

⁶⁴ <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/governments-education-policies-are-simply-about-giving-power-elite>

⁶⁵ <http://feweek.co.uk/2017/02/27/school-funding-done-rather-well-and-its-cuts-to-16-18-thats-the-bigger-story-claims-institute-for-fiscal-studies/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/24/further-education-cuts-colleges-spending-review>

⁶⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35101935>

2013 is seen as the year when the “government took big steps towards its goal of a marketised system [for higher education], with the complete removal of student number controls the most significant yet.”⁶⁸ The marketisation of higher education, coupled with the reoriented focus on employability skills within the wider education sector, means that expectations about learning opportunities and the outcomes of sustained periods of study are now often advertised, sold and judged by their market utility, rather than by their social, intellectual or critical utility (Lynch, 2006; Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009; Molesworth, Scullion, & Nixon, 2010; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014; Wyness, 2013). The suggestion is that while fees may not be deterring many from going to university, they are “distorting the choices young people make at the application stage, and once they start their course.” Studying closer to home is now more common, especially for those from poorer backgrounds.⁶⁹ This competitive market environment is driving education providers to continually “demonstrate its value to prospective students,”⁷⁰ something that was politically and civically assumed under former funding arrangements.

11.2.8 Charitable Sector

Charities, and the so-called *third-sector*, were promoted as part of David Cameron’s Big Society agenda (Hilton, 2015; C. Office, 2010), as a voluntary social service that could *take-up the slack* in instances of social need, as government funding priorities were reoriented. As with all other sectors of the public services, charities are likewise feeling the impact of the loss of funding.⁷¹ In 2012 the Race Equality and Diversity Partnership (REDP), based in Leicester, noted that throughout the period of sustained cuts, the “government has given the same message that we should all learn to do more for less.” However, and according to the REDP, the “consequences of this and the disappearance of the jobs and services outlined[...] suggests that many will simply end up with far less” (Obhi, 2012). This is in contrast to funding expectations in the period up to 2010. One assessment suggests that the “voluntary sector was cash rich,” and that “regulation was improving, fundraising had come of age and the doors to public services were open.” However, as the changing priorities of government

⁶⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/dec/23/higher-education-policy-2013-marketisation>

⁶⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/may/01/higher-tuition-fees-are-distorting-the-choices-poorer-students-make-lower-tuition-fees-could-see-poorer-students-applying-for-different-courses>

⁷⁰ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/impact-of-higher-fees-on-he-laid-out-in-uuk-report/2017533.article>

⁷¹ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/local-charities-badly-affected-funding-cuts/story-20335323-detail/story.html>

fed through, there were a number of challenges that charities and third sector organisation had to address, including, “balancing increasing fundraising costs with higher targets, managing the transition from grants to contracts, and dealing with the changing relationship with government.”⁷² More recently charities are reporting that it is increasingly difficult to secure new donors, and that there is a potential £4.6 billion financial black hole by 2018. According to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), “while the rest of the economy has grown, the charity sector’s income is the same as it was in 2009.” This shortfall was due to “low growth in public donations, cuts to government grants and contracts, and rises in inflation.”⁷³

11.2.9 Leicester Crime Statistics

In any city crime is an ongoing concern, though changes made in recent years of the reporting of crimes suggesting that there has been an overall drop in the crime rate in the city.⁷⁴ For example, a total of six hundred and fifty crimes were reported during August 2016, compared with seven hundred and thirty-nine in August 2015, and eight hundred in September 2014. There is some debate about the link between reporting changes that police forces have been expected to follow, and the experience of residents and visitors who report crimes that might not get included into the official records. Anti-social behaviour remains a significant factor in the published statistics, closely followed by instances of violent assault. However, while the overall levels of reported crime are dropping, reports of individual crimes have risen, with robbery, vehicle crime, bike theft, criminal damage and arson also on the rise.⁷⁵ Most crime in Leicester is concentrated on two areas:

⁷² <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/jan/27/voluntary-sector-lessons-funding-woes>

⁷³ <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2015/jul/22/uk-charities-may-face-a-46bn-black-hole-in-income-report-finds>

⁷⁴ <http://www.ukcrimestats.com/Subdivisions/UTA/2564/>

⁷⁵ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/safe-leicester/story-28183966-detail/story.html>

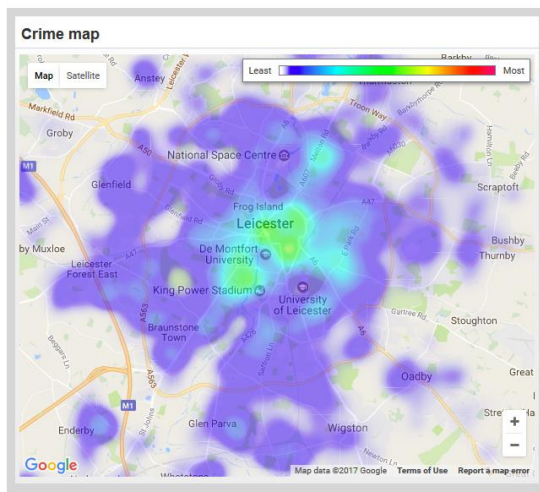


Figure 75 Leicester Crime Map

The central Leicester postcodes of LE1 and LE3 make up the two green-yellow spots that you'll see over Leicester itself. These two postcodes are Leicester Police's highest crime rate area. LE1 is central Leicester, taking in hotels, shops and a university campus. LE3 is out to the west; it's far more residential and also straddles the M1. Although these are the biggest car crime hotspots in Leicester, it should be noted that 873 crimes per 10,000 cars registered is fairly low compared to cities like Manchester and Liverpool. You don't have to go far out of Leicester to see the crime rate drop dramatically: the lowest rate [...] is for LE18.⁷⁶

11.2.10 Leicester Economic Development

Economic development is a significant concern for policy makers in Leicester, who have sought to deal with low incomes and low skill levels. The Gross Value-Added contribution of people of working age in Leicester is below the national average for the UK, so raising this level is a key focus of Leicester's Economic Action Plan.⁷⁷ According to this plan, the modernisation of Leicester's economy recognises some strategic strengths, such as road and rail network connections. Leicester is serviced by the M1 and M69 motorways, and has strong freight and passenger air traffic connections from East Midlands Airport. In addition, there is a regional cluster of universities in Leicester and Loughborough, that indicate a strong further education-led research sector, with successful research and development facilities such as the Leicester and Leicestershire's Enterprise Zone (MIRA Technology Park) and the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Parks. The relatively young and diverse population of Leicester is regarded as a strategic advantage for the local economy, given the

⁷⁶ <https://www.honestjohn.co.uk/crime/leicestershire>

⁷⁷ <https://connect.innovateuk.org/documents/3130726/3794125/Feasibility+Study+-+Leicester+City+Council.pdf/2599bda0-2076-4ada-9630-aba206e53ccf>

relative flexibility and lower levels of pay associated with a younger working population. However, pockets of unemployment and underemployment are regarded as an impediment to sustained economic growth. For example, between 2008 and 2011 the Leicester economy lost over 25,000 jobs, with youth unemployment in Leicester City remaining higher than the national average. The take-up of apprenticeships amongst small and medium enterprises is significantly lower in Leicester and Leicestershire when compared to the national average.⁷⁸

11.2.11 Leicester Urban Development

Leicester's Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, has made controversial efforts in recent years to refocus the economic activity of the city centre, and to make the city centre environment a more attractive space for visitors and tourists, which he describes as a 'public realm scheme.'⁷⁹ With the discovery of Richard III's remains acting as a promotional focal-point for tourism,⁸⁰ many changes to the built environment in the city centre have been implemented, reversing what is now seen as the 'evisceration' of the historic centre of the city by town planners in the 1960s.⁸¹ The priority of the city mayor, at this stage, is to attract inward investment, using European Union funding to supplement redevelopment projects and promote economic growth.⁸² The priority for economic development is to improve "strategic planning, transport and skills initiatives," and to "develop a strong devolution proposal to bring powers and funding from Government" (L. C. C. M. Office, 2015).

11.2.12 Leicester Politics

Due to the idiosyncrasies of the first-past-the-post electoral system in the UK, Leicester has become a 'stronghold' for the Labour Party, the mainstream British socialist party, while the county of Leicestershire remains a stronghold of the Conservative Party, the mainstream British economic liberal and nationalist party. At the 2011 local city election the Labour Party held fifty-two of the fifty-four seats available in the city, and won the newly introduced mayoral post with a majority of 55.3% first round votes, which dipped slightly to 54.6% in the 2015 mayoral election. In 2013 The Conservative Party won thirty out of fifty-five seats forming Leicestershire County Council. The introduction of the city

⁷⁸ http://www.llep.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/03/City_Deal.pdf

⁷⁹ <http://www.thebusinessdesk.com/eastmidlands/news/7716-works-begins-on-two-stage-redevelopment-in-leicester-city-centre>

⁸⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/20/leicester-midland-success-story>

⁸¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/26/lessons-from-leicester-the-uks-unlikely-new-poster-city-for-cycling>

⁸² <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/news/news-story-details/?nId=89086>

mayor in 2011 resulted in a change in the executive structure of Leicester City Council, moving away from the formerly committee-based approach. In the general election of 2015 three Labour MPs were returned based on turnouts of 64.43%, 54.99% and 63.03% respectively.⁸³ For the 'Brexit' referendum of 2016 51.1% of Leicester city residents voted to remain, on a turnout of 65.1%, while 77% turnout in the county of Leicestershire voted by 57% to leave.

11.2.13 Leicester Social Segregation

In 2016 the UK government published a report into social segregation in British communities. The Casey Review raised questions about the pace and scale of immigration in the UK, and the ability of a broad range of communities to cope with changes, and thereby maintain a sense of social cohesion. While immigration had been a major topic of political discussion, social segregation received little or no consideration. According to Dame Casey, she found "high levels of social and economic isolation in some places and cultural and religious practices in communities that are not only holding some of our citizens back but run contrary to British values and sometimes our laws" (Casey, 2016). Reaction to Dame Casey's report questioned how successive governments had "failed for more than a decade to ensure that social integration in the UK has kept up with the "unprecedented pace and scale of immigration," and have "allowed some local communities to become increasingly divided." Attempts at social integration are described by Dame Casey as "amounting to little more than 'saris, samosas and steel drums for the already well-intentioned,'" and that efforts to promote more integration and social cohesion have been "squeezed since 2010, with leaders 'falling well below the stated ambition to 'do more than any other government before us to promote integration.'" According to Dame Casey, "the problem has not been a lack of knowledge but a failure of collective, consistent and persistent will to do something about it or give it the priority it deserves at both a national and local level."⁸⁴ What was not tackled in the report, however, was how social policies, taxation, the housing market, schools policies, and so on, contribute to the concentration of ethnic and minority communities in urban areas.⁸⁵

⁸³ <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/elections-and-voting/elections-2015/parliamentary-election-results/>

⁸⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/04/social-integration-louise-casey-uk-report-condemns-failings>

⁸⁵ <http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/medialibrary/briefings/localdynamicsofdiversity/geographies-of-diversity-in-leicestershire.pdf>

enable communities to address common concerns, addressing the needs of communities which traditionally experience exclusion and/or disadvantage or discrimination” (T. Boeck et al., 2007). These recommendations fed into the subsequent ‘One Leicester’ strategy (Roberts-Thomson, 2008), in which the city council accepted that Leicester’s approach to community cohesion needed to recognise that many communities in the city “share common concerns around poverty and deprivation,” and as such are the “responsibility of city’s Sustainable Community Strategy.”

Building on earlier community cohesion strategies, there was a recognition in the ethos of the report that the “glue that kept the city together was around strong and positive relationships, whether they were based on family, friends or neighbours; local, community or faith activities; or within clubs and organisations,” and that the diversity of Leicester’s population was a defining characteristic and strength of the city. The report acknowledged that serious tensions existed, and were exacerbated by economic and social disadvantage, anti-social behaviour, crime, low educational attainments, poor housing, ill health and unemployment. What drove the strategy, therefore, was a “desire to see these issues improved along with more joined-up working between agencies and inequalities and discrimination, and inter-generational issues addressed.”

This meant adopting an approach to community cohesion that relied on “influencing all council and government organisations in Leicester to consider how their services may impact on those from different backgrounds or from different communities.” And particularly to

Ensure the city is a place which is positive about diversity and where harmonious relationships are built between and within all communities. This means that we try to tackle social tensions; support both younger and older people; address poverty and deprivation; and the diversity of people’s backgrounds is celebrated as part of the quality and richness of life (Roberts-Thomson, 2008).

What is notable about the approach, however, and apart from its corporate *top-down* way of thinking, is that there is no mention of community media in either of these reports, and so there was no subsequent strategy that could use or promote the available community media groups and resources that were established, or being established at the time (this was an observation that was made consistently by the main contributors to this study). The diversification of Leicester’s population, furthermore, has continued apace since then, to the point at which Leicester is now recognised as having one of the most culturally diverse neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom (Suzanne Hall, King, & Finlay, 2015), and yet community media initiatives, as a contributor to sustainable community development, continue to be omitted from official policy discussion. The One Leicester initiative

was terminated in November 2012 after the grant funding that sustained it from the former East Midlands Development Agency had ceased, and the new city mayor decided that an alternative strategy was preferable and more cost effective.⁸⁶ It is against this background, then, that examples and accounts of experiences gained from interaction with different community media advocates working in different groups will be considered, noting and assessing the social impact of community media as a sustainable community development approach and framework of reference.

11.3 James Black

- 2014-01-31 Interview Summary - James Black, Root Cause Productions

James Black is a community film maker based in Leicester who works under the name Root Cause Productions. In the past James has worked on community radio and for the Leicester Mercury through Citizens Eye, producing content for the community news page. James explains that what these activities have in common is the way that they work with “different community groups in Leicester.” Through these different activities James finds out about the “different events and getting to know those groups and reporting back about what they are doing” [1.112.1].



Figure 77 James Black Root Cause Films

James describes how his focus on film making enables him to capture a sense of what was happening in Leicester.

⁸⁶ <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/leicester-project-promote-25-year-aim-city/story-17362234-detail/story.html>

“Well I think what's interesting is a lot of the films that I've made have been bespoke films for different organisations, whether it's one of the most recent things I did was for the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and they wanted several films about the different services of the church, which offers community services. But I think because my background is not one in film, I kind of approached the whole thing from a journalism point of view, and talking to the people and getting a good interview, seems to be the reason, or the main focus for me, is getting the best out of the interview and that person, on camera rather than trying visually to make something look spectacular” [1.112.2.i]

James suggests that while both he and his film making partner, Sam Newton, “try and make the films look as good as possible,” the focus is always on the story that they are telling [1.112.3]. James believes this is helped by their similar background writing for the Leicester Mercury and “doing stuff with Citizens Eye.” Their focus is on trying to get the answers that best suit the people they are working with, rather than a supposedly correct form of documentary style response. James is critical of film makers who overlook the human aspects of their stories, concentrating instead on the visual appeal of the image, arguing that many of “those films seem to be about the visuals more than the content” [1.122.3].

It has taken James a few years to get to this point in his film making James explains that his approach to films is not associated with big budgets, instead they look for something that “explains their particular group, the background of that group and what that group hopes to achieve.” James has worked with many people who are regarded as underprivileged people living in underprivileged areas, people who need help with bills, while trying to help people through their everyday lives. And while James’ filmmaking is a business that needs to make money, many of the groups that he works with are not about making money, instead it is “about trying to make a difference one way or another” [1.112.4.iii]. For James, the thing that a lot of the groups that he works with have in common is the sense that they are there to help people. Whether it is the local council’s library service, or small community groups. As James explains:

“It’s about helping people, you know, whether it’s the library running different groups, like, getting older people who have never used a PC before to use a PC in their service, or having kids in from schools, and having teachers and celebrity authors, children's authors and things like that. That's all education; it’s all trying to improve people’s lives rather than trying to make money. It's a big difference I think, when you approach people. People come in from a very genuine place, where they want help and are willing to work with us to try and get their message out there, get their message across. They don't really have an agenda usually” [1.112.5.iv].

James points out that it is because the ideas emerge from the groups themselves that he believes his films are effective. James spends time with the community group to find out what they want, because they will know best about what they are trying to communicate. On occasions James may point something out to them, so

“Maybe you want to stress this aspect rather than this. And they'll say 'yeah, that's true actually'. I think if you are working with business they'd have a very set idea of what they wanted, almost like you'd be there to work entirely for them rather than working with them. I don't know because I haven't done much stuff in the business sector, but I imagine that's how it would be” [1.112.6.v].

When working with different groups James looks out for the kind of message and ideas that these groups want to convey, which can often be difficult to grasp from the first conversations, especially as none of the groups that James works with are expert or experienced communicators. James will usually have an initial conversation with the group to try to understand what it is that they want.

James describes an example of a film he had worked on about the provision of food banks.

“They wanted a film about their food bank, but there were certain things that maybe they hadn't stressed that were important, and I felt were important. For example, the food bank isn't just the whole story. For me the main point is the fact that they're a church. They are a religious organisation, so that could put people off, people who aren't religious. And would immediately probably judge a lot of people the moment they walk through the door they are going to be confronted by somebody saying, you know, we've got these services on this day, almost like the bargain of getting the free food was because we're religious and what you have to take back from us is you have to be preached at, almost. So what they wanted to say was, when they were giving out the food, when they were distributing it, how the service works in in getting a ticket, things like that, of that nature. And what I thought was important was that they stressed that this is an open group for everybody. Which was true as well. When we went there and saw it, that was exactly what was happening” [1.112.8.vii].

James describes how he could take a view as an outsider looking in, as he was clearly not part of their group. As James explains:

“I'm not a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. I don't work for Action Homeless or these other groups that I've worked for in the past. So as an outsider looking in and thinking if I was wanting to hear about this organisation what stands out for me? What are the important things that they do and what sets them apart? What is interesting to draw somebody in to what they are saying, or what makes them relevant outside of their own particular little group? So with the church it's kind of inclusive rather than the stereotypical view would be that that church, or any church. Religion can be inward looking, but that wasn't the case as far as the community events they have, or the community services they run” [1.112.9.viii].

What then are the film making values that James tries to emphasise?

“I think, when, if we end up working with somebody who we don't end up having a good experience with, we start to realise what probably that is, and probably it comes from the bad things then I realise what the good things are. So the bad things are probably when something is not a bad thing because it's anti-what I do. A kind of corporate feeling from the top down, that they don't really engage with the people that they say that they engage with. Whether it's a big organisation, say that helps young people, or something like that. And they are very impressive, so they've got a very impressive media presence, so they'll have a big income obviously, and they'll have an impressive website, and materials out there. And they'll want to augment that with a film to say how great it is. But you get the feeling that when you work with them that in their interaction with those young people, probably isn't what they're pretending it is, or what they are saying it is” [1.112.10.ix].

James looks for a sense of authenticity and directness in the responses of the groups and people he works with, describing this as guided by the “good feeling” that accompanies a project as much as any other consideration [1.112.10.x]. James would rather work with an organisation that he genuinely wants to help, rather than simply making a film for purely financial gain. The idea of promoting an organisations image for the sake of that image is inimical to James, and he is sceptical that some supposedly community focussed organisations do not actually deliver the services they receive funding for, but are happy to use their media profiles to promote their activities and sense of prestige. The film making process, if it is done with objectivity, James suggests, will find this out, which is why first-hand testimony is crucial to the development of community films. As James explains,

“I think that's because a lot of these places take on big contracts, whether it's to get people into employment, and they have to reach certain figures, so it becomes a game of trying to help in quite a superficial way, because they are trying to reach those targets, and they are trying to get more funding in, and they are trying to be impressive and want to be seen to be impressive, and seen to be somebody who can land more contracts, and do this kind of thing. Because it is the business world at the end of the day, even if it is helping people” [1.112.10.xi].

James' concern, first and foremost, is that the film making process should help people, and that the films that are made about them should include their voices in a way that is informed and empowered. This means working in ways that are objective and attuned to the differences between process-driven organisations and those that are authentic community organisations. James explains that he judges this as an “emotional response” based on the organisation that he prefers to work with. They are more “grassroots, but also those people seem to have more time, and I don't mean more time in like they are not as busy, but they seem to have, they are more focussed on individuals” [1.112.11]. And while these groups or charities might be struggling financially, there is somebody who is

“Really working hard at what they do and they are making a difference with people’s lives. And it’s not, very unglamorous work as well. I think that’s an important part as well. All these things that I like and I get a good feeling about and think, and want to work with these groups. A lot of the time it is very unglamorous work running a food bank at a church or having a charity that deals with the homeless. You’ve got all those problems that come with homelessness, like for example alcoholism and drug use, all kinds of stuff you know. Probably violent behaviour. Even though they sell themselves in a way because they have to on how they help people, and they do that. But the everyday work is not something that a lot of people would not be cut out to do, I think” [1.112.11.xii].

James has a moral or ethical view of the film making process that is not commonly found in popular mass media these days. James is starting to realise this about what he does, but that

“At the end of the day the films I’m making are community based, and for me, and I want that word to mean something rather than to just be an empty phrase because it can be a phrase that sounds very impressive and be bandied about easily” [1.112.12.xiv].

James is sceptical of the use of the phrase ‘community,’ as it is used a lot by politicians and people in the mainstream media as a dismissive back-hand, implying that ordinary people’s expectations and experiences can be subsumed to a general concept that no one quite knows what it means. As James explains,

“So that’s why when I see that the people in at the sharp-end, doing the hard work and that kind of thing, well they really do deserve the badge, in a way, of community, of going that extra step and doing stuff that’s difficult and hard work, unglamorous and working with groups that aren’t, that are going to be difficult to manage, rather than people who can say ‘well I’ve got a sense of community because’, or ‘we’re a warm-fuzzy organisation because we work with young people to do, say the arts’ or something like that, you know. I mean I believe in that stuff, and I think there’s definitely a place for it, but I don’t know whether there’s a big divide between what these different organisations do and deliver” [1.112.12.xiv].

The fact that many of the projects that James has worked on have very little funding means that he gets a greater say in the type of film that he makes for them. James still wants to make a good film, but this is aided if he also believes in the organisation and the project that they are working on. As James puts it,

“So I think if you can work with an organisation that you believe in, whatever that organisation is, and you think they are doing good worthwhile work, then it definitely will help to, help you in the project to produce something that’s worthwhile in the end and work with a group more closely, I think” [1.112.14.xvi].

None of which brings a financial reward, but it has meant that James has a portfolio of films that he is proud of, and which he hopes to have made a difference in some way.

11.4 Simon Parker

- 2013-07-03 Interview Summary - Simon Parker, Down Not Out



Figure 78 Simon Parker DNO Event

Simon Parker co-edits Citizens Eye and is the co-ordinator for Down Not Out, which is a news-agency run as a partnership between Citizens Eye and the Action Homeless charity in Leicester. Simon's role is to work out "some of the structures, some of the training programmes, working with the editorial team on how the project meets its targets from the Big Lottery" [1.72.1]. This means that Simon oversees the

"Ways that the project is run, because when you obviously put in a bid to the Big Lottery in the UK you've got kind of targets that you have to meet, like getting x-amount of volunteers involved in the reporting side of things involved in training sessions around film, around podcasting, about developing radio, things like that. So it's basically making sure that the reporting aspects of a project are in hand" [1.72.1.i].

Simon has a strong view of what the ethos of Down Not Out should be, and that he was "always really drawn to Citizens Eye and its ethos of giving a voice, or being able to be a platform for a voice, for people whose voice isn't necessarily heard at all, or its misrepresented or under-represented in the mainstream press. In a nutshell" [1.72.2]. Simon's view is that people need forms of community media because there are a wide range of issues and groups that are misrepresented and underrepresented in the mainstream press. Simon regard the support of the exchange of information in accessible forms, as being crucial, particularly

“Because I think that there's still a lack of information about, say people putting out press releases, like there's lots of charities across Leicester for instance, that have a lot of information to put out about potential events they have got coming up, fundraising. Obviously the mainstream press, like the Leicester Mercury, Radio Leicester, they've only got x-amount of space. It's a lot more dependent on their advertising. We're not restricted by that, so we can actually provide a platform for the amplification of their information, as well as news” [1.72.2.ii].

An important element of what Simon tries to engender in his role with Down Not Out is the sense of community that comes from skill-sharing. Community media relies on the sharing and exchange of knowledge, and whether these skills are specific to someone's life experience, or more general and the result of study, they are a valuable part of the relationship building process. Simon explains that there is a lot of skill-sharing in community media, and that many forms of knowledge and information can be shared in different ways across either a city or a region. Simon points out that he doubted if the Down Not Out news agency would have come about without Action Homeless and Citizens Eye getting together to share news and information about homelessness. Simon explained that it might not be possible to “amplify” these issues in the way that they have been, as they are often “ghettoised on a particular organisation's website, but since working together they now have a wider focus” [1.72.3]. Simon's view is that

“Research has proved that a news story has more power if it's placed around news that's either complementary to it, or different from it, rather than just being in the community. A good example we use is stuff like the NHS websites, or the police websites. They have a lot of potentially good news stories, or useful news stories that nobody is ever going to look at or hear about. A, because the mainstream press might not have picked that up, or want to share that. But also how many people are going to get up on a Monday morning and think 'oh, I'll look at Leicestershire Constabularies web site to see what's going on with the police?' Yet, a story from them about a particular area about Leicester could be of really important to somebody living in that particular area, and could lead to other ideas, and maybe if it's a good idea replication in another part of the city” [1.72.3.iii].

One of the other founding principles of community media is volunteering, and Simon recognises some of the main issues with getting people involved with different community media opportunities is often the perception and the structure that supports volunteering. As Simon explains,

“Having better resources and better structures. I mean what we've immediately noticed with Citizens Eye, having moved in to the building here, having more rooms available, having more computers available, makes it a lot more attractive, a lot more real to potential volunteers. And they can see they not only get the value of having their work placed on a website, but they have actually got tangible place to come and visit, speak to somebody, share their

concerns, ask advice about particular issues, technical issues, you know, how to put a video up, how to do a podcast, things like that. So it makes it a lot more useful to everybody from both sides, because we get more content. The more volunteers we get the more content we get. So it's a win-win situation" [1.72.4.iv].



Figure 79 Down Not Out Web Page

There is some frustration, however, that organisations are looking for a quick fix to many of their problems, and that many organisations will not invest in long-term solutions because they are driven by short-term considerations, temporary funding arrangements, and a shifting policy agenda that does not look at the outcomes of project, but only those things that can be measured easily. Simon's view is that

"You can see the difference in the development of people over a course of time with this. The real difference is to be seen in the soft skills that people need to develop, to either go on to get jobs, or to do interviews, or things like all those. Real interpersonal skills that are often bypassed on the constant drive for accreditation in courses, and things like that. But the actual development of people, to put the courses into action are where you see the benefit. This is what we are partially interested in. The development of those softer skills, like being able to communicate properly with somebody, how to interview somebody. Having the confidence to sit in a position like you are with a microphone and interview somebody. Those are real skills for people that might not necessarily have those to begin with. And, just developing those you can see their kind of confidence and self-esteem rocketing, in a relatively short time" [1.72.5.v].

This does not mean that community media opportunities have to be drawn into the 'skills-factory' approach that many forms of organised learning have become. Simon suggests that it is possible for community media to avoid being seen in this way, but it can only be done by

“Almost totally de-bunking all the facts that all those things are about, like putting the pressure on people to actually say well you've got to come in and do this certificate, and it's got to be a really formal course, and you are going to learn this, this week, this next week. Instead we try to keep it fairly informal, so it feels like fun while people are actually learning something. So, almost like the learning aspects of it are creeping-up on them, and it's set around having a conversation, you know, talking about particular issues. Using news and information as a way of getting people to talk and interact, and you know, develop skills from that” [1.72.6.vi].

Simon feels that what is needed most in community media is a sense of recognition, what he described as “real recognition that the development of those softer skills are absolutely vital for putting into practice accredited courses. And to make sure that that level of informality is recognised formally.” This would mean, to some extent, returning to some of the pasts. Values that had been found in the Adult Education movement, for example, when

“Courses didn't have to be accredited. They were like a bit of fun to go along to. And I know when that ethos actually changed it really did alienate masses amounts of people who used to engage with it that way. And I don't think the adult education regimes have recovered that aspect of things. So maybe not just going back and throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but a new way of structuring that needs to be done. How do you put structures on to something that is informal and seemingly more casual, even though it's effects are potentially to magnify the use of accredited courses once you have got people confident and skilled enough to actually talk to each other and to engage in further learning?” [1.72.7.vii].

So has the 'skills' agenda has become a burden? Simon believes it is a bit of both.

“It's a bit like the chicken and the egg. Like that. I think if there was a job there for somebody to get, they would be drawn to develop those skills, you know. They would have an incentive to get those skills. What's seemingly happening at the moment is that everybody's stockpiling skills and certificates, but for what reason?” [1.72.8.viii].

Simon describes how he had been doing some work in prisons, and that the process of offering work opportunities when people are released from prison are very narrow, often consisting of just working in a charity shop. Simon explains how he had tried to develop an alternative set of ideas about what might be suitable placements, but it

“Nearly fried their brains, because they thought, ah, we've not been asked that before. But, the thing was even within that the people who were managing the charity shops were saying to the prisons why are you sending me people whose qualifications are for fork-lift truck driving? Because, you know, there's the perception that, working in a charity shop is something that people can do in prisons, and something that they might get a job afterwards. But of course once you've flooded the market with x-amount of people? How many people have the same qualifications to do the same thing? It's what makes them different that's important. They might need those skills, but they also need the other skills, which is why when

people go for jobs, it is the soft skills that get them the job. It's not the certificates” [1.72.9.ix].

Community media's role, then, is to focus on the transferable skills that are prevalent in community media, and in media in general. Simon points out that he had been amused at a recent media and education event when someone described media studies as a Micky Mouse course. As Simon explains:

“I actually thought, well no, actually media, you look at it, the transfer of information, you know the communication of information in lots of different ways, written, audio, visual, you know, they are all real transferable skills. Soft skills for getting any kind of job, and also increasing the information about, say, a company, and organisation you're working with. Though to me it's, a kind of media aspect of, should be included in any course nowadays” [1.72.10.x].

11.5 Mark Clark

- 2013-08-13 Interview Summary - Mark Clark, Community Media Hub



Figure 80 Mark Clark Inside & Out Magazine

During a session of the Community Media Hub at BBC Leicester, Mark Clark gave a presentation about his involvement with Inside and Out magazine and how it came about. Mark started by describing what Inside and Out was about, and how he hoped that the magazine would be able to host training and workshop events to help offenders through coaching for skills development. One of the issues that were regarded as important by the other volunteers in the session was housing and accommodation. They explained to Mark that they had “heard on the radio there are twenty thousand people on the housing register.” Which they thought was a “massive problem.” And that if “you

don't get anywhere stable to live it's hard to stabilise" [1.99.2]. Mark explained how he views the situation.

"The thing is the probation hostels, they're so full, you know, they don't, there's only certain amounts, but I can't remember how many beds they have, those hostels in Leicester. But they cover the whole of Leicester and Leicestershire as well. Once you're a medium or lower risk then you've got to get out. That's what happened to me. Within a few months my risk was lowered and then they basically threatening me with homelessness themselves. It was only lucky that I had a good probation officer at the time that I actually managed to get the flat where I'm in now, so it's the revolving door sort of thing" [1.99.2.i].

Mark explained what had happened was when he was in prison,

"I had sort of a eureka moment about two or three o'clock in the morning, and I thought what can I do in order to raise the self-esteem and interpersonal skills of my fellow peers. I came up with all these ideas, I had to write them all down, and one of them was setting up a community magazine. Which I did, while in prison, and when I actually got transferred" [1.99.3.ii].

It took Mark some time to set up the magazine, and with the help of a more sympathetic governor Mark was able to develop the idea based on the learning and the skills that he would get from it. Inside Out magazine was pitched as a prisoner-led enterprise, written by and for people in the criminal justice system. Mark was allowed to develop the idea, though it was something of a pathfinder in terms of the response from the prison authorities. Mark explained that there are thirty-five probation trusts in England and Wales, and that the magazine goes in PDF format to twenty-three of those, and then also another two. Initially it was funded by the local foundation trust, G.E. Ellis, but that funding has now gone. Mark told the volunteers that,

"They funded me for the last two years, but they said this year we need to give the chance to somebody else. Fair enough. They only have a certain amount of money in their pots don't they, and obviously they want to help as many people as they can, you know. Which is fair enough. But it's mainly that the magazine is now on the back-burner. This one, on the screen is going to be the last one" [1.99.4.iv].

Mark explained how he wanted to shift perceptions of the magazine, and include it in the visitor's centres that prisons have, so that more people can get to see and read the content. The main issue is having good relationships with prison governors so that the magazine is officially supported. Mark explained the basic pricing structure that the magazine is offered at to cover his costs, which will allow the prisons to sell the magazine for a small mark-up to cover their own costs.

Mark's talk then turned to the subject of how to set up a community magazine. As Mark told the participations, "if I can do it from a prison cell, anyone can do it" [1.99.6]. Mark explained that he is not proud of having been in prison, but he felt that his example might help other people who have had problems and issues in their lives. Mark wanted to emphasise that the formatting of the magazine was in line with other magazines that are commonly available around Leicester, but that the crucial difference was that his magazine was aimed at a specific audience of offenders and ex-offenders. Based on this, Mark has to be clear about the range of people in the prison system. As Mark explained,

"It's a bit difficult with, with me because, you know, this goes to young offenders, which are you know, can be as young as, well, eighteen. It doesn't go to any of the younger borstals or anything like that. So my audience is from eighteen up to sixty, plus. So, it's quite difficult to actually, err, sort of, you know, have a particular design. But I've tried to make it as interesting as I possibly could" [1.99.6.v].

Mark was worried that the design of the magazine was not as professional as it could be, but that he has made consistent improvements to the look and the content based on feedback he has gathered as he has been publishing each issue. Mark described how he chose content for each issue:

"You'll have noticed on the front cover we've got a band. Obviously young people like music and also older people like a bit of music. That band are called No Comment, and actually set up while in prison. So obviously that will be of interest to my target audience" [1.99.7.iv].

One of the participants asked Mark if he takes "professional guidance on the layout now, the design?" [1.99.8]. Mark explained that he is not a graphic designer, but that he works with a designer who has helped put each of the issues together. Mark told the participants that he thinks it

"Is quite important that you actually engage with your readers and actually get their views. On the magazine, on the layout and also on the content of the magazine. So then we've got a story about female offenders, though obviously you won't go into too much detail, but basically, all of these stories are stuff that is either happening in prison or out in the community. So it's basically a resource for my readers to use, whether you are going to use it immediately or whether they are going to use it on external release" [1.99.8.vii].

Mark pointed out that the magazines are available in the four prisons in Leicestershire, and that until recently he had been funded for this. Mark explained that while the cost of production of the magazines could be quite low, it was still difficult to get funding from organisations like local councils, or the Big Lottery fund, or the probation service. With the recent cutbacks in council spending its more

difficult to produce large magazines, but there are alternatives, such as photocopying. As Mark told the participants,

“But then with all the cutbacks it's quite difficult. It really depends on what you want, whether you wanted a photocopied magazine, a photocopied publication, or whether you actually want it printed and things like that, because that's where the real cost come in. And whether you actually can design it yourself or whether you actually find somebody else to design it for you, it can be very expensive. I know that very well” [1.99.9.viii].

Mark described how the magazine gets printed by prisoners at HMP Leeds, and that its costs £325, plus £25 delivery. “So three hundred and fifty pound is printed, boxed and sent to me by next day courier.” Mark explained that he would not be able to use a local printer at that price for one thousand copies, with full colour and shiny paper. This figure doesn't take into account the use of a graphic designer and the time that it takes him to write and collect the articles, but Mark has a good relationship with his designer, so he can send him all of the content and then “he does everything. I just send him the source the content, and then he makes the magazine. Then he sends me the completed PDF, and I send it to the prisons” [1.99.10].

One of the participants asked about getting involved and how easy it would be to contribute to the magazine. Mark described how there is a tension between the willingness of people to give their services for free, and their need to make money as independent writers or designers. Though not everyone can access word processing applications or design applications, Mark suggested that a computer with Microsoft Office would be a good starting point, only to be reminded by the volunteer that he did not have a computer and so could not access software. As such the pricing of software is often prohibitively out of reach of most people. There was a suggestion from another participant that free software might be a suitable alternative, for example, Open Office is a free Word Processor with some limited design functions. Or there are design programmes like Scribus, which are also free on the internet. Mark explained that whatever software package was used, there was still the need for a clear sense of design and art skills. Mark told the group that he has not got a “creative bone” and that he was “not very good with art and I never was, never have been, probably never will.” But he can recognise that fact and so he uses the skills of other people instead. As Mark explained, “if you know somebody who is quite proficient with it then it's a matter of getting them to actually help you. And maybe guide you as well” [1.99.12].

Mark also suggested that training to use the software can come from fellow contributors, and that it is possible to learn from one another, rather than having to attend expensive training courses. Mark then moved on to talk about the importance of researching what your target audience wants to read. For Mark, it is important that *Inside and Out* reflects a broad range of interests, as it would within the prison community itself. As Mark explained,

“So for a community magazine, for my magazine, obviously they wanting to know about music, so I put in music reviews. I put in book reviews. I put in sports reviews. I put in puzzles. And then on top of that I'll try and actually incorporate other stories within that. So, whatever you're interested in, as in the music and the books and the sport and the puzzles, that's what they are really interested in. But, I try and actually put in a message, instead of just giving them that message and no sport, and no puzzles, etc., etc.. You couldn't get them to read a magazine in the first place, then I actually put those stories in there about how they can turn their lives around, in a positive and more engaged in the positive way. And what's out there available for them” [1.99.13.ix].

Mark was asked what kind of stories he looks for. Are they personal cases? Mark explained that in every issue they have an article from an “ex-offender, whether that be male or female, and they vary in different ages as well, and how they turned their lives around, basically” [1.99.14]. These stories describe where they were, how they felt about their sense of esteem, and what had brought them to the point where they were sitting in a prison cell. As Mark described his own experience,

“That first night I made a decision I was going to use my sentence to the optimum and turn my life around. And that's exactly what I've done. I've come out the other side and now this is what I'm doing. So that's the whole point of that is to motivate and inspire people. 'If he or she can do it then why can't I?'" [1.99.14.x].

Mark suggests that this is a good way to grab the reader's attention, by recalling personal stories and talking about issues that they can relate to. Mark thought that this was similar to the way that people use social media, and he explained how:

“You need to grab your readers, your audience with a story of whatever that is, you know. Whether it's young people, obviously it's going to be talking about social media, it's going to be talking about music, and that sort of thing. And interaction. What are the different services that are available to the young people? And they're the young generation, whether it's talking about older people, then you are talking about pensions, you are talking about families, you are talking about activities that you can do in your retirement” [1.99.15.xi].

Another participant raised the issues of disability in prison and how it is a challenge for people who are disabled to be accommodated properly, both during a prison term or afterwards, and asked Mark to what extent this was an issue that was being campaigned on. Mark suggested that rather than using the magazine as a vehicle for lobbying, he sees it instead as a magazine that might inspire

people by engaging with them and motivating them. Mark was then asked if he also takes stories from the probation officers' perspectives. Mark was clear that what he was trying to do was to raise awareness in the prison and probation service more broadly, both with staff, with offenders themselves, and with their families. Mark wanted to do this to:

“Express the positives that happen in the criminal justice system, but being an insider and outside - hence the name - the prison gate. So the whole point of that is to actually make my readers aware of what is out there for them and then talk about issues about welfare benefits, talking about issues that when they come out what they are actually going to face” [1.99.16.xii].

Marks next project is to produce a prisoner guide based on what offenders need to know when they are released. As Mark explained:

“It's going to be about being released, about what next, because when I came out of prison I had forty-six pounds in my pocket, and luckily I had a probation hostel to go to. But some people are actually kicked out with nowhere to stay that night. You know. What's that all about? So what I'm trying to do is to actually build a relationship with the prisoners, people on probation and also the staff as well. You know, the probation staff, the prison staff, and other staff who work with offenders and ex-offenders. To look at what is out there for these offenders” [1.99.17.xiii].

Mark intends this publication to go into libraries and to be used to teach people. Mark explains he is motivated to tell positive stories because they are seldom heard, and yet they demonstrate that people who might fall through the safety net can be turned around. So while the press will dwell on the occasional negative stories that take place, with the occasionally poor staff not doing their jobs, then the “ninety percent of the staff there are probably quite good staff” [1.99.18]. Which is the same, Mark suggested, with offenders and ex-offenders. As Mark described:

“I had to question myself. Offenders and ex-offenders they are bad people, don't trust them. They are really bad people, and that's how I'd been brought up to believe. And this is how society is brainwashed, almost, by the general media. You know, you never hear any positive news about... You do, there's a little bit more now actually, but there has a slight culture change” [1.99.18.xiv].

One of the participants suggested that this was stereotyping. Mark agreed, but he suggested that this is what had inspired him, the fact that there are positive stories that come from the criminal justice system, and if this could be combined with an educational approach then Mark felt he would be able to make an impact.

Mark went on to describe that once software had been acquired, and reasonable printing services had been found, then the next major element was distribution. For Mark, this can be “easier said than done.” But then it depends on the target audience and where they are based. Mark contacts both Leicester City Libraries and the Prison Service Library, to ensure that copies of the magazine are available in both. Obviously, prisoners do not have computers, so it would not be productive to put the magazine out simply on the web. Building-up a mailing list takes time, and has to be managed carefully so that the distribution costs do not become prohibitive, though email distribution lists remain very effective in getting documents out quickly and to a wide range of people. Mark will ‘bcc’ his main group of people on his email list, but he ensures that the people that he considers to be important or influential remain visible in the ‘to’ box. The magazine is then posted to over one thousand people.

As the session was concluding, Mark was asked if he had noticed any changes in the way that people respond to the magazine, and the kind of feedback that he gets? Mark explained that the suspicion that he faced as an ex-offender when he first came out of prison had died down. On a local level, Mark recognises that he is trusted because many people in the probation service know him. However, now that he has gained a level of trust from both the service staff and some prisoners themselves, Mark is more confident that he is able to extend a rapport about the issues he is interested in.

12 Participation as a Neutral Process

According to Blumer we can identify how his insight into the formulation of neutral social processes, such as participation, helps us to consider those elements that are discrete and those elements previously discussed, and that are variable in social participation. So, rather than linking the variable elements as if they are joined together and corresponding with one another, if we follow Blumer, we should instead be able to view them as interacting with each other in a “moving series of developments” (Blumer, 1990, p. 82). Those factors that we identify are not in themselves discrete, instead they are related, and work in relation to one another. Understanding the process that forms this relationship is therefore our task. It is easier to “detect the secularisation of values” (Blumer, 1990, p. 41), argues Blumer, but this means that the perception of the process when it is at work, or as it is represented in empirical instances, is more difficult to account for. If we are unable to validate the status of the process of participation in operation, then the concept of process-defined social change is placed in doubt, because it cannot be empirically secured. The challenge to each variation of the general social process of participation would be open-ended, according to Blumer, and there would be little agreement about how each independent variable, or some phase of it, should be treated in different situations or circumstances.⁸⁷ It would be difficult to reach agreement about the end results that are implied by the variable elements, and indeed, at which point these independent variables become dependent variables. So, as Blumer states, “the interaction is more important than their simple combination” (Blumer, 1990, p. 82).

Blumer critiques the concept of the ideal type classification which is often used in scholarship as a way of demonstrating the inevitable social results that are produced in the application of homogeneous social processes. The ideal type model suggests that there is an intrinsic character and logic to social change that calls for, and produces, given social developments. Though as Blumer points out, “to extract what is essential is not easy, particularly in a form that is meaningful and useful” (Blumer, 1990, p. 163). Blumer’s rejection of the ideal type approach ensures that the logical essentials that are selected and identified when we consider participation as an agent of social change, are relevant to the kinds of social change that takes place in practice. There is so much variation of form in social organisation, so many constituent parts and forces operating, that it would be difficult to construct an ideal or pure model that demonstrates these processes in action. While it is conceptually safe for

⁸⁷ As Kenneth Baugh notes, Blumer’s criticism of scientific method is designed to highlight the extent to which “in its functional aspect, science aims to simplify perceptual reality by the isolation, conceptualisation and on-going reconstruction of universal instrumental relations” (Baugh, 1990, p. 5).

scholarship to offer a logically coherent typology of variable elements that characterises the larger social processes at play, we do not have the capability of encapsulating all of these variables in a cohesive model that encompasses the changing and inconsistent experiences as they are applied and understood in the social field. The map we would need to produce would not be sufficient to judge the territory, as it would be almost impossible to account for, in a single comprehensible sweep, the social variations that are at play.

Blumer's concern, then, is one of assumption. Yes, it is expedient to be able to use ideal-type models in scholarly accounts of social change, but in doing so, it should not be assumed that this ideal-picture is capable of telling the whole story, and as we have now seen, the variability of the accounts of participation shows there are significant degrees of difference. Blumer argues, therefore, that we should avoid accounts of general social processes that suggest:

- Majestic leaps over unknown areas.
- Inherent technical innovation.
- Essential social conditions that do not tell us anything about group life.
- Ideal types, or coercive and intrinsic elements that can be subsumed into higher levels of generality.

We should, instead, seek to examine and develop a concept of how these factors operate in group life in practice and under every-day conditions.⁸⁸

12.1 Points of Contact with Group Life

So, in seeking a realistic and workable understanding of participation as a social process, and how it might potentially act as an agent of social change, it is necessary to identify those features that can be traced as they work in the collective life of specific groups. In Blumer's analysis of the process of industrialisation he identifies nine lines of contact and entry along which social change is induced, which can be adapted and used here in developing our understanding of how the process of media participation works. As Blumer explains, 'these nine dimensions may be thought of as a framework inside which group life must fit' (Blumer, 1990, p. 42). These are:

1. "A structure of occupations and positions...
2. The filling of occupations, jobs and positions...
3. A new ecological arrangement...

⁸⁸ "The pre-existence of human communities, each with its prevailing stocks of knowledge, means that individuals do not have to bring most objects of their awareness into existence on their own, at least on a foundational level. Thus, to a very large extent, the world of (delineated, meaningful) objects precedes (and 'objectifies') one's (existence and) experience." (Prus, 1996, p. 13).

4. A regime of industrial work...
5. A new structure of social relations...
6. New interests and new interest groups...
7. Monetary and contractual relations...
8. Goods produced by the manufacturing process...
9. Patterns of income of industrial personnel" (p.42-46).

12.2 Blumer's Nine Lines of Entry

A summary table can help to highlight the distinctions and differences between each line of entry and what its potential impact might be.

Proposition: *The social process of participation remains neutral, and is therefore uncoupled from any determinate logic that coerces particular outcomes.*

Structure of Occupations and Positions

- Positional relationships give way to new social differentiations.
- Social positions associated with modes of life in the group arise.
- This is a new social arrangement of people.
- Identification of codes of living that grow around these new arrangements.
- Look for differences in definition and expectation.
- There is no uniform structure.
- There is no determinative causality or coercive structure.
- A range of alternative possibilities emerge.
- Outcomes vary.

There is nothing inherent in the particular process that explains the social character of these occupations and positions, because, as Blumer points out, "one cannot find the explanation of these matters by going back to the bare [socialising] process" (Blumer, 1990, p. 62).

Filling of Occupations, Jobs and Positions

- Assignment of social roles and positions follows established lines of social discrimination.
- New modes of social formation disrupt assumed patterns of social discrimination.
- How new roles are explained, codified and allocated can be a sign of disruption.
- The process of role allocation can be a focal point for conflict and tension.
- The process of role allocation can be rigid or flexible and free flowing.
- Other factors might account for patterns of role recruitment.

Recognising the range of alternative possibilities that are faced by the members of the social group who are defining and making sense of these possibilities for role recruitment and allocation.

New Ecological Arrangements

- Once role allocation is underway, people have to be situated in places.
- New roles give form to new ecological arrangements.
- These new role allocations require new governance arrangements.
- Different situations will give rise to different types of disputes as they are related to different schemes of situated operation.
- The conditions for role allocation vary in different situations.
- The process of participation cannot be used to explain the conditions of living that are found in social life, the locations that they are enacted in, or the relations between people who adopt its roles and positions.

The question, according to Blumer, is that we should seek to understand how the participative media process affects the “ecological arrangement of people” (Blumer, 1990, p. 65).

Regime of Participative Work

- Governance and policy arrangements of work can vary between situations.
- Patterns of work will vary in different situations.
- Governance and resolution of disputes over patterns of work will be set by the experiences of the situation.
- Alternative forms of participative work will emerge, and will be enacted and codified given the needs and definitions of the existing situations.

Participation as a social process is itself neutral and therefore has no alignment with any form of social organisation or governance developed by producers and practitioners.

New Structure of Social Relations

- New groups will be brought into being.
- Relationships will be developed between existing groups and new groups.
- The character of these groups will be divergent and established in their interactions.
- Each group or class of individuals creates images of one another.
- They will develop attitudes and dispositions towards one another.
- They will establish status relationships between one another.
- They will build codes of action towards each other.
- They will lay down lines of demand and expectations on one another.
- Relationships may be stable or unstable.
- A variety of social structures will be developed.

In forming networks of social relations that are integral to the process of enhanced participation in media networks, nothing about these networks is uniform, and in any given instance there will be clear indications of heterogeneity, diversity and differentiation, or they may be marked by homogenous characteristics that support a sense of common community membership. Social differences can be an identifier of common virtues, or they can be a discriminator of cultural difference.

New Interests and New Interest Groups

- Different forms of interest activity will be at play.
- Forms of interest activity will show the decision-making process in action.
- Interests are defined in negotiation with other agents and interest groups.
- The way positions are lodged in the social world shape and define the relationships between interest groups.
- Interests are defined through evaluative interaction as related to the social setting.
- No interest has complete control either externally or internally of the definitions.
- Membership of interest groups is formed against a background of alternative possibilities.
- Many interest group formations may be developed.

The approach taken here suggests that the interests of those who are interacting in social settings, do so through a process of evaluations of each other's positions as they are related to the social settings. The tendency is to form interest groups that give and show a focus of organisation related to the demands and expectations of those groups, amidst a wide range of alternative and competing interests that operate and interact simultaneously.

Monetary and Contractual Relations

- Social structuring is both formal and informal.
- Social structuring is both impersonal and quasi-legal.
- The scope of relationships will vary from instance to instance.
- Contractual relationships will vary between forms of participation and forms of settings.
- Contractual relationships are negotiated and vary according to the circumstances.
- Negotiation implies potential alternatives.

There is nothing built-in to the participative process that controls the character of these negotiations, or which will determine the outcomes of these negotiations. Instead, the resolution of these negotiations will be worked out in a series of judgements and acts of will, relative to which a wide variety of alternative solutions may be possible.

Goods Produced by the Participative Process

- Goods and products enter the world physically and symbolically.
- The lines of social exchange will vary, some will be emergent and open, others will be established and closed.
- The flow of goods and products represent patterns of social organisation.
- New patterns of goods and products might undermine existing patterns, or promote new patterns of social organisation.
- New patterns of distribution will emerge alongside existing patterns and social formations.

New modes of living with different standards of income and exchange may be facilitated in interesting and significant ways, but they will not be finalised or set by them. The negotiations and differentiated positions that are taken up will remain fluid and open as new consumption patterns take different forms in different settings.

Patterns of Income of Participative Personnel

- Money is a sign of social enablement or disablement.
- Expectations about money, and what it can be used for, and how it can be distributed, vary.
- Money is a mediating concept of changing forms of social organisation.
- Patterns of accumulation and exchange vary greatly.
- People will want to do different things with money, or will want to stop other people from doing things with money.
- Economic expectations are fluid and will change.

Money has a significant role to play in the change that is facilitated by social groups, but there is no determinative feature of money in itself that precludes different financial approaches. As people's expectations of money change, so do the lines of actions and association that are formed.

The greater the opportunities for participation in practice that are offered up, the greater the potential variety for social change that accompanies them. However, the participative practices “do not determine what the specific social changes will be” (Blumer, 1990, p. 74).

Blumer's outline of the lines of entry into group life affords us the opportunity to establish how the process of participation plays out in social situations, from which it is then possible to define, label and examine the forms of these arrangements, the forms of operation in practice, and subsequently the type of social practices that are enacted between agents who negotiate these different activities and accomplishments. The variety of situations that can now be examined as a dynamic process of interaction, can subsequently focus on the codes of living that people refer to and enact, especially as these are bound with different expectations and dispositions of the potential routines of living. The on-going process of co-option of others into these new and emerging roles, that are borne in the participative process, with their reinforcements or displacements of existing social arrangements, illustrate how social change is manifest in group life. The way that we go about accounting for and explaining the ongoing renewal and sustainability of these roles and relationships, especially as they are understood to be enfranchising or disenfranchising to individuals or groups, is tied with an emerging and growing sense of entitlement that can be found in the routines that play out as permissible codes of action that are negotiated between groups. This playing out can usefully be recorded and seen in the accounts and records that are kept or made of these negotiations. For the most part, these negotiations remain informal and *ad-hoc*, though the records of formal arrangements and agreements between groups can be rich and illustrative, as are the patterns of consumption and use of media that displace the existing social arrangements and practices.

Table 13 Blumer’s Lines of Entry

Lines of Entry	Arrangement	Operation	Social Practice
Structure of occupations & positions	Social arrangement – hierarchical or horizontal?	Social structure – differentiation or similarity	Codes of living, expectations & dispositions
Filling of Occupations, jobs & positions	Allocated roles	Recruitment process	Co-option, reinforcement or displacement
New ecological arrangements	Situational arrangements	Consultation	Accountability and sustainability
Regimes of work	Social governance	Dispute resolution	Enfranchisement & disenfranchisement
New structures of social relations	Interpersonal or group relationships	Cultural interactions	Permissible codes of action
New interests & new interest groups	Communities of interest	Sharing and recognition of interests	Negotiations between interest groups.
Monetary & contractual relations	Contractual liabilities & resource distribution	Negotiations and contractual agreements	Records and accounts of agreements
Goods produced by the manufacturing process	Symbolic and physical production	Distributional arrangements	Consumption and use
Patterns of income of industrial personnel	Social exchange	Innovation and realignment	Displacement of established practices

12.3 Problems of Participation

We have now identified that participation is a variable concept which can be considered from a number of alternative positions. The challenge going forward, therefore, is to relate these positions to the practical arrangements that are met in practice and in group life. The identification of potential lines of action therefore provides a pragmatic framework that offers opportunities to account for participation as it is played out in social situations. However, whereas Blumer’s account of social process is related to discussions of industrialisation, some further adaptation might necessary to ensure that there are clear routes through which participative media actions can be understood. It is worth briefly noting some of the issues of socialisation and practical engagement that participative practices come up against when undertaken in the here-and-now. These processes are outlined by Jim Ife, but they form a common view of participatory models more generally.

Firstly, and according to Ife, we should note that the social process of participation is not defined in isolation, but should be understood in a process that is relational to the “dominant individualist, consumer basis of society,” which thereby potentially “contradicts the socialisation of many people” (Ife, 2013, p. 172). The process of social participation, as previously noted, may be played out along

discriminatory or egalitarian lines. So, when we look at examples of social participation, for example, that of ambitious and upwardly mobile white men who have been schooled in the art of networking and social status management, we may arrive at a different understanding than we would for other social groups. The forms of engagement and participation that are required in commercial or hierarchically managed social institutions are clearly different from the social networking dispositions that are required of users of a commercial or social service, or the contributors to a members-based organisation. Responding to, and overcoming traditional role allocations, as found in hierarchically delineated organisations, is not just an abstract process of consciousness raising, but also entails practical and developmental forms of socialisation and schooling (Goffman, 1990; Mills, 1959). The challenge when attempting to manage the practical steps that would encourage wider forms of non-traditional participation, is that they can amount to, and be perceived as tokenism. This is particularly problematic when those who are established in their social positions seek to address an imbalance in an organisation or a social setting, but do not wish to alter any of the fundamentals structuring routines that support the ecosystem of roles, and the range of concepts that are used to support the structuring and distribution of those roles as *necessary* and *natural* in their present forms. People may be informed in a process of consultation, but they may not get to exert any power or control over the scope and remit of the outcomes of the consultation (Arnstein, 1969; Bruns, 2003).

Therefore, to encourage practical and wide-ranging participation in a social situation there needs to be considerable attention given to overcoming the scepticism and inertia that is often assumed to be the default position found in contemporary social life. Not only is this about ensuring that the opportunities to participate are genuine, but that they are perceived to be genuine and meaningful as well. What is meaningful to people in different social situations will vary, and may have been established as either a progressive or regressive move, depending on the motivations and dispositions of the people who are involved. The route for community development practitioners, therefore, is to ensure that participation is perceived to be inclusive and diverse, so that it attracts the “broad involvement of the people concerned” (Ife, 2013, p. 172). The problem, however, is that participants might find themselves being co-opted into a power-structure that they had previously been in opposition towards, only having the power to influence, but not radically alter. As Jim Ife describes, this “has been the fate of many representatives of citizens’ groups or disempowered groups when asked to participate on government or non-government boards, committees or other bodies” (Ife, 2013, p. 172).

12.4 Practical Intersection Points

Community membership, moreover, is generally defined as an intersection point at which participants have to negotiate the right to take part in the life of the community, thus being able to access services and support from the community institutions as are available and are affordable. The notion of rights is, at the same time, linked to the responsibility that community members have to contribute to the general wellbeing and upkeep of the community. If the relationship between the rights and the responsibilities of community members becomes uncoupled, or stretched, then the sustainability of the community is likely to be limited. The language and conceptual framework of policy and judicial decisions are therefore framed and articulated in such a way that they emphasise the obligation to contribute to the overall well-being of a society, as well as the right to participate. In practice participation without attached responsibilities is viewed as unnatural, with considerable social pressure being placed on people to contribute to the community processes that are appropriate to their conditions. The risk, of course, is that the right to participate is colonised and naturalised by groups of people who follow established and embedded identity paths, or who are predisposed to certain forms of bureaucratic and administrative management roles. As such, participation becomes self-selecting and exclusive. The community development mindset, therefore, seeks to widen the appeal of community participation by altering and changing the forms of access and engagement that are required by different types of people who are identified by different social configurations and capabilities.

Furthermore, different people will participate in different community processes if the conditions are adapted to suit their circumstances and are perceived to address their needs. Firstly, people have to feel that the issues being raised are important, and that they come from their community experience, rather than from abstract or purely conceptual positions. The best way to ensure that people take up the mantle of participation is to ensure that the issues and actions are decided by the social group themselves, and not by someone from outside of the community (both literally and symbolically), telling them what they should be doing and how they should be doing it. Likewise, people must get the sense that their actions are making a difference, and that the jobs and undertakings that come from their community activity must have some observable or perceived benefit. The incentive to participate will be enhanced, in the community development frame of thinking, if there is a demonstrable sense of achievement resulting in meaningful change.

Obviously, this raises the question of what is meant by meaningful change in practice and given the circumstances. Change can be perceived on an individual level, on a group level, or on a wider social level. Understanding the changes that take place, and attributing that change to the involvement of members of a community, can either be directly related to the actions of the individuals or groups, or not. It might also be attributed to a general sense of change that is happening anyway, for example through the adoption of new forms of communication technology. Moreover, there is always the possibility that change can be attributed to negative factors, such as migration, so the process of change in practice is not value free either (H. Harris, 2004). Perhaps the strongest form of change recognition is that which is tied to the positive contribution of group members that are realised as specific accomplishments and achievements, though claims of credit for change and these achievements are themselves intensely political.

A third implication for the successful implementation of participative practice is that contributions are acknowledged and valued from different perspectives and different levels of engagement. Some contributions will take the form of traditional meetings and committees, while others will recognise activities and processes that come from different forms of non-traditional activity. The broad-spectrum of activity that is encouraged in a community development situation, means that it is much more difficult to codify and measure the inputs of different people as they engage in the participative process in different ways. There are many different roles that community members can play, and they can be undertaken with variable levels of competence and expertise. The challenge of the community development approach, in opposition to many professional management approaches, is to recognise and value the diversity of input and the diversity of outcome. This means, fourthly, that different contributors and participants will have different support needs and different access requirements. The requirement to anticipate these variable needs is a major part of thinking that underpins access provision, especially as seemingly inconsequential barriers to access for one group will be significant barriers for access to other groups. The will to encourage improved rates of participation might be strong, but without an assessment of the needs of participants then there is likely to be no significant change in access levels.

Finally, the way that an organisation or development process is managed, and the structures that support these management repertoires, themselves have to be accessible and not alienating. Traditional management roles, traditional decision-making routines, and traditional communication processes, can be alienating at the best of times. While some people thrive in the hierarchical business

environment, many do not. Contribution based on inclusive and inward-looking processes, that require certain forms of verbal capability or written literacy skills, may result in the assumption that those skills are natural, and that all decision-making should be shaped in this way by these processes. Whereas more informal, consensus-based approaches might give participants more confidence to shape the decisions that are made in a social situation. Who controls this process is perhaps the most important principle to be accounted for, as ownership of the process implies that different role-takers will bring different dispositions to the structures and processes that are adopted.

As Ife points out, “different styles will suit different communities, and there is no one right way for everyone” (Ife, 2013, p. 175). Community development-based participation seeks to avoid, therefore, the commonly held view that decisions and the structure of decision-making processes are natural and inherent in the activities that are found in a social setting. Usually, hierarchical decision-making processes are founded on a view that competition is the dominant form of intra- and extra-community interaction. The cooperative and collaborative approach to decision-making is often marginalised as somehow being less effective, less measurable and less manageable, and therefore harder to implement. But as Ife points out,

Perhaps the most important points from this discussion are the need for collective rather than individual action (‘What can we do?’ rather than ‘What can I do?’), and the importance of smaller-scale actions that can lead to larger-scale change. Community development principles recognise that effective change is gradual and organic, and this also applies to changing the organisation context of community development practice (Ife, 2013, p. 364).

The extent to which these expectations are borne out in practice are therefore a necessary further consideration for the wider context of community media.

12.5 Frameworks of Expectation

This set of features of the potential lines of social change in group life now gives us a framework by which we can make sense of the experiences of people who are involved in the participative process, or in which they have to find a suitable fit. As Blumer argues,

The people, with their modes of life and institutions, must adjust to the demands, the functioning opportunities, and the arrangements that are laid down by the [participative] process along the nine lines (Blumer, 1990, p. 47).

These nine lines proliferate and extend outwards from the initial changes introduced by the participative process. Looking at these areas of common occurrence suggests that other factors, related or

tangential, also play their part in promoting social change, but which are not subsumed by a pervasive, coercive and overarching process. When we examine social group life we see how other factors are intermixed with established general social processes, and that our willingness to link through associative logic results in a myopia about what is actually going on in our group lives. The many forms of social change that are advocated as ending in “terminal results of influence” (Blumer, 1990, p. 47), should be seen for what they are, and as they spread out from their initial points through the complex process of social change found in group life.

Here, however, we should simply note that in identifying participation as an agent of social change, it is necessary to depict this process as it relates to, and as it enters group life, and not as it might be said to have “imported ultimate social effects” (Blumer, 1990, p. 48). Scholarship has to follow from the initial lines of action and points of impact of the participative process, as they play out in group life, and as they vary and change. What matters most is how people define, account for, and negotiate the process of participation, as it relates to their established group life. These interactions may vary greatly, and they may have different consequences in different circumstances. They will not be uniform, nor will they be determined by the participative process itself. Instead, they will be locally negotiated. They will emerge from the practices that are found at every point of contact, and they will be influenced by other factors that lie outside of the participative process. As Blumer describes

If the situations that are introduced by the [participative] process are akin to those which people are already accustomed they are not likely to require new forces of behaviour or of social relations. Conversely, if the situations are significantly different in this respect, they set the occasion for change (Blumer, 1990, p. 155).

The urgency, therefore, is to examine the situations as they can be understood at the points of contact so that we can see if the participative process is indeed inducing social change.

The focus of any studies of social change associated with participation necessitate, therefore, that we find out what the lines of exchange are that are initiated in specific situations, and the extent to which change occurs. The demands and expectation that arise with opportunities and meet problems, are the place at which social relations emerge as people deal with problems, opportunities and situations in different ways. As Blumer points out, neither what is presented in a situation, or how we handle these situations and report what is present, can be considered without a thorough study of a situation and what takes place. The participative process does not tell us what kinds of opportunities, problems or demands will be encountered. The policies that we develop and the strategies

that we use to examine these issues can only emerge from the empirical study of the setting itself, and not from an ideal understanding of participation as a social process.

Any social change, as Blumer argues, is likely to originate only at the points of contact in group life, which means that any study of what takes place at these points is of prime concern. The social process of participation gives us situations that makes demands and sets opportunities for different types of activities, emergent social relations, and functioning arguments that are challenging to the established social order. Tracing the divergent lines of influence to identify what social structures emerge, what recruitment patterns are established, what ecological patterns are identified, how new interest groups are born, and so on, provide a focus to how the lines of change might be identified, and what we need to do to study these situations. However, the more that we study the secondary and associated social processes, the further away we get from the direct influence of participation as an agent of social change.

12.6 Divergent Lines of Influence – Neutrality and Relationality

In specific situations, and as we look along each line of influence, the change that we encounter may be considerable, though as Blumer has established, there is nothing inherent in the participative social process that can explain or account for these changes inherently. The extensive possibilities of alternative forms of change along each line is not determined by the process of participation, instead, we have to look at the lines of entry into group life as a framework of what is essential in the participation process. As Blumer puts it,

The framework is indifferent to the social form that it takes and to lines of social change that it sets into play. [Participation] is neutral with regard to the nature of the social changes that may arise in operation (Blumer, 1990, p. 76).

And while there are limits to the range of alternatives that can occur at the points of contact, our concern is to understand the “latitude of alternative social developments” (Blumer, 1990, p. 77), which may be much greater than if we followed a rigid, ideal-type approach to our observations. Social participation, and the lines of entry that participation represent, may either allow for the free and equitable adjustment of relationships, or be bound in a tight structural arrangement that follows and sets rigid barriers. On the one hand, moreover, we are looking for observable evidence that there is free play in the social setting, or alternatively, that there is rigidity in the social setting and the tensions in maintaining those boundaries is apparent. Given that no one knows what will be the end point of this interplay of processes, or indeed if they even have an endpoint, then we can never

be certain that these changes and patterns of change are inherent or indirectly attributable to the process of participation. Identifying the attributes of social change in these circumstances is fraught with difficulty. We might, under some circumstances, try to elicit an ideal type scenario, though as Blumer notes, our concern should be with the here-and-now, and not with a hypothetical image of potential consequence in a remote future. Speculating what the impact of social change might be in the long run adds little, according to Blumer, to our understanding of what is negotiated in the short run.

Therefore, to seek to characterise participation by projecting a set of “hypothetical final results” is no “substitute for empirical observations and analysis” (Blumer, 1990, p. 80). The picture that can be built up by empirical observation will tell us what happens as the process of participation enters group life, and what the alternative developments are or might be. This means that treating participation as a homogenous entity would not yield the results that we need to see participation as an agent of social change. The features of participation, as they are played out in social settings, are not pre-given, they have to be worked out. These actions and inferences each depend on the actions and interactions of one another, and as a “moving instrument” (Blumer, 1990, p. 143) that is defined in relation to each of these processes. Empirical observation of the lines of influence in group life will reveal the range of social changes that occur as a result of the introduction of participatory practice among other social processes. The challenge is to examine the kinds of situations that represent occasions for social change, and the responses that people make to these situations, how they “meet the demands and opportunities for change” (Blumer, 1990, p. 161), and how these responses in turn affect group life. Any form of study that misses out the interior process of the most significant elements that form and shape these relations, is missing a great deal.⁸⁹

12.7 Anticipating Social Change and Applying Lessons

Therefore, and to recap, it is possible to state that the introduction of participation as a social process has the following characteristics:

1. The participatory process is neutral and is observable at the lines of entry to group life.
2. A range of diverse alternative social developments are possible in regard to this framework.

⁸⁹ “Unless students of human behaviour attend to the many different life-worlds that make up (the subcultural mosaic of) a society, they are apt to miss a great deal of human lived experience as this pertains to both the human struggle for existence and the development of any other matters to which people in particular human groups may attend” (Prus, 1997, p. 40).

3. The participative process does not determine or account for the alternative routines and dispositions that come into play.

This means, therefore, that we can state that: *while social change is common and dynamic in these social settings, and following the lines of entry and influence, participation, in itself, does not determine this change. Participation does not operate in isolation, under ideal conditions, instead, participation takes place in social settings, as part of a culture that is represented by institutions, and alternative forms of social organisation, sometimes competing and sometimes uniform. Different responses to the process of participation will differ in different settings, but they are not determined by the process of participation.*

Likewise, the interaction of different elements of the social process of participation are related to one another. Each setting reveals a different picture. As the initial elements interact with each other they are altered, much as they are susceptible to change when new elements are introduced. Therefore, we cannot account for one element of social change, without also accounting for the related elements of social change. As Blumer describes

The determinate social change is the result of a process of development in which the x and the y themselves undergo change and in which other factors than the x and y may enter. What is important is the process of development and not the x and y factors that are presumed to set it off (Blumer, 1990, p. 141).

Therefore, what is significant for any understanding of the characteristics of social change associated with community media participation is the process of development that sets this interaction off. As the factors associated with participation are introduced to a social setting, they acquire form and character that allows us to observe them as examples of social change. The character of these elements are not present in pure forms within the logic of participation as a social process. Rather, they emerge because of a process of formation. According to Blumer, the question we must raise is **what takes place in the process of formation?** This is different from asking what the constituent factors are that proceed the process of social formation. The effort required to avoid *post-hoc* rationalisation of the role of participation as an agent of social change means, moreover, that we will be able to seek the interrelated factors that are subject to observable change as found in the process of formation. This is an open process that is accessible to new factors at the different points of entry into group life. As Blumer states,

At each point of contact there are alternative possibilities of social development and that the [participative] process is not responsible for the given alternative that comes into being.

The [participative] process, so to speak, sets the stage for social change at the given point of contact but does not determine the form of that change (Blumer, 1990, p. 149).

The participative process, therefore, should be seen as comprised of emergent situations in which these activities are developed, these relationships are formed, these social organisations are negotiated, which are based on the many ways that people meet in different situations, and call on “varying schemes of interpretation and set of expectations, inside a framework of traditional and contemporary pressures” (Blumer, 1990, p. 150). People fashion their activity in different situations on the basis of the potential lines of accomplishment that they can define and negotiate. As people come to different situations with different points of view, and different expectations, then they will define these situations differently, and thereafter the resulting activity will always vary. Attributing these definitions and accomplishments to the participatory process alone will misconstrue what is happening. Blumer’s five steps of this process can be adapted here:

1. Identification of what is meant by participation.
2. Identification of the participatory process.
3. Identification of the major points of context of the participative process in group life.
4. General awareness of the larger social process.
5. Identification of what takes place at the points of contact.

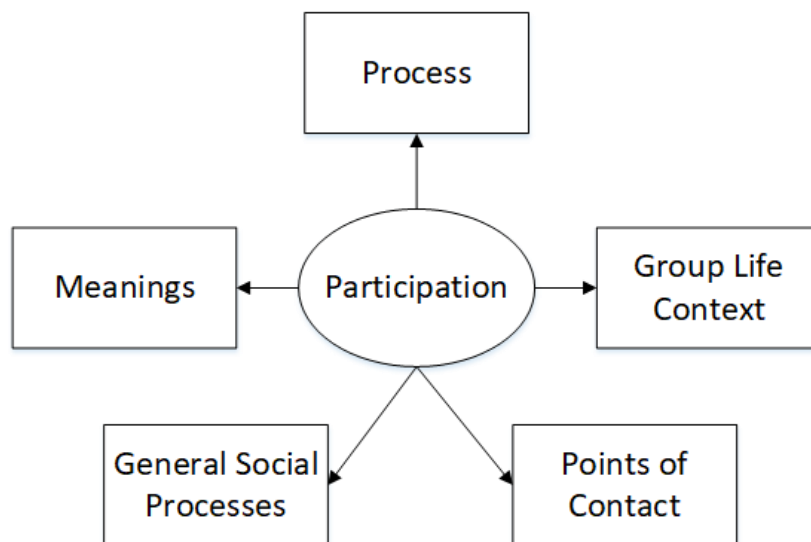


Figure 81 Identification of Participation Process

As Blumer states

The only way one can be sure that [participation] has, in fact, initiated social changes is to study what takes place at the points at which such changes arise, namely, at the points of entry of the [participation] process into group life (Blumer, 1990, p. 155).

None of these stages of enquiry can be skipped, according to Blumer, if we are to be certain that participation is an agent of social change. The social consequences that flow from this process do not originate in the logic and facets of participation, but are instead the products of the negotiated interactions that emerge in group life: the behaviours, the dispositions, the expectations, and so on. Participation can thus be regarded as an occasion for social change, but not a determinant of social change. The impact of this view is that it frees the observer and the scholar to look anew at the framework of policy decisions that are associated with these forms of social change. As there are no fixed links between the elements of participation, the social situations in which participative practices are enacted, or any ultimate ends and destinations for these changes, we are freed up to look anew at those things that facilitate or obstruct social change. Wider issues can be considered. Alternative frameworks of expectation can be plotted. Different styles of interaction can be played-out. There is no determination of social change, only a pragmatic test that recognises that policy can be wide-ranging and vary in the concerns that it seeks to address. If participation as a concept is representative of a range of dynamic forms of social interaction, then the guidance that is offered for successful understanding in different situations will also vary. Blumer concludes

In place of preoccupation with a dubious problem of the social effects of [participation], concern should turn to the problems of how social policies may be effective in guiding and controlling social changes under [participation]" (Blumer, 1990, p. 166).

There are many functions that have to be considered in relation to participation, and the changes that it brings. Reasonably good knowledge and awareness of these multiple processes, therefore, is the prerequisite to effective study as they play out in group life.

